

Rapporteur Presentation for Session 3

Ms. Leslie Wright, US UNIFEM Committee

Parallel Session 3 dealt with Seizing Opportunities for Enhanced Gender Equality and Benefits of Migration for Women and their Families. There were five panels during this session. The first addressed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the private sector's role in upholding the rights and opportunities for women migrant workers.

The session looked at CSR and what it does, and outlined the supply chain concerns for corporations and consumers. Panelists examined ways in which companies could be named and shamed, where dialogue could exist and where companies could begin to work with NGOs, community organizations and governments in partnership to effect change. The growth of CSR as a concept and rise of the internet as a source of information have created a climate of increased transparency, allowing consumers to select goods and corporations that they wish to support with their money, and employees the chance to select those companies that support their ideals. It has become important to understand the scope and challenges associated with modern day slavery, and two examples were given as to ways of work to eliminate this threat.

Finally, a corporate example illustrated ways in which NGOs and others might leverage corporate interests to work hand in hand to create a better world for women migrant workers.

Policy recommendations coming from this session include:

Recognizing the power of the private sector, when collaboratively and responsibly focused on solving global problems can be a tremendous avenue for change, yet also recognizing that regulation of corporations is often required, governments should:

- examine laws and policies to ensure that there is a balance of both reward to good practice and cost to bad practice, with the end goal of *enabling* good
- ~~develop~~ develop policies that hold corporations accountable for their supply chains – especially in respect to forced labor and trafficking – such as annual reporting on labor conditions in the supply chain and oversight to ensure accurate reporting
- address the relationship between trade, women and migration issues in order to develop further policy

NGOs should

- begin to work in partnership with governments, corporations and academia to further the research agenda related to CSR and its relationship to migrant women, forced labor and human trafficking

- engage more strategically with corporations to address these issues, such as working in coalition and directing proposals that can connect with core business expertise by making the business case for involvement

The corporate sector should

- develop policies and practices to ensure human dignity in their workforce and within the fullest possible breadth of their supply chain, and independently audit to ensure and validate human rights conditions
- work together with NGOs and governments to address corporate ethics and take action to eliminate forced labor and trafficking
- implement training for their supply chain, efficient systems of monitoring the supply chain for transparency, and effective resolution of violations
- be transparent with their customers about labor conditions with their supply chain

The second session dealt with the role of government in shaping gender responsive policies on migration. Presenters looked at government structures and legal systems and identified that, where laws are in place, implementation has been irregular. In fact, some women may in fact have chosen to risk migration despite programs designed to protect them from risk. Rural women were identified as being vulnerable, and issues of poverty were identified as being of concern.

Some of the questions raised presented dilemmas. The challenge is that women have poor access to services. The feminization of exported labor indicates that there is a need for gender-responsive laws. Agencies need to be accountable to both employers AND employees. Sending and receiving countries need to work together to improve the conditions of women migrants and MOUs must include specific protections for various areas of work. Participants recognized that there were flaws in legislation and implementation that needed to be addressed.

Policy recommendations include:

- Integrate a gender perspective and ensure effective implementation of policies on migration Enhance capacity of government officials on gender sensitivity to enable them to effectively respond to needs of women migrants
- Develop partnerships with private sector (media) for awareness raising and info dissemination on realities and measures that protect migrants

The third session dealt with the role of associations, unions and networks in upholding rights and opportunities for women migrant workers.

Four speakers presented experiences based on experiences with Trade Unions (TU), returnee migrant women workers network, community based organisations (CBOs) and networks of migrants in the countries of employment.

The speaker on TU mentioned that democratic and independent organization of workers should be aimed at providing a permanent and continuing platform for promotion and protection of workers' rights. Based on the Filipino experience the speakers focused on the effects of globalization on migration and public services, effects of brain drain and needs to address women's health services.

Stating the importance of the role of returnee migrant workers networks, one speaker highlighted her experience facing violations at her country of employment and felt that through strong advocacy and networking with media and civil society organizations it was possible to bring a change of government attitude towards women migrant workers.

It is important to address the needs and aspirations of migrant workers as well as the potential migrants in host communities since all problems starts at that level. The speaker shared her experience in working with CBOs through various interventions including community radio, awareness programmes, local advocacy for developing village ordinance etc.

Highlighting on the positive role of migrant workers networks and right to association the speaker brought experience from Hong Kong where over 2 hundred thousand workers are working in households including child and adult care and other house hold activities. In HK almost 27% WMWs face physical and 2% face sexual exploitation during their employment. The HK newly adopted immigration law made it all impossible to live and work legally in the country resulting in huge number of illegal migrants who face abuse often.

The session recommended that:

1. the rights of migrants needs to be upheld
2. unions for quality public service
3. connect to from an international network to address WMW issues
4. involve migrant workers at all stages of development
5. strengthening multi-stakeholder partnership
6. strengthen CB works and networks for greater development of migrant communities and migrants
7. conduct more studies on networks, unions and CBOs

The fourth session was concerned with the migration of highly skilled women in respect to norms, standards and rights. Brain drain and waste was discussed – large numbers of educated people with extensive experience and education migrate and are de-skilled

in low paying jobs. What is needed is a more inclusive system of accreditation and a support system for the self-organization of migrant groups.

Three factors can contribute to the decline in women's migration:

- 1) the demand for construction work, or other male-oriented employment,
- 2) the introduction of minimum wages which leads to non-approval of contracts, and
- 3) participation in higher education leading to disinterest in migrant work.

Skilled women can take the lead in diaspora communities, giving much more back to the communities when they return.

The Philippines is producing an oversupply of nurses, however the nurses produced are not highly qualified and lack specialization.

- Enhance retention of nurses in the country through incentives and financial remuneration
- Filipino health professionals are still the most in demand in the world, thus it is possible for them to negotiate for ethical, fair and just recruitment practices.
- Bilateral negotiations are needed between Philippines and countries recruiting Filipino health professions to ensure that there are ethical and sound recruitment practices.

The last session dealt with the reintegration of migrant women workers through entrepreneurship and financial literacy. This session discussed the social and financial dimensions ranging from the difficulties migrants have in gaining acceptance and relevance in the family and the communities they return to, especially for women who have been traumatized by abuse. The session quickly turned to the financial challenges faced by migrant women and noted that predeparture briefings needed to include training on how to budget for savings, the need to set goals for long-term training and understanding of the cultural pressures involved in becoming the breadwinner.

Migrant women returning might be trained in becoming entrepreneurs, participating in community-based programs on how to manage and/or run a business. A structure that provides migrants with choices is important.

For those migrants with an orientation for business, the re-integration approach should be business oriented.

- Market information on the demand for services or products should be available to help the migrants make sound business decisions on investments.
- There should be training on project management and leadership, skills needed to run a business.

- Community based programs and cooperatives have proven to be successful. There should be specific capability building on how to develop and manage community based programs.
- Links to funding sources from social entrepreneurs and public development funds should be designed to make it easy for communities to access capital.

A Social stock market concept is being studied by the Asian Development Bank, similar to Bovespa in Brasil.

But it was recognized that entrepreneurship is not a panacea. Some people would not wish to run a business, nor would they would be successful at doing it. They should be encouraged to learn more about their chosen careers, and to become the best they can be, taking advantage of further on-the-job training and other resources. The private sector can be helpful in making these job opportunities known to migrants, giving them further skills to market themselves to gain higher pay.

Policy recommendations from this panel are:

- Governments should keep better and more relevant data including where job opportunities are and what skills a migrant worker should have to progress in his/her career
- Governments should outlaw placement fees from workers, which effectively hold them in bondage. Such placement fees should be paid by employers.