

EXPERIENCE PAPER: TRAINING OF DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT



**Lessons Learned through the Labour Migration Project (LMPSL),
Sri Lanka**

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Abbreviations

DOFE	Development Officer Foreign Employment
MFE	Ministry of Telecommunication, Foreign Employment and Sports
SLBFE	Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment
HELVETAS	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Sri Lanka
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
CDS	Community Development Services
CHRCD	Centre for Human Rights and Community Development
PREDO	Plantation Rural Development Organization
ESCO	Eastern Self-Reliant Community Awakening Organization
SWOAD	Social Welfare Organization Ampara District
SOND	Social Organizations Networking for Development
MIC	Migration Information Centres
FBR	Family Background Report
FDP	Family Development Plan
CCP	Child Care Plan
LMPSL	Labour Migration Project Sri Lanka
D.S Division	Divisional Secretariat

1. Executive Summary & Key Recommendations

Development Officers Foreign Employment (DOFEs) are unique to Sri Lanka and South Asia particularly in the sphere of migration governance. The introduction of DOFEs at the divisional level promoting decentralization of services to migrant workers, opened new avenues for existing and prospective migrant workers and their families based at the grassroots level to access Government services and created a new space for the civil society and other service providers (of migrant workers) to engage and collaborate to promote rights and provide services to migrant workers. Following their appointment in 2013, they have received limited number of trainings from the Ministry of Foreign Employment (MFE) and Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau (SLBFE) as well as from civil society organizations including under the previous project phases of the Labour Migration Project Sri Lanka (LMPSL) funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation on information provision, financial literacy and psycho-social assistance to migrant workers. Lessons learned through the previous capacity building interventions made by the Ministry of Foreign Employment and LMPSL project (previous phases) highlighted the need for more detailed information and training to enhance DOFE's capacity to effectively provide services to migrant workers and their families. DOFEs being the closest Government representative for over a million Sri Lankan migrant workers and their families, building their capacity is key to meaningfully address and respond to the issues and needs of migrant workers and their families.

The **LMPSL project** funded by the SDC made an intervention to train 491 DOFEs in 16 high migration districts in Sri Lanka to capacitate them with theoretical knowledge and soft skills to improve their services to migrant workers and their families and to maximize the positive impacts of a decentralised service provision system. *Training of Development Officers Foreign Employment: Lessons Learned through the Labour Migration Project (LMPSL), Sri Lanka* captures the experiences of LMPSL project partners: HELVETAS, ILO, CDS, CHRCD, ESCO, SWOAD, CARITAS Sethsarana, PREDO and SOND in facilitating the Training of DOFEs in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Employment, highlighting good practices, challenges and lessons learnt during the process of the training programme and has briefly focussed on immediate outcomes of the training programme on DOFE participants. This paper has been compiled by HELVETAS as well as through a series of discussions conducted with representatives from LMPSL project civil society partner organizations, Ministry of Foreign Employment, Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment as well as through series of anecdotal interviews conducted with a selected number of DOFEs who participated in the programme. Information gathered for this paper indicates that the training programme has made a positive contribution to: Facilitate the DOFEs to understand their duties and responsibilities and how to execute them in a professional manner; Provide DOFEs with relevant knowledge soft skills to better discharge their duties to migrant workers; Provide a holistic overview on multiple aspects of labour migration merely going beyond their duties; Build trust and relationship between the DOFEs within the district and outside the district as well as with the Ministry and SLBFE at the National level and Strengthen relationships between the LMPSL project partners and the DOFEs, the Ministry and the SLBFE to a satisfactory level.

Key Recommendations:

- Introduce a system to monitor the service delivery of DOFEs trained through the programme at least through incremental milestones.
- Provide a separate office space for DOFEs working in high migration districts (at least) similar to Migration Information Centres to provide a positive working environment to enhance the delivery of services.
- More importantly, provide guidance and administrative support to DOFEs to focus on providing pre-departure guidance including pre-decision making, follow ups with in service migrant workers, providing welfare services and providing re-integration support to both male and female migrant workers over FBR (Family Background Report) related work. Where necessary, take steps to amend the job description of DOFEs in line with the changing needs of migrant workers and changing dynamics of labour migration.

2. Introduction

This Experience Paper focuses on the role of Development Officers Foreign Employment, deployed at the divisional level in 2013 promoting decentralization of services relating to labour migration in Sri Lanka; sharing the experiences of the LMP SL project partners and the relevant officials at the MFE and SLBFE in facilitating the seven day residential training programme for DOFEs from July 2017 – May 2018 highlighting good practices and key lessons learnt from this intervention as well as immediate outcomes of the training programme.

This training programme, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation was conducted by the LMP SL CSO project partners in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Employment for 491 DOFEs based in 16 high migration districts: Batticaloa, Ampara, Vavuniya, Jaffna, Gampaha, Kurunegala, Kalutara, Ratnapura, Anuradhapura, Nuwaraeliya, Kandy, Trincomalee, Puttalam, Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar

The paper is compiled through a series of interviews and consultations with the relevant officials from the MFE, SLBFE, selected DOFEs who participated in the training programme and LMP SL CSO project partners.

3. Context

3.1 Who is a DOFE?

A designated Government officer appointed at the divisional level (geographically situated closest to village level) to provide government services to migrant workers is unique to Sri Lanka. Development Officers Foreign Employment (DOFEs) are appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Employment and deployed at the divisional level with a mandate to implement Government policies relating to labour migration and to provide multiple Government services to nearly a million of migrant workers and their families. Geographically situated closer to the migrant workers and their families, DOFEs are an important stakeholder in migration governance and decentralized service provision system. Under the functional supervision of the Senior Assistant Secretary of the Ministry and the administrative supervision of respective Divisional Secretary or a representative appointed by the Divisional Secretary, the DOFEs provide multiple services ranging from pre-departure guidance and information provision on safe labour migration; reintegration support; welfare services and submission of various reports including family background reports for female migrant workers, family development plans and care plans.

There are three DOFEs appointed per division based at the divisional secretariat with a higher percentage of DOFEs being women. For divisions with high labour migration (eg: Rideegama), around 4-5 DOFEs are appointed.

3.2 Appointment of DOFEs.

During the mid-nineties the services of the SLBFE were decentralized at the district level. These services were largely limited to pre-departure information provision. As the number of migrant workers and their families increased, more support was required to address their varying needs and issues ranging from pre-departure, in service, post departure information, reintegration and welfare related issues. Moreover, the need to further enhance decentralized service provisions which could be easily accessible to several thousands of underserved migrant workers (who contribute with the highest number of foreign remittances to Sri Lanka's economy) and their families based at the grass roots level have been long felt.

Development officers were introduced to the state sector in 2012, by the Government as part of the Graduate Employment Scheme to provide employment to country's unemployed graduates.

Subsequently, these officers were deployed at several ministries including at the then Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare where around 1100 development officers were recruited and deployed at all divisions in the country. The appointment of DOFEs helped establish the Ministry's presence at the divisional level as well as at the district level to coordinate and implement work relating to labour migration and promote safe migration. However, the newly recruited cadre of DOFEs weren't immediately given a clear job description nor an office space at the divisional secretariat due to the ad-hoc manner in which the development officers were introduced.

"Before the seven-day training, I thought that my only job is to do the FBR. Only after the training that I could fully understand all my duties and responsibilities." – DOFE from Ampara

3.3 Roles and Responsibilities of DOFEs in labour migration

At the very beginning, responsibilities held by the DOFEs included: pre-departure information sharing, promotion of foreign employment and providing re-integration support to returnee migrants. Following the introduction of the Family Background Report (FBR) for female migrant workers, DOFEs had to prioritize on multiple FBR related tasks over other contractual responsibilities where eventually DOFEs perceiving FBR as their "sole responsibility." Currently, they are contractually assigned to deliver following Roles and responsibilities:

1. Creating and maintaining a database of migrant workers in the respective division

Includes mapping of migrant workers in the respective division, preparing a file for each migrant worker with up to date information.

2. Family Background Report Preparation and Submission

Preparing the FBR is a lengthy process for DOFEs which require collecting relevant information and documents from the prospective female migrant worker, conducting field inspections to cross check the information provided and submitting the FBR to the approval committee at the Divisional Secretariat with recommendations on approval or refusal.

3. Preparing reports for migrant worker families

These reports include: social report for each migrant worker family and the family development report and family care plans to address development and child care related goals of selected migrant worker families during the migration cycle.

4. Pre-departure Guidance

Providing information and guidance as well as raising awareness with prospective migrant workers on safe labour migration and contribute towards the promotion of foreign employment.

5. Reintegration Support

Preparing and maintaining a database of returnee migrant workers and attending to their reintegration; referring them to livelihood programmes and conducting frequent follow ups.

6. Support to Children of Migrant Workers

Frequently monitoring the welfare of children of migrant workers and where necessary referring those children and their families to counselling services as well as preparing child care plans for vulnerable child of migrant workers.

7. Progress Reporting

Include: reporting on a monthly basis the progress of the respective duty areas to MFE and maintaining a good rapport with other related institutions; preparing and submitting a monthly progress report on the activities done by the DOFE through the DOFE coordinator to the Ministry.

4. Why the CSOs supported the DOFE Training Programme

The deployment of DOFEs at the divisional level reduced the geographical distance between the migrant workers and key government actors in migration (i.e. MFE and SLBFE) and government service provision was decentralized thus becoming more accessible to migrant workers. However as mentioned in the previous section, the DOFEs having received minimal amount of training in relation to discharging their duties assigned to them meant that they had limited capacity to deal with numerous issues and problems of migrant workers around the migration cycle. However, DOFEs playing a pivotal role as the Govt. focal point at the local level to migrant workers and their families, meant that further investing on strengthening their capacity (through knowledge and skills development) is vital to improve the quality of services they provide to migrant workers and their families at the grass roots level.

4.1 Limited training opportunities

DOFEs having graduated from various academic fields ranging from sociology to physical sciences to performing arts, had limited knowledge and understanding on labour migration to begin with. Since their appointment in 2013, they have sporadically received minimal number of short-term training from the MFE and SLBFE. These include trainings on: government administrative procedures, laws and regulations on labour migration and on FBR related work and the said trainings did not provide all required knowledge or the required soft skills for DOFEs to fulfil their duties to migrant workers at the grass roots level. At the same time, available opportunities to receive training (on the job) for DOFEs were limited within the Ministry due to limited funding and due to an absence of a comprehensive training programme. Furthermore, over the last few years there have been several changes into the DOFEs initial job description (roles and responsibilities) via Ministerial circulars and most DOFEs who are based in the divisional level didn't have a proper understanding on how to execute some of the new tasks assigned to them such as preparing "*Family Development Plans*" or the "*Family Care Plans*". Most DOFEs who were interviewed for this paper mentioned that prior to the seven day training, they hardly prepared a family development plan due to not having enough knowledge and guidance.

4.2 Experiences of the CSOs

CSO project partners, during the earlier phase of the LMPSL project, made several initiatives to train DOFEs working in selected high migration divisions in Galle, Ampara, Batticaloa, Killinochchi and Nuwara-eliya districts from 2013-2015. Under these initiatives DOFEs received training on specific subjects relating to their roles such as: "safe labour migration information provision" (manual and resource package for this training was developed by ILO); financial literacy (manual for this was developed by HELVETAS) and on providing of psycho-social support to migrant workers and their families. As a result of these, CSOs were able to build a good relationship with relevant Govt. officials (relevant DOFEs, divisional and district secretaries as well as with the MFE and SLBFE). During these trainings, CSOs were able to identify gaps and needs in the service delivery of DOFEs to migrant workers that could not be solely addressed through the abovementioned trainings.

Among the key lessons learnt of the CSOs as well as the Ministry was the need to provide holistic thematic knowledge (covering the rights of the migrant workers, labour standards, gender sensitivity, complaint handling mechanisms etc) and soft skills development to DOFEs through a comprehensive training programme in order to facilitate them to serve migrant workers efficiently and effectively. Moreover, both the Ministry and CSOs identified the need to capacitate the DOFE's to function as the first point of contact at the local level for migrant workers on information relating to labour migration due to migrant workers often being misinformed by various unregulated intermediaries functioning at grass roots level.

Objectives of the DOFE training programme:

1. To facilitate the DOFEs to better understand of their roles and responsibilities.
2. To provide comprehensive theoretical knowledge and develop soft skills relating to their job.
3. To complement the trainings conducted under the Phase II of the LMPSL project (safe labour migration information provision, financial literacy, psycho-social support)
4. To build and strengthen relationships between the CSO partners of the project and the Government stakeholders (MFE, SLBFE, DOFEs, District and Divisional Secretariats) to promote collaboration between the said stakeholders.
5. To identify DOFEs with excellent skills, capacity and motivation for specialized training as well to be part of the resource pool to conduct future

5. How we conducted the Training Programme

5.1 Process of Developing and Executing the Training Programme

A training manual and a resource package was developed by a senior consultant commissioned by HELVETAS who had extensive knowledge and experience in labour migration and training of government officials. Both the manual and resource package were developed in close collaboration with MFE, SLBFE and through multi stakeholder consultations and were piloted through all training programmes conducted in the districts before finalizing based on post training feedback.

Selection of resource persons for the training were done by the Ministry of Foreign Employment and included a combination of resource persons from the Ministry and the SLBFE. For specific modules such as gender sensitivity and communication and befriending support, external resource persons were commissioned by CSO partners. Overall facilitation of the training programme conducted for DOFEs from Batticaloa, Ampara, Vavuniya, Jaffna, Gampaha, Kurunegala, Kalutara, Ratnapura, Anuradhapura, Nuwara-eliya, Kandy, Trincomalee, Puttalam, Killinochchi, Mullaitivu and Mannar Districts were done by the LMPSL CSO project partners: HELVETAS, ESCO, SWOAD, CDS, CHRCD, PREDO and CARITAS Sethsarana.

The training was conducted as a seven-day residential programme with funding supported from the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC). Overall facilitation and logistical arrangements (selection of the training venue, coordinating with the resource persons, dissemination of invitee letters, providing meals and accommodations and conducting pre and post training evaluations) for the programme were handled by the LMPSL CSO project partners in collaboration with the Ministry and SLBFE throughout the programme.

5.2 Good practices

5.2.1 Developing a Training Package

A trilingual training package consisting of a Training Manual for trainers and a Resource Package for trainees (including a document setting out an overview of the training package for external stakeholders) were developed for DOFEs on provision of services for migrant workers. During the development of this training package, multiple stakeholders were consulted including officials from the Ministry of Foreign Employment, SLBFE, DOFEs, migrant workers and CSO organizations. At the same time, it supplemented the earlier training approaches and training packages: *Safe Migration Information Package* (ILO) and *Financial Literacy Manual* (HELVETAS). This training package provided holistic knowledge on labour migration; on roles and responsibilities and also placing a strong focus on practical aspects (presentation and befriending skills, positive attitude towards migrants and their families) and on how to provide services to the migrants and their families. Developing a Training Package that provided relevant information to guide resource persons to deliver their training sessions and for DOFEs to provide services to migrant workers was a key element of this programme.

Box 01: Training Manual: Modules

1. Introduction to the Training Programme
2. Working as a DOFE
3. An understanding of labour migration
4. International commitments, policies and laws
5. Institutional framework on labour migration
6. Sensitivity to diversity
7. The Stages of Labour Migration and diverse aspects
8. Grievance redressal
9. Observation visit to SLBFE
10. Economic and Financial aspects
11. Migration Health
12. Communication, befriending and providing support
13. Case Management
14. Mapping of Services
15. Documentation and the role of the MDO

5.2.2 Participatory Approach between Multi-Stakeholders

Concrete efforts were made to follow a participatory approach between key stakeholders representing the Government (MFE, SLBFE, DOFEs) and Civil society organizations (mainly LMPSL project partners) during all stages of the seven-day residential training programme conducted for DOFEs from the 16 high migration districts to increase collaboration and ownership between the multi-stakeholders towards the sustainability of this training programme. For instance, during the entire process of developing the training package, the Technical Consultant along with HELVETAS invested a lot of time to hold multiple consultations with the MFE, SLBFE, CSOs, trade union representatives, migrant workers and DOFEs and especially ensured the participation especially the Ministry and SLBFE.

“The Manual development took a long time than expected due to numerous consultations we had with the stakeholders including the Ministry. But in the end, it was worth the time because we were able to build our credibility on it.”

The Consultant of the Resource Package

These efforts helped in building ownership towards the training programme among key stakeholders especially the Ministry and in obtaining the support of the MFE to institutionalize the training manual and resource package into its existing training programme. Similarly, during the execution of the seven-day residential training programme, a critical role was played by the CSO partners in coordination and facilitation and as result of these collaborative efforts, the CSOs were able to strengthen their relationships with relevant Govt. stakeholders including MFE and SLBFE and also received recognition from the Govt. for their work on safe labour migration in the country.

5.2.3 Sound Coordination and Communication

Ensuring sound coordination and communication (through meetings, frequent correspondence and follow ups) between the CSO partners and relevant focal points from MFE, SLBFE, DOFEs as well as resource persons throughout the training programme was key to assuring smooth implementation of the programme. This helped in selecting and managing numerous resource persons, ensuring participation of DOFEs for the programme and in mitigating other circumstantial issues (eg: last minute changes to resource persons).

5.2.4 Regular Monitoring and Evaluation

Conducting a pre and post training evaluation of the participants through surveys and informal discussions helped to measure the quality of the overall programme (sessions, resource persons and logistics) and to coordinate with the Ministry to take relevant steps to improve this training programme. In addition to this, few CSO organizations took steps to prepare a separate report based on the feedback given by the DOFE participants for the pre and post training evaluation surveys with recommendations to the Ministry towards the sustainability of this training programme.

5.2.5 Providing a conducive training environment

That the programme was conducted as a residential training for over seven days, ensuring a conducive environment for the participants equipped with all required facilities (spacious training halls, quality food, accommodation and natural surroundings), along with provision of language interpreter services is key towards the success of the training. At the same time, accommodating varying needs of the participants proved to be successful in facilitating active participation of DOFEs for the entire duration of the training. For instance, special measures were taken to allow female DOFEs with children below the age of three to bring their children and a caregiver to the training premises where they were provided with accommodation and meals.

5.3 Challenges

5.3.1: Resource persons

Despite MFE, SLBFE and CSO's coordinated efforts to allocate the most suitable resource persons to conduct the training, the programmes faced challenges in managing them. Few resource persons owing to limited preparation, limited training of trainer experience and limited presentation skills could not fully meet the required standards during their sessions. There were last minute changes to allocated resource persons due to them having other professional commitments thus having to make last minute changes to the training agenda. Having a resource pool where a majority being Sinhala speaking, meant that for training programmes conducted for Tamil speaking DOFEs, almost the entire training had to be conducted through providing consecutive interpreters which took additional time from the session agenda and reduced the interest and participation of Tamil speaking DOFEs during post lecture discussions. These had an impact on the overall quality of the training programme.

5.3.2 Coordination and Communication Gaps

Whilst officials at the MFE, SLBFE and CSOs made considerable efforts to ensure sound coordination and communication throughout the programme, the programme encountered some coordination and communication gaps. Considerable number of DOFEs who took part were not given sufficient information on the training programme (purpose, content and importance of this training) in advance and hence they arrived at the venue with little preparation. In certain instances, there was a delay in sending out invitee letters to DOFEs by the MFE focal points.

Due to professional commitments at the field level, the Ministry could release DOFEs based in a district/division only in batches. As a result, CSO partners based in one district could not train all DOFEs in their respective working districts as they had to combine DOFEs from other districts. This had an impact on the follow up work done by the CSO partners with the DOFEs based in their working districts.

A key practical session given by the training module was to conduct an exposure visit to either the SLBFE head office or a regional office. This important session could not be completed due to the inability of SLBFE accommodate a large number of participants.

As a result of the training programme being jointly organized by the MFE and CSO organizations and the active role played by the CSO partners in the overall coordination of the programme triggered confusion among the DOFEs as to who holds the ownership of this programme. The Ministry too was also not familiar with some of the CSO organizations who were new to the project and the relationship between the two organizations were yet to be built and hence due to this, there were communication and coordination related issues during the organizing of certain training programmes.

5.3.3 Low Participation of DOFEs from Jaffna District

Overall participation of DOFEs from Jaffna for the training was low compared to other districts. Despite the training was made compulsory by the Ministry, only 50% of DOFEs from Jaffna participated. The low turnout for the training was attributed to the limited interest and motivation among the said DOFEs on their job itself as labour migration in Jaffna being relatively low compared to other districts.

5.3.4 Training Programme was limited to DOFEs from selected districts

The seven-day training programme as mentioned earlier, was provided only for DOFEs from 16 high migration districts under the LMPSTL project funded by SDC. For the DOFEs from the remaining nine districts the Ministry conducted a three-day training programme to train them on general administrative procedures on knowledge relating to discharging their duties and these trainings weren't as comprehensive as the seven-day training programme. Hence there continues to be disparities between the DOFEs who underwent the seven-day training and the three-day training in terms of knowledge and skills that is required to serve the migrant workers and their families in their districts.

Several months after the seven-day training programme, some of the CSO project partners who facilitated this programme reported that some of the DOFEs that were trained were transferred to other districts and have been replaced with DOFEs belonging to one of the 9 districts that undergo the seven-day training during the rotational transfers conducted by the Ministry. The CSOs also reported that the said DOFEs's capacity (in terms of knowledge and skills) to deliver their services to migrant workers at the local level have been limited compared with the DOFEs who have received the comprehensive seven-day training programme.

"It's easy to work with DOFEs who are trained with our support. During the seven-day training programme, we build a good rapport with those DOFEs from our district which makes it easier for us to work together to address issues of migrant workers. However, after the transfers of some of the DOFEs who we worked earlier, we have to build relationships and rapport with the new DOFEs to collaborate with them and there is always a difference between a trained DOFE and a DOFE who has not received training."

CSO member from Kurunegala District

5.4 Lessons Learnt

- Following the development of the Training Manual and Resource package and upon selection of a pool of resource persons, a Training of Trainers (TOT) was not conducted for the resource pool to sensitize them on the objectives of the training and on the content of the training package and to provide further guidance on conducting the training. Conducting a TOT prior to the commencement of the trainings could have better prepared the resource pool to deliver their sessions as per required standards as well as towards the overall sustainability of the training programme.
- Developing a separate training cadre within the Ministry of Foreign Employment to conduct future trainings programmes (seven-day residential training programmes) for DOFEs is essential for its sustainability. It is important to note that the Ministry has already identified the need and is currently in the process of building a training cadre within the Ministry.
- Following the completion of the seven-day residential training programme there wasn't a concrete follow up plan or a system to systematically monitor the execution of assigned duties of DOFEs. Having a monitoring system activated immediately after the training could have optimized the service delivery of DOFEs.
- CSO partners observed the need for this programme to provide more information on migrant health related issues, trafficking and to allocate more time in the training agenda for the session on psycho-social issues due to the interest shown by the DOFEs.

6. Immediate Outcomes of the Training

6.1 Increased understanding on the roles and responsibilities

Almost all DOFE participants interviewed for this paper reported that the training helped them to better understand the roles and responsibilities assigned to them. Prior to this training, majority of participants had limited understanding on how to discharge their duties and services to migrant workers and often thought that FBR is their main job. A DOFE from Kurunegala claimed that since her appointment in 2013, she only knew 50% of her job description and it was only through the training that she was able to fully understand her role.

“Before coming for this training, I used to think that it was my job to make decisions for migrant workers. However, after I underwent the training I realized that my role is to facilitate the migrant workers to make their own decisions”

DOFE from Ampara District

Following the training programme the DOFEs whom were interviewed for this paper are focusing more on fulfilling other contractual duties relating to service provision of migrant workers which they did not perform earlier due to not having required knowledge and skills such as conducting awareness raising programmes on safe labour migration and providing reintegration related support to returnee migrant workers and preparing family development plans. HELVETAS provided funding for DOFEs trained in Anuradhapura, Kalutara Ratnapura districts to conduct these awareness raising programmes for community members on safe labour migration.

“Before the training, I believed that giving the FBR is my main responsibility. During the training I realized that FBR is only 10% of my job”

DOFE from Batticaloa District

During HELVETAS visit to three divisional secretariat officers (Mawathagama, Rideegama, Polpithigama) in Kurunegala, it was observed that DOFEs have been provided a separate office space (Migration Information Centre) within the divisional secretariat premises by the LMPSL CSO project partner, CHRCD working in the district.

These migration information centres (MICs) were established by CHRCD following the end of the training programme drawing on the experiences of other LMPSL CSO project partners (HELVETAS, ESCO and SWOAD) in establishing MICs in Galle, Batticaloa and Ampara districts. DOFEs from the above mentioned divisions in Kurunegala who were interviewed for this paper mentioned that having a separate office space has been very helpful for them to discharge their duties, provide services and support (pre-departure information, psycho-social referrals etc) to hundreds of migrant worker families that visit them on a daily basis.

6.2 Improved knowledge on labour migration

"The training equipped me with a lot of knowledge on labour migration. After the training I conducted awareness programmes on safe labour migration in 22 Grama Niladari divisions where I spoke for two hours with what I learned from the training."

DOFE Coordinator, Anuradhapura District

The training facilitated the DOFEs to improve their theoretical knowledge on different aspects of labour migration (eg: rights of migrant workers, regional and international forums on labour migration, gender, grievance handling and psycho-social support). As per pre and post evaluations conducted by HELVETAS, DOFEs reported 50% increase on their knowledge on labour migration. DOFEs from Ratnapura, Batticaloa, Nuwara-eliya and Ampara mentioned that the training significantly helped them in providing pre-departure guidance and information to prospective migrant workers and their families.

6.3 Improved Analytical Skills and Soft Skills

"I am a Business Management graduate. Earlier, when I was asked to prepare a Family Development plan, I did it according to Business Management concepts. During the training, I was introduced to the SWOT analysis tool and now I am using this tool a lot for my work."

DOFE from Ampara District

The training introduced analytical tools to DOFEs through practical exercises and facilitated to improve their analytical skills which they find most helpful in terms of preparing family development plans. A majority of the DOFEs interviewed found the SWOT Analysis tool to be useful in reporting.

DOFEs mentioned that they were able to develop soft skills: presentation skills and interpersonal skills through the programme.

However, this was an area that the DOFEs mentioned that they need further support.

6.4 Increased knowledge in preparing Family Development Plans

One of the most significant outcomes of this training programme is that the DOFEs received clear guidance and motivation to systematically prepare Family Development Plans to support short term, medium term and long-term goals for development to identified migrant workers in service which they hardly prepared prior to the training. All DOFEs that were interviewed for this paper mentioned that the quality of their family development plans has improved and while some DOFEs reported that some of the family development plans developed for migrant workers have already shown progress.

"Before I went for the training, I didn't know how to prepare a family development plan, so I didn't prepare them. The training equipped me with relevant analytical tools and confidence to systematically prepare a family development plan. From 2017- to present I have prepared 22 plans exceeding the minimum number of 10 plans that was expected from me by the Ministry."

DOFE from Kurunegala District

6.5 Trust Building and Relationship Building

One of the important immediate outcomes of the training programme, as evident through the discussions conducted for this paper with DOFE participants, CSO partners, relevant officials from the MFE and SLBFE was the training programme has significantly helped to build trust and strengthen professional relationships between:

- DOFEs based in different divisions within the same district.
- DOFEs and the MFE and SLBFE at the national level
- DOFEs and service providers within the district
- CSO project partners and DOFEs trained under their respective programmes
- CSO project partners and MFE and SLBFE based at the regional and national level
- CSO project partners and Divisional Secretariats.

This has resulted in increased collaboration at the divisional and district level to among Govt. officials and CSOs to provide services to migrant workers.

“Before this training programme, we only worked with the DOFEs in our divisional office. During the seven days I spent at this training programme, I was able to build relationships with all DOFEs in the district. Earlier, our relationship and communication with the Ministry based in Colombo was mostly limited to their circulars. It was at this training that we were able to meet and interact with senior officials from the Ministry and the SLBFE and build a rapport with them.”

DOFE from Ampara District



Development Officers Foreign Employment during the training programme held in 2017.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1: Conclusion

The significant efforts made through the collaboration of LMPSSL project partners and the Ministry of Foreign Employment to enhance capacity of Development Officers Foreign Employment based at the divisional level in 16 high migration districts have made a positive contribution to:

1. Facilitate the DOFEs to understand their duties and responsibilities and how to execute them in a professional manner
2. Provide DOFEs with relevant knowledge soft skills to better discharge their duties to migrant workers
3. Provide a holistic overview on multiple aspects of labour migration merely going beyond their duties.
4. Build trust and relationship between the DOFEs within the district and outside the district as well as with the Ministry and SLBFE at the National level.
5. Strengthen relationships between the LMPSSL project partners and the DOFEs, the Ministry and the SLBFE

7.2 Recommendations

7.2.1 Recommendations to Improve the Training Programme

- Develop a bilingual (Sinhala\ Tamil) pool of resource persons within the Ministry of Foreign Employment to conduct these trainings for both Sinhala and Tamil speaking DOFEs in future.
- Conduct a Training of Trainers to institutionalize the training programme and to ensure the sustainability of this programme.
- Make timely revisions to the resource package for future trainings in line with the changing dynamics of labour migration. Consider providing more information on issues such as migrant health and trafficking for future trainings.
- Provide follow up or refresher trainings to maximize the services of DOFEs.
- Offer this training as a course in Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration to provide further recognition.

7.2.2 Recommendations to Improve the Service Delivery of DOFEs

- Introduce a result-based monitoring system to monitor the DOFE's delivery of services to migrant workers.
- Provide a separate office space (Migration Information Centre) for DOFEs working in high migration divisions similar to Migration Information Centres that are been established by LMPSSL project partners in Galle, Ampara, Kurunegala and Batticaloa districts to increase recognition, motivation of DOFEs and to provide them a better working environment to provide services to migrant workers and their families.
- The Ministry needs to provide assistance to DOFEs to re-prioritize their tasks and to shift their focus to providing pre-decision making, pre-departure guidance follow ups with in service migrant workers, providing welfare services to migrant workers and providing re-integration support as opposed to conducting FBR related work.
- Provide opportunities for promising DOFEs to undergo specialized training relating to discharging their duties (eg: psychology, counselling) to enhance their carrier potential and to increase their motivation.
- Invest in further developing soft skills and presentation skills of DOFEs.