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Wage Protection for Migrant Workers

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Introduction

Wages and working hours are critical factors for both workers and employers, affecting job choice, migration, and social well-being. The ILO is committed to promoting social justice and decent work by ensuring fair wages and wage protection standards. Migrant workers, who often migrate for job opportunities and better wages, face specific challenges in wage protection due to labor abuses such as underpayment or non-payment. This guidance note provides an overview of international labor standards on wage protection, with a focus on migrant workers.

Key Highlights

Following are some of the important aspects covered in ILO's Wage Protection Guidance Note for Migrant Workers:

- ILO defines the term '**wages**' as remuneration or earnings, however designated or calculated, capable of being expressed in terms of money and fixed by mutual agreement or by national laws or regulations, which are payable in virtue of a written or unwritten contract of employment by an employer to an employed person for work done or to be done or for services rendered or to be rendered.
- ILO standards on wage protection encompass various aspects such as the right to regular payment, protection against payment in kind and deductions, privileged treatment of wage claims, swift settlement upon termination, and the right to be informed about wages before and during employment.
- Regulatory measures aim to address wage payment issues such as non-payment, delayed payment, underpayment, non-payment of overtime, benefits, entitlements, severance pay, and unlawful deductions.
- The ILO defines forced labor as coercive labor practices where work is extracted under the threat of penalty, and withholding of wages is a core indicator, which may suggest forced labor if systematically and deliberately used to compel workers to remain in the workplace.
- Migrant workers face wage abuse due to unfair recruitment, discrimination, and weak governance, leading to exploitation and forced labor, and they may work in unregulated sectors or insecure employment, resulting in wage-related issues like non-payment, underpayment, delayed payment, and unlawful deductions, undermining their social protection and job security.
- Some countries exclude domestic workers, especially migrants, from national labor laws, leaving them vulnerable to wage exploitation. Convention No. 189 and Recommendation No. 201 establish wage protections for domestic workers, including the right to regular payment in cash or through bank transfer and transparent accounts of remuneration.
- Effective wage protection monitoring, and enforcement requires awareness-raising, capacity-building, and empowerment of labor inspectorate, along with cooperation between relevant government departments and fair recruitment practices.

- Access to justice is crucial for migrant workers to uphold their labor rights. State and non-state mechanisms, including the ILO's Migrant Worker Resource Centers, can provide support. Bilateral labor migration agreements are necessary to protect wages, and the UN Network on Migration's guidance can assist in designing fair agreements. Countries of origin can support wage protection through pre-departure training, legal services, and post-return interviews.

Read More: [Guidance Note: Wage Protection for Migrant Workers](#)

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