



## Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)

# ASIAN CONSULTATION ON GFMD 2007

15-16 June 2007, Pasig City, Philippines

## CONFERENCE STATEMENT

We, the 60 participants representing migrant organizations, NGOs, diaspora groups, trade unions, development advocates, and civil society groups from 17 countries, have come together at the “*Asian Regional Consultation on the GFMD 2007*” that was organized by the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) and partners on 15-16 June 2007 in Pasig City, Philippines.

This is the second regional consultation focusing on “migration and development” organized by Asian migrant groups and civil society advocates. It builds upon the first consultation held in Bangkok in August 2006, in preparation for the “*United Nations High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development (HLD)*” in September 2006.

This second Asian regional civil society consultation aims to bring together the various migrant groups, development advocates and civil society organizations in order to coordinate and jointly prepare for GFMD 2007; to broaden and deepen the consensus reached in 2006; to identify priority topics and focal issues to be emphasized in GFMD 2007; to plan common or joint actions and activities; and to start initial discussion on preparations for GFMD 2008.

One of the resolutions at the HLD 2006 (New York) was to continue holding a global discussion on this issue. The governments agreed to hold the first Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) on 10-11 July 2007 in Brussels, after the offer by the Belgian government to host the forum. This will be an inter-governmental, informal, non-binding meeting. 12 civil society representatives will be allowed to join the government meeting; a “Civil Society Day” is scheduled on 9 July to allow more civil society groups to join a parallel process. There is also a standing decision to hold the next GFMD in 2008 in the Philippines.

## **COMMON POSITION ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

The first Asian civil society consultation came up with a joint statement on the common perspectives and positions of migrants and civil society advocates on the issue of migration and development (see attached “*Joint Statement of the Asian Alliance on Migration, Development and Human Rights*,” August 2006). This joint statement emphasized that there must be continuing dialogue on this issue, and that these discussions must be done in the framework of human rights, social justice, gender equality, sustainability, and the people’s right to development. We asserted that this dialogue must be done in the ambit of the United Nations process, so that governments remain accountable to their commitments in this meeting, as well as to their standing obligations under the United Nations standards, instruments and declarations. We further emphasized that any meaningful dialogue on this matter must ensure the effective participation of migrant groups and civil society advocates.

We reaffirm the joint position, perspectives and demands as embodied in our 2006 Joint Statement. We lament the lack of clear and coherent response or commitment by the governments, especially in Asia, to the perspectives and demands that we raised in HLD 2006. We are deeply concerned that the GFMD 2007 will further ignore the inputs and interventions made in the 2006 HLD process, and bring the discussion back to the level where the primary emphasis is on the exploitative perspectives and agendas of governments and businesses.

We further score the token space and representation accorded to migrants and civil society groups, foreclosing any real and substantive interaction or dialogue.

Despite these serious reservations, we, the Asian migrant and civil society groups, decide to continue to engage with the GFMD process to try to make it a more meaningful and real platform for substantive discussion on migration and development issues among the key stakeholders.

For the 2007 GFMD, we specifically want to emphasize the following concerns.

## **PRIORITY THEMES AND POSITIONS FOR GFMD 2007**

### **1. Migration policy regime and human rights framework**

We call for the strengthening and enactment of rights-based migration legislation, based on international standards, for the full protection of migrant workers at all levels. Each country should have a clear migration policy based on fundamental human rights principles, as enshrined in the core U.N. and ILO standards/conventions. Migration policy should firmly commit to the principles of non-discrimination, social and gender justice, the right to mobility, right to information, decent work, the right to work and rights at work, and the right to development. Migration policies should be formulated and implemented with prior consultation and effective participation of the primary stakeholders (migrants, civil society, trade unions).

We reiterate our call for the immediate ratification of the core U.N. and ILO standards and conventions, particularly the Migrant Workers Convention and ILO Conventions 87, 98, 97 and 143.

We call for the reform (towards more rights-based framework) and effective implementation by sending and receiving countries of existing policies and laws. Policies and laws should be effectively disseminated, monitored and implemented.

We emphasize the need for concrete and decisive action by Asian governments to improve governance. Pervasive corruption in many sending and receiving countries, as well as the lack of political will to crack down on abuses against migrants, worsen the violation of migrants' human rights. Good governance means upholding the human rights and dignity of everyone in society, especially the poor and marginalized, including migrant workers.

We demand decisive action by governments to make recruiters, employers, remittance/money transfer companies, lending companies and businesses in the migration industry, to be accountable and liable for their exploitative or abusive practices.

### **2. Savings, remittance and social contributions**

We continue to emphasize our call for the proper recognition, valuation and measurement by host and home governments of the benefits from, and contributions of, migrant workers. Migrants' social contributions should be recognized and valued as much as their economic contributions. The full appreciation and recognition by sending countries of the social costs and adverse impacts of migration; these social costs should be considered vis-à-vis the benefits.

There is an urgent need for the provision of comprehensive and effective support, mechanisms, programmes and enabling conditions by the sending and receiving governments for the mobilization and harnessing of migrants' savings, remittances, diaspora funds and economic resources towards community and social development in the home country. This requires the setting up of independent, transparent, coherent and specialized agency(ies), with participation of migrants and other stakeholders, to manage and harness migrant savings and resources towards community development.

We want to caution policy-makers, however, that the harnessing of remittances and resources of migrants should always be considered within the framework of human rights, social development and empowerment. Over-emphasis and dependency on remittance is not sustainable and is anti-developmental; this further exploits migrants as milking cows, and shifts the burden and responsibility away from the government.

It is the primary responsibility of the host and home governments to provide the enabling policies, mechanisms or national programmes for effective savings, remittance, social development, and reintegration. States must ensure that migrants and their families benefit from their own remittances. The mobilization of migrants' savings and remittance should be voluntary and not forced e.g. via legislation.

Migrants and primary stakeholders can only be central actors in development if they are empowered to mobilize and harness their savings, remittance, skills and capabilities for personal, community and national social development. They should be involved in the planning, decision-making and implementation of these development initiatives.

Governments should ensure the provision of low-cost and accessible remittance or money transfer channels. This means regulation at the national and/or international level of remittance and money transfer companies/channels, remittance flows, practices, fees and charges. The gains and profits made by governments and remittance companies should be used in part or full to support social and community needs, services, as well as to mitigate the social impacts/costs of migration.

### **3. Migration and development framework**

Development means the ability of one country to improve its economy without compromising the human rights, dignity, health and welfare of its workers. It means enhancing the freedoms of the people. Migration and development must promote global citizenship; migrant workers should be given the same rights and protections as citizens of receiving countries.

Development policies should incorporate migration policy, based on the core human rights and the right to development principles, effective consultation and participation of the primary stakeholders, and with mechanisms against corruption.

Women constitute half of the migrant population and communities; women empowerment and gender justice are essential for any development programme to be effective. Development policy

should not focus on getting remittances, but address the problems of poverty, job security and holistic livelihoods of the people.

Dependency on labor migration is not sustainable; the mass export of labor should not be a national development policy of the government.

Immigration policies that exploit and drive migrants to resort to irregular migration should be reformed. Accessible, fair, transparent and non-corrupt regular migration channels should be created especially for migrants in the laboring job categories (factory, fishery, plantations, domestic work, etc.). Development strategies of both sending and receiving countries should not exploit, encourage and make us of irregular or vulnerable migrant workers.

Recognizing the valuable contribution of migrants to both sending and receiving countries, migrants and their families should be covered by universal social security, provident/retirement, and health insurance programmes in both sending and receiving countries. Migrants should have access to social services. They should be covered by decent work, equal pay, and equal opportunities policies. The rights of marginalized migrants (e.g. women, domestic workers and the “low/semi-skilled” workers) to family rights, social mobility and social advancement should not be unfairly restricted.

#### **4. Partnership with other stakeholders**

Any partnerships for development with other stakeholders should be based on the core principles of human rights, social and gender justice, and the right to development.

We commit to build effective and strategic partnerships and collaboration among migrants, trade unions, diaspora communities and civil society groups within and among countries to promote our development initiatives.

We shall explore critical partnerships with companies or corporate sector (e.g. airlines, couriers, recruitment agencies, telecommunication corporations, lending agencies and other businesses benefiting from the migrants) based on the above principles. We shall encourage the participation of the business sector in the migration discourse, solicit their support in enhancing migrants’ development initiatives, make them constantly aware of their accountability for abusive or exploitative practices, and encourage them to deepen their socially-responsible and ethical practices. We shall advocate for corporations to create support programs and services for migrants as part of their corporate social responsibility, including the allocation of part of their net profits to address migrants’ needs or mitigate the social costs of migration.

We shall engage recruiters, money transfer companies to push them to operate ethically, and in an accountable and responsible manner.

#### **5. Process and platform in discussing migration and development**

Any process discussing migration and development at the international level should ensure the effective participation of the primary stakeholders – migrants and civil society groups.

We call on the United Nations and governments to institutionalize a thematic approach in discussing the issues of migration and development; identify specific points to form the basis of a binding program of action so as to avoid the holding of repetitive forums.

We reiterate our demand that the GFMD should be brought under the auspices of the UN. Governments should have accountability over their decisions/commitments at the GFMD; GFMD should also come up with concrete plans of action on development. Therefore, there should be mechanisms for effective implementation and monitoring of the commitments/resolutions and plans of action made at the GFMD.

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#### List of Participating Organizations

##### **Bangladesh**

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK)

Welfare Association of Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE)

##### **Cambodia**

Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM-Cambodia)

Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (CWPD)

##### **Hong Kong**

Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR)

Indonesian Migrant Workers Union (IMWU)

The Hong Kong Coalition of Indonesian Migrants Workers Organization (KOTKIHO)

##### **India**

Migrants Rights Council

National Domestic Workers Movement

National Domestic Workers Movement – North East Region

Migrant Forum in India

##### **Indonesia**

Migrant Care

Jarnas Pekabumi – National Network of Economic Development Indonesian Migrant Workers & Their Families

Solidaritas Perempuan

Center for Indonesian Migrant Workers (CIMW)

##### **Korea**

Joint Committee with Migrants in Korea (JCMK)

##### **Malaysia**

Migration Working Group

##### **Mongolia**

Center for Human Rights and Development (CHRD)

##### **Nepal**

All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA)

##### **Philippines**

Atikha Overseas Workers and Communities Initiatives

Center for Migrant Advocacy – Philippines (CMA-Phils)

Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc.

Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation, Inc.  
Samahan ng Migrating Pilipino at Pamilya Inc. (SAMAPI)  
International Network of Alternative Financial Institutions – Phils (INAFI)  
Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)  
IDEALS  
Philippines Consortium on Migration and Development (PhilComDev)  
Batis Center for Women  
FAMDEV

### **Singapore**

Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME)  
Singapore National Trades Union Congress

### **Sri Lanka**

ACTFORM/ACILS  
Migrants Services Centre (MSC)

### **Taiwan**

Hope Workers Center

### **Tajikistan**

SAODAT

### **Regional Organizations**

Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA)  
Asian Migrant Centre (AMC)  
Asia-Pacific Forum on Women, Law & Development (APWLD)  
Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)  
Focus on the Global South  
Union Network International-Asia Pacific Regional Organization (UNI-APRO)  
ASEAN Service Employees Trade Union Council (ASETUC)  
ICCO

### **International Organizations**

The Hague Process