

A conversation with staff from International Organization for Migration, Protect the People, and Center for Global Development, June 23, 2015

Participants

- Sarah Williamson – Managing Director, Protect the People (PTP)
- Michael Clemens – Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development (CGD)
- Dmitry Poletayev – Program Development and Donor Liaison Officer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Drazan Rozic – Programme Manager, IOM
- Maria Moreno – External Relations Liaison, IOM
- Alexander Berger – Program Officer, US Policy, Open Philanthropy Project

Note: These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made in the discussion.

Summary

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke with IOM, Ms. Williamson of PTP, and Dr. Clemens of CGD for an update on a Good Ventures grant given to IOM to create a pilot program allowing Haitians access to seasonal work in the United States. Conversation topics included the number of job orders from participating employers, the selection process for Haitian workers, and effective approaches to employer recruitment.

Status of job orders from participating employers

So far, 95 job orders have been filed for Haitian workers to participate in the program. These 95 orders are firm and have been officially submitted for government approval. Another 30 workers have been requested by a dairy farmer in upstate New York, who is interested in the program but has not yet committed to participating. (It is not clear whether dairy farmers will be eligible to participate in the program, as their employees are not typically considered "seasonal.") The employers' demand for workers has gone up since the original job orders were submitted, as many employers decided to increase their requests after visiting Haiti.

Likelihood of job order approval

There is a slight risk that a state department of labor will deny an employer the full number of workers requested. For example, an employer might request 30 workers, but the department of labor could certify it for only 20 workers, saying that the employer could instead hire 10 local workers who are currently receiving unemployment benefits.

However, US employers received foreign labor certification for 94% of the workers for whom H-2A petitions were filed in fiscal year 2014. There is thus reason to expect that the job orders for this project will be approved.

Terms of employment

The contracts outlined for the jobs requested so far are fairly short, averaging about three months per contract. This is significantly shorter than had been originally anticipated (roughly eight months per contract). The participating employers view the program largely as a trial run that will allow them to gauge its potential for success.

Status of worker selection and preparation for workers' arrival

IOM selection of workers in Haiti

IOM has preselected 200 workers from certain communities in Haiti to participate in the program. Some of the employers who were able to visit workers in Haiti have already decided that they want workers from a certain cooperative. IOM is now waiting on confirmation of the number of job orders to proceed with selection. At that point, IOM will begin selecting members from a cooperative near Port-au-Prince to fill the first job orders from Washington State. Selection will likely be completed in one to two weeks, depending on the final number of job orders.

At least 50% of the workers will come from the Kenscoff commune near Port-au-Prince, where the baseline survey was conducted. Two of the farms have specifically requested workers from Kenscoff.

Employer preparation for workers' arrival

PTP is communicating with the employers and agents every day to ensure that the employers' needs are met. The new employers are now preparing housing for the workers, and PTP is advising them on how to achieve compliance (including details such as having the correct size windows and the required hallway length) as quickly as possible.

Potential reasons for greater success in employer recruitment

PTP has been more successful at securing job orders from employers in this reporting period than in the last one. PTP believes this is because the participating employers exhibit a high degree of cultural competence. They are well traveled and tend to speak other languages. They are also somewhat younger overall than the employers approached in the last reporting period and have shown a high tolerance for risk and a spirit of adventure. Getting employers with that temperament to visit Haiti and see the potential proved necessary to the success of recruitment.

During this period, PTP also began looking for employers in Washington State, which is facing a shortage of agricultural labor. PTP engaged an agricultural expert, to recruit employers in Washington State.

Experience working with National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE)

Earlier in the project, PTP tried to recruit employers through more traditional channels, such as NCAE, targeting employers that were well respected in the

farming community or had had experience with H-2A programs. This approach proved less successful. However, NCAE represents the leaders of the farming community around the US, and working with NCAE was valuable in that it connected PTP to several agents. These agents are now familiar with the project and are filing H-2A paperwork on behalf of participating employers. Breaking in to the farming community took more steps than PTP anticipated, but NCAE has been very supportive.

*All Open Philanthropy Project conversations are available at
<http://www.givewell.org/conversations>*