

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE OBSERVATORY OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE ARAB REGION (OIMAR)

League of Arab States

In accordance with the recommendations of the Regional ICPD+5 held in Beirut in 1998 and the Arab NPC's annual meeting held in Amman in 2000, and with the support of UNFPA and UNDP, the Observatory of International Migration in the Arab Region (OIMAR) was established within the Population Policies Department (PPD) of the League of Arab States (LAS) with the aim of collecting data on Arab labour migration, facilitating the exchange of migration data and contributing to develop regional policies on international migration. It also had the aim of promoting development as an antidote to migration and enhancing the beneficial effects of international migration on development.

A. CONTINUOUS ACTIVITIES

The OIMAR collects and disseminates data on international migration in Arab countries. It is developing a comprehensive database on migration issues. The database includes currently files on:

1. Country profiles of Arab countries on international migration policies
2. Bibliography
3. List of Arab researchers working on international migration
4. Arab and international institutions with activities in international migration

OIMAR provides regular updates to migration sub-websites.

B. RECENT SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Regional Conference on Arab Migration in a Globalized World, 2-4 September 2003

This Conference, organized by the Population Policies Department of the League of Arab States in coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with the support of UNDP and UNFPA, provided a forum for dialogue among decision-makers, representatives of the regional and international institutions, Arab and foreign experts in international migration. The Conference had two main goals:

- a. To explore the recent dynamics of Arab labour migration, and the current and potential effects of globalization.
- b. To explore possible mechanisms to rationalize Arab labour migration at the national, regional and sub-regional levels so as to fulfill its potential to promote development in the Arab region in the context of globalization.

The main topics considered by the Conference were:

1. International migration and the challenges of globalization in the Arab region.
2. Characteristics and magnitude of Arab migration patterns in the Mashreq.
3. Characteristics and magnitude of Arab migration patterns in the Maghreb.
4. Characteristics and magnitude of Arab migration patterns in the Gulf.
5. Management and regulation of human resources in the Arab world.
6. Convening a workshop on the Arab diaspora.
7. Convening a workshop on OIMAR.

The main recommendations made by the Conference were:

- Participating in supporting skilled migration Institutes/ Associations and its roles and contribute with other related Arab Institutions.
- Participate in promoting the contribution of those skilled migrants with efforts for Development and knowledge transfer in Arab Countries.

Main mechanisms

- Setting up a Database on Arab skilled Migrants and their Institutions and networks.
- Establishing a website for the ANKTE for introducing similar institutions and networks in Arab countries, promoting the dialogue between them.
- Establishing Mechanisms for knowledge transfer and the Efforts of Arab skilled migrants towards development in Arab Countries.
- Preparing to publish a Review for this Network.
- Advocating supporting and funding institutions, for promoting skilled migrant networks and share in the funding of Knowledge transfer activities through skilled migrants.
- Establishing a high committee for this program, consist of distinguished personnel, decision-makers, politicians and representatives of funding institutions and some skilled migrants.

Establishing an Arab network for National organizations and institutions concerned with international migration

The network currently includes representatives from Arab National Population Councils and National governmental and NGO's institutions related to International migration. This network feeds the database with research studies and reports on international migration at the national level, and aims to create dialogue and concertation on International migration issues and challenges.

Strengthening Regional Policies: urgent tasks/ priorities needs.

In the light of the outcome of the activities - data collection, studies, dialogues - implemented at the Arab regional level during the past period, mainly the proceeding and outcome of the " Arab Regional Conference on Arab Migration in a Globalized world" held during 2-4 September 2003.

It was revealed that there are a number of priority activities needed in order to provide a better understanding of the International migration process, as well as promoting national and regional policies in the Arab region.

Those priority activities:

1. Activities that provide regularly the required data on the various Migration dimensions: for instance, for more than 10 years there's no national field surveys on International migration in any of the Arab countries, even the case studies were very rare and limited to few countries. Hence, there's a strong need for adopting a project to carry out regular national surveys in Arab countries, and to promote researches and studies efforts including qualitative studies in the region on international migration issues.
2. Activities aiming to promote dialogues, coordination and advocacy on the Arab regional and sub-regional (Mashreq- Maghreb- Gulf) levels, as well as on the Mediterranean region, in order to explore possible mechanisms to rationalize Arab human resources migration and develop cooperation to maximize benefits to sustain development.
3. Capacity building activities, for planners and senior staff responsible of International Migration sector in the Arab countries.