



Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)

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Standing Members

Bangladesh

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK); Association for Community Development (ACD); Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU); Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE)

India

Center for Education and Communication (CEC); Center for Indian Migrant Studies (CIMS); Migrant Forum India (MFI); Migrant Rights Council

Nepal

All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA); Women Rehabilitation Center (WOREC)

Sri Lanka

Action Network for Migrant Workers (ACTFORM); Migrant Services Centre (MSC); Women and Media Collective (WMC)

Burma

Federation of Trade Unions – Burma (FTUB)

Indonesia

Center for Indonesian Migrant Workers (CIMW); Jarnas Pekabumi; KOPBUMI; Migrant Care; Solidaritas Perempuan; Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (SBMI)

Malaysia

Charles Hector & Co.; Tenaganita

Philippines

Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiative; Batis Center for Women; Center for Migrants Advocacy (CMA-Phils); Kapisanan ng mga Kamag-anakan ng Migranteng Mangagawang Pilipino (KAKAMMPI); Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc. (KCFI); Unlad Kabayan Migrants Services Foundation, Inc.

Singapore

Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME); St. Francis Workers Centre (SFWC)

Hong Kong

Asian Migrant Centre (AMC); Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR); Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU)

Japan

Solidarity for Migrants – Japan (SMJ)

Korea

Joint Committee with Migrants in Korea (JCMK)

Mongolia

Center for Human Rights Development

Taiwan

Hope Workers Center (HWC)

Uphold the Rights and Well being of Women Migrant Workers!

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we call upon the international community to uphold the rights and well being of women migrant workers. Women migrant workers constitute half of the total 200 million migrants of the world. Asia is home to more than fifty million migrant workers. A big number of women workers are employed as domestic workers, health care workers, factory workers and as workers in the entertainment industry. Some countries in Asia deploy more women migrant workers than men. In the Philippines, 72% of deployed migrant workers for the year 2005 were women.

We also call on the international community to celebrate and recognize the contributions of women migrant workers to the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of both countries of destination and origin.

We would also like to recognize the conditions and challenges that women migrant workers, the women left behind and all other women from all walks of life face under neo-liberal globalization. Globalization and the World Trade Organization's(WTO) neo-liberal agenda has led to the worsening of the situations of poverty, unsustainable development and the marginalization of specific sectors. This in turn causes increasing incidence of migration as working abroad become for most women, the only option to survive or improve their lives.

Women migrant workers experience abuse in the various stages of migration: pre-departure, on-site and return or reintegration. Before leaving they are exposed to illegal recruitment, extortionate placement fees, trafficking and abuses in recruitment agency centers. On site, migrants experience contract substitution, non payment of wages, physical, sexual and psychological abuse, discrimination and marginalization. Upon return and reintegration they experience abuses in detention centers, forced repatriation, lack of security in terms of income.

We would also like to highlight the following issues and challenges faced by women migrants:

Recognize Domestic Work as Work!

Migrant domestic workers are among the most vulnerable sectors of workers due to the multiple forms of discrimination they face – based on social identities of class, gender, race and citizenship – the confinement of domestic work to private households. Migrant women domestic workers are often subject to the denial of decent work and living conditions, such as no rest-days, long and unregulated work hours, and denial of reproductive health rights. Such conditions pose additional obstacles to their self representation and reinforce difficulties in organizing and engaging in collective bargaining.

We note with deep concern that in many countries domestic work is yet to be recognized as work. The implications of this include non-coverage of domestic work under national labour legislation, human and labour rights violations, and most importantly, denial of their right to freedom of association or right to join and form associations and unions.

Uphold women migrants' rights to health and well being!

The right to health is a basic human right guaranteed in the International Bill of Rights (*Art. 22, 25*) and the core human rights instruments of the United Nations, namely: the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination – CERD (*Art.5.e.iv*), Convention Against Torture – CAT (*Art.3*), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – CEDAW (*Art. 11, 12*), Convention on the Rights of the Child – CRC (*Art. 24, 26*) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their families (*Art. 25,27,28, 43,45,70*). Women migrants right to health should be guaranteed regardless of their status.

In most instances however, this is not the case. Women migrant workers are often placed in working and living situations where they are exposed to vulnerabilities such as violence and abuse. A large number of women migrant workers in particular migrant domestic workers do not have access to health care due to the nature of their jobs. In some cases domestic workers are seldom allowed to leave their employers homes thus they have limited or no access to health care services.

Women migrant workers in conflict situations are exposed to danger. Testimonies of women migrants in areas of conflict have shown us that some of them are prevented from leaving their workplace while some get injured in the process of escaping from their workplace.

We also express our concern over the ongoing discrimination against migrant workers as seen through the mandatory HIV/AIDS testing they are subjected to upon arrival in the host country. Conduct of mandatory HIV testing without their knowledge i.e. without pre- and post-test counseling, violates the right to information, privacy and confidentiality.

The absence of gender sensitive legislations that take into full account the needs of women migrants including access to reproductive and maternal health care, right to privacy and personhood, right to life and basic right to health in both countries of destination and origin of women migrant workers put women migrants' in vulnerable situation.

Uphold the Rights and Dignity of Women Migrant Workers in the Entertainment Industry!

In the case of women migrant workers in the entertainment industry, the nature of their work makes them vulnerable to institutionalized labor abuse and sexual exploitation which includes systematic labor contract violations, trafficking, and debt bondage. In order to escape the situation of violence, women opt to “marry” their customers, only to end up as victims of domestic violence due to a number of socio-cultural factors which put pressure on the interracial relationships such as cultural and language differences and varying expectations on the relationships.

Offsprings of interracial relationships between entertainers and their customers also face discrimination, abandonment, and in some cases, denial of their right to their father's nationality.

Uphold and respect the rights of victims/survivors of trafficking and other forms of violence against women!

In cases of illegal recruitment and trafficking wherein women migrant workers are deployed to the countries of destination through irregular channels, women migrants live under the fear of being caught or reported by their employers to authorities and are treated as violators of immigration policies when they are apprehended.

Victims/survivors of trafficking and other forms of violence against women should have adequate services and protective measures to ensure that their rights are recognized and respected from the time they are identified as trafficked persons until they are humanely repatriated to their countries of origin. Governments of countries of origin must have comprehensive and qualitative reintegration program in place to help the women come to terms with their experiences of violence and to expand women's options upon their return for gainful and sustainable employment.

In light of the above issues we therefore call for the following:

- The ratification and effective implementation of the UN Migrant Workers Convention on the protection of migrant workers and members of their families, the core human rights conventions of the United Nations, the fundamental Conventions of the ILO and those that pertain to migrant workers;
- The recognition of women migrant domestic workers as workers and their inclusion into the local social and labour laws, uphold and protect their right to mobility, freedom to join and form associations and trade unions.
- for an intensifying of its region-wide campaign against unjust and discriminatory policies towards domestic workers as exemplified by the 'new conditions of stay' (NCS) and "2-week rule" in Hong Kong;
- Uphold and respect the rights of victims/survivors of trafficking and other forms of violence against women
- Uphold women migrant workers right to health and well-being in particular providing women with access to health care, services;
- The enactment of gender sensitive laws take into consideration the specific needs of women migrant workers including among others: access to services and information on health, reproductive and maternity health care;
- The implementation of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

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