Migrant Workers’ Rights Program: Lessons Learned 2004-2014

A partnership between Diplomacy Training Program and Migrant Forum Asia
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1. Executive Summary

This report reflects on the Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) and Migrant Forum Asia’s (MFA) activities to build the capacity of advocates for the rights of migrant workers in Asia and the Middle East since 2004. Each year from 2004, DTP and MFA have organised human rights advocacy training programs for members of MFA networks and other individuals committed to promoting respect for the rights of migrant workers.

What began as a shared idea and commitment, and a single program in 2004, has continued for 10 years and provided training for over 300 individuals working for migrant workers’ rights.

DTP has commissioned this report to assess, and draw lessons from, the DTP/MFA collaboration on capacity building since 2004. The report draws on responses to a survey of alumni from these training programs, as well as interviews with some key stakeholders in Asia and in the Middle-East in international organisations. The surveys were conducted in early 2014.

The report is an opportunity to reflect on what has worked and what has not – and to learn lessons that can be applied to future capacity building work. The report includes some recommendations. It is the first stage in a two stage reflection process for DTP and MFA. The second stage will be a workshop that will map future directions, based partly on the findings of this report.

Purpose of the Partnership and Capacity Building Activities

In 2004 DTP and MFA began collaborating on capacity building programs for civil society advocates focused on the human rights of migrant workers. DTP was in the process of reviewing thematic priorities for human rights capacity building in the Asia-Pacific region – to address new and emerging challenges. William Gois was recently appointed to the new role of Regional Coordinator of MFA, and was invited to present a session on the rights of migrant workers at DTP’s 14th Annual Regional Human Rights and Peoples’ Diplomacy Training Program held in Bangkok in January 2004. This was the first time DTP had included program content on these issues and the need for a dedicated capacity building program on the rights of migrant workers was discussed and agreed.

The purpose was to contribute to efforts to ensure that the human rights of migrant workers and their families in, and from, Asia are properly respected, protected and fulfilled in accordance with recognised minimum international standards.

The aim was also to use capacity building programs to connect advocates for migrant workers’ rights with the broader human rights movement, trade unions and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and the women’s movement.

For DTP this collaboration is consistent with its mission to contribute to building the knowledge, skills and networks of human rights movements in the Asia-Pacific Region. For MFA this work is consistent with its commitments to its membership and to its vision of a world where the rights of migrant workers are realised.

Beneficiaries

The intended beneficiaries of these programs are the millions of migrant workers and their families who would be affected if agreed minimum human rights standards were applied to labour migration policy and practice. The most immediate targets for training are civil society advocates who have a
commitment to the rights of migrant workers, and who are actively engaged in relevant work. Other targets have been those working for organisations with a direct role and mandate relevant to migrant workers that have the potential to make a strategic impact and that should be part of larger efforts to secure respect for the rights of migrant workers – particularly staff of NHRIs.

**Underlying Assumptions**

Migrant workers experience a wide range of harms and human rights abuses in countries of origin, transit and destination. These abuses have been extensively documented in the reports of major human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the ILO and other UN agencies.

Responding to these abuses, the approach taken by DTP/MFA makes a number of working assumptions:

- That the abuses and harms would be eliminated if accepted international human rights and labour standards were universally and effectively applied to policy and practice affecting migrant workers – and progress towards implementation of these standards is likely to reduce the abuses.
- That national laws and policy settings are important factors in levels of abuses experienced by migrant workers.
- That the capacity and political will of government officials, recruitment agencies and employers is a key factor in determining levels of abuses experienced by migrant workers.
- That advocacy and engagement by civil society is a key driver of political will and good governance, governance that is respectful of human rights.
- That better legislative and policy frameworks and practice can be attributed, in part at least, to effective and sustained civil society advocacy.
- That there are possibilities for civil society advocates and their organisations to make an impact on abuses in the short term in countries of origin and destination.
- That building the knowledge, skills and networks of advocates is necessary for substantive, long-term impacts in relation to the policies and practices that affect migrant workers.
- That enhanced collaboration and cooperation between civil society organisations and NHRIs and trade unions and government officials will lead to improved outcomes for migrant workers.
- That there is value in enabling and facilitating direct engagement between advocates and key UN officials (ILO/OHCHR) through participation of the latter as trainers/resource people.

Most of these assumptions are based partly on the observable differences in law, policy and practice on migrant workers in different countries.

**Strategy**

The strategy was to apply DTP’s methodology of participatory human rights advocacy training, developed since 1990, to building the knowledge, skills and networks of individuals and organisations committed to advancing the rights of migrant workers.

The capacity building programs would deliberately seek to nurture collaborative relationships across sectors, institutions and countries through the mix of participants and trainers and the curriculum and teaching methodology.

**Activities and Partnerships**
Over the years, the DTP/MFA partnership has evolved from collaboration on a short regional capacity building program in Asia to a more comprehensive set of capacity building activities that has included the following:

- A country level focus on building capacity of advocates in country of origin using an approach of multiple modules and supported activities.
- Regional capacity building programs in countries of destination.
- Development of new training and resource materials in English and Arabic for use by NGOs, NHRIs and OHCHR.
- Engagement and support of alumni in a range of advocacy activities.

The first regional program was held in Jakarta, Indonesia in November 2004. Since then 12 regional DTP/MFA programs have been held in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Cambodia, Timor Leste, Lombok (Indonesia), Thailand, Nepal, Lebanon and Qatar. Each regional program has been 5 days long and has typically involved 25-30 participants per program. DTP/MFA have also worked on a year-long capacity building program in Nepal in 2013/14.

DTP and MFA have worked collaboratively to organise and implement these programs with other institutions and NGOs at the regional and local level, including the Asia Pacific Forum (APF) of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as well as local partners on the ground.

Engaging Alumni

While the programs have generally been single stand-alone activities, justified in their own terms, they have also been part of a broader commitment and strategy on capacity building by both DTP and MFA. Efforts have been made to follow up with participants of the programs to enhance the impact of the training. Alumni are actively engaged in the following ways:

- Former participants (alumni) have been invited to return to subsequent programs as trainers.
- Alumni organisations have been local organising partners and hosts for subsequent programs.
- MFA has involved alumni in their representational work at regional and international forums, and in campaigning and advocacy initiatives.
- MFA has created a special listserv for alumni of DTP programs.
- DTP has added alumni to its alumni database and they receive a regular monthly E-Newsletter to keep them informed and updated.
- Alumni are encouraged to stay connected through e-groups and social media such as Facebook.

Overview of Findings

What began as a single regional capacity building program in Asia in 2004 has evolved over the last ten years into a range of capacity building activities with a regional, country and sector specific focus in Asia and more recently from 2012, into the Middle East. The move into the Middle East has been a major shift that has enabled programs to be organized in the major countries of destination for migrant workers from this region. The DTP/MFA programs are a unique contribution to efforts to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers in Asia and the Middle East. The uniqueness derives from the combination of the partnerships, curriculum, and methodology.

The programs have drawn together an unusual set of stakeholders – beginning with DTP and MFA, but including the ILO and OHCHR, APF and NHRIs and a wide range of NGOs and civil society organisations and also government officials.
These activities have become the principal way in which MFA develops the knowledge and skills of its growing membership and the individuals in these organisations.

Based on the surveys returned by participants in the programs and discussions with stakeholders:

- The training programs have had a positive impact on individuals to increase their awareness and knowledge, improve their skills and change their attitudes and inspire new ideas.
- The benefits of an individual’s participation have flowed into the work of participants’ organisations.\(^1\)
- The training programs have been helpful to enhance the networks of alumni and promote cross-sectorial collaboration on migrant worker rights.
- Alumni have been able to apply their knowledge and skills to promote migrant worker rights internationally, regionally and nationally.
- The training has inspired alumni to develop and conduct their own capacity building programs.
- The training programs have been valuable in connecting individuals active in countries of origin and destination.
- There is a need for increased institutional capacity to ensure the sustainability of the program and strategic follow up with alumni.

While it is difficult to make a causal link between the trainings and specific outcomes, the feedback from participants and stakeholders do highlight some specific outcomes and impacts that could be attributed to some extent to the programs. The following general and relevant observations can be made:

- Two countries in the region, Indonesia and Bangladesh (locations of DTP courses), have ratified the 1990 Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families and DTP alumni were involved in leading the ratification campaigns in both countries.
- DTP/MFA alumni have engaged with UN human rights mechanisms – including UN Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review.
- The issue of migrant workers’ rights has risen up the global and regional policy agenda and civil society has been afforded space to make its claims. DTP alumni have participated in the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development and the International Labour Conference hosted annually by the ILO.
- More actors, including funding agencies have become engaged in the field of labour migration, and there is a higher media profile for issues affecting migrant workers, particularly in the Middle East.
- Asian civil society advocacy on migrant workers has a reputation as the best organized and most strategic of any region.
- These DTP/MFA courses are the first known to the organisers to bring together civil society advocates from countries of origin in Asia with civil society in countries of destination in the Middle-East and to facilitate ongoing linkages between them.
- The DTP/MFA courses have grown organically and have now also made the link with migrant rights issues in North Africa.
- A new Arab network on migrant workers has been established with DTP/MFA alumni playing the leading roles.
- New national level networks and coalitions have been established by DTP/MFA alumni.

\(^1\) This was reported in a number of ways – including information sharing, use of the training and resource materials, training initiatives, and activities and strategies of the organisations.
There has been new collaboration between advocates in countries of destination and countries of origin. This has among other things, enabled collaboration on specific cases and more generally, assisted in informing advocacy approaches and overcoming misconceptions.

**Summary of Recommendations**

**Capacity Building Strategy:** The growth in the range and number of DTP/MFA capacity building activities could be usefully described in a comprehensive capacity building strategy. The strategy should join the dots between DTP/MFA’s national level and regional projects/programs, programs with a specific sectoral or institutional focus, and the focus on countries of origin and destination. Such a strategy would benefit from being based on a clearer theory of change for the program. This would enable the prioritization of programs, and follow-up activities and support provided to alumni.

**Future Programming, Curriculum Revision and Methodology:** The annual regional training should continue and be complemented by more advanced and/or thematic programs. Trainings could aim to take place in parallel with (and/or focused on engagement with) major meetings and forums on migration and could also include direct engagement with human rights mechanisms. The methodology of future trainings could seek to explore options for integrating online and blended learning approaches. The trainings could include more case studies of success stories as well as insights to what works and what does not work in terms of advocacy. Field trips could also involve more interaction with local migrant communities and lead to specific advocacy outputs.

**Strategic Participant Selection and Partnering:** The diversity of participants was seen to be strength of the program. Participants have varying levels of experience and seniority, diverse cultural and institutional backgrounds and also bring interesting perspectives from countries of origin or destination. Nonetheless, DTP/MFA could consider how, through targeted participant selection, that a greater impact could be made. For example, DTP/MFA could consider more engagement with government officials, trade unions and the private sector. These issues should be addressed within a clearer overall strategy for DTP’s capacity building work on migrant workers.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** DTP has an established methodology for evaluating its specific programs. It needs to develop its monitoring and evaluation methodology for its work with alumni and for assessing the longer term impact of its programs. This is related to having a clear overall strategy, with more measurable objectives based on a theory of change to better enable DTP/MFA to assess the impact of the training programs. DTP/MFA should seek the resources to engage in more regular monitoring and evaluation, based on closer follow up with alumni and their organisations, and their advocacy activities over time to measure the long term impact of the programs. This should look at developing case studies and Most Significant Change methodology.

**Consistent Follow-Up and Building a Stronger Alumni Network:** Stakeholders and alumni would like to see more regular alumni events and a stronger network emerge. The alumni network could be built using both online mechanisms and face-to-face opportunities. Consistent follow up should be undertaken, and collaboration encouraged in a more systematic way. The sharing of experiences and providing a space where alumni could ask for assistance is important and web based tools may offer options for this.

**Planning and Logistics:** As the programs have expanded into new areas and increased in frequency, DTP needs to ensure that proper protocols are adhered to and cultural sensitivities are addressed. For example, higher levels of formality can be sometimes expected in the Middle East and North Africa, than in some parts of Asia. DTP will also need to address a perception of things being organised at the “last-minute”, which has been a function of limited capacity in terms of personnel, and issues of funding. Keeping in mind the importance of respecting protocols, DTP should address
these issues and ensure the highest professional standards in the planning, preparation and logistical elements of its programs.

**Institutionalisation and Sustainability:** DTP has developed significant specialist expertise and a unique set of relationships in this area following a decade of collaboration with MFA. Through these relationships and its alumni, it is uniquely placed to contribute to promoting the rights of migrant workers through high quality training and support to alumni of its programs. Many of the recommendations outlined in this report are resource dependent. To fulfill the potential that exists, and to enhance the impact of existing and planned activities, DTP’s migrant worker program requires a full time staffing commitment. This would widen the scope for closer follow up with alumni as well as the development of the alumni network. It also requires regular funding and searching for new sources of funding.

2. Purpose and Methodology of the Lessons Learned Report

This study is the first phase of the Lessons Learned Project. It draws out lessons from the DTP/MFA collaboration on capacity building in the area of migrant worker rights since 2004, and develops recommendations for priority areas of action for the future. The report will form the basis for the second phase of the lessons learned project, an in-depth discussion and strategic planning process between DTP, MFA and other stakeholders that will take place in the latter part of 2014.

The DTP/MFA programs teach rights based strategic advocacy. Given the complexity of the issues involved and the range of actors and contexts, it is not the aim of this report to identify the specific impact of the individual training programs or the cumulative impact of the ten years of capacity building programs on outcomes for migrant workers, nor changes in legislation or policies that advocacy by DTP/MFA alumni may have contributed to.

Rather, it reflects on what lessons can be drawn from the last ten years of working in this area – as one of the activities of two small NGOs – DTP & MFA. This report firstly outlines the program and its activities to date. Secondly, it looks at alumni and stakeholder appreciation of course content, methods and materials. Thirdly, it examines the extent to which DTP and MFA have achieved the objectives for the program decided upon as it began in 2004. This section examines the impact of capacity building on individuals and considers what these individuals have gone on to achieve through their organisations over the years. Detailed alumni profiles can be found in Annex 5. Finally, it summarises the advice and suggestions of alumni and stakeholders on what to improve in the training as DTP/MFA look ahead to future programming. Based on the analysis of these findings, the report concludes with some lessons learned and recommendations to inform DTP/MFA’s strategic planning process.

This report uses information collected from qualitative surveys of alumni and interviews with stakeholders such as trainers, representatives of partner organisations and other stakeholder organisations operating in the region. Approximately 300 alumni from 2004 – 2013 were emailed a questionnaire by MFA/DTP (a sample questionnaire can be found in Annex 4), of these, 42 alumni responded (see Annex 3). Stakeholders were sent out personalised questionnaires and were mostly interviewed on Skype. A list of the nine interviewed stakeholders can be found in Annex 1.
3. Program Description

3.1 Origin and Rationale for DTP’s Focus on Migrant Workers’ Rights

DTP was established in 1989 with a mission to provide high quality human rights advocacy training to human rights defenders in the Asia-Pacific region. In 2003 it adopted a new set of thematic priorities to respond to the changing human rights challenges and opportunities in the region. The rights of migrant workers and their families, the violations of their rights and their vulnerability were identified as a key emerging issue and priority.

In addition it was recognised that a focus on the rights of migrant workers would contribute to building awareness, understanding and support for human rights in a wider constituency in the region – not previously reached and addressed by human rights NGOs.

The 1990 Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families (CMW) came into force as a core human rights treaty in July 2003 and this was also a factor as there was clearly a new need to build knowledge and understanding of this key, but relatively neglected human rights treaty. In 2004, DTP’s 14th Annual Regional Human Rights and Peoples’ Diplomacy Training Program in Bangkok included sessions on the rights of migrant workers for the first time. This was the beginning of DTP’s engagement with the issues and laid the foundation for the subsequent partnership with MFA.

3.2 The Migrant Workers Rights Program Purpose and Objectives

DTP’s discussions with MFA established the need for a capacity building program to:

- Build the knowledge, skills and networks of individuals in MFA’s membership.
- Help link advocates for the rights of migrant workers to the wider human rights movement in the region.
- Engage a wider range of actors in advocacy on behalf of migrant workers’ rights – and in particular trade unions (TUs), national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and the women’s movement.
- Promote ratification of CMW and the application of other relevant UN and ILO Conventions to policy and practice.

The principal activities have been the organisation and facilitation of an annual regional five-day capacity building program held in different locations across the region. The target number for participants in each program was 25-30, as this is optimum for DTP’s participatory training methodology.

In 2008, the program was held to coincide, and enable interaction, with the Global Forum on Migration and Development and associated civil society activities in Manila. This program was also the first and only follow-up program to date – with most participants having been alumni of earlier programs. In 2012 and 2013, the regional capacity building programs were held in West Asia (Lebanon and Qatar). In 2013, DTP and MFA, at the initiative of one of DTP’s alumni, developed a new single country focused program in Nepal, which is being replicated in 2014 in Sri Lanka.

3.3 Course description

Each course curriculum has been slightly different, with a different mix of trainers and content to reflect recent international developments and the national context of the particular program. Each
course begins with extensive participant introductions, and establishing a common understanding of the issues of concern that participants are working on and their expectations. This is followed by an introduction to human rights and the most relevant UN/ILO standards and the relevant institutional mechanisms for monitoring and accountability. The course uses a participatory methodology. Practical skills building and networking activities are integrated into these sessions and then become the focus of subsequent sessions as skills in strategic advocacy are built. Most programs will involve a real life practical exercise – such as engaging with local officials, and a field trip.

3.4 Trainers/Facilitators

The course trainers and facilitators are different on each program, although most courses have been jointly facilitated by Patrick Earle (DTP) and William Gois (MFA). DTP seeks leading academic experts and practitioners who have a commitment to the course objectives and participatory teaching methodology. DTP draws on local expertise and seeks to ensure gender balance in facilitators/trainers across each program. Most trainers provide their services pro-bono.

Since the first couple of years most programs include DTP alumni from earlier programs as trainers. More recently DTP/MFA have been seeking to develop a core set of trainers for its programs in the Middle East.

3.5 Program Participants

Participants were sought through an open application process and the program was promoted through DTP’s and MFA’s networks in the region. The selection process was the responsibility of DTP, and MFA were consulted and their recommendations were given particular weight. There was a shared commitment to achieve a gender balance amongst the participants, as well as a regional balance.

Consistent with the purpose of the program, efforts were made to engage NHRIs, TUs and the wider human rights movement. Representatives of these actors were invited as participants and as trainers/facilitators in the programs, and have also been involved as as funders through grants and/or providing fees for participants. These actors have also been included in the curriculum. There was a more formal program partnership with the APF of NHRIs from 2009-2011, which gave APF greater involvement in the selection of participants and development of the program schedule.

Final numbers and composition of participants in each program was affected by the availability and nature of funding for the course each year. Fees were charged in most years until 2012 when the programs became more securely funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). In previous years funds were raised through a variety of sources, sometimes with both MFA and DTP subsidising the costs of the program out of their own funds.

From 2004-2008, participants were drawn from South and South-East Asia. From 2009, DTP also began to accept and include participants from West Asia/Middle East, bringing together advocates from these countries of origin and destination for the first time. Since then, all regional programs from 2009-2014 have included participants from these countries of origin and destination.

“There was an excellent selection of participants, with very few ‘tourists’- participants visibly chosen by their organisation as a reward rather than as staff with real potential for later using the skills acquired at the training.” – A trainer
3.6 Course Follow-Up

The courses are short (5 days) and intense and represent a significant investment in a small number of individuals. DTP and MFA have recognised the need for follow-up with participants. Follow-up thus far has been determined by the level of available resources, changing technology and the commitment of participants.

In each program participants are encouraged to establish an e-group as a way of staying in touch following the program. In recent years Facebook groups have become more popular. Anecdotal evidence and feedback from surveys suggest that participants do stay in touch and the networks they establish have both a personal and professional dimension related to their activities for migrant workers. This has included collaboration on advocacy and cases.

MFA has also created a list of alumni from DTP courses and has followed up with participants. MFA has sought to involve some participants in subsequent activities, such as regional and global lobbying activities. In these cases, the training can be seen to have been particularly relevant.

Since 2009, DTP has produced a monthly E-Newsletter that goes out to all of its alumni – including alumni of the Migrant Workers’ program. This features news and updates relevant to migrant workers’ rights advocacy.

DTP and MFA have managed to find program and project funding at different times to enable the courses to be held. However, neither has had funding to support follow-up with participants.

3.7 History of the Program’s Development and Significant Program Revisions

The objectives for the regional training programs have remained largely the same since the first program in 2004. The content of each regional program has been slightly different, with some variations in the sessions and in the resource people/trainers - and sometimes with more locally oriented objectives.

The location of each program has been based on strategic advice from MFA – relating to migrant workers’ rights advocacy in that country and the potential of hosting the program to boost the capacity (and profile) of the host organisation, the profile of its membership and engagement with the MFA network. Most programs since 2004 have been hosted by the organisations of DTP alumni from earlier programs.

Consistent with the program objectives, the program content has always included sessions on the role and functions of NHRIs and on the ILO standards. These sessions have been developed and delivered by staff from NHRIs (and/or APF staff) and staff from the ILO respectively. This has served the purpose of also helping to build the links and networks of participants with NHRIs and the ILO.

The more formal partnership with the APF (2009-2011) saw a greater program focus on the role and functions of NHRIs than in preceding or subsequent programs. Working with DTP, APF developed a training manual for NHRIs on migrant worker rights. Since then, the APF has piloted a regional blended-learning course on migrant worker rights for staff of NHRIs.

DTP/MFA have partnered with the ILO, which has been involved as a provider of resource people for the training programs. There has been a greater focus on the ILO and ILO standards in the programs in the Middle East.
The 2011 regional program in Bangkok had a particular focus on trialling new draft OHCHR training modules and introduced some new issues (detention and xenophobia). The programs in 2011, 2012, 2013 all included a focus on the Kafala system.

Following the initiative of a DTP alumnus (Mahendra Pandey, Founding Chair of PNCC, Nepal), DTP was selected by SDC to organise and facilitate a country level capacity building program in 2013 in Nepal. This was a significant change of approach, content and methodology for DTP – and involved organising and facilitating five four-day training modules. The program concluded in early 2014 and has yet to be evaluated, but early indications have been very positive. This approach is being applied again and adapted to circumstances in Sri Lanka.

There has been consistent informal discussion between DTP and MFA about developing more specialised programs. This includes engagement with the UN system, GFMD and other processes and higher level skills in lobbying and advocacy, and media engagement. Another need that has emerged in recent years has been training on the role and responsibilities of the private sector in relation to the rights of migrant workers.

### List of Migrant Worker Rights Training Programs and Locations 2004 - 2014

- **2004**, Training Program on Migrant Workers Rights and the Migrant Workers Convention, Jakarta, Indonesia
- **2005**, Migrant Workers Training Program, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- **2006**, Capacity Building in Human Rights and Migrant Workers in the Asia-Pacific Region, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
- **2007**, Capacity Building on Human Rights and Migrant Workers in the Asia-Pacific Region, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- **2008**, Migrant Workers, Human Rights and Advocacy in the Asia-Pacific Region: A Follow-up Training Program for DTP Alumni, Manila, Philippines
- **2009**, Capacity Building on Human Rights and Migrant Workers in the Asia-Pacific Region, Dili, Timor Leste
- **2010**, Capacity Building on Human Rights and Migrant Workers in the Asia-Pacific Region, Lombok, Indonesia
- **2011**, Capacity Building Program on Human Rights Advocacy and Migrant Workers in the Asia-Pacific Region, Bangkok, Thailand
- **2012**, Capacity Building Program for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Migrant Workers in the Middle-East and Asia, Beirut, Lebanon
- **2012**, Capacity Building Program on Human Rights Advocacy and Migrant Workers in the Middle-East, Doha, Qatar
- **2013**, Capacity Building Program on Human Rights Advocacy and Migrant Workers in the Middle East, Doha, Qatar
- **2013**, Nepal Capacity Building Program on Human Rights Advocacy for Migrant Workers, Country Program, Kathmandu, Nepal
- **2014**, Ethical Business and Recruitment Practices in Labour Migration: A Training Program for Practitioners, Dubai, UAE
4. Reflections of Alumni and Stakeholders on Course Content, Methodology and Materials

4.1 Course Curriculum Content

DTP’s courses seek to balance and integrate balance of skills, and knowledge with the development of networks. Alumni across the years felt the course they had participated in had well defined objectives and that significant effort was put into curriculum content and teaching to achieve these objectives.

The courses provided participants with a general understanding of the rights of migrant workers in international law and a better understanding of the issues migrant workers face regionally – including push/pull factors and the complexities of aligning sending and receiving countries political, economic social and cultural practices and agendas. The courses also provided participants with a foundation in the general human rights framework and the national laws of sending and receiving countries.

Participants valued this global perspective of the problems faced by migrant workers, and issues of human rights, poverty and globalization, and could relate it to the issues they work on local and national level.

Specifically, alumni valued learning about UN and ILO conventions relevant to migrant worker’s rights on labour migration and the difference between the ILO and UN mechanisms such as the UN’s human rights Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, the Universal Periodic Review and how to engage with certain UN/ILO procedures, and understanding the role civil society and the UN system. They reported being able to use the knowledge they gained.

Learning tools used for the sessions on advocacy, lobbying and campaigning for policy change were valued. These included practical sessions on strategic advocacy, developing SMART objectives, collecting information and developing a template for standardised case documentation; and how to draft standard contracts for migrant workers.

Alumni also felt that the courses provided good opportunities to learn from each other and they gained knowledge by exchanging views, ideas and experiences with other participants and resource people from various countries. As an example of the value of this, one alumnus highlighted the usefulness of gaining knowledge of the problems and issues in other countries concerning domestic workers rights, to then make comparisons and adopt their different tactics to reach out to protect domestic workers from exploitation in their own context.

“Now, I have good knowledge and understanding of labour migration at local, national and international level. The international instruments for migrant workers’ rights and the international complaint mechanisms were new concepts for me. The beauty of the training was to give me a critical understanding of the major issues and challenges for migrant workers and the use of tools and techniques to meet these challenges such as SMART objectives, campaigning, documentation, lobbying and advocacy.” An alumnus (35)

4.2 Ideas to Update and Improve Curriculum Content

There was some feedback that now is the time to take stock of how advocates are conceptualising “the migrant” and to take into account the wide range of experiences migrants face – and changing patterns of migration and profiles of migrants. There can be overlapping factors such as the fear of
persecution as well as economic factors that push people to move. OHCHR has a focus on migrants – rather than just on migrant workers.

Within the Middle East, there are very diverse groups of migrants. There are many unaccompanied children that migrate, while men are more likely to migrate for work, and women can often migrate to be spouses or brides, and as such have very particular vulnerabilities.

Some felt that the older models of organised recruitment channels and circular labour migration are becoming less relevant. Traditionally unscrupulous recruitment agencies have been seen to play a major role in exploitative migration. In reality, however, not all migrant workers have contact with brokers and much recruitment is informal through family and social networks. Although much formalised labour migration occurs in the Asia Pacific region, through recruitment agencies, it is important for advocates to keep in mind that there is increasing irregular migration around the world.

There was also feedback about the value of promoting migrant workers’ rights in the context of broader human rights issues – and the broader human rights framework – which the DTP courses do. Migrant workers’ rights are more than simply labour rights and migrant workers are increasingly affected by issues of xenophobia and racism, as well as changing detention practices. A key challenge for capacity building for migrant worker advocates is addressing the need for a greater diversity of views to be achieved towards migrants in public discourse.

A key challenge for advocates is to be able to effectively promote basic principles of equality that need to be applied to migrants and their children, for example, in their access to schools and education. The equality principle would inform a more intelligent debate, where the State must justify exclusion. There are excellent examples of good practice from the US, Canada and Portugal that could be shared in programs and highlighted in program materials.²

There was also said to be a need to factor into future training programs the barriers to movement put up by governments, as well as issues of smuggling, trafficking, and abuse by border guards.

Another challenge for advocates is breaking down the isolation of some sectors of migrant workers in particular – undocumented or irregular migrants and domestic workers. Domestic workers, who live on-site and have very individual relationships with employers, are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

The political isolation of migrant workers (and migrants) as non-citizens diminishes their voice and political influence in a range of ways. Migrant workers are unlikely to know how the political and social system in destination countries functions, and they are likely to feel both excluded and vulnerable. These feelings are based on the precarious situations that many migrant workers live in – dependent as they are on the employer and sponsor, lack of familiarity with language, customs and cultures. They lack a vote in most countries and lack the political influence that comes with having a vote. As minorities and non-citizens they can be vulnerable to populist and nationalistic political appeals. Migrants have little say themselves in the laws, policies and practices affecting

² USA: Unions have been allowed to unionize irregular migrants. In some States, Police Commissioners have requested that local police be forbidden to check immigration papers, as police could not uphold their mandate of law and order because of the lack of trust in migrant communities, even regular migrants, whom are too afraid of police to report crimes. Some states now issue drivers licences to people regardless of their migration status. This is a valuable form of identification, and allows migrants to access essential services. Canada: Toronto has forbidden schools to ask for immigration papers so all children can enrol regardless of their migration status. Portugal: There is a database in the Ministry of Social Affairs where all children of irregular migrants are registered so that they can access schools and hospitals. The database is inaccessible to migration and other authorities.
Effective action depends on connecting with and mobilizing host populations (citizens). This heightens the significance of including course content on outreach and alliance building.

The constituency of actors working on migrant worker rights has expanded greatly in recent years. Within this group, MFA seeks to develop and build capacities of actors, to become part of MFA’s strategy of movement building. MFA is generally skeptical of stand-alone trainings that are not part of wider movement building strategies and is supportive of developing thematic, specialist and more in-depth training programs as an essential follow up.

Other stakeholders echoed this desire, hoping that DTP will continue the annual training but also go beyond it in future. The different model of training that took place in Nepal was seen to be a good example of the kind of approach required as DTP/MFA move forward. This training was more in-depth with a smaller cohort that would meet repeatedly through the year.

It was expressed by some that migrant workers advocacy had reached a level where advocates needed to be more sophisticated in their discourse. Advocacy has won civil society a seat at the negotiating table in international forums. Advocates have been lobbying governments; however when governments respond with requests for advice and input from civil society, advocates are not always equipped to respond in a professional way.

It was suggested that more specific training programs could be developed for targeted audiences, involving technical experts and institutions that can bring people together to discuss a pertinent topic – perhaps on an annual basis. Others believed that such specialised courses could potentially lead to joint advocacy and joint research on the migration corridor between participants of countries of origin and countries of destination, as well as leading to advocacy conducted on a national and regional basis.

Stakeholders recommended that the most engaged and committed participants be selected to develop UPR shadow reports, participate in global debates such as GFMD, and that MFA should get involved and send representatives. This was echoed in alumni responses that suggested holding specific sessions or an advanced program on how to use international mechanisms, monitoring and writing shadow and alternative reports.

Greater specialisation was also preferred by some alumni for future courses, for example to focus on a single area. For example, programs could be held according to context, i.e. training on migrant work by sector (factory, plantation, domestic work) or by country. Such specialisation was seen to help deepen the learning experience and refresh skills of Alumni having already undertaken a general training. Some alumni would have preferred to learn about more specific good and bad practices when using international instruments, with more specific lobbying guidelines. This could include: examples of good and bad submissions, examples of good and bad policy dialogues, examples of good and bad media campaigns and explains the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. A particular regional focus would have also been beneficial, for example, how to collaborate with other organisations to avoid persecution for lobbying against particular government policies whilst operating from within them.

In future, training content could teach participants how to engage with the UPR, the GFMD and accessing the Special Rapporteur. Stakeholders highlighted now that two cycles of the UPR have passed, it can be observed how the issue of migrant workers has been tackled. The UPR provides a venue to raise issues on migrant workers and can give particular focus to receiving countries; however the top recommendation for receiving countries is always to ratify the convention. It would be more helpful for advocates to learn how to raise specific human rights issues in their particular country.
Thematic sessions for future training programs that were suggested include:

- Immigration detention (information gathering and detention monitoring)
- Unaccompanied minors
- Problems encountered by older migrants
- Xenophobia in Asia and the Middle East
- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (such as the right to social security in country and also for returnees, service provision, and health provision provided in a rights based way)
- Migration related to environmental changes, particularly in view of global warming
- Business and human rights (including improving recruitment practices and developing fair recruitment benchmarks)
- Introductions to international meetings like GFMD, ADD and WSFM
- Combating human trafficking and human smuggling
- Labour migration governance (regulation of migration, national laws, ethical recruitment process, standard labour contracts)
- Human rights of migrant workers
- Economic models of migration
- Support for migrant worker victims and their family members
- Protection and rescue mechanisms (strengthening the capacity and resources of concerned authorities and CBOs)

Some stakeholders felt that the training should introduce participants to conducting legal reviews of national legislation, and utilising international conventions as indicators for compliance or non-compliance. Participants could then conduct such a legal review of their country’s national legislation.

Alumni thought that there was much benefit for destination and sending countries to know each other’s best practices. Similarly, another alumnus thought it would be helpful to spend more time getting to know issues facing migrant workers from the different parts of the world.

Media engagement was another important topic that some trainers felt needed to be further developed in future trainings. More media sessions could focus on how to be more professional and improve reporting on migrant worker rights. This would be particularly important in the Gulf, where governments are very concerned about their international reputation.

NHRI stakeholders said they were interested in learning about engaging with the ILO and being able to participate in ILO processes. Some stakeholders thought that many participants were unable to engage in actions for migrants due to a lack of funds. As such, DTP / MFA could include a session on possible funding sources and on how to connect with donors.

It is clear from the above that there is a great demand for training, and for increased knowledge in a range of areas. It is clearly impossible for DTP/MFA to meet all of these different needs and demands through its programs. Already there is a sense in some feedback that introducing short sessions on some new or technical areas within existing programs does not satisfy demand or meet needs (how to use technology in advocacy, UN Guidelines and Emerging Standards on Corporate Accountability for Human Rights, emerging global codes and the OECD guidelines). The risk in introducing more specialised topics into the general programs is that some aspects of the training were not so useful for the work of some participants. Given the range of specialist subject areas being suggested there is a need for careful prioritisation.

DTP needs to consider:
How to make choices in new program content and thematic/country focus given the range of demand
Offering a range of courses to its alumni and seeing which ones have the necessary interest to proceed.
Exploring how technology and web based platforms could be utilised to develop more specialised content.
Options for scaling up of its programs – including through greater investment in the development of resource people/trainers.

4.3 Feedback on Training Methodology

DTP has always been committed to participatory teaching methodology that respects and values the knowledge, skills and perspectives of participants. Over the years it has developed this methodology so that it is reflected not just in an emphasis on small group work, practical exercises and case studies but in the way participants are involved in management, organisation and facilitation of the programs.

Alumni respondents noted the usefulness of the methodology, and considered it a main strength of the program. Alumni appreciated the way that the programme design and methodology were tailored for the diverse group of international participants. Some alumni appreciated the methodology so much that they adopted it into their own organisation’s training programs.

Stakeholders also noted that the training methodology included great activities. Trainers appreciated the way the content merged the use of international human rights mechanisms and national level advocacy in practical sessions. Stakeholders felt that providing the space for these exercises to apply international human and labour rights standards is one of the best aspects of the training program, allowing participants to see how these standards are relevant to their work.

Alumni felt that participatory exercises and discussions were the best aspect of the training. Issue based group work and practical exercise allowed participants to apply what they learned about treaties and conventions. These practical in-program experiences enhanced their capacity to access and participate in governmental and inter-governmental processes following the program. Participatory exercises also allowed for maximum interaction between participants and facilitators, making the networking with NHRI’s and civil society a success. Role-playing was also helpful for alumni to better understand of the issues. Some trainers felt that the role plays were excellent, while others thought the role play exercises on advocacy and lobbying skills could be improved.

The training program draws participants of various backgrounds and skill sets. Trainers found that interactive exercises, role plays and discussions were great equalisers in the sessions, which brought common ground to the participants of very diverse backgrounds. Simulations of negotiations, where participants pretended they represented the government of each other’s countries was said to be very helpful. These gave participants a glimpse of what takes place, what could happen, what could be traded and what concessions could be made in negotiations. Alumni also valued the fact that activities were interspersed with real life engagement with key international processes affecting migrant workers such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

These methods facilitate the sharing of diverse first-hand experience between participants from different countries that were also seen as highlights of the programs. Stakeholders felt that another one of the best aspects of the program is the flexibility of the sessions and that everyone is given a voice. At the beginning of the programs, trainers noted that participants from countries of origin and participants from countries of destination were divided. However, as the resource people broke down these differences, participants could engage in substantive dialogue and solid relationships were built.
One trainer commented that DTP does a fantastic job at engendering a sense of good will and camaraderie amongst participants and thought that this is the main strength of the DTP’s approach to training. Stakeholders felt that much more could be done to capitalise on these alliances developed in the training, which could involve better use of an alumni training program.

Trainers and alumni thought field trips were valuable and should be kept in future programs. Field visits allowed alumni them to make comparisons with the situation of migrant workers in their own country and gave them new insights into migrant worker problems. For example, participants in the 2012 Qatar program visited labour camps in Doha and gained first-hand accounts of the working condition of Asian migrant workers in the country. Another alumni of the Qatar programs found that one of the best aspects of the program was visiting worker’s housing in the industrial zone as an interesting comparison with their organisation’s own experience with workers’ accommodation in Bahrain. Interaction with local human rights groups and government officials widened their perception about migrant workers problems. It also exposed alumni from sending countries to the realities faced by their missions and labour attaches.

“During the training, I got a chance to visit our mission. I saw a huge crowd of migrant workers not having enough support to them. After I returned to Nepal, I went to labour ministry to share my training experience with the labour secretary, focusing on the conditions for migrant workers in Qatar, as well as the Qatar government perspective. Also I shared about the role of the mission and their progress. We have started to lobby our government to strengthen mission capacity.” An alumnus (33)

DTP has used many different trainers over the years – and they inevitably have a range of training styles and approaches. In interviews and responses some trainers and stakeholders highlighted that the participatory methodology also posed some challenges.

Some are more comfortable than others with participatory teaching methodologies. For some trainers, if they could re-do their session, they would use more interactive, practical and simulation type activities to involve all the participants. They would use power points less, and instead, have more interactive dialogues, adult learning exercises and develop meta-cards to visually document each session. Some stakeholder responses indicated that finding the right balance of trainer input and the participatory approach depended much on the participants while some trainers felt there was a tendency to depend too much on the trainer.

Some trainers suggested more peer training and sharing of past examples of actions. To some extent, this already takes place with the presence of alumni invited to return as trainers, and it was felt that this could be built on.

Stakeholders and alumni suggested the following adaptions to the training methodology:

- Encourage peer learning through involving alumni as facilitators and resource people and including more case studies.
- Include blended learning model methodology, online programmes on new developments after the training, with assignments and guidance.
- Produce information, education & communication (IEC) materials for participants to use in their work.
- Include more interactive dialogues, hands-on workshops, site visits and field trips to local NGO partners and to government departments involved with migrant labour.
- Include more real life outputs, such as engaging with international processes during the training.
- Allow for more time to be spent with the migrant workers in the host country during field visits.

4.4 Training Materials

DTP prepares a core training manual for each course. This includes written chapters on the UN and ILO, key standards and processes. This is supplemented by a range of reference materials, and the presentations of trainers and sometimes additional resources provided by the ILO and the UN and particular NGOs. The materials are intended to be used as teaching aids throughout the program and as reference documents for participants after the training. The PowerPoint presentations of trainers and participants are shared with participants at the end of each program. DTP provides profiles of the participants and the trainers. In more recent programs all participants have been provided with a USB stick with all the materials. At the end of each program, DTP produces and circulates a report drawing from the participant evaluations.

Alumni found that the program training manual, other materials, documents and PowerPoints were useful and could be used in their work after training. Alumni also appreciated handouts such as the booklets, publications, information sheets, briefing papers and materials on international human rights instruments. One alumnus shared that prior to the training they only had national legal knowledge, and the materials helped to enrich their knowledge of international instruments. Some alumni found the participant profiles and the evaluation sheets for the training useful. Particularly, one alumnus found the feedback document through the report of DTP on the Seminar Workshop was very useful in their own institutional post event reports.

The special country focused program in Nepal involved working with participants to develop case documentation templates and the standard contracts document and there was positive feedback about the value of this. Alumni mentioned using the materials after the training program in a range of ways. Some examples include:

- **As reference materials:** Alumni refer back to the materials as a refresher to review policies and conventions; prior to discussions to assist in collaboration with other NGOs and trade unions; while drafting a revision on migrant workers law. Materials have been preserved in some alumni organisation’s libraries for further use.

- **As lobby and advocacy tools:** Alumni use the materials to develop presentations; to engage the media; and to campaign on migrant workers’ rights.

- **To develop new materials and publications:** Alumni used the materials to complete a review on handling cases; translate materials into local languages; develop their own training manual for human rights, migration, and human trafficking; and develop a legal training manual.

- **For information sharing:** Alumni have disseminated copies of the training materials to other colleagues at headquarters and at grassroots level; and referred the documents to researchers in their organisations.

- **For capacity building:** A NHRI alumnus reworked the materials to align directly with their national situation and used these materials in capacity building activities. A civil society alumnus now runs a training session on human rights advocacy, including techniques for campaigning, using the materials.

To improve the use and impact of the materials, trainers suggested that participants’ access reading material in advance of the session, so that they could be better equipped to digest complex material and ask questions on the issues that they would have already reflected on.

Other stakeholders advised providing national situation profiles on foreign migrant worker protection and reviews on domestic laws and legislation. These profiles could be based on responses
by participants to a survey or form, and then included in the set of materials. Stakeholders advised DTP/MFA to partner with others to use pre-existing materials and training modules. This could include the OHCHR modules and the ILO’s program on quality media reporting for migrant worker issues currently being developed.

5. Reflections on Outcomes and Impacts

Measuring outcomes and impacts from training and from human rights education activities poses challenges for methodology and resources. It is difficult, and has been beyond the resources of DTP/MFA, to collect baseline data that would enable the measurement of change. The effectiveness of advocacy, of individuals and organisations is determined by many things beyond the control of either DTP or MFA – or the training.

From MFA’s perspective, one success has been the collaboration between MFA, a practitioners’ organization committed to working with its members to achieve change and DTP which provides practical human rights advocacy training. The result of the collaboration has been training that not only focuses on knowledge building, but the skills to put it into action immediately, with the support of MFA in following up. MFA has been able to use these programs to build the capacity of its members, to develop the skills of key individuals and to network with other key actors. The training program is not just portfolio training, the capacities of individuals are truly raised up. This is particularly the case for those advocates who are new to the issue.

Since partnering with DTP, MFA has since stopped conducting its own major trainings, although it does run workshops and other events. For MFA, a practitioners’ organization, there are specific advantages to partnering with DTP, an NGO that focuses on training. DTP has a long history of providing training, including other types of human rights training in addition to migrant worker rights. Its connection to academia makes it a more objective organization and is therefore less threatening to those sensitive about a focus on rights. For these reasons DTP has been able to advance training in more difficult areas. The framework on human rights is used to make connections, to show that the issue of migrant workers is not one dimensional, but a cross-cutting issue.

The successes of the migrant worker rights program can be seen in the work of its alumni – and in their reflections on the value of the training they received. The following section covers alumni impressions of their changed attitudes, increased confidence, increased knowledge awareness, improved lobbying and advocacy skills and enhanced networks following the training.

5.1 Changed Attitudes and Increased Confidence

Participants in these courses have come from a wide diversity of backgrounds, national and organisational contexts. From the beginning DTP/MFA saw the value in bringing together people from different countries and sectors so that they could learn from each other and build common understanding and links. This has become more significant since the programs started involving participants from countries of origin and destination. The attitudes and confidence of advocates are connected to their motivation and capacity to be effective in working for change following their participation in programs.

One of the significant outcomes of the training program that came out from the survey responses of alumni was their remarked change of attitudes, perceptions and ideas as well as an increase in self-confidence. Alumni noted that they developed a greater tolerance towards culture, gender and religious difference, and a greater sensitivity towards the struggles faced by migrant workers, especially since the programme integrated migrant workers themselves as participants. Some alumni
reflected that the best aspect of the training was the variety of nationalities of participants, which helped them to recognise the problems facing migrant workers in different contexts and develop ideas how to address them. Alumni valued meeting other people committed to the issue of migrant workers, and were inspired by other activists and the way they built solidarity.

Alumni reported developing a broader understanding of both what innovative practices other organisations were employing in both origin and destination countries; and a broader understanding of where other organisations were focusing their work. Participation increased the strength of alumni ideas and awareness of human rights, particularly on migrant rights. It also encouraged alumni to become more proactive about these issues and to take on new initiatives with renewed effort. Not only was this interaction and exchange of views a positive learning experience, but it also boosted the confidence of participants to be able to share their own views, experiences and knowledge.

“The program enabled me to communicate the findings of research among policy makers as well as stakeholders to ensure safe labour migration.” An alumnus (38)

One alumnus expressed that their participation in the program changed their perspective on matters of migrant workers, realising the need for in depth examination of the complex issues facing migrant workers. After the training, this alumnus undertook efforts to learn more about the lives, situations and human rights of migrant workers and consequently, was nominated as a focal point for their organisation to deal with migration and trafficking in persons. An alumni lawyer from Egypt noticed that after the training, his attitude had completely changed, and that he now had a more positive attitude towards the cases of migrant workers. Another reported that they had a new realisation of the importance for law enforcement officials to have knowledge of the human rights based approach and using politically correct terms such as ‘undocumented’ instead of ‘illegal’ migrants, to help them to treat migrant workers as human beings. Alumni attitudes and perceptions about the media, advocacy, and lobbying and campaign strategies also changed as a result of participating in the program.

“My organisation is a member of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT) in Bahrain. The training has given me more confidence to promote the need to comply with international standards at these sessions. We have arranged meetings with the Anti-Trafficking Unit and the Public Prosecutors and again, I have felt more confident to express our views and to advocate for change and improvements. We will be meeting with the Ministry of Social Development to discuss support for victims of trafficking staying in our shelter.” – An alumnus (42)

The self-confidence of alumni was increased because of the knowledge and skills they gained from the program as well as the space given to interact with other migrant advocates. Alumni reported that this building of capacity and confidence has proved useful when speaking with people at national, regional and international forums as well as exchanging views, experiences, knowledge learned.

“The knowledge and skills from DTP build up my capacity and self-confidence. Particularly to speak with many people, both at national forums, regional and international. So far people often underestimate the knowledge of migrant workers particularly migrant domestic worker. I still remember when I participated in one public discussion, one recruitment agency association leader warned me not act as a former migrant worker, he suggested to just simply say I was an activist. He could not believe that former migrant domestic workers have become so familiar with UN mechanisms, UN Convention or any other policies related to migrant workers issues or human right issue in general.” – An alumnus (3)
Perhaps just as significant as other attitudinal change is the feedback that thanks to their participation in the program, alumni realised that the issue of migrant workers cannot be addressed by migrant workers alone, and needs strong cooperation with other parties having common ideology and objectives to struggle for migrant workers’ rights and justice.

5.2 Building Knowledge

The program aims to build knowledge and raise awareness through the presentations of trainers and of participants, as well as through the group work and field trips. Each program is therefore unique in some aspects because of its different participants.

Alumni were asked to provide details of how they or their organisations have been able to use the knowledge built during the program in their work. Alumni report that, the knowledge gained from the training not only was used in their daily work, but also for their organisation’s future plans. Alumni reported that they were able to share the course content and knowledge learned with their co-workers informally as well as through structured training programs, and directly with migrant workers in their countries. The knowledge gained in the training is used often; for example, as alumni research the implementation of the rights of migrant workers and their families or as they take part in advocacy and lobbying.

“There, I have been able to ensure informed choice for safe migration with its alternatives, lobby and advocate for policy changes and to protect the human rights of migrant workers and their families, applying the knowledge and skills gained from the training.” An alumnus (35)

Alumni gained greater knowledge of human rights and thanks to the training now connect the violations of migrant worker rights to the wider human rights issues and violations. One alumnus noted they were selected for further human rights training overseas. Another alumnus designed their own training manual and curriculum for human rights education.

“As a migrant returnee, organizer, migrants’ rights activist, the DTP training was an eye opener for me. I applied in various ways the knowledge from the training, particularly, it has helped me on the advocacy, lobbying and engaging in policy dialogue at the national level.” An alumnus (5)

For alumni with media backgrounds, the training helped them to develop new ideas and helpful contacts. Attending the program also taught them how to perform more professionally while reporting on migrant issues.

“I do stories on migrant related issues. I have filed more than 250 migrant-related stories in Times of Oman. Many of them were mainly on stranded undocumented workers. Some of the stories I filed had impact, and the migrants in distress were able to overcome the tough times.” An alumnus (26)

Alumni highlighted that they are now well informed about the international human rights framework, specific human rights treaties including CMW, ILO Conventions and human rights mechanisms and complaints processes in their work to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers. For some, the training helped specifically to better understand CMW and its importance. Another gained insight into the different ways these international instruments could be utilised for
lobbying and advocacy purposes. Some alumni did not have adequate or accurate prior knowledge about the rights of migrant workers, and after attending the program, their ideas had now changed thanks to the knowledge they gained in the training.

"It was my direct mandate to ensure policy outputs for the Commission through engagement with the international human rights promotion and protection mechanisms. It was how we performed this function that was informed by the DTP program." A NHRI alumnus (7)

The training helped some participants to go beyond their theoretical foundation to a practical level of knowledge. The inputs of participants of the training were a very helpful tool to understand the actual situation on the ground and how this was being addressed. For some, the best aspect of the training was knowledge gained by learning about different approaches to migrant worker rights projects from resource people and other participants, which now meant they could develop new program ideas in their own community. For one alumnus, this change of perspective from the knowledge gained helped to give direction to their work for the cause of migrant labour in the UAE. For an alumnus from Nepal working on issues of migrant workers in Qatar, field visits exposed them to the very bad living conditions of migrant workers, and made them realise the limit of government awareness of migrant worker’s realities.

Alumni appreciated hearing the views of the Qatari government as well as the NHRC representatives from Qatar. Feedback from the same program however, suggests that the presence of government officials inhibited the sharing of knowledge.

Participants found it useful to hear about MFA’s mission dialogue activities – its engagement with the diplomatic missions and labour attaches of countries of origin. It made them realise that it is very important to have a dialogue among the sending countries to strengthen their network for the right of every migrant worker, not only those from their country.

"The knowledge gained from DTP really helped us to network with key stakeholders, in advocacy to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers, and also helped us to engage with government and UN bodies, the EU and ASEAN to advocate for the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers as well as to sensitize the media.” An alumnus (13)

5.3 Improved Practical Skills in Lobbying and Advocacy

Building strategic advocacy skills was an explicit objective of all of the programs and this is reflected in the time given to this in the curriculum and in the practical teaching methodology. Participants responding to the survey reported that their participation in the program led to the improvement of their practical skills in lobbying and advocacy.

Examples of Alumni Involvement in National Campaigns, Advocacy and Lobbying

- NGO policy dialogues with Philippine government (amendment of Philippine magna carta on migrant workers, domestic workers policy reform, human smuggling protocol, ILO Convention 189 and local equivalent national law) and other lobby activities with both executive and legislative agencies of the government.
- Dialogue with the Israeli embassy/Ministry of Labour on human trafficking of caregivers from the Philippines to Israel.
- NGO direct involvement in the process of the Bangladesh Government enacting the Overseas Employment and Migration Act 2013.
- Advocating in Bangladesh for the ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers.
- Visiting the Kuwaiti Minister of Labour regarding changing the kafala sponsorship system.
- Planning a workshop on ILO Convention 189 on domestic workers in Kuwait.
Alumni used the skills they learned to develop strategic advocacy techniques in lobbying and in media sensitization to the issue of migrant worker rights and to strengthen lobbying and advocacy at national and international levels using international instruments. Alumni appreciated being exposed to strategies of engaging with various mechanisms, including the GFMD, the UN Committee on Migrant Workers and the UPR. Facilitation and diplomatic skills training in negotiations with various stakeholders were also valued, as participants developed an understanding how to deal with different authorities with confidence. Some alumni noted they were able to use these skills to negotiate with their governments and have been engaged in policy dialogue, with government and any other stakeholders to revise laws revision and for convention ratification. Following the training, one alumnus was able to succinctly address the issue of exorbitant recruitment fees for Qatar with government officials.

“Working in an international organization, I have dealt and engaged a lot with the government, media and NGOs to advocate for the rights of migrants in which “diplomacy” is very interesting part to be practically implemented in my day to day work.” An alumnus (4)

Alumni appreciated training in media skills and engaging the media in advocacy, and reported that these skills were often put into practice. Media skills training helped alumni to be more effective in highlighting the issues faced by migrant workers. Sessions on using video to transform issues into pictures and film were also said to be helpful. For some alumni who had little previous exposure to media advocacy, this introduction was said to be the best aspect of the training.

“As a result of the training, I was able to engage the government in a series of meetings and a policy dialogue calling for decent work for domestic workers. We also submitted a memorandum on policy matters concerning domestic workers. Media was used for our advocacy and to a great extent this brought about public awareness. We used media advocacy, petitions, postcard campaigns, memorandums, and distribution of pamphlets – this campaign called the government to accord decent work for domestic workers and to recognise domestic work as work.”- An alumnus (8)

For this alumnus, who had previously not had results engaging with media, using the training program’s approach brought about much public awareness on the issues of domestic workers rights. Another alumnus helped to save the life of a migrant worker who was sentenced to death for murder in Qatar by campaigning to secure “blood money” to save the life of worker.

“We always publicise the reporting regarding the migrants’ situation in Thailand. For example, some provinces used martial laws on Burmese migrants, we denounced this and lobbied to the ILO, related UN’s agencies, international governments as well as the Thailand government. We very often make press releases and conferences in order to pressure the government. The issue of boat people is one of the big issues in Thailand, and we are working together with international media like Aljazeera, CNN and some national media.” An alumnus (40)

Alumni appreciated the skills they gained in leadership, training and strategic thinking. The training also helped alumni to develop other relevant skills such as developing SMART objectives, case documentation, designing concepts, organising and coordinating meetings and developing proposals. One alumnus attributed these improved practical skills, developed on the program to being able to subsequently organise a domestic workers association in their country.
Alumni and their organisations have also been publicly recognised for their work to support migrant worker rights following the training. An alumnus of the 2004 program was recognized as Ashoka Fellow in 2008 and their organisation, the Foundation for Education and Development, has grown to be the biggest Burmese NGO which works for the promotion and protection of migrants workers’ rights in Thailand, winning the human rights mention awarded by the French government in 2010.

Another alumnus from Sri Lanka was also recognised for their aptitude following their participation in the program, and was appointed to manage a labour migration project under a separate unit, with additional staff. This recognition went beyond their organisation, to civil society at national and international levels, which led them to be part of national and international consultations and advocacy, and to get involved with existing networks working on the rights of migrant workers. Moreover, this recognition also resulted in the government approaching their organisation to collaborate on various initiatives.

5.4 Alumni Challenges to Application of Knowledge and Skills

Some alumni faced various difficulties and challenges to implement the knowledge and skills that they had learned in the program.

For one alumnus whose organisation developed an outreach program for the prevention of unsafe migration and human trafficking, and to promote accessing legal labour migration agencies by using volunteers, found that because illegal migration agencies use sophisticated marketing techniques, potential migrants in the local community believed them more than their project volunteers. This same alumnus felt that they needed more training in advocacy and the migration convention to be able to apply the knowledge learned during the training. Alumni felt that the training on making a video/film for media advocacy, although very good, was difficult to put into practice after only a few hours training. Although another alumnus felt they had done their best to use the knowledge gained in the program to benefit migrant workers and their families, such as developing a campaign to save a Nepali migrant worker in Dubai from the death sentence, they felt that they needed more practical knowledge and exercises to apply knowledge learned in the real world and bring about real change.

It was found that the information gap in destination countries is another impediment to devise strategies for the protection of migrant workers. Some alumni found that putting the content into local perspective and prioritising advocacy on case by case required a lot of energy and resources. For others, promoting human rights remained challenging due to the difficulty of getting the

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**Examples of Alumni Involvement in National Awareness Raising Activities**

DTP/MFA Alumni have:

- Organised a Human Rights Film Festival and screened a short film on migration issues, in conjunction with the ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML).
- Conducted trainings on migrant workers’ rights in India, with a focus on organising internal migrant workers in different cities and rural areas in India.
- Raised awareness of human rights amongst potential migrants and migrants’ families in the Philippines, including radio programs and distribution of reading materials.
- Organised a conference on “Sensitizing the Constitutional Assembly Members on Issues of Migration” on 21st February, 2014 in Kathmandu.
- Hosted a national conference on reform and alternatives to the kafala system in Lebanon.
- Undertaken several research projects for lobbying purposes in Lebanon.
- Held conferences on migrants’ rights in Kuwait.
authorities involved, as they remained indifferent. Government policy also has made the daily work of some alumni difficult. CSOs in Malaysia paid visits to embassies and the Ministry of Labour, as well as in Geneva, to lobby and protest certain issues, but felt that it was not of any use.

Although some migrant workers are active and cooperate with NGOs, the most difficult aspect of their work is organising the migrant workers in their country, as many are living under pressure and are afraid of getting involved. An alumnus in the Gulf felt disappointed by the lack of migrant workers willing to volunteer. They felt that the migrant workers in their country did not want to get involved, preferring that others work to pursue their rights for them.

One alumnus from a NHRI felt that their organization does not give them a direct opportunity to apply the knowledge they learned for the betterment of the entire staff. Another alumnus from civil society shared that after the training, their new regional knowledge on migrant worker rights was used only for research and policy recommendations, rather than actual participation in human rights processes.

5.5 Building Networks

Building the networks of participants is another explicit goal of the program – informing the selection of individuals from a range or countries and organisations, and the program methodology which makes space for individuals to build these links. The alumni survey suggests the programs have been very successful in enabling participants to build their networks, and that these links have had a range of lasting benefits for individuals, their organisations and advocacy on the issues.

Stakeholders appreciated the mix of participants that were brought together: a good cross section of civil society, NHRIs, sending and receiving countries, as well as gathering participants along regional and sub-regional lines.

In the Middle East, the DTP/MFA program was seen to be a very innovative program, and a new development for the region. Stakeholders also appreciated the approach taken in the 2012 Beirut training where civil society and trade unions were brought together. Stakeholders felt it was important to get more trade unions to cooperate with civil society on issues of migrant worker rights in future. The Beirut training brought together participants from different countries in the region and in addition, groups from Asia. This was a good development as often actors in the Middle East do not know their peers in countries of origin. It was also said to be very beneficial to bring civil society in the Middle East together to meet in person.

The vast majority of alumni respondents found the program helpful in building participants personal networks and collaboration with others on migrant workers’ rights. Some participants found that networking with other participants, key stakeholders, and the sharing of experiences, tools and best practices as well as building alliances were the best aspects of the training. The network and rapport built between participants of sending and receiving countries was reported to be one of the most useful aspects of the training, which also gave them insights into their perceptions of each other’s countries. It also has a very practical dimension for case work and advocacy.

Alumni valued improving their networking skills and learning how to build alliances to strengthen the movement for migrant workers. The networking and solidarity between participants was useful to bolster long term friendships and working relationships, to empower participants thanks to the knowledge shared from partners, to find support for their work as well as establishing partnership with their organisation.

Importantly, the evidence suggests that the networking that begins during the DTP courses continues following the program and has lasting impacts. The Beirut training was also the first time
for Lebanese civil society to meet with non-Lebanese and non-Arab organisations. In the last few years, there has been greater cooperation between Arabic countries as well as between origin and destination countries.

Stakeholders believed that one of the greatest successes for migrant worker advocacy in the Middle East was the emergence of a regional pan-Arab civil society network, the Arab Network for Migration Rights, which is currently growing rapidly. Many of the network’s core members, including its leadership went through the DTP/MFA training program. The training allowed them to build relationships and an understanding of the work being undertaken throughout the regions. These relationships helped to facilitate and support the development of the Arab Network.

The DTP/MFA trainings allowed the space for ideas on regional networks to be developed, and led to common research agendas and other cooperation. For example, the Insan Association in Lebanon now has a close relationship with Tamkeen in Jordan, originally fostered at the training. The Insan Association are now in the process of setting up a sister organisation in Jordan. The engagement and relationships between the Caritas, local host of the program in Lebanon, and other NGOs were also significant.

Qatar’s National Human Rights Committee has hosted two programs. Feedback suggests that their work on migrant workers’ rights has increased in volume and visibility. Their links with migrant communities established through the programs have opened up new channels of communication and access to some redress for some migrant workers.

Civil society actors were also able to develop links between countries of origin and destination, for example KAFA in Lebanon have been in touch with civil society organisations in Nepal, concerning victims’ assistance and have provided valuable contacts for specific cases.

Some networking occurs during the training with immediate results. For example, a Nepal based migrant’s organisation was able to meet a trade union representative from Bahrain, dealing with the issue of migrant workers at the training. They then informed their network and individual migrant workers in Bahrain to get support from this trade union.

Following the training, civil society organisations have been able to work with trade unions on migrant worker advocacy and protection.

“*We worked together with a Thai trade union to get equal rights for migrant workers in Thailand, such as social security fund and health care. We advocate to the Thai and Myanmar governments to protect migrant workers, to issue a 4 year visa extension and to cancel the departure fund from the Thai government. For our activities, we always use local and international media for advocacy amongst international organizations and foreign consumers.*”
– An Alumnus from Civil Society (14)

Alumni reported that following the training they were able to:

- Contact fellow participants to get their views when they needed an international perspective.
- Expand their relationships with existing networks to carry out their work.
- Develop new networks, allowing them to collaborate with NHRIs, Bar Associations and lawyers.
- Engage with community organisations to build their capacity and work with government officials at the national level.
Exchange information and cooperate on handling individual complaints and case referrals between origin and destination countries.

Help appeal cases to various national human rights commissions in Asia and the Middle East.

Share case studies with MFA for the UPR.

Continue dialogue that began in their program through the MFA Online platforms/groups.

Develop good relationships with labour attachés and were able to contact them directly to deal the issue of their national migrant workers in distress.

Form a national coalition for migrant workers.

Alumni from the Qatar program have developed a Facebook group called Diplomacy Training Program, Doha, Qatar, 2012 and have regular communication with each other.

The Centre for Migrant Advocacy (CMA) in the Philippines has sent several participants from their organization to the training. Networks build through the program and knowledge gained assisted and provided valuable support for their staff’s involvement at various levels and forums in national, regional advocacy and international advocacy; for submissions of position papers in congressional hearings; in education and training work.

Networks developed in the training program have helped alumni verify information for migrant workers in need in other countries. For example, one alumnus in the Philippines had two cases of migrant workers in Lebanon who had been working undocumented for years and now wanted to go home. They wanted assistance from an NGO, but were asked to pay an exorbitant amount. The alumnus called a contact in the NGO they had met during the program to verify, and was told their services were free of charge. The alumnus immediately informed the two migrant workers.

Another alumnus who found the program helpful in building their personal network and collaboration with others on migrant workers’ rights is now working closely with migrant workers and their families in remote areas. The alumnus has been involved in developing four networks with the help of other local NGOs, journalists and other stakeholders to inform people about safe migration procedures and related issues to ensure safe migration. Following the training, a Lawyer alumnus is now in communication with the Swiss embassy in Egypt and Jordan to try work together on a project on migrant workers.

Some alumni stayed in touch with trainers they met during the program. For example, an alumni organisation, MWPS in Bahrain, invited DTP resource people to give a presentation on identifying victims of trafficking and took them to visit their shelter. Two alumni contacted a journalist trainer from the program, regarding the abuse and exploitation of taxi drivers in Qatar, which lead to the trainer publishing an article exposing the contract violations experienced by drivers in Doha.

For a journalist from the Gulf, contacts with alumni from destination countries such as Bangladesh, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Lebanon helped to get details, comments, facts and data for stories on their nationals’ expatriate experience. This alumnus believes that they were only able to widen their network after the training in Qatar, and after associating with MFA, is now able to focus more on migrant issues at a macro level.

**Strengthening the MFA Network**

Prior to the partnership between DTP and MFA, there was the question of how to build a constituency after the convention on migrant workers came into force in 2003. One objective of this program of capacity building was to engage a wider range of actors in advocacy on behalf of migrant workers’ rights, in particular trade unions (TUs), national human rights institutions (NHRIIs) and the women’s movement. Partnering with DTP allowed MFA to develop a wider regional constituency, and target other advocates such as trade unions and NHRI staff. There are a lot more organizations
working on the issue of migrant worker rights now than in the past, and many referrals of cases. There are a lot more organizations’ looking at the issue of migrant worker rights, as such MFA has also shifted its focus from one particular sub-region.

Some of the organizations attending the training programs have asked to become members of MFA. However, other organizations that have not been involved in the training program have also joined the MFA network over time. Helpful organizational contacts were developed during the training were said to result in participant organisations obtaining membership status of Migrant Forum Asia. The involvement in the training program helped one alumnus to then partner with MFA to conduct regional trainings in Kathmandu and Chennai.

Examples of Alumni Organisation Involvement in Committees, Alliances and Networks

**National**
- Advocacy Network for the Revision of the Law on the Placement and Protection of Overseas Migrant Workers (JARI-PPTKLN)
- Domestic Workers Advocacy Network (Jala-PRT)
- Alliance to Ratify the Migrant Workers Convention of 1990 (ARRAK 90)
- Cambodia Working Group on ASEAN Migrant Workers
- Cambodia Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC)
- Migrant Forum Lanka (MFL)
- Bahrain National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCHT)

**Regional**
- Arab Network for Migrants’ Rights
- Asia Pacific Forum (APF)
- Asian NGO Networks on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)
- Asian Migrant Domestic Workers’ Alliance (ADWA)
- Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM-Asia)
- Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)
- Mekong Migration Network
- People’s SAARC
- Task Force on ASEAN Migrant Workers

**International**
- Migrant Rights International (MRI)
- International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN)
- Building and Wood Workers’ International (BWI)

5.6 Engaging Actors in Advocacy and Developing Links to the wider Human Rights Movement

When the DTP/MFA program began in 2004, migrant worker rights were still seen as a relatively new concept. It was worked on by some specialist NGOs and migrant’s organizations, and was not a mainstream human rights issue. MFA also had experience of the issue being seen as a soft issue in the human rights discourse. This is because unlike some work on civil and political rights, it did not directly challenge the power of the state.

At that time opportunities in training for human rights advocacy did not exist for migrant worker advocates; rather people became advocates by doing - practically getting involved in human rights advocacy for migrants. Nowadays, human rights knowledge comes by way of academia, with a focus
on theoretical and technical knowledge. MFA sees that the DTP/MFA training program stands out as an alternative model of training for those working on these issues.

The partnership and the trainings helped to show the connection of migrant rights and human rights, and helped to make alliances between organizations. Now there is visibility of migrant rights in the human rights community, for example, in the framework of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

One of the explicit objectives of the collaboration from the beginning was to engage a wider range of actors in advocacy on behalf of migrant workers’ rights, and to use the training programs to connect migrant worker advocates with the broader human rights movement – and the trade union movement – and in doing so to put the rights of migrant workers on the agenda of human rights organisations and trade unions.

Engaging NHRIs and Building NHRI-Civil Society Collaboration

An explicit objective of the programs has been to build collaboration between NGOs and NHRIs on the rights of migrant workers, which was seen as generally absent, and to get NHRIs more active and engaged in promoting and protecting the rights of migrant workers. It is difficult to assess to what extent the programs have been successful in meeting these objectives, but the following section provides some feedback from alumni and stakeholders.

Since 2004 there has been program content on the role and functions of NHRIs, and participants from NHRIs have been present on most if not all trainings since 2004. A number of the responses to the alumni survey came from NHRI staff.

Efforts were made to engage NHRIs more systematically through the APF. The APF became an important source of funding for the programs in later years – and a formal partner between 2009 and 2011. This reflected the prioritisation given to migrant workers within the APF secretariat, and increasingly by NHRIs in the region. The programs in Qatar in 2012 and 2013 were hosted by the Qatar National Human Rights Commission.

However, there are real challenges to developing a greater focus on migrant workers within NHRIs and to building collaboration between NHRIs and civil society, which participation in training programs may not be able to overcome in isolation from the commitment of individual NHRI leadership.

Many NHRIs in the Asia region have scarce resources (both human and financial) and therefore have to balance their priorities carefully. Migrant worker rights are an important issue, but they are only one of the many human rights challenges from each NHRI in this region. Other “competing” priorities include rights of refugees and asylum seekers, torture, death penalty and corporal punishment, women’s rights, freedom of religion, Indigenous people’s rights, detention without trial, racism and other discrimination, sexual orientation and gender identity, lack of fair trials and wrongful convictions.

Another factor is that NHRI staff who participate in DTP trainings do not necessarily have decision-making powers, and are not necessarily selected by the NHRI for the training based on the relevance of migrant workers to their work functions. They may return from the DTP training inspired and motivated to work on migrant worker rights, but if the institutional decision makers, such as Commissioners, prefer to devote the NHRI’s resources elsewhere, the staff are not be able to implement their plans to protect and promote migrant worker rights. This challenge was not unique to DTP trainings. It suggests that if including NHRI participants is to continue to be seen as a way of building collaboration, then more consideration needs to be given to who is selected from NHRIs to participate in the trainings. It was suggested that there may be more visible signs of collaboration if
NHRI decision-makers such as Commissioners were involved in these activities, although it was noted that Commissioners do not usually participate in trainings.

One of those interviewed noted that while there was a theoretical value for bringing NHRI s and NGOs together in such training contexts, they were not personally aware of many examples of resulting concrete collaboration. However a number of the NHRI alumni did respond that such collaboration had taken place.

“A challenge in bringing together NHRI s and NGOs in the same programme is to maintain the relevance of the content for all participants. It was said to be difficult to develop contextualised programmes that address the mandates, interests and realities of these two different groups of participants. Sessions that were contextualised to the reality of NHRI s work and mandates (a lot of program content on NHRI role and functions) were said to be more useful and relevant to the NHRI participants than to NGO participants. The APF later piloted a migrant worker rights course specifically for NHRI staff for these reasons.

NHRI s face challenges in developing and maintaining partnerships with civil society. There is a perception that an NHRI’s independence may be affected if there is seen to be strong collaboration with civil society. An NHRI respondent from the Philippines reported that these concerns could be overcome, and highlighted an example of their experience of good collaboration with civil society on UN human rights treaty body reporting. Although some NHRI engagement with civil society can be strong, such as in the case of the Philippines, in other countries it is less so.

Some NHRI alumni staff felt the best aspect of the training was the networking, sharing of experiences and best practice. Alumni noted that they gained skills in using networks to advance issues which may not fit in their particular institutions mandate for whatever reason, and where able to use networks to create solidarity around particular issues. Following the training, respondents said that their NHRI s have been able to work with local and overseas civil society organisations.

“I was able to build networks with both regional NHRI s and NGOs. I have continued to build and develop these relationships which have been invaluable in my work in this area.” - NHRI Alumnus (41)

Case Study of NHRI-Civil Society Collaboration

The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) of the Philippines and a civil society organisation developed a joint advocacy campaign with the assistance of another civil society group in Nigeria to address the Philippine government deployment ban on Nigeria. Kidnappings of foreigners had been taking place at sea, and the Convention does not cover seafarers. However, this total deployment ban covered land based workers as well. This ban deprived workers and meant that land based migrants became the targets of corrupt officials as they attempted to leave the country. They jointly went to the government, and sought an oversight investigation into the ban. They sought to understand the formula used to develop this employment ban and negotiated at a bilateral level.
DTP/MFA trainings were said to provide an opportunity for NHRI staff to network and link with other NHRI staff as well as to exchange views on their respective performance with the Paris Principles.

Following the training, NHRI alumni have contacted other NHRI staff for information and concerning specific cases. For example, the Philippine government has written to the contacts in Saudi Arabia about its nationals in distress and concerning a death penalty case. There is also greater collaboration between the Philippines and Malaysia, particularly concerning Filipino workers in Sabah and North Borneo. Various NHRI staff now consult each other on migrant worker issues.

“My Commission has tried to contact other commissions for the promotion and protection migrant workers’ rights. We have a plan to begin advocacy with the government for the promotion and protection of migrant workers’ rights.” A NHRI Alumnus from Bangladesh (20)

Thanks to the training program, NHRI alumni gained a better understanding of the application of rights to different groups of people/populations and different countries, gaining a particular appreciation of regional and sub-regional challenges. There is also now a greater international collaboration between national human rights institutions, which now consult each other, as well as their cooperation with civil society and with governments. According to NHRI stakeholders, the many changes that have occurred cannot be solely attributable to the training; however the training program did provide a space for networking, which is crucial for such collaboration to take place.

The following could be said to be outcomes of the DTP/MFA programs:

- Some greater collaboration between NHRI staff and civil society at the national level.
- Some greater collaboration, including action on specific cases, between NHRI staff and civil society in countries of origin and destination.
- Some greater collaboration, including formal MoUs and action on specific cases, between NHRI staff in countries of origin and destination.
- Sub regional workshops on NHRI staff and Migrant Workers (Nepal organized a major regional workshop in 2012).
- The establishment of focal points on migrant workers by all NHRI staff in the Asia region (with the exception of Australia).
- New training materials (APF Manual) on migrant workers and role of NHRI staff and new training programs (APF blended learning program for NHRI staff).
- Two regional capacity building programs in the GCC hosted by Qatar’s NHRC.

While few countries (Jordan, Qatar) in the MENA region currently have fully accredited NHRI staff, more countries (Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Iraq) have announced their intention to establish them.

If DTP/MFA are to continue to prioritize engagement with NHRI staff in their capacity building for migrant workers’ rights they should consider the following:

- Seeking high level commitment from specific NHRI staff to focus on migrant workers’ rights.
- Careful selection of NHRI participants for regional/specialist programs.
- Specialized programs to develop capacity and collaboration between NHRI staff in countries of origin and destination.
- Specialised country specific or sub-regional programs (e.g. Nepal/South Asia).
- Establishing clear objectives for involvement of NHRI staff (e.g. cases, policy work, MoUs, HRE).
Engaging Trade Unions and Building Collaboration

An explicit objective of the DTP/MFA programs was to build collaboration between migrant workers organisations and trade unions, and to encourage trade unions to take up migrant workers’ rights. This has proved challenging.

The mandates and approach taken by trade unions are very different to those of NGOs and this has often meant that collaboration can be difficult to build. This is particularly the case in the area of migrant workers’ rights and particularly where migrant workers have been prevented from either joining existing trade unions or establishing their own. The situation of migrant workers has made it very difficult for them to organise or to be incorporated into existing trade unions – although more recently the attitude of trade unions is changing markedly. In destination countries, trade unions had previously been absent from the scene of migrant workers’ rights. Traditionally, trade unions have pursued their end goal of labour rights for workers and have to confront and challenge perceptions that migrant workers undermine established wages and conditions. Labour migration as now recognised as an established feature of globalisation and of work life for many. Irregular migration is now beginning to be seen as a response to real labour needs in agriculture, construction, care giving and hospitality. As trade union membership has declined in many countries and sectors, unions have need for new members, and migrant workers are recognised as a potential source of membership. Complaining or asserting rights presents migrants with many risks, such as deportation. Unions are now interested in working with migrant workers and this has allowed for the protection movement to become more forceful.

In the Gulf region, migrant worker rights are still a new issue for trade unions. The few trade unions that do exist in the Gulf struggle to build networks due to the extent of control by the government. It is difficult to obtain a license, and once a license is obtained they are constrained in their mandate, which leads to some form of self-censorship. In Kuwait, trade unions such as the Kuwait Trade Union Federation (KUTF) have a migrant worker department that attempts to deal with the complaints of migrant workers. However, they have limited capacity. In Bahrain, while trade unions do push for reform, migrant workers can be members of unions but cannot be elected to positions.

At the global level, the trade union movement has recognised the need to work with NGOs and other social movements. It is recognising the need to address the rights of migrant workers. This is also true of sections of the trade union movement in the MENA region, perhaps even more so than most of the Asia region.

There have been trade unionists and trade union representatives on some but not all of the DTP/MFA courses. The 2006 program held in Malaysia was co-hosted by the Malaysian Congress of Trade Unions.

The DTP/MFA training session held in Beirut in 2012 brought trade unions and civil society together. Collaboration has developed between trade unions of country of origin (National Federation of Trade Unions of Workers and Employees of Lebanon (FENASOL)) and destination (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)). Although this collaboration cannot be solely attributed to the meeting provided at the training, it definitely assisted the collaboration that representatives were able to meet face to face.

The 2013/14 Special Program on Nepal included more substantive engagement with, and participation from, leading trade unions.
If DTP/MFA are to continue to prioritise engagement with the trade union movement, then they should seek higher level endorsement for, and engagement in, this work and approach the trade union leadership to contribute more actively, including through financial support.

DTP/MFA should consider more strategic engagement with trade union federations, including the ITUC and Global Union Federations, and consider more specific targeted programs around ILO processes or on the OECD Guidelines on Multi National Enterprises and in engagement in their national level programs.

This was suggested as an area for DTP to work more on in future.

**Engaging the ILO and OHCHR**

OHCHR and ILO have a key mandate and role to play in promoting and protecting the rights of migrant workers. OHCHR has a broader interest in the human rights of all migrants, and the ILO in a human rights based approach to labour migration policy and practice. Both UN agencies actively engage governments – and have a role to place in capacity building and advisory services to reform legislative and policy frameworks.

The DTP/MFA programs are reasonably low costs strategic interventions that promote awareness and understanding of international standards to key audiences that have the capacity to help drive the kind of change that OHCHR and the ILO are working towards in different ways. The programs help to link ILO/OHCHR staff up to key actors in the region and play an important networking function.

While there has been significant engagement by OHCHR in the programs in Asia and the MENA region, including significant funding for the 2011 program in Bangkok, it was felt that there was unfulfilled potential in this engagement. With DTP contracted to developing training modules on migration and human rights for OHCHR, there may be possibilities for more substantive and deeper engagement.

The DTP/MFA courses have involved content on UN human rights and ILO labour standards since 2004. The ILO Jakarta office helped to fund the first course in 2004. ILO staff has always delivered the ILO sessions.

The main challenge for greater ILO involvement has been their mandate to work with social partners (employer and worker organisations) and governments, which had usually excluded linking substantively with NGOs and civil society. However this has been changing.

More recently, the ILO’s engagement with these capacity building programs has grown significantly, informing the substantive content of programs in the MENA region. It was the ILO that encouraged MFA and DTP to bring the programs into the Middle East, and that it was ILO funding that made the first Middle East program in Lebanon possible. The ILO also actively suggested and facilitated a much higher level of trade union participation in the Middle East programs – something that DTP/MFA had been struggling to achieve previously.

The ILO also played an instrumental role in linking DTP to the SDC, which was funding an ILO regional programme on migrant workers, with the view of developing synergies between the work done with ILO constituents and the work done with the broader civil society movement.
The ILO has therefore been a critical partner in the Middle East and has strongly supported the DTP and MFA in its work – and helped to give this work greater visibility, including for instance by taking part in the opening sessions with the press etc.

Moreover, ILO has worked hand in hand with DTP and MFA to develop a more strategic long term vision – recognising the potential that this unique partnership has and bringing its very valuable expertise into it.

5.7 Promotion of CMW Ratification and the application of other relevant UN and ILO Conventions to policy and practice

One of the original objectives set for the capacity building programs was to promote ratification of CMW. CMW was adopted in 1990 but only came into force in 2003 and it was hoped that the number of ratifications could be substantially increased. Two Asian countries, Indonesia and Bangladesh, have subsequently ratified the Convention. DTP held programs in both countries early on in the advocacy efforts promoting ratification, and in both countries, DTP alumni were involved in the ratification campaigns. It is impossible to say whether the DTP/MFA programs contributed, or if they did, how much, to the ratification.

What has perhaps become more evident in particular programs is consideration of the extent to which ratification should be a priority strategic objective, especially where it is seen as unlikely to be achieved in the short to medium turn. Consequently ratification has taken less of a priority in later programs with greater emphasis a human rights-based approach – that encourages and enables participants to use the whole range of UN human rights and ILO Labour standards.

Examples of Alumni Involvement in International and Regional Human Rights Processes

- Alternative reporting to the UN Committee on Migrant Workers
- Alternative reporting to the UN Economic, Social, Cultural Rights Committee
- Alternative reporting to the UN Universal Periodic Review
- Alternative reporting to the UN Committee Rights of the Child
- Alternative reporting to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
- Input to the UN Committee on Status of Women
- Submissions to the Office of UN Secretary General for its annual reports to the OHCHR
- NGO representation at World Trade Organization (WTO) 9th Ministerial Meeting in December 2013
- Case reporting to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants
- Sending Urgent Appeals to UN Special Rapporteur on forced labour cases
- Participation in the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD)
- Participation in the UN Human Rights Council
- Participation in the International Labour Conference (ILC)
- Participation in the Asia Europe Forum
- UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD)
- ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights
- ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC)
- ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML)

Alumni have been involved in multiple international, regional and national processes to promote the application of relevant UN and ILO Conventions to policy and practice. There was also said to be more advocacy activities developed with the involvement of migrants themselves in the Asian region; a greater focus on reforms to the kafala system in the Middle East, and related reforms in the migration policies in the GCC and ASEAN. Moreover, the emergence of the Domestic Workers
Convention through the ILO framework was an advance that showed advocates that the international recognition of the rights of domestic workers was achievable and change was possible.

Alumni are implicated as organisers and participants in various international and regional conferences, dialogues and civil society consultations.

**Examples of Alumni Engagement in International and Regional Conferences, Consultations and Dialogues**

- Hosting NHRI’s Conference on Migrant Workers on 2012 which produced the “Kathmandu Resolution 2012” as an outcome document
- Participation in the Minority Rights Forum in Geneva 2012
- Dialogue with Foreign Missions and Consulates in Jordan, 2-3 October 2012, by ILO Jordan and MFA
- Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)'s UN HLD Informal Discussion
- Asia-Pacific Consultation on the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD)
- World Social Forum on Migrations (WSFM) in Manila
- Regional Conference towards Adoption of an ILO Convention on Domestic Workers, 7-9 October 2010, Jakarta, Indonesia organized by ILO, SPSI, KSPI, KSBSI, IDWN, WSM, JALA PRT, MFA.
- Day of General Discussion in the Context of International Migration
- Consultation Meeting on Domestic Workers Protection at the International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, Switzerland 20-21 April 2009

6. Future Directions for the Migrant Worker Rights Program

Some stakeholders felt it was important for DTP to reflect on its vision of what it wants to achieve for the participants, and how this can be achieved. Outcomes should include an increase in the use of international human rights mechanisms, be it specialized independent enquiry mechanisms – the UN’s human rights Special Procedures, human rights treaty monitoring bodies and the UPR. However, as some of the outcomes of these mechanisms can be slow, stakeholders suggested that the training better equip participants to deal with discrimination, violations and abuses at the national level.

Another suggested outcome was an increased diversity of voices from the grassroots/frontline being heard in international fora, to bring these perspectives to the table where policy frameworks and priorities are being negotiated.

Each training program provides a space for organizational learning, with each new set of participants, different resource people and the targeting of certain countries. It was seen as important for DTP/MFA to build on the general training that is given in the regional programs – to a deeper level of training and capacity building. Examples of DTP doing this can be seen in its country focused 2013 training in Nepal with five modules being delivered to the same core group of participants. It can also be seen in the May 2014 training on business and human rights in Dubai which had a focus on recruitment agencies.

6.1 Participant Selection

Stakeholders felt that the strong relationships that developed between participants in the past trainings were a testament to commitment of the participants – and therefore of the DTP/MFA selection processes. It was felt that future training programs continue the hybrid selection process of both open applications and targeted selection of participants.

In terms of selecting the best type of participants based on their seniority or level of experience, trainers found that having a mix of participants from different levels and experience worked well.
Although it may be helpful to only include those who have had some previous work experience beyond their national level, trainers felt that participants have proved extremely quick to grasp both the usefulness and the manner in which to use international human rights mechanisms. The important factor was that selected participants should come with a strong backing from their hierarchy/organisation.

At the same time, consideration needs to be given to selecting a number of participants from an organisation/institution/country, with a view to building up the critical mass and institutional impact. This could be done within one program or over a number of programs. The training program is not only about developing the skills of individuals, and to have a larger impact, should consider targeting the middle management level of organizations who do human rights advocacy, who are already delivering and are capable of taking decisions for their organization. Stakeholders felt that although there is a benefit to target the local level, to have a real network of influence, the right people need to be sought out and approached to be both participants and partners.

Consideration also needs to be given to the balance between the reach of the training and its depth. Some suggested that DTP/MFA have now provided their base level training to most of those individuals/organisations active in the Middle East on migrant workers’ rights – and the focus should therefore shift to providing specialised courses and a deeper level of training.

The GCC in particular poses challenges given the constrained space for civil society, and for advocacy and the relative absence of NGOs and human rights organisations. Selection of individuals is heavily dependent on informal networks identifying individuals in institutions and welfare organisations.

A continuing issue for programs in the MENA region is the balance of participants from countries of origin and destination. There are real advantages, highlighted in this report, in such a balance, but it can detract from more in-depth regional discussion.

6.2 Priority Targets for Capacity Building – Beyond Civil Society

The DTP/MFA programs have deliberately targeted committed civil society actors – recognising them as key drivers of change, and that the commitment they bring to the training significantly increases the likelihood of impact.

Since the beginning of the DTP/MFA partnership, trainings have included engagement with NHRI staff and government officials. This recognises that the protection and promotion of human rights is in their mandate and that training NHRI staff, and linking them with civil society, is strategic. Mixing NGO and NHRI’s participants helps develop the kind of networks, at the national and regional levels, that are needed to maximize the impact of human rights programs and operations.

More recently DTP/MFA have involved other government officials in its training programs – such as Labour Attaches – and in the case of Qatar, government officials from a wide range of departments. Again this has been done partly on the basis of the valuable networking and linking that the program facilitates.

Some respondents felt MFA/DTP should target NHRIs and government officials more strategically and consistently. Possible targets mentioned included Ministries of Labour and Ministries of the Interior. In targeting government officials, the need to target capacity building at the right level to promote change was emphasised.

Other suggestions for targeted and specialised trainings include:

- Journalists
- Lawyers
6.3 Trainers

Selection of Trainers

Although partners felt that there was currently a good pool of trainers, it was noted that the particular methodology of participatory teaching in the DTP/MFA program made it difficult to find suitable trainers. Stakeholders noted that those renowned in the field may not necessarily be good trainers. It was recommended that DTP/MFA find a good balance between inviting some trainers for political reasons and the best trainers for this type of methodology. If the intent is to scale-up the number and range of trainings then this issue of trainer selection will need to be thoroughly examined.

It was suggested that promising alumni be selected for training of trainers (TOT) sessions. It was suggested to have at least one alumnus facilitator in each training program, to reinvigorate the alumni network and allow participants and stakeholders to build closer links. DTP could also seek out updates from alumni, to identify the issues that are actively being addressed by alumni and then suggest new facilitators on those specific topics.

Preparation and Support for Trainers

Some trainers felt that the interaction with DTP ahead of and at the training was excellent. Other stakeholders emphasised the need for more sufficient advance preparation and coaching for trainers, to share ideas and receive feedback at least once or twice prior to the training. Some stakeholders felt that each session of the training program was very different; and at times some felt that there was a disjuncture between the trainers and materials in one session and the following one. It was suggested that this may require more planning and collaboration between different trainers prior to the training. Some stakeholders have felt that they were on standby as a fill-in trainer. In such cases, it was seen to be preferable to clarify their role and expectations in terms of topics/sessions, and to have adequate time to prepare prior to the start of the program. It was suggested that if DTP was better resources and had a full-time staff person working on these programs then these issues could be more easily addressed.

Follow-Up with Trainers

It was suggested that trainers be asked for a debriefing soon after their session, before some elements of their suggestions and insights are forgotten and this would assist in the evaluation process also. This is an issue that could likely be addressed with sufficient resources.

Networking between Trainers and Participants

Trainers felt that the continuity of networking and collaboration between participants and trainers has a lot to do with individual personalities. If a trainer encourages participants to stay in touch and informs them they will be available for interaction after the training, the collaboration does continue. Most former trainers and stakeholders have had contact with some individual participants in the form of updates, and requests for information or collaboration.

6.4 Follow-up with Alumni

It is in this area of follow up that allocation of further resources in DTP/MFA has the potential to have the greatest impact. Although MFA knows that alumni have kept in touch with each other and
collaborated on migrant worker advocacy, neither MFA nor DTP has actively monitored or documented the collaboration between alumni. There would be value in doing so, however there is a lack of institutional capacity to invest in such follow up activities at present.

Currently alumni are all added to the DTP alumni list and receive the DTP- E News. Alumni are also added to the MFA network list serve. MFA has a referral system process in each country, and alumni would be added to their relevant country group to send cases forward. During trainings, MFA identifies people whom it would like to work with further and invites them to other workshops, to be co-facilitators or be part of MFA representation as key resource people.

Post-training, alumni had several ideas on continuing networking and collaboration with other participants, resource people and DTP/MFA.

It was suggested that:

- Online tools: e-networks, email list serves, Facebook groups, forums and video conferences.
- Face-to-face contact: reunions, alumni events and study visits/exchange programs.

Alumni were interested in:

- Receiving information, situation updates on new developments on migrant workers
- Sharing experiences, best practices and case studies
- Learning about opportunities for fund raising, capacity building, and further education and networking
- Participating in forums to write and share articles and project proposals on migrant workers’ rights
- Connecting with other alumni regardless of their program of participation

Similarly, organising an alumni event to bring together alumni from other countries together with a DTP representative was also suggested.

Otherwise, events and groups could be developed based on country groupings. Different thematic groups could be developed by DTP/MFA from its alumni so that they can study, engage and support the movements for migrant rights.

- Refresher courses, more alumni trainings, advanced courses, forums, workshops and follow up programs
- encourage alumni to reconnect with each other, exchange information, share experiences, challenges and seek advice
- support alumni to develop ideas for future activities and design action plans

Some stakeholders felt there was a real need to professionalise strategies of intervention on migrant worker rights. Rigorous national strategies in relation to advocating for specific rights for migrants were required. It was felt that the training could provide the space to identify potential partners as well as identify challenges.

Stakeholders advised more investment into the alumni network.

It was recommended that the list of alumni on the DTP web page and their biographies be updated. This could be done by sending a periodic email to ask what alumni have been doing and how their skills have developed.

Stakeholders appreciated that whenever DTP was visiting their country; they kept in touch and they brought together all the alumni. This made them feel that they were part of a group and network, which was guided by the organizers. It was suggested that further informal get togethers of alumni
be held in-country, between civil society and NHRIs. It was also suggested that DTP host periodic web discussions to discuss relevant issues. It was seen to be crucial to hold events of good substance that generated networking between participants. Stakeholders felt that it would motivate the alumni to connect with others interested in the same issues from around the world, as well as revive the network of alumni.

It was seen as essential for DTP/MFA to keep track of the alumni they train. It was recommended that DTP follow a similar model to the Canadian human rights foundation, Equitas, which has run a 3 week summer course on human rights for the last 34 years. It is an unofficial requirement for alumni after the course to organise trainings in their countries, on a smaller scale and often, thematic, based on issues they work on. They receive support in terms of materials, or for the presence of one or two officials/staff. Alumni from their region are then invited to attend. Equitas also encouraged them to return as instructors.

DTP/MFA could firstly identify countries to target, then select NGOs in the countries of target and work with them over number of years. By training one or two at time over the next few years, it means that a large number of personnel are trained over the years and that inside their own organisations are now a critical mass of knowledge and techniques for advocacy.

Alumni expressed interest in some form of follow-up after the training. DTP was said to be doing a wonderful job keeping its alumni connected and informed on the various issues that arise in the field of migrant rights through its newsletter and Annual Report. Nonetheless, it was suggested that DTP/MFA could connect with alumni via surveys to check on their progress and provide a space for participants to connect with each other for:

- Sharing of resources, future plans and successful activities
- Forums to participate in discussions on relevant topics
- Support for activities: funding sources, small grants, accessing interns, translations and active contacts in different countries

Alumni also believed that DTP/MFA could involve alumni in:

- the re-design of the program based on their current needs and context
- facilitating or co-facilitating in new training sessions
- contributing as resource people to share their practical knowledge and experiences

It was suggested that DTP/MFA identify potential key change agents in their training programs for further training on advocacy, lobbying, campaigns and leadership skills.

6.5 Program Locations

MFA has consistently provided strategic advice on program location to enhance program impact. This has seen DTP/MFA move programs into the Middle East. This has required adjustments – and higher costs, including for interpretation and translation. Despite these challenges, stakeholders felt that the strength of DTP/MFA was the ability to adapt quickly and rethink their approach depending on the context and circumstances. This was said to be helpful as they venture into new areas in future. The North Africa region in particular was said to be in need of these types of trainings, and it was suggested that DTP/MFA organise an event in a North African country.

Other alumni advised that future programs be held in sending countries like India or Bangladesh, so that participants from these countries of origin would feel more comfortable to express their views openly.
Some stakeholders appreciated having the training sessions in parallel with real meetings and forums, such as the training that coincided with the visit of the Special Rapporteur, and the GFMD. It was recommended that future trainings be conducted in parallel with other events, such as the sessions of the Committee on Migrant Workers, for example.

6.6 Institutional Capacity

Although the last two years have seen more substantial funding for the programs, MFA felt that DTP and MFA as institutions have not grown in parallel, and face human resource and financial challenges. Some stakeholders identified the main challenge for DTP as their lack of reliable funding, and encouraged them to have a longer term vision for the training with a strong fundraising base for the sustainability of the program.

Linked to the issues of funding, the biggest challenge for the partnership between DTP/MFA is the lack of institutionalization of the migrant workers program. Each training program is still managed as an individual activity, albeit within a broader strategy for both MFA and DTP. The work on migrant workers is not fully integrated into DTP’s work – for example in its Annual Regional Human Rights Defenders Programs – where spaces could be made for MFA members (as occurred in 2013) or its thematic priorities on business and human rights.

Given the resource constraints in DTP, MFA has taken on more of the organisational and logistical responsibility for the training programs. Particularly as DTP/MFA move into new regions (MENA), they need to ensure that cultural issues and sensitivities are addressed and care is taken to ensure that the logistics of programs are managed professionally so that the program maintains its reputation for quality in all of its aspects.

DTP/MFA is now involved in capacity building in the Middle East and in Asia – in regional trainings, issue specific trainings (e.g. private sector/recruitment agencies) and intensive country specific trainings. The training program has taken on three dimensions: the annual general training program (now taking place in the GCC), plus specialized thematic training programs, and also country programs such as the one in Nepal based on 5 modules. Stakeholders would like to see more thematic programs developed, such as trainings on: women and migration; undocumented migrants and their rights; migration and detention; and children and migration. DTP is also working with OHCHR on a set of training modules that address some of these issues. OHCHR has indicated it would like to work with DTP on such future trainings.

The current institutional resources and capacity are stretched, with the respective directors of MFA and DTP largely organizing and facilitating the trainings. DTP is closer to having a sufficient number of projects to enable the funding of the dedicated staff within DTP that would enable this program to grow and to fulfill its potential. Having stability over a five year period would allow the program to do more to build a stronger constituency of actors advocating for migrant worker rights and to build on the last decade of groundbreaking work in Asia and the Middle East.

6.7 Funding

DTP is deeply appreciative of the funding that has been provided by different parts of SDC – and the faith shown by SDC in applying this approach of civil society capacity building in the MENA region. SDC funding since 2012 has made a significant difference and enabled an increased level of activity and the engagement with new actors in the MENA region. SDC’s funding for programs in South Asia have enabled DTP/MFA to have a deeper and more substantive engagement with both ends of the South Asia-MENA migration corridors. SDC has also been active in encouraging and assisting DTP to bring in other funding sources for this work – partly to build the collaboration buy-in. It should be noted here also that Qatar’s NHRC has provided substantial in-kind support to the programs in Doha.
It is impossible to separate the issue of institutional capacity from the issue of funding. As part of its overall risk framework DTP should map donors and key stakeholders, and invite them to participate and see what they can contribute to the training programs. One respondent said there was a need to follow up with philanthropic donors in major capitals in Australia. As part of this process it may be helpful for DTP Board members to see what these trainings look like and why they are so unique – so that they can be more actively engaged in seeking financial support for them.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The context for migrant worker advocacy has changed since the beginning of these capacity building programs ten years ago. The scale of labour migration has continued to grow significantly and with growing understanding of the economic impacts of migration the issues have moved up the policy and political agenda. Civil society advocacy has managed to open the doors to all of the key policy and intergovernmental forums to ensure that the human rights of migrant workers are at the very least on the table for consideration. It is impossible to know for certain the contribution that the DTP/MFA programs have made to this advocacy.

Initially focused on the Asia-Pacific region, the program has expanded into West Asia to also target destination countries in the Middle East and Gulf. However, what is clear is that the training has had an impact on the alumni and their work, and has been greatly appreciated by stakeholders.

The main lessons that have been learned over the last ten years of migrant worker rights programs include:

1) The training programs have had a positive impact on individuals to increase their awareness and knowledge, improved their skills and change their attitudes and perceptions.

The participatory methodology and practical applications of course curriculum during the training have not only helped participants to internalize knowledge learned and develop practical skills, but also to develop their self-confidence. The diverse range of participants and their experiences also gave participants fresh perspectives and new ideas that inspired and motivated them.

2) The training programs have been helpful to enhance the networks of alumni and promote cross-sectorial collaboration on Migrant Worker Rights.

Alumni found that working in collaboration with others is essential to promote migrant worker rights. Through the program, participants from civil society, trade unions and NHRI staff were able to meet, learn and share together, often for the first time. This exposure has played a role in growing cross-sectorial collaboration after the training. Trade unions in origin and destination countries now work together and NHRI’s are collaborating with civil society. These collaborations developed after initial meetings in the training program. There is now a greater referral of cases and seeking of support between alumni, and trainers as well.

The partnership with the APF meant that a greater number of NHRI staff were introduced to migrant worker rights. Now the APF conducts its own training on migrant worker rights and its manual was developed in partnership with DTP/MFA.

Indeed, ten years on from the conception of the program, there is a greater range of actors involved in advocacy on behalf of migrant workers’ rights. Migrant worker rights are also now seen to be part of the greater human rights movement.
3) Alumni have been able to apply their knowledge and skills to promote migrant worker rights internationally, regionally and nationally.

Alumni have been able to apply their knowledge and skills to promote the application of UN and ILO Conventions to policy and practice. This report has outlined the multiple international and regional processes that alumni have engaged with, including alternative reporting to UN mechanisms, participation in ILO processes, as well as regional bodies such as ASEAN. Alumni have been involved in conferences, dialogues and consultations at the highest levels. They have also been involved in engaging media to raise awareness, advocacy and lobbying their governments.

4) The training has inspired alumni to develop and conduct their own capacity building programs.

Alumni have adapted DTP materials and curriculum to their own national situations. They have conducted training programs inspired by DTP’s methodology and developed modules based on the DTP curriculum and materials. Materials are highly valued and shared with colleagues and partners. The DTP/MFA training has thus become a model of good practice for those working on migrant workers’ rights.

5) There is a need for increased institutional capacity to ensure the sustainability of the program and strategic follow up with alumni.

Financial stability was seen to be the main challenge for future planning as well as the ability to monitor and follow up with alumni. As the number of trainings increase, and the need for great monitoring and evaluation of the programs to be able to assess their impact, DTP and MFA have not as yet grown in parallel institutionally.

**Recommendations: Priority Focus Areas**

**Capacity Building Strategy:** The growth in the range and number of DTP/MFA capacity building activities could be usefully described in a comprehensive capacity building strategy that joined the dots between national level and regional projects/programs, programs with a specific sectoral or institutional focus and the focus on countries of origin and destination. Such a strategy would benefit from being based on a clearer theory of change that would enable prioritization of programs and follow-up activities and support to alumni.

**Future Programming, Curriculum Revision and Methodology:** Alumni and stakeholders thought the annual regional training should continue and be complemented by more advanced and/or thematic programs. The model of the Nepal training was said to be a good example of how training could be conducted over a longer period of time to establish solid relationships and have strategic outputs in one country.

As there are growing cases of irregular, non-traditional migration, it was suggested that the curriculum reflect these advocacy needs as well as consider wider issues in migration and human rights. There were several new topics of interest that were suggested to be included in future, such as sessions on human trafficking, unaccompanied child migrants, detention, protection mechanisms and service provision, business and human rights including ethical recruitment. Sessions on how human rights defenders could work more diplomatically to avoid persecution as well as raising funds for their work are also needed.

Trainings could aim to take place in parallel with (and/or focused on engagement with) major meetings and forums on migration and include direct engagement with human rights mechanisms. The methodology of future trainings could seek to explore options for integrating online and
blended learning approaches. The trainings could include more case studies of success stories as well as insights to what works and does not work in terms of advocacy. Field trips could also involve more interaction with local migrant communities and lead to specific advocacy outputs.

**Strategic Participant Selection and Partnering:** The diversity of participants, in terms of their level of experience and seniority, cultural diversity, bringing together perspectives from country of origin and destination, and their institutional backgrounds were seen to be strengths of the program. Nonetheless, DTP/MFA could consider how, through targeted participant selection, a greater impact could be made - this may involve training a few people from one organization over several years. Participants with the potential to share their knowledge and provide strategic direction to their organizations with backing from their hierarchy should be selected. These issues should be addressed within a clearer overall strategy for DTP’s capacity building work on migrant workers. DTP/MFA could consider more engagement with government officials, trade unions and the private sector.

**Strategic Partnerships/Collaborations:** DTP/MFA should consider more strategic engagement with trade union federations, including the ITUC and Global Union Federations, and consider more specific targeted programs around ILO processes or on the OECD Guidelines on Multi National Enterprises and in engagement in their national level programs.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** DTP has developed its methodology for evaluating its specific programs. Presently, participants fill out an application form to be selected and then an evaluation at the end of the program. What would be helpful for future monitoring and evaluation of the program, as well as to better understand the impact of the program on the work of alumni would be to have participants fill out a self-assessment form on their current level of knowledge, experience/level of involvement as well as confidence levels related to the course and program objectives. This could be compared with another self-assessment form at the end of the training on changes to attitudes and confidence levels, improved awareness and skills, as well as follow up forms sent out possibly a year later. It is important to have quantitative as well as qualitative responses gathered.

DTP needs to develop its monitoring and evaluation methodology for its work with alumni and for assessing longer term impact of its programs. This is related to having a clear overall strategy, with more measurable objectives based on a theory of change to better enable DTP/MFA to assess the impact of the training programs. Of course the difficulty to analyze the impact of one program over a long period of time is that individuals continually learn, receive other training, and go on to work in other organisations and to work on other issue areas. DTP/MFA should seek the resources to engage in more regular monitoring and evaluation, based on closer follow up with alumni and their organisations, and their advocacy activities over time to measure the long term impact of the programs. This should look at developing case studies and Most Significant Change methodology.

**Consistent Follow-Up and Building a Stronger Alumni Network:** At present, certain alumni have been selected by MFA for close follow up and involvement in the MFA network and some alumni have been selected to return as trainers and resource people to subsequent training programs. Stakeholders and alumni would like to see more regular alumni events and a stronger network emerge. The alumni network could be built using both online mechanisms and face-to-face opportunities. Consistent follow up should be undertaken, and collaboration encouraged in a more systematic way. The sharing of experiences and providing a space where alumni could ask for assistance is important and web based tools may offer options for this. Requirements could be requested of participants following their training. For example, that they conduct trainings or advocacy or campaign events upon their return home. However this would then require the support
of organizers. Developing some form of a training of trainers program or session would therefore also be advisable.

Planning and Logistics: As the programs have expanded into new areas and increased in frequency, DTP needs to ensure that proper protocols are adhered to and cultural sensitivities are addressed. For example, higher levels of formality can be sometimes expected in the Middle East and North Africa, than in some parts of Asia. DTP will also need to address a perception of things being organised at the “last-minute”, which has been a function of limited capacity in terms of personnel, and issues of funding. Keeping in mind the importance of respecting protocols, DTP should address these issues and ensure the highest professional standards in the planning, preparation and logistical elements of its programs.

Institutionalisation and Sustainability: DTP has developed significant specialist expertise and a unique set of relationships in this area from a decade of collaboration with MFA. Through these relationships and its alumni, it is uniquely well placed to contribute to promoting the rights of migrant workers through high quality training and support to alumni of its programs. Many of the recommendations above are resource dependent. To fulfill the potential that exists, and to enhance the impact of existing and planned activities, DTP’s migrant worker program requires a full time staffing commitment. This would widen the scope for closer follow up with alumni as well as the development of the alumni network. It also requires regular funding and searching for new sources of funding.

In the context of increasing migration and the vulnerabilities and exploitation that has grown in parallel, there is a need not only to build up the capacity of advocates but also to sensitise those government officials involved in the migration process to the human rights of migrants, in an age of increasing political polarization of non-citizens around the world. It is in this context that the work of DTP/MFA is necessary and beneficial, and with greater institutional capacity and strategic planning, the impact of their programs can have wider influence to promote the rights of migrants.
Annex 1: List of Stakeholders Interviewed

Francois Crepeau, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants

William Gois, Regional Coordinator, Migrant Forum Asia, Philippines

Karen Gomez-Dumpit, Director of Government Linkages, Commission on Human Rights (CHR) of the Philippines

Mariette Grange, Senior Researcher, Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies, Switzerland

Helene Harroff-Tavel, Programme Officer, International Labour Organisation, Switzerland

Alix Nasri, Consultant, International Labour Organisation, Switzerland

Pia Oberoi, Migration Advisor, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Switzerland

Suraina Pasha, Regional Training Manager, Asia Pacific Forum (APF) for National Human Rights Institutions, Australia

Ellene Sana, Executive Director, Centre for Migrant Advocacy, Philippines

Roby Alampay, Southeast Asian Press Alliance (2010)
Hala Al Ali, National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) (2012)
Homayoun Alizadeh, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2010)
Marie Apostol, FAIR Hiring Initiative (2013, 2014)
Renuka Balasubramaniam, Lawyers for Liberty (2013)
Nilim Baruah, ILO Regional Office Bangkok (2013)
Laurie Berg, UTS (2006)
Pramesh Chandran, Malaysiakini (2006)
Ryszard Cholewinski, International Labour Organisation (2012)
Dr Abrar Chowdhury, Refuge and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Dhaka University (2005, 2013)
Matthew Coghlan, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (2014)
Asenaca Colowai, OHCHR (2009)
Shanthis Dairiam, CEDAW Committee – IWRAW (2006)
Luc Demaret, International Labour Organisation (2012)
Surya Deuja, NHRC Nepal (2013)
Kalpalata Dutta, Asian Institute on Human Rights (2011)
Patrick Earle, Diplomacy Training Program (2004-2014)
Andre Frankovits, Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney (2013)
Charles Hector, Bar Council of Malaysia (2006)
Nidal Jurdi, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Middle East Region (2012)
A/Prof Ray Jureidini, Center for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo (2013)
Azfar Khan, International Labour Organisation (2012)
Ursula Kulke, Labour Protection Department, International Labour Organisation (2012)
Emer. Prof Garth Nettheim, Diplomacy Training Program/UNSW (2005)
Pia Oberoi, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2011)
Alecks J Pabico, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism (2008)
Mahendra Pandey, PNCC (2013)
Daniel Panjaitan, Indonesian Legal Aid (2004)
Dr Aurora Parong, Amnesty International (2008)
Suraina Pasha, Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF) (2010)
Adrian Pereira, Dignity International (2006)
Hari Phuyal, Supreme Court of Nepal (2013)
Arul Prakkash, KOMAS (2009)
Dr Renu Rajbhandari, WOREC Nepal (2013)
S.A. Al Razi, Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE) (2005)
Sinapan Samydora, Think Centre (2008)
Rajeev Sharma, BWI Asia Pacific (2013)
Dr Tasneem Siddiqui, Refuge and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Dhaka University (2005)
Bandita Sijapati, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) (2013)
Aderito Soares, SAHE Institute for Liberation and the East Timor Jurists Association (2009)
Bobby Soriano, Tactical Technology.org (2008)
Jane Stratton, Public Interest and Advocacy Centre (PIAC) (2005)
Samar Tarawneh, Jordan National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) (2012)
Marie-José Tayah, International Labour Organisation (2012)
Ranjana Thapa, UN Resident Coordination Office (UNRICO) Kathmandu (2013)
Evelyn Ursua, Ursua Law Office/UP College of Law (2008)
Rex Varona, Migrant Forum Asia (2013)
Mayan Villaba, MFA (2004)
Annex 3: List of Alumni Survey Respondents

2. Dr. Ahmed Alhashemi, Middle East Centre for Training and Development (2012)
3. Linda Alkalash, Tamkeen (2012)
15. Beverley Hamadeh, Migrant Workers’ Protection Society (2013)
17. Samantha Hutt, Insan Association Lebanon (2012)
20. Osama Mohamed Khalil, Hisham Mubarak Law Center (HMLC) Egypt (2013)
23. Avimansingh Lama, Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) (2012, 2013)
30. Mahendra Pandey, Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) (2011)
35. Selim Reza, Refuge and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Dhaka University (2013)
37. Hessen Sayah, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center (2012)
39. Sopeap Suong, Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (2008)
40. Mi Kay Thi Tun, Migrant Worker Rights Network (2008)
42. Navuth Ya, CARAM Cambodia (2008)
Annex 4: Sample Alumni Questionnaire

Questionnaire for DTP Alumni – Lessons Learned Survey

Introduction:

DTP and MFA have worked together since 2004 to organise and facilitate training programs in Asia on the rights of migrant workers. These programs aimed to build the knowledge, skills and networks of participants to promote the better application of international standards on the rights of migrant workers. These programs also sought to build collaboration between NGOs, NHRIIs and Trade Unions – and between civil society and NGOs in sending and receiving countries.

We are now reviewing this work to learn the lessons and to plan our way forward in Asia, the Middle-East and North Africa.

We would really appreciate your help in this work. Your responses to the following questionnaire will help us to understand the value and impact of our work together – and to better plan for the future.

Please could you take a few minutes to answer the questions below.

_________________________________

Name:
Gender:
Program Attended: (Year/Location)

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

1. Role/organisation when you did the program?

2. Role/organisation now?

3. Briefly describe the work that you do concerning migrant workers?

SECTION 2: PROGRAM IMPACT/OUTCOMES

4. Are you using the knowledge, skills and networks built acquired in the program for your work on migrant workers’ rights?

□ YES

□ NO

In each of the following categories, please describe what you are using from the training program

Content information/knowledge:
Skills:

Materials:

Networks:

5. If you have faced difficulty in applying the learning from the training in your day-to-day work, could you give examples?

6. Did your ideas/ perceptions and/or attitudes changed as a result of your participation in the program?

☐ YES

☐ NO

If YES, please describe the changes.

7. What were the best and most useful things about the program? Why?

8. What were the least useful things of the training program? Why?

9. Have you or your organisation been able to apply the knowledge from the training program? (e.g. as a result of the training, have you engaged with any UN or regional human rights bodies or processes, engaged in policy dialogue, engaged your government, used the media for advocacy purposes or other advocacy tools?)

☐ YES

☐ NO

If YES please provide details. If NOT please explain why.

10. Was the program helpful in building your personal network and collaboration with others on migrant workers’ rights?

☐ YES

☐ NO

If YES, please give an example of an activity or initiative that resulted from your participation in the program)
SECTION 3: FUTURE PROGRAMS

11. Do you have any advice on how DTP could improve its programs and/or its work with alumni (e.g. concentrate on certain thematic)?

12. What additional follow-up support do you think DTP/MFA could provide to its alumni?

13. Please indicate you are willing to participate in a follow-up telephone/skype interview.

   Telephone number:

   Skype name:

   Thank you for participating in this survey!
   Please email your completed survey to dtp@unsw.edu.au
Annex 5: Selected Alumni Profiles

Alumni Profiles – Migrant Workers Capacity Building Programs: 2004 - 2013

DTP and MFA have trained over 300 advocates and officials from Asia and the Middle East since 2004 on migrant workers’ rights. These alumni are actively engaged in public life through their work in civil society, international organisations, trade unions and national human rights institutions. The following profiles are drawn from responses to the survey of DTP alumni completed in early 2014.

Rhodora Alcantara Abano – Advocacy Officer at Centre for Migrant Advocacy (CMA), Philippines


As Advocacy Officer at the Centre for Migrant Advocacy (CMA), Rhodora’s work on migrant workers focuses on lobbying with executive and legislative agencies, public advocacy, media interviews, research and writing articles. CMA is an advocacy group that promotes the rights of overseas Filipinos – land- or sea-based migrant workers and Filipino immigrants – and their families.

The best aspects of the training were sessions on media, lobbying and advocacy, as well as the exposure to the government. I have applied the knowledge gained from the training in CMA’s alternative reporting to the UN Committee on Migrant Workers, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Universal Periodic Review as well as providing input for the 58th session of the UN Committee on the Status of Women. I have also engaged with regional human rights bodies such as the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC).

It was also helpful in my engagement with the Israeli Embassy/Ministry of Labour concerning the human trafficking of caregivers, and with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in relation to the anti-human smuggling protocol. All I learnt in the training also helped in my involvement in policy dialogues with the Philippine government on the amendment of the Philippine Magna Carta on migrant workers, domestic workers policy reform, the human smuggling protocol, ILO Convention 189 on domestic workers and local equivalent national law, etc.

Since the program, I have continued to network with one of my batch mates from Zamboanga City in relation to undocumented Filipino migrant workers in Sabah. In future, I would suggest that DTP/MFA perhaps organise a reunion for alumni to exchange experiences that can serve to enhance each other’s knowledge and skills, such as a Philippine alumni to get together.

Dr Ahmed Alhashemi – Managing Director, Middle East Centre for Training and Development, United Arab Emirates

Program/s Attended: Doha (2012)

Dr Ahmed is the managing director for the Middle East Centre for Training and Development in Dubai. With a view that knowledge eliminates all evils, the Centre was set up with a vision of creating awareness and bridging gaps between regulatory authorities and migrant workers. The Centre also seeks to do a comparative study of positive practices around migration issues globally and in the region.
The training provided by DTP helped raise my knowledge from the books to a practical level, and gained some useful skills on leadership. The many situations dealt with by the different people that had attended the training were a very helpful tool; rather than just knowing the law and ignoring the actual situation, we exchanged information on the different ways in which the situations were tackled. It was great to see the diversity of people from different backgrounds meeting together on a common platform. They not only bring across the victories that they have secured in the field working with migrant issues, but also the various challenges faced by them in solving these various issues. This change of perspective helps to give direction to work for the cause of the workers in the UAE through providing knowledge. The presentations done by the officials of the ILO and different NGOs regarding international conventions and the different work they do was a huge advantage in contributing to my understanding.

The networking aspect facilitated by the DTP was one of the great supports that I received when setting up the Middle East Centre for Training and Development. The interaction with contacts I had met at the program, including different universities and NGOs, helped me to focus on specific areas that required more attention in the field of migrant workers’ issues.

During the course of the program, I understood that there would be time constraints. However, I believe it would be helpful allocating more time to getting to know issues from different parts of the world. However, DTP is doing a wonderful job by keeping alumni connected and informed on various issues that arise in the field of migrant rights. I feel that it would be great to conduct a survey, with questions, for example, on the different issues in the field of migrant rights and the comments and suggestions of each alumni member. This will allow all participants to express their views and opinions.

Renuka T. Balasubramaniam – Advocate and Solicitor, Malaysian Bar Council’s Human Rights Committee, Malaysia

Program/s Attended: Dhaka (2005), Manila (2008), Kathmandu (2013)

Renuka is an employment and immigration lawyer in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. Following her participation in DTP’s program in Dhaka, she began to undertake pro-bono work for migrants and refugees. She is actively engaged in regional and international migrant rights advocacy.

Her views on DTP’s programs:

The DTP programs are well structured with well-defined objectives. A significant effort is put into teaching participants how to achieve those objectives. I found the campaigning and advocacy skills, as well as the information on international conventions and ILO processes particularly useful.

As a lawyer, with a focus on legal research and litigation, it is difficult to find partners for advocacy work. People run different campaigns at different times and have different immediate priorities. DTP has helped me join up with MFA and as a result of my participation in the program; I conducted regional training with MFA in Kathmandu and Chennai, as well as joined MFA for participation in the 2009 Asia Europe Forum.

Through the DTP training, I have come to realise that lawyers can make small yet significant changes. I would suggest for future improvement, DTP should consider involving judges in the training and perhaps not inviting government representatives. DTP might also consider concentrating on providing programs around the types of performed, e.g., advocacy training for advocacy groups,
legal training for lawyers etc. DTP/MFA could also provide additional follow-up support through assisting with funding sources, interns, translation and country of origin contacts with visible results.

**Maryam Danesh- Afghanistan Independent Human Right Commission (AIHRC), Afghanistan**

*Program/s attended: Doha (2012)*

Maryam serves in the Monitoring and Investigation Department of the Afghanistan Independent Human Right Commission (AIHRC) in Herat. She evaluates the situation of Afghan migrant workers in Iran.

I gained useful knowledge from that program that I can use in my work at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. For example, I learned about advocacy for the rights of migrant workers within International Human Rights, specially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I also learned about the rules of International Human Rights Commissions on promoting and protecting Human Rights, including the rights of migrant workers. Moreover, I learned about the techniques and strategies of advocacy, including the media and lobbying.

The best aspect of the training was learning about the contrast between migrant workers and refugees. Learning about the definition of migrant workers and their rights, changed my perceptions. Because the rights of each group are different, I should identify between migrants and refugees to solve their cases. Every aspect of the training was useful for me, because I did not have much experience with migrant workers. Now I can resolve the case of those persons very well.

I would advise that it is better that DTP send out a form each month to all the alumni to ask about their problems while working on migrant workers’ rights. After that DTP could provide advice on how they can resolve their problems. This would be very useful. To improve follow up with alumni, DTP can send alumni such solutions about migrant worker cases and also share alumni experiences with migrant workers with the other alumni. Also, DTP could invite participants to some meetings or conferences where they can share their experiences.

**Som Prasad Lamichhane- General Secretary at Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), Nepal**

*Program/s Attended: Doha (2013) Nepal Special Program*

As General Secretary at Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), Som has been particularly involved with establishing linkages between migrants, potential migrant communities and government agencies for the rescue, protection and support of migrant workers in both the country of origin and country of destination. PNCC is a non-profit organization of committed returnee migrant workers dedicated to protecting and promoting migrant workers’ rights at national, regional and international levels.

The most useful aspect of the training was the diversified participants. We got a chance to listen to the views of Qatari government as well as a National Human Rights Committee representative. Another very useful part was the Migrant Forum Asia mission dialogue. These days, it is very important to have a dialogue amongst sending countries to strengthen the network for the rights of every migrant worker, not only our nationals.

During the training, I got a chance to visit our mission. I saw a huge crowd of migrant workers who did not have enough support. Now, we have started to lobby to our government to strengthen
mission capacity. After coming back from the DTP training, I went to the Labour Ministry to share my training experience with the labour secretary, focusing on migrant worker conditions in Qatar. I was also able to succinctly address the issue of an exorbitant recruitment fee for Qatar with the government officials.

Through the program, I formed a good relationship with the Labour Attaché, and I contacted him from Nepal to deal with the issue of Nepalese migrant workers. We also met a trade union representative from Bahrain who is dealing the issue of migrant workers. We have now started to inform our network and individual migrant workers to take a support from them.

My advice for DTP/MFA is to organize future programs in sending country like India and Bangladesh, and invite receiving country representatives as participants. We could then express our views more openly. In terms of additional follow-up support, DTP/MFA could share information amongst participants to include in mission dialogue.

**Sathish Madhavan – Journalist, India/Dubai**

*Program's Attended: Doha (2013)*

Sathish is a Dubai based senior journalist who has been predominantly covering stories involving issues and challenges faced by expatriates in the UAE/Middle East. He is the author of Distressing Encounters: Real Life Stories from a Reporter’s Diary, Volume One, which is a compilation of human interest stories from 10 leading English dailies from the region about migrant workers living in the Gulf region. He is also involved in campaigns that promote the welfare of the expatriate community in the Gulf and uses the media as an advocacy tool and as a means of informing the people about the human rights violations occurring in the region. For the last 15 years, Sathish has successfully employed media intervention to help low income workers in the region receive medical aid and financial support.

The materials supplied during the training program were of immense help. Knowledge about various migrant worker rights, and existing international norms and conventions that I acquired from the DTP program has been used in my work. The best and most useful things that I gained from the program were through the round table discussion and special lectures delivered by guest speakers and experts as well as fellow DTP team members. Participation in the round table discussions was very useful. They opened up new insight into the problems that migrant workers face, while the field trips to labour camps in Doha, Qatar, helped me get a firsthand account of the working conditions of Asian migrant workers in that country.

During the DTP program, we had the opportunity to interact with local human rights groups and also government officials. Often we hear only one side of the story, so talking with government officials widened our perception about migrant workers and the problems they face. DTP also helped facilitate networking opportunities with other social workers and organisations in the region. This helps in identifying migrants’ problems and to address them, whenever possible. As a result of participating in DTP, I now have access to network with many human rights groups from Nepal, Bangladesh and some Middle Eastern countries, a dialogue which is continued through the MFA Online platforms.

I believe that the DTP and MFA could provide occasional training and group meetings to refresh our knowledge and help alumni keep in contact. When planning programmes, it would be better to organise such meetings keeping in mind the work schedule of the participants. Week long programmes can hamper normal work schedules and taking leave may be difficult. If the programme is on a weekend, it will be easier to participate.
Dina Nuriyati – Advisory Board, SBMI, Independent Researcher/Advocate, Indonesia


Dina was a young migrant worker in Hong Kong when she began her advocacy for the rights of migrant workers. Dina worked in Hong Kong as a domestic worker for four years. Upon her return to Indonesia, Dina together with a group of return migrant workers established the Federation of Indonesian Migrant Workers Organisations, later known as SBMI – a trade union for migrant workers, in which she is noted as the first chairperson and the Advisory Board member. She has previously also worked as a project officer for Friedrich Eberth Stiftung and as Coordinator of Gender and Migrant Workers Division at Trade Union Care Centre (TUCC) in Aceh, Indonesia. As an independent researcher, Dina also worked on a joint research project conducted by the University of New South Wales and University of Pennsylvania on access to justice for migrant workers from Southeast Asia to the Middle East.

Before the DTP, I often acted without in-depth analysis particularly in dealing with issues on migrant workers. This totally changed after my participation in DTP. My participation in DTP changed my view and perception, helping me realise that the issue of migrant workers is not an issue to be handled alone, but requires strong cooperation with other parties sharing a common ideology and similar objectives to struggle for the right of migrant workers and justice.

Among the skills gained from the DTP training courses, I recognise technical and strategic lobbying as important skills when undertaking our advocacy work. I am indebted to the DTP trainer who taught me this significant skill, which I have put into practice in my career as an activist for migrant workers’ rights. Through the DTP, I have also learnt about the importance of media and documenting our activity to support our work, and in particular, maintaining good relationships with the media while campaigning and making press releases.

The strength of the DTP lies in its combination of materials necessary for advocacy work and the practical training through strategic exercises to consolidate the knowledge of the participants. Training exercises really helped us to apply the knowledge that we gained and really enhanced our capacity to access and participate in governmental and inter-governmental processes to promote and protection human rights and the rule of law.

I work mostly as an independent researcher now, but when I was still active in the organisation, I tried to apply and share with colleagues all the knowledge I received from the DTP training. The skills I have learnt from DTP still inform how I approach consultations, such as meetings with the ILO. The knowledge and skills from DTP have built my capacity and self-confidence, especially when speaking at forums regionally, nationally and internationally. The knowledge that participants gain from DTP deepens, strengthens and sharpens analyses on the problems of migrant workers from a global perspective.

Transnational strategies are needed for transnational issues. DTP has taught us how important it is to make allies to strengthen the movement of migrant workers. SBMI has been actively involved in many alliances, to strengthen the movement of migrant workers, at regional, national and international levels.

For future follow-up support, DTP and MFA may consider facilitating a meeting with the alumni for reflection and experience exchange. This will be beneficial as it will allow organisers to assess the benefits and difficulties encountered in applying the knowledge gained from the DTP and assist in developing better programs in the future.
Mahendra Pandey - Founding Chairperson, Pravashi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), Nepal

Program/s Attended: Bangkok (2011)

Mahendra is the founding Chairperson of Pravashi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), one of the pioneer organisations focused on education and awareness amongst migrant workers, access to justice for workers and their families, provision of a Rapid Response Mechanism through which the PNCC can provide immediate supports to migrant workers through a widespread network and assistance for reintegration.

Before attending the DTP training, I didn’t know that much about human rights instruments and had few skills on developing linkages between violation issues of migrant workers’ rights and those of human rights violations. Although every session and all the content was very valuable, the most useful part of the training was the provision of knowledge on international legal instruments and how they are implemented in the practical field. There have been some difficulties in applying the learning from the training, as we need to provide even more practical knowledge to fieldwork. However, I have done my best to utilise my knowledge to still benefit migrant workers and their families.

After the DTP training, as an active and technically equipped person of my Organisation, I have conducted training similar to DTP in Nepal, which has really supported other Nepali, including rights activists, social workers, human rights activists and lawyers. This training from DTP has supported my organisation in engaging with UN and regional human rights bodies and processes, engaging with government and using the media for advocacy purposes. It has also been applied to help us become involved in UPR, and engagement with the government and media for lobbying and advocacy purposes. I am using my skills, materials and networks, which were largely acquired from the DTP training in my day-to-day work for the rights protection of migrant workers and their families.

The program was also helpful in developing my capacity to build personal networks and collaborate with other migrant rights activists, thereby allow collaboration. Network partners include the Human Rights Committee (Qatar), Malaysian Bar and lawyers.

I personally suggest that the DTP should carry out assessment among DTP alumni and provide top-level participants with more training based on what they practice. This will equip them with more skills so that they can lead campaigns and advocacy with greater efficiency. As a follow-up, in addition to the above, DTP and MFA could also consider providing the alumni with online courses with assignment for further evolution and guidance.

Francis Solomantine


Francis Solomantine recently joined the Solidarity Center in Sri Lanka as Program Officer. The Solidarity Center and its partners support and promote government and workplace policies aimed at protecting the rights of migrant workers, including Sri Lankans, especially in the Middle East. Previously, Francis was Program Coordinator at the Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), managing the Labour Migration Project supported by the SDC. His responsibilities included capacity building of community-based paralegals on redress mechanisms for migrant workers.

Most of my interventions at the ground level are from the knowledge gained through the DTP/MFA training programs. I have been able to apply those skills gained, not only at the local level, but also at the national and international levels. In particular, skills such as concept design, meeting
coordination, and collaboration with both state and non-state actors in order to implement initiatives and develop conceptualised proposals. The skills have been applied during paralegal trainings, civil society coalition meetings, project advisory committee meetings of the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and at international forums.

The material from the DTP/MFA trainings has also formed the basis of some of my own work. Some of the policy briefings provided by MFA have been translated into local languages and used during trainings at the community level. At CHRD, we used the participant’s profile and evaluation sheet to strengthen our own initiatives.

I would like to thank DTP and MTA for strengthening and supporting my relationship with existing networks to carry out my advocacy work. I have been very successful in building alliances with like-minded organisations at all levels, which strengthens my lobbying and advocacy and assists engagement. The diplomatic approach, which I learnt from the DTP training, has also helped me to build skills in order to engage in new initiatives with organisations and activists working on migrant rights issues globally. I have built close alliances, particularly in regard to information sharing and seeking legal redress and advice. The networks I have developed with countries of destination and of origin, including MFA members, NHRIs, international lawyers, media personnel and UN agencies are very useful in my day-to-day work. I have seen the improved results of being able to approach them.

I really believe and acknowledge that the DTP/MFA trainings have enhanced and developed my career. As a result, I have advanced within my own organisation and I have been recognised as a human rights defender and migrant rights activist internationally and nationally, which has led to my inclusion on numerous national and international consultations and existing networks. Government entities in Sri Lanka have also recognised my abilities and in turn, this has helped us to strengthen collaboration for some innovative and ongoing initiatives. The DTP program has been designed to be useful and very appropriate. The content covered in the training supports day-to-day practice and assists in capacity-building. It also contributes to the sustainability of our organisation and our work.

DTP should continue distributing the newsletter and publishing the annual report, both of which have proved very informative. It would be ideal if DTP/MFA could consider holding more targeted programs on a specific topic to provide a more in-depth analysis of some of the components, mechanisms and issues. The DTP could also run an annual activity to bring alumni in the same country together to exchange and share experiences. Perhaps it might be feasible to set up individual chapters at a local or regional level to take the lead to organise the DTP alumni. This gathering could be undertaken as a thematic or general follow-up activity.

Sopheap Suong - Regional Manager for the Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center, Cambodia

Program/s Attended: Manila (2008)

Sopheap is currently the Regional Manager for the Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC) in the Northwest Region of Cambodia. Among projects under his supervision, Sopheap has been running a project on safe migration and reduction of human trafficking since 2008, promoting human rights and safe migration through the delivery of information to potential and current migrants, and organising training for local duty bearers. Sopheap has also cooperated and coordinated with NGO partners at destination countries to provide services to migrant workers who fall victim to trafficking. He has been the focal person of CWCC for Mekong Migration Network since 2006 and is involved with research and joint advocacy efforts.

I have been using knowledge on international human rights instruments and matters related to migrant workers gained from the DTP training in my work in the six years since that training. The knowledge on human rights had a big impact on my work in regard to how to analyse human rights situation and how to address the human rights violations. The knowledge on migrant workers and
their human rights gave me a fundamental view on how to work with migrant workers and to address issues of migrant workers’ human rights. The presentations and interactions between experts on migrant workers matters and human rights and the participants were most useful. The participants could learn from their expertise and we could provide our views. The interactions really gave us ideas on how to work with migrant workers and address human rights violations regardless of their status at the destination country. I have applied much of what I learnt from the DTP course in my work. Using knowledge from the program, I wrote an essay for an entrance exam to apply for International Human Rights Training Program (IHRTP) in Canada in 2011. I was selected and trained for three weeks in Quebec. I have applied all this knowledge in my work and used it to train my colleague and design training materials to educate others on human rights.

The DTP training that I attended in Manila was refresher training for DTP alumni. However, I was new to the program, but luckily, the resource persons were able to elaborate more on the lessons and I found them particularly informative and useful. The content on human rights and migrant workers were clear, although the content on advocacy – especially at a regional level – and the information on using technology in advocacy could have been clearer. At the time, using technology (telephone link) in human rights advocacy was not applicable in my country. But now, social media, such as Facebook, has become more viable and popular in Cambodia. I have a few links with participants from Cambodia, Philippines and Bangladesh and we maintain communications through Facebook and Skype. After participating in the DTP training, my perspective on migrant worker issues has really changed. These matters are really complicated and it is something we need to really look at in-depth in order to get to know about their lives, their happiness and their pains. After attending the program, I have continued working with migrant workers, trying to learn about their lives, their situations and their human rights. Due to this, I have been nominated as the focal person in CWCC when dealing with migration and human trafficking issues. In 2011, I received a Golden Medal Award from the government based on sub-decree signed by the Cambodian Prime Minister acknowledging my great effort in promoting safe migration and combat trafficking in persons.

I would encourage DTP to continue the training course on migrant workers, human rights and advocacy as these topics are still relevant and evolving. The DTP should conduct proper pre-assessment with participants to see what our needs are. I suggest that DTP establish a DTP alumni network! Participants were just instructed and encouraged to keep in touch to share their knowledge and experience, but there is no follow up so participants must try to get in touch with each other through social networking. DTP/MFA should create a network link through which alumni can contact and share their experiences regardless of what year they attended the program. DTP/MFA should follow up on participants’ improvement and organise refresher or reflective courses for its alumni and encourage regular meetings between alumni. DTP should also consider training on how to campaign through social media, such as Facebook, due to its increasing popularity.

Michael White - Senior Legal and Policy Analyst, New Zealand Human Rights Commission, New Zealand

Program/s Attended: Timor Leste (2009)

Michael works as a Senior Legal and Policy Analyst with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission. The work that he currently undertakes is related to migrant workers across a number of human rights activities and programmes, including advocacy around both ratification of the convention, capacity-building (both nationally and regionally) and researching relating to the rights of migrant workers both domestically and within the Asia-Pacific region.
Some of the content I use from the DTP training includes knowledge of the Convention and the rights of migrant workers more broadly at international law. I also now have a better understanding of the issues that migrant workers face regionally, including push/pull factors and the complexities of aligning the political, economic, social and cultural practices and agendas of sending and receiving countries.

The DTP training in advocacy skills, such as the different techniques to raise awareness and the role that NHRIs can play as a leader, facilitator and coordinator have also been useful. The use of media for advocacy was particularly memorable for me as this was an area where I had had little exposure previously.

The use of networks, whether to advance issues which may not fit in a particular institution’s mandate for whatever reason, or to create solidarity around particular issues, was particularly informative. Although I do not refer to the materials from the DTP on a daily basis any more, they have been an invaluable resource for my work. I have reworked the materials to align directly with the situation in New Zealand and I now use these in capacity-building and advocacy activities.

Every aspect of the training was useful. It provided a holistic approach to migrant workers’ rights and gave us the basic tools to work in this area. The program has given me a better understanding of the application of rights to different groups of people, populations and countries. It has provided me with a deeper appreciation of regional and sub-regional challenges.

The networking opportunities also allowed participants to share their experiences and best practice, as well as establish ongoing contact and relationships, so that we may collaborate with networks to advance particular issues and concerns. I was able to build networks with both regional NHRIs and NGOs. I have continued to build and develop these relationships, which has been invaluable in my work in this area.

I have engaged with UN bodies and the government around issues pertaining to migrant workers’ rights. As a Western receiving country with little political will to ratify the Convention at this stage, this has required innovative approaches to be adopted. The training from DTP has equipped me with the techniques and tools to be able to do this.

As an introductory course, the training programme provided by the DTP is an exemplar. In my view, however, it would be useful to have more follow up courses, perhaps an advanced programme with time for roundtable conversations sharing experiences implementing what we have learnt.

I look forward to continuing to work with DTP and its alumni.