Preferred terminology in migration discussions

Terms to be avoided	Preferred/ neutral terms	Justification
• Labour exports / imports; • Labour exporting / importing countries	• Emigration of labour or labour outflow; immigration of labour or inflow of labour; • Emigration/Immigration country	Migration involves the movement of human beings who should enjoy human and labour rights unlike traded commodities. "Labour is not a commodity" – Philadelphia Declaration of the International Labour Organization.
• Manpower	• Human resources	The term 'manpower' is not gender sensitive.
• Labour sending countries • Labour receiving countries:	• Countries of origin or source countries; • Countries of destination or host countries	May imply that governments are engaged in labour emigration/ immigration. Most overseas placements are done by the private sector. Workers are also mostly hired by private employers in destination countries.
• Labour migrants / Temporary contractual labour (GCC countries) • Economic migration/ Economic migrants;	• Migrant workers; Migrant labour; • Labour migration/ Migrant workers.	International instruments have never used the term 'labour migrants'. 'Economic migrant' is a rather derogatory term used to describe those seeking asylum for economic reasons rather than for real persecution.
• Migrant domestic helper	• Migrant domestic worker	Migrant domestic workers are much more than 'helping' in the household being engaged in full time work, undertaking many duties and often working excessive hours.
• Unskilled workers	• Low skilled and/or semi-skilled workers	All worker including migrant workers have specific skills. The preferred terms are consistent with the dignity of labour.
• Illegal migration • Illegal migrant workers/ clandestine migration	• Irregular migration/ Undocumented migration • Migrant workers in irregular status.	No human being is illegal. The term 'illegal' criminalizes migrants who may become irregular due to different reasons.
• Voluntary return	• When migrants have an option to remain	Disguised deportation programmes.
• Management	• Governance	Suggests control of migration to some extent; Who manages?
Source: *Compiled by Piyasiri Wickramasekara, Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA)*		