



MIGRANTS WORKING IN COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY  
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Cross-border recruitment of workers is a vital part of facilitating international labour mobility. When recruitment is done in a fair and transparent way, it contributes to safe and orderly labour migration which benefits countries of origin and destination, employers and migrants. But unethical recruitment is a wide-spread phenomenon. It is found across economic sectors and is commonly associated with the recruitment of workers in lower skills categories where prevailing practices are based on a “worker pays” business model. Under this arrangement, migrant workers pay the fees and costs related to recruitment and migration, often leaving them heavily indebted and vulnerable to exploitation. When combined with other forms of abuse such as false promises about the terms and conditions of employment, limitations on freedom of movement, coercion or lack of access to remedy, this can lead to exploitation and conditions of forced labour.

To address these abuses, IOM has adopted a multi-stakeholder strategy to advocate for ethical recruitment. In simple terms, ethical recruitment means hiring workers lawfully and in a fair and transparent manner that respects and protects their dignity and human rights. The principles of ethical recruitment and protection of migrant workers are grounded in international instruments, including the standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Declarations.

## PROMOTING IRIS: ETHICAL RECRUITMENT

IOM’s flagship initiative to promote ethical recruitment is the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS). IRIS is a global multi-stakeholder initiative that supports governments, civil society, the private sector and recruiters to establish ethical recruitment as the norm in cross-border labour migration. The goal of IRIS is to make international recruitment fair for everyone involved: migrant workers, employers, recruiters and countries of origin and destination. It does this by:

- Promoting respect for the rights of migrant workers;
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in recruitment;
- Advancing the Employer Pays Principle; and
- Strengthening public policies, regulations and enforcement mechanisms.

IRIS is referred to under Objective 6 of the [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#). Its priorities include: 1) awareness raising and capacity building, 2) migrant worker voice and empowerment, 3) the regulation of international recruitment, 4) voluntary certification, and 5) stakeholder partnerships and dialogue.

## AWARENESS RAISING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Across economies and jurisdictions, levels of awareness and commitment to ethical recruitment remain low. To address this, IOM provides tailored programs for recruitment agencies, employers, policymakers and civil society with the goal of enhancing understanding, commitment, action and impact. Interventions are solutions oriented. They are adapted to meet local needs, thematic priorities and levels of awareness, and include global and regional webinars; in-person awareness sessions; and modular, classroom-based learning. Tailored resources such as policies, guidance material, E-Learning modules and toolkits are also available. To enhance their reach and impact, these activities are implemented in partnership with industry associations, governments at national and sub-national levels, companies, international agencies such as the ILO and civil society organisations.



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## MIGRANT WORKER VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT

Respect for and protection of migrants' rights lies at the core of IOM programming. In recent years, a growing interest in ethical recruitment has been accompanied by a focus on the unique vulnerabilities of migrant workers in the global economy. This has inspired the concept of "migrant voice", an umbrella term that captures a range of migrant-centred activities. For IRIS, this includes community and grassroots engagement, direct outreach and support through Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and partnerships with civil society, migrants' rights groups, the labour movement and other non-profit organisations. The goal of these activities is to empower migrant workers and the organisations that advocate on their behalf.

In practical terms, IRIS pilots comprehensive training programmes that involve pre-departure, post-arrival, employment, cultural and pre-return orientation. It also supports civil society monitoring of recruitment practices and grievance mechanisms that link CSOs in countries of origin and destination. These activities support the development of an ethical recruitment "safety net", promote remedy (when needed) and enhance a holistic safe migration experience for migrants in corridors where IRIS is active.

## PROMOTING EFFECTIVE REGULATION OF RECRUITMENT

In many migration corridors, the vulnerability experienced by migrant workers is exacerbated by weaknesses in regulation and enforcement. Inconsistencies across jurisdictions, coupled with uneven enforcement capacity, can lead to gaps in migrant protection. To address this, IOM supports Member States through IRIS. This includes capacity building as well as assistance in policy dialogue at national, sub-national, bilateral and regional levels.

IOM takes a "whole of society" approach to promoting ethical recruitment. This means facilitating dialogue within and between governments, between national and sub-national authorities and between governments and other stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society; it also includes supporting National Action Plans, Roadmaps and bilateral arrangements on ethical recruitment, and the development of new labour migration and recruitment policies. IRIS also convenes global and regional conferences to share experience, facilitate learning, identify common challenges and disseminate good practices.

## IRIS CERTIFICATION

In addition to supporting governments, civil society and migrant workers, IOM has created a voluntary certification system for international recruitment agencies. IRIS Certification was developed with a coalition of partners from government, the labour movement, business and human rights organisations, international organisations and the private sector. It is based on a multi-stakeholder Standard that defines ethical recruitment and uses a robust system of checks and balances to ensure that participating recruiters adhere to the Standard and treat jobseekers and migrant workers fairly. IRIS Certification operates independently under a Certification Scheme Manager. Advocacy, training, due diligence and partnerships are hallmarks of IRIS Certification.



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## PARTNERSHIPS AND DIALOGUE TO PROMOTE ETHICAL RECRUITMENT

Since its launch in 2014, IRIS has adopted a partnership approach characterized by close cooperation with stakeholders that include government, civil society, industry associations and multi-stakeholder initiatives. These partnerships aim to establish effective frameworks for ethical recruitment and to generate, match and sustain supply and demand for ethical recruitment services. Working in close collaboration with regional IOM programmes such as [CREST](#) (Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking), they leverage the combined strength and influence of each stakeholder to effectively promote ethical recruitment and respect for the rights of migrant workers. IOM is a founding member of the [Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment](#) and cooperates closely with a range of other organisations, including the [Consumer Goods Forum](#), [Fair Labor Association](#), the [Institute for Human Rights and Business](#), the [Responsible Business Alliance](#), the [International Tourism Partnership](#) and [Social Accountability International](#). IOM also supports regional consultative processes, including the [Colombo Process](#) and [Abu Dhabi Dialogue](#); and within the UN family, IOM aligns closely with the normative framework of the ILO and cooperates in the implementation of regional and national-level programmes.

For more information about IOM's work on IRIS and ethical recruitment, please visit: [iris.iom.int](http://iris.iom.int). To learn more about IRIS Certification, visit: <http://iris.saasaccreditation.org/home>. To learn about IOM's CREST programme, visit: [crest.iom.int](http://crest.iom.int).

