



Statement 18 December 2016

Today, on International Migrants Day we recognize and celebrate the contributions made by millions of migrants all over the world. Migration flows today are at unprecedented levels with the United Nations Estimating the total number of migrants to be at 243 million. On this day, then, let us be reminded not only of the extent of their contribution, but also of the enormity of the need to respect their dignity, rights, and freedom from discrimination and exploitation.

In celebration of the contributions of migrant workers and recognizing migrant voices we share with you a documentation of the stories of 150 men and women migrant workers from Bangladesh in the book, "Untold Stories of Migrants: Dreams and Realities". The book is a publication of MFA member Refugee and Migratory Research Movements Unit (RMMRU). We are proud to join RMMRU in launching this publication on international migrant's day.

Global Governance of migration

Today, more than ever, migration has been at the forefront of international agenda as evidenced by the adoption of governments on 19 September of the "New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants" and the launch of a process of intergovernmental negotiations leading to the adoption of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

The recognition of various events exposing the plight of migrants around the world calls for its critical attention and intervention. Governments must ensure that all migration policies designed and implemented at national, regional, and international levels are rights based. Ensure that the needs, priorities and rights of migrant workers and members of their families are central to any policy discussion.

We call for global governance on migration that works for the human rights of migrants. Governance mechanisms, including the Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees, and the stakeholders entrusted with their negotiation, must fulfill the highest international rights standards. To this end, states must look at existing international standards on labour rights and migrant rights, acknowledge the intersectionality of these rights with other rights areas, the related conventions which must continue to be ratified and implemented. The global compact process should be multi-stakeholder and take into consideration the experiences of migrant communities and local authorities who have been at the forefront of the struggle for migrants rights and for years have been addressing realities on the ground.

Recruitment reform

Addressing issues in the recruitment of migrant workers has been key to the advocacy of migrants groups in the region. Abuses in the recruitment process particularly in the global supply chains have been rampant. Recent media reports have exposed abuses in the recruitment of migrant workers in the electronics industry.

There is urgent need for countries of origin to develop greater cohesiveness and solidarity through mechanisms such as regional MoUs, to establish and common standards like zero recruitment fees, a living wage, decent work conditions, and reduced remittance costs, and avoid a "race to the

bottom". There should be no exceptions or exclusion zones for different categories of workers. The right to organize too must be enshrined in the regional MoU and be fulfilled by the countries of destination. We also call on states to ratify and implement ILO Conventions on migration 97 and 143, ILO Convention 181 on private recruitment and adhere to the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment in implementing policies and programs on recruitment.

Women Migrant Workers

Women in migration, particularly migrant workers, experience increased and specific risks on account of their consistent inability to access labour, legal, and social protection. Some sectors (including domestic work and other sectors dominated by female labour), working and living conditions exacerbate such risks, leaving women migrant workers at risk of sexual and physical violence, immigration detention, poor health, denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Migrant domestic workers in particular are at risk due their exclusion from labour laws of most countries.

Given the challenges facing women in migration, states should proactively formulate and enact laws and policies on migration, adhering to international human rights instruments centering the rights of women. Specifically we call on states to ratify and implement CEDAW and the ILO Convention 189 on Domestic Work.

International Migrants Day this year is also an occasion to celebrate the anniversary of the UN 1990 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (UN 1990 CMW). MFA recognises those States that have signed and ratified the CMW, and calls upon all other States, in particular countries of destination, to "Step It Up!" and do the same.

It is disappointing that a treaty that merely reaffirm and complement fundamental human rights guaranteed to all humans by the ICCPR and ICESCR to vulnerable migrants should have ratifications from only 49 state parties, with very few destination countries. Given that migrants are extremely vulnerable to human rights abuses, it is unfortunate that wealthy states that pontificate on human rights should balk at the prospect of offering basic protections to those who need recognition of these rights the most. Migrant receiving states must finally take responsibility for the protection of the fundamental human rights of all people under their jurisdiction and ratify the Convention.

MFA, its members and partners are celebrating international migrants day across the Asia by organizing a number of activities with migrant communities and members of their families. To know more about the activities of MFA and its partners for International Migrants Day please check our website: www.mfasia.org

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) is a network of grassroots organizations, trade unions, faith-based groups, migrants and their families and individual advocates in Asia working together for social justice for migrant workers and members of their families.