What is the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS)?

- IRIS is a global initiative that is designed to promote ethical international labour recruitment.
- It has been created by IOM and a coalition of partners from government, civil society and the private sector.
- In practical terms, IRIS is about identifying and supporting ethical labour recruiters. It does this by:
  - Defining and setting a benchmark for ethical recruitment – ‘the IRIS Standard’,
  - Establishing a voluntary certification process for international labour recruiters, which includes creating a list of ‘IRIS certified labour recruiters’ to help employers and workers make more informed decisions about recruitment, and
  - Ensuring that the IRIS Standard is being maintained by certified recruiters through a monitoring and compliance mechanism.
- The goal of IRIS is to transform the international recruitment industry to make it fair for workers, recruiters and employers. It does this by:
  - Promoting the Employer Pays Principle,
  - Promoting greater transparency within international recruitment, and
  - Promoting the rights of migrant workers.
- IRIS has undergone significant pilot testing. This includes testing:
  - The IRIS Standard to ensure that it is set at the right level (i.e. it’s not too easy or impossible for stakeholders, especially recruiters, to follow),
  - The IRIS audit framework and methodology to ensure that it is credible, feasible and robust, and
  - The overall IRIS certification model to ensure that it is a smooth and logical process.
- IRIS certification was launched in selected countries in December 2018 and will be slowly introduced to new locations in the coming years.
- In the meantime, IOM is rolling out a capacity building programme for labour recruiters which includes a two-day training program to introduce them to the IRIS Standard, management systems and IRIS certification. For more information please refer to the factsheet on IRIS capacity building.
- IRIS complements IOM’s broader efforts to promote ethical recruitment and safe and legal labour migration, as well as combat forced labour and modern-day slavery.
- IRIS is closely linked to IOM’s Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking (CREST) initiative.
- In particular, the tools developed by IRIS will be used to support capacity building efforts, such as training for recruiters, suppliers and employers, and labour supply chain mapping.
Who are your key partners?

- Since its inception, IOM works with a variety of stakeholders to create demand for ethical recruitment and IRIS.
  - These include the Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment (LGRR), the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), International Tourism Partnership (ITP) and other industry associations.
- Similarly, IOM works closely with stakeholders who have similar initiatives to ensure complementarity and a consistent approach.
  - These include Social Accountability International (SAI), Clearview, the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI), ISEAL, the Responsible Business Alliance (RBA), the Fair Labour Association.
- Within the UN system, IOM and ILO are working together to promote ethical recruitment.
  - In particular, the ILO has established the policy framework for ethical recruitment through its Fair Recruitment Initiative and General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment.
  - While IOM is working on the more operational aspects of ethical recruitment through the IRIS and CREST initiatives.
- IOM is also working with a team of certification specialists and social compliance professionals on the more technical aspects of IRIS – such as building the certification system and IRIS training programs.
  - These include Social Accountability Accreditation Services (SAAS) and the British Standards Institution (BSI).

Why was IRIS created?

- The exploitation of migrant workers often begins at the recruitment stage when workers are charged recruitment fees and costs or misled about the job on offer.
- According to the latest global estimates of modern slavery, around 25 million people are victims of forced labour globally – with about half of all victims in debt-bondage.
- When it comes to combatting modern slavery, many interventions focus on the employment stage – such as how workers are treated in the factory or farm setting.
- While these interventions are important, they often come too late when it comes to tackling unethical recruitment and its consequences.
- International recruitment often remains a gray area due to the lack of a standard definition of ethical recruitment, as well as inconsistencies and gaps in how international recruitment is regulated.
- It is for these reasons that IOM and a coalition of likeminded stakeholders decided to develop IRIS.
- At the global level, IRIS has been funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
What is ethical recruitment?

- To put it simply, ethical recruitment means hiring workers lawfully, and in a fair and transparent manner that respects their dignity and human rights.
- The IRIS Standard explains what ethical recruitment means in practice, and what labour recruiters need to demonstrate to become IRIS certified.
- The IRIS Standard consists of seven core principles for ethical recruitment:
  - Respect for Laws, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
  - Respect for Ethical and Professional Conduct
  - Prohibition of Recruitment Fees to Jobseekers
  - Respect for Freedom of Movement
  - Respect for Transparency of Terms and Conditions of Employment
  - Respect for Confidentiality and Data Protection
  - Respect for Access to Remedy
- The IRIS Standard was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.
- It is based on existing international human rights instruments, ILO Conventions and standards, ILO’s General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as well as related codes of conducts and best practice from the recruitment industry, including World Employment Confederation Code of Conduct.

What are recruitment fees?

- Recruitment fees or related costs refer to any fees or costs incurred in the recruitment process in order for workers to secure employment or placement, regardless of the manner, timing or location of their imposition or collection.
- This includes medical and insurance costs; skills and qualifications tests costs; training and orientation costs; equipment costs; travel and lodging costs, and any administrative costs or overhead fees associated with job placement.
- Recruitment fees include costs that are paid in money or property, deductions from wages or benefits, kickbacks or bribes, and in-kind payments such as free labour.
- IRIS’s position on recruitment fees and costs is consistent with the ILO’s Definition of recruitment fees and related costs.

What is the Employer Pays Principle and will it cost more?

- The Employer Pays Principle is considered best practice and is endorsed and promoted by the Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment, industry groups and increasing number of governments.
- As the name suggests, under this model the worker does not pay any fees or costs for their recruitment and deployment – rather these costs are covered by the employer (company).
- While this model may initially appear to be a more expensive option for companies and recruiters, it needs to be considered within the context of risk management and can prove to be more cost efficient in the long-term.
- For example, if an unethical recruitment agency provides a worker that is not suitable for the company, then there will be additional costs for the company in repatriating the worker, recruiting a replacement worker, and possibly even fines if there has been any legal non-compliance.
How will IRIS certification work?

- IRIS certification is voluntary and only available to private recruitment agencies that send workers overseas.
- To become an 'IRIS certified labour recruiter,' applicants (recruiters) will need to demonstrate that they meet the requirements of the IRIS Standard.
- The IRIS certification model is based on similar global certification schemes and includes a series of checks and balances to ensure the scheme is credible and robust.
- Please refer to the factsheet on IRIS certification for more information.

Pilot testing the IRIS Standard

- The IRIS Standard was developed after extensive consultation with government, civil society and private sector stakeholders.
- It was then pilot tested to ensure its fit for purpose in different geographical, jurisdictional and sectoral contexts.
- This included testing the Standard against the needs of recruiters and employers.
- This occurred as part of IOM’s broader labour supply chain mapping projects with companies that were interested in learning more about how workers are recruited within their supply chain.

Testing the IRIS Certification System

- In partnership with Social Accountability Accreditation Services and selected audit companies, IOM has been testing the feasibility and applicability of all components of the certification system.
  - This has taken place primarily in the Philippines and Nepal in 2018.

How will IRIS be rolled out?

- Following the launch of IRIS certification in December 2018, IRIS is being rolled out gradually through pilot projects in selected countries.
  - This includes in the Philippines and the two Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, where IRIS launched its first government to government pilot project.
  - The first stage of the IRIS roll-out will focus on assisting committed recruiters with building their capacity to meet the requirements of the IRIS Standard.
  - This will be followed by an IRIS assessment with the aim of certification.
  - Please refer to the factsheet on IRIS capacity building for more information.
- During the roll out, IRIS will collaborate with similar initiatives promoting ethical recruitment such as ILO’s Fair Recruitment Initiatives, Responsible Labour Initiative of RBA, and the Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment.

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