

IMMIGRANTES

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**CONSEIL ŒCUMÉNIQUE DES ÉGLISES**

UNITÉ JUSTICE ET SERVICE

Commission d'entraide et de service des Eglises  
et d'assistance aux réfugiés

LIGNE DIRECTE: (022) 91.63.20.

Dear Brother,

I'm just coming back from Southern Africa where the MCC from 10 countries organised a Consultation on Refugees and Migrants. It was a very important event - Many social workers dealing with exiled people attended the meeting. And for the first time the problems of all the uprooted were taken altogether.

I send you the conclusions / recommendations we wrote last december in Hong Kong, at the end of a study-consultation organised by CCA / URM.

In your letter you asked if some money is available. Available, helas no. So far, not for those uprooted, the migrant workers. This situation reflect the lack of interest for them - Anyway why I'm convinced that the situation is changing because of the amplitude of the dramas in some countries (unemployment - returns - illegals - racism). If you decide some action and a specific project, you have to present it, with the support of churches, for the next screening series - I will support of course.

You must know that in Brazil some churches and Associations met in July, constituted a National Commission to prepare a Consultation for next year -

Have a good meeting.

Sincerely yours,

*afp*

# Proposals and Recommendations

As we follow the migration cycle process, from recruitment, to departure to and arrival in the host country until repatriation back to the sending country, every step is riddled with problems for the migrant worker which shall be identified below. And for every step are proposals for action and certain mechanisms that may be adopted.

## I. RECRUITMENT

### Problems

- a) unclear terms of employment, no contract papers and inadequate protection of workers
- b) high fees for processing of papers
- c) illegal methods employed by recruitment agencies or illegal recruiting firms

### Proposals

1. Examine the terms, conditions, liabilities defined in the contract.
2. The contract must be written in a language the contractee understands.
3. The contract must include provisions which would ensure that workers leave the home country properly and safely, free from last minute harassment from immigration officials.
4. Work for the standardization of contracts.
5. In some countries, it may be necessary to look into the possibility of pressure exerted on the contractee by outside party, etc.
6. Legal aid should be provided to workers confronted

with illegal recruitment, violations of contract terms and all other problems connected with his/her working/living conditions.

7. Educational campaigns be launched to inform the people about their rights, the legal procedures, and all other data that they would need to safeguard their interest. Mass media can be helpful.
8. Workers' families can be organized and serve as the link between the home country and the workers' abroad.

### Mechanisms

1. A structure can be set up in the home country which can act as a 'watch dog'.
2. The church and/or concerned secular groups, organizations can be tapped to respond to the problems.
3. A legal aid group may be organized or, if already in existence, mobilized.

Special attention should be given to the recruitment of women into the prostitution industry in foreign countries.

### Proposals

1. Women who go abroad to work as prostitutes should be considered to form one category of migrant workers. While it is illegal yet, it exists and must be studied carefully.
2. Recruitment into prostitution deserves special attention because of the degree to which these women are exploited and dehumanized.
3. To undertake campaigns against acts and structures that reinforce sexual discrimination, social



prejudice, sexual harassments (ex. pregnancy test which Singapore requires of domestic helpers; stereotyping of Thai and Filipino women as inclined to sexual pursuits, etc.)

4. To collaborate with existing networks and organizations which are genuinely concerned about the exploitation of women in all its forms.



## II. ARRIVAL AT THE RECEIVING COUNTRY



### Living conditions

- a. Domestic helpers are usually accommodated in the receiving agency's office until the employer takes them in. The waiting time can be from one to two weeks. The treatment given them is usually insulting and degrading. Sexual harassment is common. Some domestic helpers are made to take on work without compensation.
- b. Living conditions of migrant workers in construction

- sites or other related jobs are in bad state. Housing is either in desert tents, labour camps or shacks.
- c. Inadequate food, lack of recreation and freedom of movement are also common.

### Proposals

1. The recruiting agency must be held responsible and liable for the safe arrival of the migrant workers.
2. Strict conditions be required of the receiving agency. Provisions for medical care must be guaranteed by the receiving agencies.

### Work Conditions

#### a. Domestic helpers

- a1. Singapore has no minimum wage for domestic helpers. The number of working hours for them is not stipulated, both in Singapore and Hong Kong.
- a2. Labour laws do not usually cover domestic helpers.
- a3. The problem of contract-substitution is common, particularly in the Middle East.

#### b. Other workers

- b1. Many accidents happen in job-sites.
- b2. here is no standard salary for certain jobs. Salary differentiation exists among migrant workers, who receive lower pay than nationals for the same job.
- b3. Contract substitution and contract violations are commonly committed.
- b4. Freedom of movement within the worksite and in other parts of the country is restricted.
- b5. Benefits, indemnities and other compensations are not always guaranteed.

## Proposals

1. Study the possibility of formulating labour laws that would define the relations between the employer and the domestic helpers.
2. Undertake a comparative study of the socio-political and cultural systems and conditions, labour laws and practices in the host countries.
  - 2.1 Repatriates may be interviewed to furnish information.
  - 2.2 KAIBIGAN to provide a copy of the (a) compendium on Filipino migrant workers in the Asia and Pacific region; (b) compilation of Saudi Arabia labour laws.
  - 2.3 The Middle East Council of Churches to handle data collection for the Middle East countries (as volunteered).
  - 2.4 DAGA to be the centre for the collection and dissemination of information.
3. Legal aid be provided to the migrant workers in the host countries. (A legal aid group already exists in Lebanon and the Philippines. Other groups may be organized or contacted in other countries, and linked to the network.)
4. Counselling/advice be made available to the workers in the sending and receiving countries.
5. Pressure the host countries through government-to-government relations to set a standard minimum wage for migrant workers. International convention laws such as those of the International Labour Organization of the United Nations may be invoked.

6. Organize migrant workers.

7. A mechanism - a committee, an organization, etc. - be established in the sending country to look into the situation of migrant workers and provide the necessary programmes and services.
8. Come out with publications in the form of a newsletter or an update to sustain the exchange of information.

## Repatriation

1. Upon return to the home country, the migrant worker is confronted with the problem of what to do with his/her savings and how to re-adjust to the environment.
2. Many families spend remittances on non-essentials and become prey to consumerist values. Hence, there is increased pressure for the migrant worker to go back to work again to maintain the new standard of living.

## Proposal

Counselling and advice be made available to returning migrant workers. Part of the service may be to identify ways to invest their money wisely.

## Networking

1. It is necessary to link up with all concerned individuals and organizations, in the national, regional, continental and international levels. The presence of and/or endorsement by prestigious and credible personalities would also be very helpful.

2. The network on all levels may engage in any or all of the following:





# Overview

to

## Labour Migration

- a. research and documentation
- b. publication
- c. education
- d. provision of services like legal aid

3. DAGA to facilitate linkage between and among the groups/organizations, for the time until a more specialised unit exists for this purpose.

4. Three levels of 'intervention':

- 4a. Influential/prestigious individuals may be requested to intercede on behalf of migrant workers.
- 4b. Legal procedures may be resorted to.
- 4c. Popular pressure may be launched through the use of interest groups, mass media, lobbying, petition campaigns, etc.

5. Whatever body that may be created should maintain independence from political/partisan groups to maximize effectiveness in networking and in attaining the objectives.

### Other Proposals:

1. It was proposed that a regional consultation be held in 1986/1987. In the meantime, participants agreed to initiate efforts in their respective countries towards the establishing of a group/organisation or agency to respond to needs and problems of migrant workers. Developments from hereon will be taken up during the next consultation.

2. A committee was formed to monitor and follow-up activities at the national and regional level. Members are one from Centre for Society and Religion, Sri Lanka, a representative from the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrant Filipinos and one from DAGA.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY-CONSULTATION

Profile of Migrant Workers (Age, Family, Sex) in Middle East  
by Home Country

Home Country	Workers' In the Middle East		
	Age	Family	Sex (% male)
India	<u>1977-78</u> Men: 68% 20-35 Women: 50% are 25-30	<u>1977-78</u> Men: 52.1% married Size of household: 5.4	?
Pakistan	<u>1980:</u> 50% under 30 75% 25-35	<u>1980:</u> 70% married 90% of married migrants separated from dependants	?
Bangladesh	<u>1980:</u> 70.9% 20-35	<u>1980:</u> 3.5 dependants	?
Sri Lanka	? : Women: 80% 25-40	? : 50-70% married	<u>1979:</u> 21 <u>1983:</u> 47
Thailand	<u>1981:</u> average 32 27.8% 26-30 25.6% 31-35	? : 10.2% unmarried 3 dependants	<u>1981:</u> 100
Philippines	<u>1981:</u> 60% 20-35 <u>1982:</u> Men: 52.5% 19-34 Women: 81.1% 19-34	? : Men: 80.8% married Women: 21.6% married <u>1981:</u> 65.5% married 4.2 dependants	<u>1981:</u> 74
Indonesia	?	? ?	?
Malaysia			
South Korea	<u>1981:</u> 50% 34-38* 50% below 34*	<u>1981:</u> most are married Size of household: 3-5	?
China			

\*estimation from indirect evidence such as children's age  
Data collapsed from various sources

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