

Export of labor is one of effective measures to supply jobs to laborers in developing countries, increase source of foreign exchange and improve remarkably the laborers' living standard. One of factors affecting the export of labor is the marketing service, including tasks of finding, accessing, exploiting and maintaining export markets.

According to the ILO, some 60 countries in the world are exporting labor (up to 120 million laborers) and 200 nations employ guest workers.

Statistics by the Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs show that some 300,000 Vietnamese laborers and experts in some 30 different trades are working in 40 countries all over the world.

Labor market in a country has its own characteristics and needs. Markets accessible to Vietnamese laborers are in the following regions:

1 Northeastern Asia

In this region the biggest number of guest workers is found. This market offers a wide range of well-paid jobs and it is suitable to Vietnamese laborers because of similar culture and customs.

This region employ many Vietnamese laborers. Although many countries in this region have faced difficulties recently they are still the main markets for Vietnamese labor, especially Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

- At present, South Korea employs a big number of guest workers from 14 Asian countries who work there as apprentices. The South Korean government has limited the number of foreign apprentices to 80,000 (Vietnam: 13,000 laborers). Some 8,500 Vietnamese laborers are contract workers mainly in small enterprises. The Korean small business authority (KFSB) said they were ready to double the quota on Vietnamese guest workers when Vietnam had effective measures to control Vietnamese laborers and recruit laborers more strictly.

The Korean labor market needs workers for engineering, construction, electronic, textile and clothing, Road and bridge building, shipping and service industries. The average wage varies from US\$ 400 to 500.

- Japan employs some 50,000 guest laborers working as apprentices a year. It is a highly developed country that faces shortage of labor because of its low birth rate. According to the latest UN report, Japan needs some 600,000 laborers a year to cover this shortage. As the Mayor

AN ESTIMATE OF EXPORT MARKET FOR LABOR

by Dr. PHAM PHI YÊN



of Tokyo puts it, Japan not only needs foreign laborers for hard and dangerous jobs but also young experts regardless of their nationality. That is why it becomes a promising market for labor from developing countries.

At present, this market needs workers for engineering, electronic, seafood processing, construction, shipping and IT industries. An apprentice is usually offered a 3-year contract with an income that varies from US\$500 to 1,800 a month according to the nature of jobs offered. Japanese companies, however, only receive trained laborers dispatched

2. Southeast Asia

This region, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Laos and Cambodia in particular, supplies jobs to some two million foreign laborers.

- Laos is familiar to Vietnamese laborers. It attracts some 10,000 laborers to its construction and forestry businesses. The average wage in this market isn't high, around US\$200 a month.

- Malaysia is one of Asian countries that most employ guest workers. Of some eight million laborers in this country, 770,000 are registered guest workers and 80% of them are Indonesians. At present, the Malay-



by local companies.

- In Taiwan, there are some 50,000 foreign laborers working in 28 different trades. Up to mid-2001, the number of Vietnamese laborers on this island rose to 11,000. Most of them work as public nurses or family servants under 2-year contracts and earn some US\$500 a month. This market also needs workers for many other industries. Vietnamese exporters of labor, however, must see that this is a demanding market. To be employed as a family servant for example, a laborer must have good health according to Taiwanese standards and get a health certificate from hospitals recommended by Taiwanese parties, or must be a qualified nurse to take care of the old people. Moreover, they must use the Chinese fluently to get jobs in this market.

sian government tries to reduce its dependency on Indonesian labor force by attracting workers from other Asian countries, including Vietnam.

The Malaysian government estimates that the country can employ from 100,000 to 200,000 Vietnamese laborers in its construction business and perennial plantations, although various industries here are in need of workers. Up to now, there are only 200 Vietnamese laborers working in Malaysia. A contract with guest workers varies from two to seven years with the average wage of US\$250 a month.

- Singapore, like many other developed countries, is badly in need of IT technicians who could make an average salary of US\$1,600. The Singaporean government tries to attract foreign workers and at the same

time, encourage foreign student to make study at tertiary or secondary levels by offering scholarship and employment opportunities in Singapore after graduation. That is why to send student to make study in Singapore is also a way of exporting labor to this market.

3. Other markets

a. Middle East: This is the biggest market for foreign laborers where some 10 million guest workers are employed by various industries (construction, oil, clothing, textile, utility services, etc.). This market has harsh working and living conditions and low wages (from US\$100 to 300 a month), but it could help reduce the unemployment rate in Vietnam.

b. Africa: This region suffers high unemployment rate but it needs experts in various fields (health care, education, construction, agriculture, etc.)

c. Russia and Eastern Europe: Countries in this bloc have no need for foreign laborers but many Vietnamese businesspersons have run business there since 1980s and they could employ Vietnamese laborers.

d. Developed countries: Most of them face great shortage of labor because of low birth rate. That is why their governments facilitate immigration and employment of guest workers. These markets usually need laborers working as nurses, teachers, farm hands, sailors, IT technicians, etc.

The U.S. is the most attractive market for laborers from developing countries because of high wages (twice as high as Japanese average wage and three times higher than Korean and Taiwanese wages).

Official German survey estimates its shortage of labor is 1.5 million laborers. Italy needs some 30,000 guest workers. According to a London-based advisory firm, the E.U. will need 35 million guest workers by 2050. These data show that many countries are ready to employ foreign workers, which provides favorable conditions for laborers from developing countries, including Vietnam.

Thus, potential markets for Vietnamese labor are numerous. The most difficult problems for labor authorities in Vietnam are how to secure well-trained labor as required by foreign labor markets and how to control Vietnamese laborers in foreign countries in order to build a good public image for Vietnamese labor. ■