

Principle 1

NO FEES ARE CHARGED TO MIGRANT WORKERS

The employer should bear the full costs of recruitment and placement. Migrant workers are not charged any fees for recruitment or placement.

Migrant recruiters frequently charge fees to workers for recruitment and placement. Placement fees may include travel, visa and administrative costs, and other assorted unspecified 'fees' and 'service charges'. Sometimes the fees are treated as loans with high rates of compound interest. These practices lead many migrant workers into heavy debt to secure a job and can increase vulnerability to exploitation, including debt bondage, forced labour and human trafficking.

After arrival in the country the worker may experience non-transparent salary deductions and overcharging for essential goods and services. In some cases, this makes the migrant worker vulnerable and places them in debt. Women, who in practice earn less and own fewer assets, and in practice are granted lower status than men, are especially vulnerable to such charging.

Heavy indebtedness can seriously erode the value of remittances, with negative consequences for families back home and to the economy in the country of origin. It also means that migrant workers may be more likely to leave their jobs to find illegal but better paid work in the shadow economy of the country of employment.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- All business enterprises should have an explicit policy, which prohibits the charging to migrant workers of recruitment fees and placement fees, irrespective of where or how they are recruited.
- No business enterprises should require workers to pay a deposit or bond to secure work, nor should they charge or accept reimbursement from any worker to cover recruitment fees and costs.
- Business enterprises that use migrant recruiters should only use migrant recruiters that are legally registered. All contracts with the migrant recruiter should specify that no fees be charged to the workers.
- Migrant recruiters should be transparent to user enterprises with regard to details of any agents/sub-agents used, including their charges and terms of engagement.
- Employers and migrant recruiters should inform applicants through job advertisements and the interview process that the applicants should not bear any costs of recruitment and placement.
- Employers and migrant recruiters should provide successful applicants with a breakdown of legitimate recruitment expenses that are to be covered by the employer prior to signing the job contract.
- Employers should check with migrant workers on arrival that migrant recruiters have not charged any fees for recruitment or placement, and should take remedial action if fees have been levied. Confidential channels for reporting complaints about fees should be available to migrant workers. Any fees found to have been paid by the migrant worker to secure employment should be refunded to that worker.
- Should the employment contract be extended, the employer should pay the full cost of extending working visas, and any associated costs.