



Public Services International
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Sixth Informal Thematic Session: “Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures”

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Panel 3 – Recognition of Skills and Qualifications and Relevant Measures

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Public services are facing the phenomenon of labour migration. This is most visible in the health sector.

Shortages, demographics, unequal distribution of health workers, undervaluing of health care work, unemployment, underemployment and precarious work and the interplay of these factors are drivers of migration in the health sector. Women and young workers are disproportionately affected, being the predominant workforce in the health and care sectors. Out of necessity, and not by choice, health workers are forced to leave their home countries in search of decent work elsewhere.

Developing countries are often on the losing end, left with an acute shortage of health workers and fragile health systems, while faced with threats of health outbreaks, conflicts, climate change impacts and displacement, among others.

The migration of health workers is a global concern, which requires global solutions anchored on the principles of human rights, sustainable development, social justice, and solidarity. The concept of Global Skills Partnership to address staff shortages in countries of destination, while providing employment opportunities for countries of origin, must be examined within this framework. A real partnership takes into account sustainability of workforces and skills needs of both countries of origin and destination. This can only be done through properly regulated government-to-government arrangements with the participation of social partners. The example of the Germany-Philippines Bilateral Labour Agreement on Nurses offers a good practice model, bringing trade unions and employers in a social dialogue in designing labour migration governance.

Mutual recognition of skills and qualifications is essential in addressing brain drain and brain waste. However, it must take into account fairness, non-discrimination, equality of opportunity and treatment and protection of human and labour rights. With mutual recognition, must come mutual responsibility by States to ensure the sustainable development of the health workforce in both origin and destination countries.

The often-promoted model of public-private partnerships has its failures, and PSI has plenty of evidence to support this. While the private sector can enhance employment opportunities, skills development and mobility, it is the ultimate responsibility of States to govern labour migration, in respect of international human rights norms and labour standards.

Finally, public services, such as health and social services, are critical in fighting poverty, addressing inequality and promoting social inclusion and cohesion. For this reason, public services are not temporary jobs. They are not seasonal jobs. We cannot have temporary and circular migration in public services.