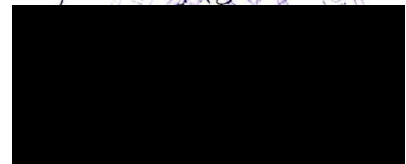




International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

Authorized for submission



Project Proposal:

ASSISTANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA TO ADDRESS THE IMMEDIATE AND MID-TERM NEEDS OF THE SRI LANKAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN LINE WITH THE NATIONAL COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN FOR MIGRANT WORKERS

Project type:	RR - Return and Reintegration Assistance for Migrants and Governments
Secondary project type:	
Geographical Coverage:	Sri Lanka
Executing agency:	International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Beneficiaries:	Migrant workers in vulnerable conditions, predominantly domestic workers or undocumented/ irregular migrants stranded abroad awaiting repatriation and upon their return. Approximately, 100 stranded migrants and returnee migrant workers will be selected for support either at destination country, country of origin or both.
Partner(s):	Ministry of Labour (Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment (SLBFE), State Ministry of Foreign Employment, Ministry of Foreign Relations, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Defence (Department of Immigration and Emigration).
Management site:	Sri Lanka-CO-Colombo-LK10
Duration:	12 Months
Budget:	180,518.00 US Dollar

Summary

Sri Lankan migrant workers in the Middle East, the primary destination for migrants, are amongst those most impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Approximately 97.4 percent of domestic workers and 78 percent of low-skilled category workers are concentrated in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. As per the Foreign Ministry, currently, a total number of 34,721 migrant workers have requested repatriation assistance from SLBFE due to layoffs and other causes of unemployment. The Government has prioritized the need for repatriation following the discovery of a fast-spreading new variant of the coronavirus, including cases in the Middle East. Due to increasing unemployment, many countries have requested migrant workers who cannot sustain themselves to return; consequently, migrants are likely to adopt riskier coping strategies which create more opportunities for human trafficking and associated forms of exploitation. In many countries, migrants are in crowded safe houses managed by the Sri Lankan embassies, which pose several health and safety risks. Few countries have requested undocumented migrants (including those who have overstayed their visas) to leave the

country; these migrant workers are reportedly being denied health care and are being rounded up for detention and deportation. Lack of repatriation options push migrants, particularly women, into vulnerable or exploitative situations. Social services are stretched, with limited ability to meet the specific needs of stranded and/or vulnerable migrants such as rights protection, translation and interpretation assistance, documentation support, and assisted voluntary return and reintegration.

Against this background and at the request of SLBFE to support repatriation of migrant workers standard abroad, the project proposes following outputs and activities:

Output 1: Stranded migrants and migrant returnees have access to timely, context-specific and correct information on COVID-19 prevention measures.

Output 2: Vulnerable stranded migrant workers have improved access to protection, and assistance services in host countries.

Output 3: Migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in their host countries and wish to return to Sri Lanka continue receiving support related to their return.

1. Rationale

Approximately 1.5 million Sri Lankan migrant workers are employed overseas¹. Statistics derived from the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) indicate that in 2018, less skilled and domestic worker categories represented 55.2 per cent of the total departures for foreign employment from Sri Lanka. The Middle Eastern region continues to be the main destination for Sri Lankan migrant workers. Approximately 97.4 percent of domestic workers and 78 percent of low-skilled category workers are concentrated in Kuwait, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Over 40,000 migrant workers, predominantly from the Middle East region have been the top segment of overseas workers who have been returned so far, whereas another 20,000 Sri Lankans have been returned from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin American regions. As per SLBFE, a total of 34,721 workers who lost their jobs due to fall of oil prices in the Middle East and the COVID - 19 disaster have already requested the SLBFE to repatriate them². The SLBFE is currently planning to repatriate 30,000 migrant workers within the next 03 months and as of April 2021, with the mandatory quarantine period has been reduced to seven days. 14 hotels have been selected that are to be used as quarantine centres, which would not incur any cost to the migrant workers, although the airfare must be borne by the migrant workers themselves³.

Due to increasing unemployment, many countries have requested undocumented migrants and migrant workers who cannot sustain themselves to return; consequently, migrants are likely to adopt riskier coping strategies which create more opportunities for human trafficking and associated forms of exploitation. In many countries, migrants are in crowded safe houses managed by the Sri Lankan

¹Corporate Plan, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment 2017 – 2021, <http://www.slbfe.lk/file.php?FID=386> , and see, National Policy & Action Plan on Migration for Employment for Sri Lanka 2020 – 2023 (2020), unpublished.

²Ibid.

³<http://www.ft.lk/front-page/Govt-assures-fully-funded-repatriation-and-quarantine-for-migrant-workers/44-715076>

embassies, which pose several health and safety risks. These migrant workers are reportedly being denied health care and are being rounded up for detention and deportation⁴. Social services are stretched, with limited ability to meet the specific needs of stranded and/or vulnerable migrant workers such as rights protection, translation and interpretation assistance, documentation support, and assisted voluntary return and reintegration⁵. Migrants in such vulnerable situations are unable to effectively enjoy their human rights and are at increased risk of violations and abuse.

The SLBFE in collaboration with the Sri Lankan embassies maintains several safe houses/shelters for Sri Lankan migrant workers in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Cyprus, Jeddah, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, and Riyadh, however there is no gender disaggregated data available currently.

IOM recently carried out a rapid needs assessment to have an in-depth understanding of the background/context of the stranded Sri Lankan migrants abroad. It suggested that migrant workers in semi-skilled or other less skilled categories and undocumented/irregular migrants are in extremely vulnerable conditions and are awaiting repatriation⁶ and would require immediate relief assistance upon their return. The assessment is based on the information received from stranded migrants, calls received to the IOM hotline seeking assistance, government stakeholders and IOM missions and Sri Lankan embassies in destination countries.

Since there is no updated data available on the number of migrants awaiting return, IOM missions have coordinated with relevant embassies/consulates in countries of destination and have obtained some statistics (refer Table 1) on the number of stranded migrants who intend to return to Sri Lanka. These figures have been received verbally as no official data represent this group.

Table 1

Country of Destination	No. of stranded Sri Lankan migrants	Gender (Male/Female) %
UAE (as of March 2021)	600	40/60
Kuwait (as of March 2021)	5000	30/70
Bahrain (as of July 2020)	140	50/50
Cyprus (as of July 2020)	225	50/50
Israel (as of July 2020)	155	40/60
Jordan (as of July 2020)	686	40/60
Lebanon (as of July 2020)	1500	10/90
Oman (as of July 2020)	746	30/70
Qatar (as of July 2020)	1900	60/40
KSA (Riyadh & Jeddah) (as of July 2020)	1000	30/70

⁴Socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on migrant populations and communities in Sri Lanka, 2020, page 7

⁵UN Advisory Paper: Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 In Sri Lanka, https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/LKA_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf

⁶Policy brief, COVID-19 and its implications on human trafficking in Sri Lanka 2020

In addition to the above, IOM mission in Lebanon has reported that there are nearly 20 migrants who are homeless and in a very vulnerable situation, needing urgent assistance to return to the country. Further, approximately 15 migrants in Croatia have approached IOM mission requesting possible return assistance as they do not have the necessary financial means to support their return.

The 'Contact Sri Lanka' Web Portal has been able to direct Sri Lankans to the nearest Sri Lanka Diplomatic Mission, and also to help connect vulnerable categories of Sri Lankans who are in need of food and medical emergencies, with provision of dry rations, medicines and in certain occasions facilitating arrangements for shelter. However, the system is challenged due to the overwhelming number of requests made by migrant workers who are adversely affected by COVID-19.

Due to the surge of requests for assistance that sending missions receive, the current funding is not sufficient to meet the migrants' immediate and medium term needs, such as medical support, documentation support, transitional shelter assistance, food and hygiene support, for instance. In order to further assist, IOM Sri Lanka can in such instances provide assistance to both IOM missions and Sri Lankan embassies abroad to meet such needs of migrants and assist those most vulnerable with repatriation assistance (air tickets, assistance with PCR testing and facilitating quarantine upon arrival). IOM Sri Lanka will coordinate with the Sri Lankan embassies in the identified destination countries and IOM missions abroad to organize the repatriation, as well as coordinating with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Sri Lanka Bureau for Foreign Employment to obtain necessary pre-travel COVID-19 clearances. There will also be a predetermined cap of at least 50 migrants in highly vulnerable situations who will be assisted with flight tickets and related costs that IOM will be able to sponsor through this project, which will also be ascertained once the needs assessment is conducted.

As there is a high number of stranded migrants, various stakeholders are addressing multiple needs. In most cases, Sri Lankan government provides shelter and access to food and sanitation for the migrants in most vulnerable conditions. The NGOs in destination countries also provide NFI and food for a limited number of migrants but they are unable to continue these interventions long term due to lack of resources.

Based on the information received through IOM hotlines and feedback from IOM missions and Sri Lankan embassies/consulates, IOM envisages to address the immediate short-term needs of 90 stranded migrant workers with the funding from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australia.

IOM's support will be extended at pre-departure, upon arrival and post arrival stages of the migration cycle as outlined in results matrix. Discussions with returnee migrants revealed that many experience challenges upon their return. Access to relief packages, medical needs, psychological counselling and other immediate needs such as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. are some of the persisting needs of migrants upon their return.

2. Project Description

Through the funds of the UN Sri Lanka SDG Multi-Partner Trust Fund and at the request of SLBFE, IOM will contribute to the objective of mitigating and addressing immediate and mid-term protection needs of the Sri Lankan migrant workers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is built on

the urgent priorities in the National COVID-19 Response Plan for Migrant Workers⁷ (1. Measures required at country of destination; 2. Measures to be taken to repatriate migrant workers; and 3. Quarantine support for the most vulnerable cases upon arrival), and the UN Advisory paper: Immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. The National COVID-19 Response Plan for Migrant Workers that has been prepared by the SLBFE through a series of consultation with various stakeholders in collaboration with SLBFE, ILO and IOM under the guidance of the ministry of Skills Development Employment and Labour Relations. The Ministry has requested IOM support to implement this plan.

The project will target the Middle East region with some provisions (minimum of 10% of the target group) to assist stranded migrants in critical conditions in other countries. Among the countries in the Middle East, the project will prioritize countries such as Kuwait and Lebanon as per the request of the Government and considering the vulnerabilities of migrants. The beneficiaries will be identified based on vulnerability screening tools and needs assessments undertaken by IOM in consultation with SLBFE.

The project is in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and primarily contributes to SDG Target 10.7 by (1) facilitating voluntary returns, which form part of the cycle of international migration and are essential to comprehensive migration management, and by (2) assisting returning migrants as well as Member States to address challenges associated with return migration and re-inclusion. Other SDG targets also make direct connections to migration topics, human trafficking (5.2, 8.7). The project directly contributes to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration objectives 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration and 10. Prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.

The project envisages the following outcome and outputs:

Outcome 1: Protection and assistance needs of migrant workers in vulnerable conditions are mitigated and addressed at pre-departure stage at CoDs and upon arrival in Sri Lanka

Output 1.1 Stranded migrants and migrant returnees have access to timely, context-specific and correct information on COVID-19 prevention measures.

At the project inception, IOM will conduct a gender sensitive rapid assessment in collaboration with SLBFE to identify details such as the locations, disaggregated data and the needs of the stranded migrant workers in identified Gulf country/countries. The assessment will be based on the data and information shared by SLBFE and will be further informed of the location and needs of stranded migrants, and able to provide context specific information on COVID-19 prevention.

Based on the needs assessment findings IOM will develop contextualized information, education materials (IEC) on COVID-19 prevention measures and types of assistance available from IOM (e.g hotline to seek information) and other government services. The risk communication materials will be translated to Sinhala and Tamil local languages. The messages will be disseminated via social media boosting that will reach to a targeted audience of migrant workers in the Middle East.

IOM will continue to operate the hotlines and respond to requests for information on migrant assistance and protection needs of migrants due to COVID-19. The hotline records will provide further evidence on the needs of the stranded migrant workers.

⁷Led by SLBFE, with the joint technical assistance from ILO and IOM under the guidance of the State Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Market Diversification (under the Ministry of Labour).

Output 1.2: Vulnerable stranded migrant workers have improved access to protection, and assistance services in host countries.

In coordination with relevant consulates, embassies or in absence, IOM missions in destination countries, facilitate individualized screening and deliver necessary services and assistance for addressing vulnerability and exploitation including, *inter alia*, access to adequate shelter, food and nutrition, hygiene items and health including counselling/ psychosocial support and access to health care.

The IOM mission in the destination country will conduct the screening to assess the vulnerability/Voluntary Declaration Form will be filled by the migrant to declare his/her voluntariness to return home and informs IOM Sri Lanka. Initial consultations have been conducted with the IOM missions in the Middle East region, however, the countries will be finalized after the needs assessment has been conducted considering the requests from the Government. In coordination with the SLBFE IOM will support 90 beneficiaries for support based on a vulnerability screening criterion. In line with the IOM Reintegration Handbook⁸, the Rapid Vulnerability Assessment screening form and the Migrant Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse screening form are tools that will be used before travel and again when returnees arrive in their country of origin. Further, IOM will obtain necessary government approvals to repatriate the migrant. In coordination with IOM Sri Lanka, the following services will be offered to migrants based on their needs:

- Pre-departure counselling to explain the return process.
- Addressing any immediate needs based on vulnerability screening, e.g. establishing referrals.
- Cash grants with a predetermined cap to meet any urgent needs during travel/transit if required.
- Provide departure assistance, e.g. counselling, COVID-19 related travel information.

IOM Sri Lanka will coordinate with the relevant destination country IOM mission regarding return and will provide translation support and virtual counselling support in local languages as per the requirements.

Output 1.3: Migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in their host countries and wish to return to Sri Lanka continue receiving support related to their return.

In coordination with relevant consulates, embassies, and IOM missions abroad, organise voluntary returns for the most vulnerable migrants whenever feasible in line with international and national public health recommendations. IOM will facilitate pre-departure health checks for migrants who intend to return voluntarily; refer returnees to appropriate health professionals if they develop COVID-19 related symptoms.

The following services will be carried out:

- Health screening/PCR/Fit to Travel (FFT health assessments)

⁸https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom_reintegration_handbook.pdf

- Booking air tickets
- Providing transport assistance to the airport
- Immigration formalities and quarantine process (handled by GoSL)
- Arranging onward transportation upon request (From the quarantine centre)

3. Partnerships and Coordination

At the national level, the project will work with Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) and the State Ministry of Foreign Employment which have the relevant mandates related to migrant workers. The SLBFE under the State Ministry of Foreign Employment and the Ministry of Labour, is the key government institution responsible for migrant returnee workers. IOM will select the target beneficiaries and provide assistance in close coordination with SLBFE. IOM will also coordinate with the State Ministry of Women and Child Development (under the Ministry of Education) will be another key ministry for issues related to women migrant workers in vulnerable conditions.

The project will coordinate with the Ministry of Health and their local officials in the provision of mental health and psycho-social support services at district level. IOM's field offices in Jaffna, Kilinochchi and Batticaloa will assist in this work. For the interventions at countries of destination, IOM will facilitate the process with Sri Lankan High Commission or Embassy in the destination country, destination country authorities, destination country NGOs / CSOs, Family members of the migrant in the country of origin. Furthermore, IOM's presence in over 172 countries and involvement in several regional consultative processes place the organization in a position of advantage to reach out to the stranded migrants abroad.

IOM has well-established centrally managed management, procurement and financial systems in place. Additionally, in order to maintain data on direct assistance and for the purpose of contributing to updated statistics and informed policy, all data obtained on assisted returnees/VoTs are entered and captured within IOM's global database on Migration - Migrant Management Operational System Application (MIMOSA)⁹.

4. Monitoring

The programme team will develop a results monitoring framework, a detailed work plan and an action plan once the project starts. This will form the basis for monitoring. The IOM programme manager will be responsible for monitoring of the project based on the results monitoring matrix.

IOM will submit the following to meet communication and reporting requirements of DFAT. IOM will adhere to the branding guidelines of the donor in the communication materials produced. The materials may include;

⁹ IOM's activities on Migration Data: An Overview -
https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iom_activities_overview.pdf?language=fr

- A one-page case study on the main countries that migrants are being repatriated from, along with their immediate and medium terms needs and the repatriation assistance that is required.
- Photos of activities (for use on social media) will be shared with DFAT and RCO
- Email any press release for review to DFAT and RCO for approval prior to dissemination.
- Coordination with sending missions for recording returns on MiMOSA.

5. Evaluation

An evaluation will not be conducted as part of this project due to budget constraints. However, together with the final report, a lessons learnt exercise will also be conducted to reflect on the achievements of the project in terms of outcome and output level results and to record any lessons learnt. This will also assist in identifying the remaining needs of the migrant workers.

6. Results Matrix

	Indicator	Data Source and Collection Method	Baseline	Target	Assumptions
Objective: To contribute to mitigating and addressing immediate and mid-term protection needs of the Sri Lankan migrant workers affected by COVID-19 pandemic.	% of migrant returnees who report being satisfied with repatriation assistance received from IOM Survey (disaggregated by gender and age).	IOM Survey	0.00	70.00	
Outcome 1: Protection and assistance needs of migrant workers in vulnerable conditions are mitigated and addressed at pre-departure stage at CoDs.	% of assisted stranded migrant workers satisfied with the repatriation assistance and protection services (disaggregated by gender and age).	Interviews and survey	0.00	80.00	The Government prioritizes the return and repatriation of stranded migrant workers to Sri Lanka as part of their COVID-19 response plan.
Output 1.1: Stranded migrants and migrant returnees have access to timely, context-specific and correct information on COVID-19 prevention measures	Availability of a rapid needs assessment report	Document review		Yes	Relevant government authorities take into account the baseline needs assessment in the facilitation of return.
Activities that lead to Output 1.1	# of people reached through IOM social media posts targeting Middle East region	IOM social media account information	0.00	15000.00	The rapid needs assessment holds a high quality and identifies relevant information to facilitate repatriation (does not incur a cost).
1.1.1 Conduct a rapid needs assessment and identify the migrants in extreme vulnerable conditions in collaboration with the government stakeholders (does not incur a cost).					
1.1.2 Disseminate IEC materials already developed on risk communication and information dissemination on available services (does not incur a cost).					

<p>Output 1.2: Vulnerable stranded migrant workers have improved access to protection, assistance services in host countries.</p>	<p># of stranded migrant workers who receive protection or other repatriation related services in host countries (disaggregated by gender and type of service: pre-departure counselling, addressing immediate needs based on vulnerability screening, cash grants to meet any urgent needs during travel/transit, departure assistance)</p>	<p>Document review</p>	<p>0.00</p>	<p>90.00</p>	<p>Migrants are willing to seek relevant services, screening, and referrals for repatriation.</p>
<p>Activities that lead to Output 1.2</p> <p>1.2.1 Facilitate individualized screening in coordination with SLBFE (does not incur a cost).</p> <p>1.2.2 Deliver necessary services and/or provide cash grants to address any immediate needs such as food, hygiene items or urgent needs during travel/transit.</p> <p>1.2.3 Provide pre-departure counselling/ psychosocial support and access to health care for migrants (does not incur a cost).</p>					
<p>Output 1.3: Migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in their host countries and wish to return to Sri Lanka continue receiving support related to their return.</p>	<p># of migrants who are in vulnerable situations due to COVID-19 who received additional return support, (disaggregated by gender, age and type of services: Health screening/PCR/Fit to Travel, booking of air tickets, transport assistance to the airport, immigration formalities and quarantine process, arranging onward transportation)</p>	<p>Document review</p>	<p>0.00</p>	<p>50.00</p>	<p>Migrants are willing to receive repatriation support if needed.</p>
<p>Activities that lead to Output 1.3</p> <p>1.3.1 Organise voluntary returns for the most vulnerable migrants in line with international and national public health recommendations.</p> <p>1.3.2 Facilitate pre-departure health checks for migrants who intend to return voluntarily, refer returnees to appropriate health professionals if they develop COVID-19 related symptoms.</p>					
<p>The return process follows international and national recommendations.</p>					

7. Work Plan

Activity	Responsible Party	Time Frame - Months											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.1.1 Conduct a rapid needs assessment and identify the migrants in extreme vulnerable conditions in collaboration with the government stakeholders (does not incur a cost).	IOM/SLBFE												
1.1.2 Disseminate IEC materials already developed on risk communication and information dissemination on available services (does not incur a cost).	IOM												
1.2.1 Facilitate individualized screening in coordination with SLBFE (does not incur a cost).	IOM/SLBFE												
1.2.2 Deliver necessary services and/or provide cash grants to address any immediate needs such as food, hygiene items or urgent needs during travel/transit.	IOM												
1.2.3 Provide pre-departure counselling/ psychosocial support and access to health care for migrants (does not incur a cost).	IOM												
1.3.1 Organise voluntary returns for the most vulnerable migrants in line with international and national public health recommendations.	IOM/SLBFE/MFA/Sri Lankan embassies												
1.3.2 Facilitate pre-departure health checks for migrants who intend to return voluntarily, refer returnees to appropriate health professionals if they develop COVID-19 related symptoms.	IOM												

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