

Appendix III An example of a call for interprofessional and intersectoral collaboration

Brain Drain from a Pacific Nation

Twenty years ago, the development strategy of the government was focused on the countryside, particularly the agriculture sector. Large and medium sizes projects included irrigation and road to market infrastructure. Post harvest facilities included agricultural extension services to millions of small farmers.

However, the policy makers then reverted to an industrialization strategy which wasted its resources, and many projects became white elephants. Subsequent, wide spread poverty and unemployment forced millions of workers to look for work abroad. The first wave of workers was mostly from the lower social strata. Their main contribution to their host countries is manual labour. In time, however, leading importers of workers have discovered the many attractive traits of workers from this country. They are cheerful, culturally adaptable, quick to learn foreign languages, tender, loving care givers and willing to work long hours. Today, the second wave of migrant workers includes skilled and technical professionals, administrative and executive managers. What used to be overseas manual workers has become “brain poaching” of “Overseas Knowledge Workers”.

In 2003, from January to June alone, 431,872 skilled workers left for work abroad. There are now 7 million workers, some 10% of the home population, who work abroad and annually send \$8-10 billion back home.

The government does not complain that poverty is the cause for migration. It capitalizes on the financial influx from this manpower export strategy to keep the country's economy afloat.

Unfortunately, the migration system, as an economic strategy for development, leads to break down in social and family structures and unparented children. It creates a culture of dependence on remittances on the part of the families which tend to use these funds for excessive consumption, rather than for increasing the productive capacity of the country. The government, for its part, relies on this bonanza of hard currency and conveniently postpones structural reforms which are badly needed for putting its macroeconomic house in order.