

S. 409.

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM (WSF) 2024
15 – 19 Feb 2024, Kathmandu, Nepal

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF "ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE"

WE STAND WITH WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS!

In 2021, 70 million women globally were working as international migrant workers more predominantly in domestic work and agricultural sectors.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) has also identified discriminatory policies of country of origin and destination against women migrant workers as one of the major root causes of forced labour.

Our interactive session entitled "Where do you stand with women migrant workers?" organised by BNSK (Bangladesh), AMKAS (Nepal), Our Journey (Malaysia) and regional organization, Migrant Women Forum (Migrant Forum in Asia) attracted 45 participants, mostly women, comprising of civil society representation, migrant community organisations, local media and returnee migrants identified the following challenges;

1. That women migrate for a variety of reasons other than poverty and unemployment, example to escape patriarchal systems, domestic violence, sexual harassment or forced marriages which increases their desperation to migrate and recruiters often prey on their desperation by forcing them into debt bondage and increased recruitment cost;
2. That women are seen as vulnerable and need of protection hence governments take a protectionist view of policies on women migrant workers. However, age barriers, family approvals etc. may work against women who are unable to fulfil such requirements and thus migrate with false documentations or seek irregular migration routes;
3. That women migrant workers are less likely to have access to migration related information due to cultural and social restriction which impedes their access to accurate information and connectivity to their peers for support as women are less likely to be educated impairing their ability to read; women have less access to technology i.e. phone and internet and women are restricted in their movements;
4. That pregnancy tests are conducted and is used as a cause for deportation (regardless of who the baby of the father is). Women are also forced to seek illegal abortions to enable them to continue their migration process. Reproductive health issues are also used as an excuse by employers to deport or restrict access to healthcare.

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Handwritten signatures and names of participants at the bottom of the page, including: MPA, Shree, Subrina AED Bangladesh, Biene, Caritas, AMKAS Nepal, and others.

- 5. That women who work aboard for long periods would return pass their child bearing age which results in divorces, broken families and stigma from society;
- 6. That women are restricted to certain migrant sectors including informal sectors example domestic work; and
- 7. That women in destination countries are less likely to be given overtime and/or night work due to security reasons, which impedes their earning capacity.

We put forth the following recommendations:

- 1. That governments should remove all discriminatory policies including age barriers and family consent requirements to allow women to make their own choices to migrate akin to male migrant workers;
- 2. That governments should look at skills certification/recognition, reskilling and up skilling e.g. language skills, financial literacy skills that would enable the worker to be promoted or support the migrants reintegration into their home country;
- 3. That pregnant women should be allowed to decide whether to migrate. *or not to migrate* Pregnant migrant workers in destination countries should be provided the necessary healthcare and childcare to enable her to continue her employment;
- 4. That companies should adopt the employer pay model and reflect the same in recruitment agreements with agents/recruiters, wherein business would be able to sue recruiter for breach of contract if the recruiter charged fees to the worker;
- 5. That companies should provide adequate social security benefits and healthcare benefits that are tailored to specific health requirements of women;
- 6. That companies should create a safe and conducive environment wherein women workers are given equal wages, overtime including opportunity for night work by increasing security at business premises at night including providing transportation; and
- 7. That companies should adopt a zero tolerance policy on any forms of sexual harassment including gender sensitization trainings for all employees and a reporting mechanism which is confidential and with protection from retaliation.

Desiree

Yanah

Manda
Shukla

BNSK (Bangladesh)
AMKAS (Nepal)
Our Journey (Malaysia) and
Migrant Women Forum (Migrant Forum in Asia)

Malaysia

Mix

Rajesh

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