

## CONCEPT NOTE

International Conference on Gender, Migration and Development:  
Seizing Opportunities, Upholding Rights  
September 25-26, 2008  
Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila  
CCP Complex Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City, 1300 MANILA, PHILIPPINES

The ICGMD is spearheaded by

Office of the President  
The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women

In partnership with  
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM),  
International Labour Organization (ILO),  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),  
Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) / Migrant Rights International (MRI)  
Women and Gender Institute of Miriam College (WAGI-MC)  
Lola Grande Foundation for Women and Children, Inc. (LGF)

And in cooperation with  
Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE)  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Globalization, demographic shifts and the shortage of skills and labour in many countries has resulted in the increasing migration of workers and their families. However, as noted by Ambassador Regine de Clerq in the First Global Forum on Migration and Development in Brussels in 2007, migration is the most complex issue related to globalization yet it is the least addressed.

A notable trend in recent times is the growing number of women migrants. Today they make up nearly half of the global migrant population. This is often referred to as the "feminization of migration". Women migrate for various reasons, including reunification with their families and marriage. Increasingly, migration represents for women the opportunity to find a better job, or just a job. Their work and income contributes to the well-being of themselves and their families and to the development of both sending and receiving countries. For some women migration leads to career enhancement. For others, it can lead to de-skilling as they accept lower skilled jobs for higher pay. The critical role their contribution to development plays deserves more recognition. Applying a gender lens to migration patterns can contribute to identifying ways to enhance the positive aspects of migration and to mitigate the negative effects, as well as promote greater gender equality in both sending and receiving countries.

Labour migration of women for some categories of work such as domestic work and care-giving can result in high levels of exploitation and abuse. Women may also find themselves in situations of being trafficked for sexual exploitation, or in organized migration for marriage. Trafficking often occurs in the context of migration, as women who are vulnerable outside their usual environment are taken advantage of. Pervasive gender inequalities also contribute to this vulnerability. Women can end up trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation even when they avail of legal migration channels. Internal migration

patterns are also routes to exploitive work and trafficking across borders.

Such conditions exist despite countries' endorsement of regional and international human rights instruments such as the ASEAN Declaration on the Promotion and the Protection of Rights of Migrant Workers, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC), the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the ILO Migration for Employment Convention, the ILO Migrant Workers Convention and other state obligations on migrant workers.

This underscores the need to mainstream human rights in general and women's rights in particular into the discourse and practice on migration and development. Promoting the human rights of migrants, particularly women migrants, is critical in and of itself, as women are human beings with human rights. Protecting migrant women's human rights promotes development and good governance. This requires multi stakeholder collaboration - government, civil society, private sector - both within and between countries of origin and employment.

Against this background, the international conference seeks to provide a multi-stakeholder forum to explore, highlight and propose actions and partnerships to address the issues arising from the gender, migration and development nexus.

#### **CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES**

1. To facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices in promoting opportunities and gender equality for women migrants', enhancing their contribution to development and upholding their rights and those of their families;
2. To infuse a gender perspective and rights-based approach to policies, programs, and services on migration;
3. To contribute to the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the deliberations of the 2nd Global Forum of Migration and Development to be held in Manila on 27-30 October 2008.

#### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Global and multi-sectoral partnerships and networks (governmental bodies, civil society organizations, academe and private sector) forged and strengthened on approaches to enhancing opportunities for migrant women and upholding and protecting their rights and those of their families;
- A Call to Action to effectively address issues, challenges and opportunities for migrant women and their families;

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

Approximately three hundred (300) participants, including the following:

- Government Senior Officials and Parliamentarians (from UN Member States) directly involved in policy making, particularly on gender, migration and development matters;
- Civil society (from UN Member States): women and migrant advocacy groups, children's advocacy groups, NGOs, religious groups, associations;
- Trade unions
- Academe
- Private sector
- International and Regional Organizations

## **MEETING FORMAT**

The Conference will run for two days, with plenary opening and closing sessions and parallel (simultaneous) discussion sessions allotted for each day. Conference conveners and co-sponsors will be responsible for organizing a number of the parallel sessions. Other organizations and groups are invited to organize additional sessions, covering the cost of resource persons, documents etc for the session. The parallel session groups are expected to develop concrete outputs, including good practices (policies and programs), areas of cooperation, knowledge and implementation gaps, and recommended courses for action or initiatives.

## **CONFERENCE FOLLOW UP**

Progress on the implementation of agreements, in particular the Manila Call to Action will be monitored by the Conveners. If resources permit, follow-up meetings will be organized once in two years, where the reports on the implementation of agreements will be presented. Similar conferences may also be convened, focusing on gender-specific themes arising from the Conference.