

Global Skills Mobility Partnerships: An Opportunity for Canada

Zainab Al-Jaiashi, Ruth Farkas, Rena Harrison and Luke Lustig-Bruce

Issue

The following brief explores the use of Global Skills Mobility Partnerships (GSMPs) to address Canada’s trade and development goals through harnessing human capital to build capacity internationally while meeting domestic demand.

Background

The Canadian economy is experiencing shortages of labour across a variety of sectors. These shortages are particularly acute in the healthcare system, leading to increased wait times, fewer patients receiving care in a timely manner, and an overall efficiency decrease in the healthcare system. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these labour

shortages with increased workloads on an understaffed health system, causing many nurses to leave the profession (Boomah, Callen and Cruz 2021).

GSMPs should be used as a solution for addressing the nursing labour shortage in Canada and could eventually be applied to shortages in other sectors. When designed properly, GSMPs can alleviate shortages in the health care system by sourcing skills internationally through migration (ibid.).

These partnerships are bilateral or multilateral agreements between states that support migrants to gain the skills and training necessary to be recognized in a receiving country. GSMPs, therefore, support the mobility and legal migration of newly trained professionals into the labour force of the host country. The programs are designed to

Global Skills Mobility Partnerships and Triple Win Models



Receiving Countries

- gain skilled workers, affordable training, and easy recruitment.



Sending Countries

- gain a greater pool of skilled workers, paid-for training, improved training and education institutions, and benefit from remittances



Migrants

- gain subsidized training, greater mobility, and appropriate skill sets

Information Source: Van de Pas and Mans 2018

allow participants to remain in Canada or return to their home country to contribute to their local labour market.

Thus, receiving countries would gain skilled workers, affordable training and easy recruitment. Sending countries would gain a greater pool of skilled workers and paid-for training, and benefit from remittances. Finally, migrants would benefit from subsidized training, greater rights and mobility, and appropriate training, with the potential to apply for permanent resident status and enjoy all associated rights thereafter.

The World Health Organization's (WHO's) Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel states that a GSMP should consider all involved stakeholders, creating a win for receiving countries, sending countries and the migrants involved (WHO 2010). Thus, Canada has the responsibility to work within the code and use it as a guideline in developing a pilot project that successfully addresses the concern of "brain drain" and labour shortages in sending countries, as well as ensuring that the rights and interests of migrants are respected.

Canada already has a framework for skills mobility within the existing Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship policy. However, the Global Talent Stream falls short of the triple win objectives that GSMPs seek to achieve. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) has an obligation to build strategic partnerships and reinforce international efforts to ensure global access to health interventions in the fight against COVID (Office of the Prime Minister 2021a). GSMPs provide an opportunity to collaborate with new and existing partners to build a more prosperous and resilient world for everyone.

Case Studies

Analysis of current successful examples of GSMPs internationally informs the key considerations on how GAC could develop labour mobility programs in Canada.

Germany's Triple Win Model

In 2013, the Federal Employment Agency and International Placement Services (ZAV) and German Association for International Cooperation (GIZ) commissioned a program for the "sustainable recruitment of nurses from a third country for employment in Germany" (GIZ 2022). They developed country partnerships with nations that have a surplus of well-

trained nurses that were underutilized in local labour markets. This included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, the Philippines and Tunisia. Through cooperation with ZAV and GIZ, the program has well-coordinated management of the labour migration process. The program has seen 4,900 nurses placed with German employers in clinics, care homes and out-patient services, with highly rated employer satisfaction (ibid.).

The program was designed with a monitoring process that verifies that all nurses in the program have high professional qualifications. The pre-employment process follows four steps:

1. Recruitment and selection of candidates
2. Language course/orientation training
3. Professional preparation
4. Offering job vacancies to preselected candidates (ibid.).

There is a further four-step process once candidates secure employment:

1. Support of departure process
2. Support of integration process
3. Support of the recognition process
4. Monitoring (ibid.).

Each of the steps in the process is clearly defined with roles and responsibilities effectively allocated. The key to building successful GSMPs is careful management and planning in each step of the process and adequate partnerships to facilitate them. This partnership successfully addresses Germany's labour needs and provides high quality training and opportunities for migrants while contributing to training capacity and partly offsetting the consequences of high unemployment rates in sending countries.

The Australia-Pacific Training Coalition

The Australia-Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) was created in 2006 with the aim of linking skill creation directly with labour mobility (Chand, Clemens and Dempster 2021). The program is funded by Australia's Agency for International Development, and partners with Pacific Island states such as Fiji, Papua New

Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to offer Australian-recognized credentials to students in member states (Clemens, Michael, Colum Graham and Stephen Howes 2015). The program provides additional training and preparation for students wishing to migrate to Australia. The APTC has taught almost 17,000 students in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing and construction (Center for Global Development n.d.).

The APTC has a dual-track model; each track results in Australian-recognized credentials following successful completion (Chand, Clemens and Dempster 2021). The first is the domestic track, which offers students in member states the chance to gain Australian credentials in accordance with employer preference, thereby enhancing skill development in sending countries and avoiding the brain drain effect that is associated with other types of skills mobility agreements. The second track is the labour mobility track, which consists of students who have expressed an intention to migrate within five years of enrolment and offers these students additional training in preparation for work abroad, including language training (Dempster and Toy 2020).

Canada-CARICOM Skills Training for the Green Economy Scholarships

The Canada-CARICOM Skills Training for the Green Economy Scholarships provide students from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states with short-term exchange opportunities at publicly funded Canadian colleges and institutes, including Concordia University and Mohawk College (EduCanada 2022).

The universities and colleges are responsible for the education and training necessary for program participants to gain the accreditation needed to join the labour force back home (ibid.). At the end of this program, students are required to return to their sending country with the new skills gained.

This scholarship was created with the intention of advancing the sustainable development of CARICOM countries while creating stronger ties with post-secondary institutions in Canada. The program is funded by GAC and Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), a network for colleges and institutions nationally and internationally, as it aligns with their interest in advancing skills mobility partnerships internationally.

Partnerships with post-secondary institutions strengthen the skills training for the GSMP pilot project to ensure a high-quality education that meets Canadian nursing standards. These partnerships also ensure that participants receive accreditation from both the sending and receiving country, allowing them to work and gain skills from either country. Further, encouraging participants to return to the sending country after skills gained helps to alleviate brain drain.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on key takeaways from the above case studies and provide insight on how to develop robust GSMP models that benefit Canada, sending countries and migrants. In the post-COVID pandemic context, these recommendations focus on applying GSMPs targeting nursing; however, these models can and should be applied to promote training and labour mobility in other industries.

1. **GAC should commission the development of a GSMP pilot project in nursing, in partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and relevant stakeholders.** The success of the Triple Win Model in Germany can be attributed to the commitment and leadership of the ZAV and GIZ in supporting the process and structure for the mobility of the migrant. The program depends on strong partnerships with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the various stages of the preparation, placement and integration of migrants in the host country. In the case of nursing, the relevant stakeholders include employers, regulatory agencies and associations, and educational institutions. The GIZ coordinates the recognition process for the qualifications acquired abroad, while the ZAV is responsible for placing the candidates. In Canada, GAC should take the lead in coordinating a pilot process between relevant federal, provincial and territorial agencies to verify qualifications through the regulatory agencies of the respective provinces. Consultation with provinces and territories is necessary to ensure the commitment of provincial regulatory agencies to any pilot program. GAC would benefit from an inter-ministerial approach. It is important to align any pilot GSMP with IRCC: failure to do so in the Australian context constrained the success of the APTC, since potential migrants were required to undergo costly in-person skills assessments.

- The pilot project should follow set criteria for selecting partner sending countries.** To avoid brain drain, recruitment should be from partner countries with a labour surplus. To determine the potential partnership countries, Canada should consult the Health Workforce Support and Safeguards list developed to facilitate the effectiveness of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. This list has identified 47 countries that are facing critical health workforce shortages (WHO 2021). While there is not an explicit ban on developing GSMPs with these countries, Canada must ensure that any agreements formed will focus on the development of the sending countries. In learning from previous GSMPs, it is important to select sending countries where the language proficiency of candidates in English or French is high. This will minimize language barriers in training and integration into Canadian labour markets. Country partners to consider would be India, Morocco, the Philippines and Tunisia.
- GAC should partner with institutions that already have the necessary capacity and skills for building GSMPs.** In addition to support and facilitation from federal government partners such as the IRCC, the pre-employment process should be facilitated in partnership with educational institutions that already support global skills mobility such as Mohawk College, Concordia University and the CICan. CICan collaborates with colleges and institutes across the country and internationally (Current Global Projects, 2022). CICan is already a partner of the Government of Canada in implementing Canada's International Education Strategy. CICan has partnerships with educational institutions abroad and has the capacity and knowledge to develop strong partnerships for GSMPs for incoming migrants to Canada.
- GAC should support the development of a dual-track model.** Learning from the APTC example, GAC's pilot project should allow migrants who receive skills training through Canadian-post secondary institutions the option to return to the sending country or to remain in Canada for work. Currently, models used in CARICOM have only a short-term exchange opportunity, which is beneficial for the sending countries but does not address the goals of the host country candidates. GAC's

pilot project should expand on the CARICOM partnership model by using a dual-track model for applicants. Overall, the intention is to create a model that benefits migrants by providing them the option of staying and working in Canada or returning to their home state to use their new skills. A dual-track model will benefit sending and receiving country partners through wider capacity building in skills training and education.

- Create relevant partnerships for a GSMP Pilot Project.** In order for this Triple Win Model to be successful, a variety of departments and other actors must be consulted in the negotiation process. Our research has highlighted shortcomings in states where consultation between health ministries and skills development departments was minimal. Moreover, legal consultations with the provinces would be required to make sure GSMPs are compatible with domestic agreements on labour mobility. The following key bodies should be consulted in developing a pilot GSMP:

- Canadian Nurses Association
- IRCC
- IRCC's Foreign Credentials Referral Office
- Provincial departments of health and regulatory bodies
- Universities and colleges (for example, Mohawk College and Concordia University)
- CICan.

About the Authors

Zainab Al-Jaiashi is a student in the University of Waterloo's Master of Arts in Global Governance program, based at the Balsillie School of International Affairs.

Ruth Farkas is a student in Wilfrid Laurier University's Master of International Public Policy program, based at the Balsillie School of International Affairs.

Rena Harrison is a student in Wilfrid Laurier University's Master of International Public Policy program, based at the Balsillie School of International Affairs.

Luke Lustig-Bruce is a student in the University of Waterloo's Master of Arts in Global Governance program, based at the Balsillie School of International Affairs.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Margaret Walton-Roberts and Leah Cabral for their continued guidance and support throughout the development of this brief. We would also like to offer a special thanks to Dr. Andrew Thompson, along with the Balsillie School of International Affairs and Global Affairs Canada, for their support and feedback throughout this project.

References

- Boomah, Sheila, Miranda Callen and Edward Cruz. 2021. "Nursing Faculty Shortage in Canada: A Scoping Review of Contributory Factors." *Nursing Outlook* 69: 574-588.
- Center for Global Development. n.d. "Australia Pacific Training Coalition." <https://gsp.cgdev.org/2021/07/07/australia-pacific-training-coalition-aptc-2/>.
- Chand, Satish, Michael Clemens and Helen Dempster. 2021. "A Pacific Skills Visa: Improving Opportunities for Skilled Migration Throughout the Pacific Region." Center for Global Development Policy Paper #231. www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Pacific-skills-visa-WP.pdf.
- Clemens, Michael, Colum Graham and Stephen Howes. 2015. "Skill Development and Regional Mobility: Lessons from the Australia-Pacific Technical College." *The Journal of Development Studies* 51 (11): 1502-1517.
- Dempster, Helen, and Andie F. Toy. 2020. "How has COVID-19 Affected APTC's Efforts to Promote Labor Mobility in the Pacific?" Center for Global Development (blog), July 13. www.cgdev.org/blog/how-has-covid-19-affected-aptc-efforts-promote-labor-mobility-pacific.
- EduCanada. 2022. "Canada-CARICOM Skills Training for the Green Economy Scholarships." www.educanada.ca/scholarships-bourses/can/institutions/ccstge-ccfpev.aspx?lang=eng.
- GIZ. 2022. "Sustainable recruitment of nurses (Triple Win)." www.giz.de/en/worldwide/41533.html. F. n.d. "Current Global Projects." www.mohawkcollege.ca/international-students/partnerships-stronger-together/current-global-projects.
- Office of the Prime Minister. 2021a. *Minister of Foreign Affairs Mandate Letter*. <https://pm.gc.ca/en/mandate-letters/2021/12/16/minister-foreign-affairs-mandate-letter>.
- Van de Pas, Remco, and Linda Mans. 2018. *Global Skills Partnerships and Health Workforce Mobility: Pursuing a Race to the Bottom?* Public Services International. http://world-psi.org/sites/default/files/attachment/news/web_2018_mig_report_marrakesh.pdf.
- WHO. 2010. *The WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel*. www.who.int/publications/m/item/migration-code.
- . 2021. *Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List, 2020*. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/health-workforce/hwf-support-and-safeguards-list8jan.pdf?sfvrsn=1a16bc6f_5.