

Media Update

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ILO

Press Release

Promoting Safe Migration from Pakistan:

Pakistan Overseas Employment Promoters Association launches a Code of Conduct on Ethical Recruitment

ISLAMABAD, 22 June : Pakistanis can legally pursue overseas employment through two modalities, either through a public or private overseas employment promoter or through “direct” employment, by which an individual makes an employment arrangement on their own or through a friend or relative working abroad. Today, about 58 percent of all Pakistani migrant workers find employment abroad with the help of a private overseas employment promoter and it is clear that these actors play a pivotal role to promote Pakistani manpower abroad and match workers with suitable employment opportunities.

Private overseas employment promoters are licensed by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource development (MoOP&HRD). However, these licenses are no guarantee that every promoter apply ethical recruitment practices; it is well known that malpractices (including high costs and fees, failure to meet placement obligations and contract substitution) are fairly common among overseas promoters.

Recognising that these challenges persists within the private recruitment sector, the **Pakistan Overseas Employment Promoters Association (POEPA)**, the representative body of private overseas employment promoters in Pakistan, has developed a Code of Conduct on Ethical Recruitment (hereafter referred to as the *Code of Ethical Conduct*) as the industry’s self-regulation and monitoring programme. The Code of Ethical Conduct is applicable to all its members and was developed with support



from the **ILO South Asia Labour Migration Governance Project**, a project that is supported by the European Union. Pakistan's third Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) 2016-2020 highlights the importance of improved governance of labour migration and recognises the recruitment industry as an important stakeholder. The ILO join hands with all stakeholders to protect the rights of migrant workers and promote safe migration from Pakistan.

Talking at the launching ceremony of the Code of Ethical Conduct earlier today, **Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal, Central Chairman, Pakistan Overseas Employment Promoters Association** said that the Code of Ethical Conduct was developed to promote ethical recruitment practices in Pakistan. He stressed that “the Code of Ethical Conduct will be our guide to do things right in our business“. Mr Afzal pointed out that “private recruitment agencies are contributing a lot to the development of Pakistan by promoting our manpower abroad, which in turn generates a significant inflow of remittances to the country“. He emphasized that “the major aim and objective of implementation of this Code of Ethical Conduct is to identify un-ethical practices in our trade and to establish guidelines and procedures on fair and ethical business practices applicable to all POEPA members. The compliance with the new ethical business practices outlined in the code, will ensure a good reputation of the recruitment industry in the eyes of every segment of our society”.

Mr. Aqeel Awan, Member of Pakistan Overseas Employment Promoters Association (POEPA) provided a comprehensive overview of the objectives of the Code of Ethical Conduct and outlined the key steps in its implementation. Mr Awan said that “the Code provides industry-wide principles for ethical recruitment, promotes self-accountability and regulates the conduct of overseas employment promoters with ethical standards that comply with the Emigration Ordinance and Emigration Rules, 1979“. Mr Awan explained that “the Code of Ethical Conduct is based on international and regional good practices and commitments on fair recruitment including ILO and other UN instruments; industry specific models such as the Code of Conduct on Ethical Recruitment developed by the International Confederation of Private Employment Services (CIETT), and work done under the regional Overseas Employment Service Providers Alliance of Asian Associations. The key principles of the Code of Ethical Conduct include promotion of highest business standards in all components of the recruitment process including job advertisement, protection and welfare of workers, skills training, handling of complaints and disputes, job seekers and customer care and partnership development“.

Mr Awan also shared a separate plan outlining how the Code of Ethical Conduct will be implemented; a plan that includes training, monitoring and reporting and stressed that “POEPA will establish a compliance committee that will collect implementation reports from each OEP and will compile it into an annual report“. He said that “in the event a member is found guilty of gross misconduct, POEPA will have the authority to suspend the violator’s membership in the association and can recommend that the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Pakistanis cancel their business license“.

Ms Ingrid Christensen, Country Director, International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Office for Pakistan, congratulated the POEPA on this achievement. Speaking at the event, she explained that “in today’s globalized economy, workers are increasingly looking for job opportunities beyond their home country. Labour migration in Asia largely occurs under temporary migration regimes and for less skilled work. By matching available jobs in countries of destination with qualified workers in countries of origin, public and private employment agencies have an important role in this quest. At the same time concerns have been raised about the growing role of unscrupulous employment agencies, informal labour intermediaries and other operators acting outside the legal and regulatory framework. Despite the existence of international labour standards relating to recruitment, national laws and their enforcement often fall short of protecting the rights of migrant workers.“ Ms Christensen stressed that “the Code of Ethical Conduct is a strategic component of the attempts of the Pakistani private recruitment industry to regulate the conduct of all its members through an industry-wide self-regulation and monitoring initiative; all with the aim to ensure fair recruitment”.

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UNHCR

Press Release

UNHCR Chief Urges for inclusive education for all including Afghan refugees

PESHAWAR, 23 June: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi has urged the international community to invest more in youth empowerment and education while the current emergencies have increased global concern about the additional risks faced by children who do not have access to educational opportunities. The High Commissioner noted that protracted refugee hosting countries need additional support for education.

“Emphasis on education particularly becomes vital at a time when children below the age of 18 constitute 51 per cent of the total 65.3 million globally displaced people.” Said the Refugee Chief, at the occasion of the inauguration ceremony of a Government Girls Primary School in Daad Behsud, Nowshera on Thursday.

The UN Refugee Agency through German funding rehabilitated the existing structure of school by constructing 08 additional classrooms, toilets, and overhauling of the entire building, provision of furniture, sports goods and aid kits.

The UNHCR Chief spent some quality time with students of the school and also inaugurated a Sustainable Development Goal #4 (SDG) wall at the School. Grandi, together with students of Daag Behsud School painted SDG messages on one of the walls of the school, dedicated to promote education. The United Nations is empowering Pakistani youth for the promotion of peace and harmony in the country. The UN Wall Campaign is a wall chalking campaign for the Pakistani youth to disseminate key values of the United Nations.

Addressing a gathering of students, teachers and their parents, UNHCR Chief said, “Investment in Pakistani and Afghan youth equals to investment in resilience, empowerment, stability and future of both countries.” Mr. Grandi added, that a living example of such resilience was Ms. Aqeela Asifi, 2015 Nansen Refugee Award Winner, an Afghan refugee teacher who dedicated



her life for the education of refugee girls. Ms. Asifi was also present at the ceremony.

Mr. Grandi assured that UNHCR is committed to support governments globally for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal #4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030.

The High Commissioner appreciated the provincial government for allowing access to refugee children in public schools. He said, “Despite this international commitment, education for refugees, remains widely under-supported and underfunded. Under-investment in refugee education results in continued low enrolment rates, gender disparity and low quality of education.” The High Commissioner added that, efforts to provide education options for Afghan refugees, by host governments, NGOs, UN agencies, public schools and civil society have unequivocally proven the benefits of education and training, particularly for Afghan refugee girls.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Imran Zeb, Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CCAR) said that, education is vital to improve the future human capital of Afghanistan and its economic sustainable development and peace building.

The Chief Commissioner added that, the tireless work of educators and community activists, such as the 2015 Nansen Refugee Award winner, Aqeela Asifi, is testament to the fact that solutions can be found, even in the most challenging of contexts.

Mr. Muhammad Atif Khan, Provincial Minister of Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said, education is among the top priorities of the present provincial government and that the government has allocated USD 1.072 billion (Rs. 111.52 billion) for elementary and secondary education for the years 2016-2017. The Minister said, “The glory of nations lies in the proper and quality education of its youth.” Minister Khan appreciated UNHCR’s support for the rehabilitation of the existing education facilities in KP under its RAHA programme.

The Daag Behsud School upgrading is part of the United Nations and Government of Pakistan joint Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas (RAHA) initiative. Germany is one of the key donors for RAHA interventions and have provided €27.5 million in sectors of health, education, community infrastructure and livelihood, across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

To date, some 10.6 million people have benefited from some 3,500 RAHA projects worth USD 175 million RAHA projects, of which overall around 11 per cent are Afghan refugees whilst 89 per cent have been Pakistani citizens in refugee hosting villages.

During his day-long stay in Peshawar the High Commissioner also held meeting with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pervez Khattak and Governor Iqbal Zafar Jhagra and discussed issues related to refugees in the province.

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