

Gender and Migration: Why are Women more Vulnerable?

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I. Introduction

The main concern of this presentation is that while the overall feminization of international migration is increasing, the vulnerability of women migrants to discrimination, exploitation and abuse is also likely to increase. Then we need to discuss what can be done to improve protection and alleviate discrimination.

The presentation will focus on the following issues:

Why are migrant women more vulnerable?

What are the main forms of discrimination, exploitation or abuse?

How can discrimination, exploitation and abuse be redressed?²

As such the presentation intends to focus on women migrant workers in the destination country and who have migrated voluntarily.

International migration is seen by many to be a transitory phenomenon in response to temporary shortages and surpluses of labour. However there is strong evidence that while this form of population

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² This paper is mostly based on information from the International Labour Organization (ILO): *An information guide on preventing discrimination, exploitation and abuse of women migrant workers*, Geneva, 2003. Most case studies can be found in the Guide unless there is a separate reference. This Guide can be found online: <<http://mirror/public/english/employment/gems/advocacy/protect.htm>>.

movement is constantly changing in nature, scale and composition, it is in fact an important and enduring structural feature of the economies of many countries around the world.

According to the UN Population Division in 2002 there has been a steady growth in migration with an estimated 175 million migrant today. Also, 60% of those migrants live in more developed regions and 40% in less developed regions. Almost one in every ten persons living in a more developed country is a migrant. In contrast, nearly one in every 70 persons in developing countries is a migrant. However if we take a closer look at some specific countries like the Arab Gulf Region, we find that migrant labour consists of 60% of the population in Bahrain, 91% in the United Arab Emirate, 80% in Kuwait and 90% in Qatar.

There are push and pull factors between sending and destination countries: economic disparities are widening between labour shortage in high income countries and labour surplus in low income countries. In sending countries there is an inability to provide workers with decent employment opportunities and living standards and a decline in real wages in addition to high unemployment and underemployment rates. In receiving countries, there is an ever growing demand for low status, low skilled and low paid jobs. In other words there is an increasing flexibility in the labour market. Demographic trends show that many developed countries face population stagnation and ageing while developing countries continue to grow faster than their job markets can absorb.³

The existing push and pull factors hand in hand with increasing barriers to migration (which are not related to labour demand) are only fostering an increase in irregular migration exposing migrant workers, men and women, to exploitative working conditions and denying them access to legal and social protection. The main problem in most countries is the inadequacy in the legal systems to manage migration and whereby migration for labour is not considered as part of employment policies and labour rights but more as a border control and security issue. In such conditions principles of labour and human rights can become easily subsumed. So in other words, from the source country migration is becoming increasingly *informalized* as

³ ILO: *Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy*, International Labour Conference, 92nd Session, Geneva 2004.

more and more workers are willing to risk irregular avenues to seek work abroad. In the destination countries the whole area of migration is increasingly *criminalized* as they deal with more irregular workers and victims of trafficking (in fact irregular migration and trafficking cannot be divorced from policies of regular labour migration).

2. Gender and migration: why are women more vulnerable?

Despite the difficulties and constraints, migration offers women new opportunities and financial independence in addition to improved status within their homes and communities. Over and above, female migrants are now major contributors to their home country economies through their private remittances.

In Sri Lanka in 1999, 62% of total remittances were from women migrants and accounting for more than 50% of the trade balance. In the Philippines in 2001 women contributed 6.2 billion dollars. In fact, studies have revealed that women migrants tend to remit more of their income back home than male migrants⁴. The issue of remittances cannot be overestimated in importance as it can reveal the extent to which labour migration can be linked to overall development of a source country. As of 2002, by conservative IMF estimates, international remittances to developing countries exceeded \$80 billion per year. Considering that Official Development Assistance seldom exceeds \$60 billion per year, migrants are actually contributing more to the development of their countries than do the overall wealthy countries' development agencies. Also considering that women tend to remit more than men to their home countries actually makes them significant financial contributors to their home country's economies.⁵

Despite the potential for improving their lives there are many disadvantages and risks that women face as compared to men:

- During the decision to migrate many women may have unrealistic expectations, lack of proper information on the migration process and procedures and on employment opportunities. They may also lack the

⁴ S. Forbes Martin, *Women and migration, Background paper for the Consultative meeting on migration, mobility and how this movement affects women*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 2-4 December 2003, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 6.

know-how and ability to cover expenses. Thus they may end up in irregular and exploitative situations.

- As compared to men, women migrant workers tend to be concentrated in a more limited number of occupations.
- The migration of women is mostly unrelated to career advancement and skill acquisition. There is enough evidence to suggest that a significant number of migrant women possess skills and qualifications often not recognised or unneeded in the types of work that they perform. In fact, many studies indicate that migration involves deskilling for some groups of women. For example many Filipino women with college degrees work in domestic service or the entertainment industry.
- As compared to men, most migrant women end up performing the 3D jobs and are in isolated situations with limited opportunities to build networks. Therefore they have limited access to information and social support.
- Women more than men tend to occupy jobs within the informal sector which is not covered by any labour legislation or social protection.
- Women migrants themselves lack knowledge of their rights, fear the authorities and are not organized.
- From an individual perspective, most women migrate to overcome poverty and limited viable employment opportunities in their home country. Most see their employment as temporary to achieve certain personal/family objectives (e.g. savings to establish a business, build a house, pay debts or for the education of the children). However, these objectives are difficult to achieve in the short term or over a single contract period due to a variety of reasons: problems with debt bondage, withholding of wages, receiving less wages than original contract, lack of knowledge on money management and savings, among many others. This means that the women stay longer than anticipated or go back and forth in migration cycles between source and destination countries.
- The authorities in most destination countries treat women migrant workers as workers with limited or no legal rights. In cases of exploitation and abuse, the judicial system is not always construed in favour of the abused worker. In some European and Latin American countries legal amendments have been adopted with regard to labour and human rights of migrant workers. But many Asian and Middle Eastern destination countries have yet to recognize the rights of migrant workers and to take concrete steps to uphold these rights.

- The return and reintegration process of migrant workers can also be more problematic for women than men (e.g. socio-psychological effects, family relationships, financial difficulties and employment related problems).

3. Forms of discrimination, exploitation and abuse facing women migrants

'Xenophobia... leads many in receiving countries to view migrant women workers as aliens: as inferiors – culturally and socially; as a potential threat to stability; as 'fair game', especially if they are women; without rights, or an ability to obtain redress; with ignorance – about the worker's culture; as people apart – isolated by language and culture, segregated because of differences which increase a sense of threat; as commodities and therefore subject to different standards of treatment in general – there is widespread reporting of migrant workers being ill-treated, starved, locked up and so on; because of different ways of relating to women arising out of religion and culture – making female workers more vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse'.⁶

3.1. As a result of inadequate labour migration management in destination country

In principle regular labour migration for jobs which are in demand should stimulate economic growth and promote cultural diversity or integration. However, most of the times migrant workers face negative reactions, sometimes taking the form of open racism. Migrants are perceived as taking away jobs from the native population despite the fact that migrant workers, especially women, usually perform the jobs that the native population shun. The following provides some reasons why this situation persists despite the growing demand for migrant workers in many countries:

- Governments lack a clear policy framework with regards to migrant workers;
- Governments lack of effective enforcement mechanisms with regards to management of migration, especially with regard to illegal recruiters and employers who violate rights of migrant workers;

⁶ D. Cox, L. Owen and C. Picton et al, *Asian women migrants workers: Maximizing the benefits of their experiences* (Bundoora, Nov. 1994), p. 29.

- Governments lack adequate support services for migrants;
- Existing gaps in equality of opportunity and treatment between men and women at the national level;
- The economic contribution of migrant workers remains unrecognized in the destination country;
- There are pre-existing gender inequalities in the policies of countries of destination.

3.2. The challenges facing trade unions and civil society members

In many destination countries, trade unions and migrant associations and other NGOs play a critical role in making up for the deficiencies in government support and services. Yet women migrant workers face major challenges in benefiting from trade unions and NGOs activity due to the following main reasons:

- Migrant workers are not allowed to join or form unions in some destination countries;
- Some trade unions lack a specific position vis-à-vis migrant workers;
- Migrant women workers face additional obstacles in joining and/or forming unions;
- Some trade unions lack resources and capacity;
- Some destination countries lack an active civil society;
- NGOs in destination countries focus on provision of services and protection;
- Networking at the international level as well as at the national level in the countries of origin is a powerful tool but needs to be strengthened.

4. Redressing discrimination and abuse: the international instruments

Existing international principles and instruments upholding basic human rights, workers rights and migrant rights are mostly based on the fundamental principles of equality, non-discrimination and protection. According to these international principles, destination countries are not only obliged to refrain from violating the rights of individuals, but also to take positive actions to ensure that individual migrant men and women are able to enjoy these rights.

4.1. The international legal instruments

There are a number of important human rights instruments that aim to ensure equality. Some of these are not specific to migrants but include citizens and non-citizens. Others are specific to migrants and victims of trafficking and these apply to include regular and irregular workers.

The relevant United Nations instruments include the:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948;
- International Convention for the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 1990;
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), 1965;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979;
- Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography, 2001;
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000;
- Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000.

The majority of the member states of the United Nations have ratified at least the two universal instruments relating to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)* and the *International Covenant on Social Economic and Cultural Rights (1976)*. This puts destination countries under legal obligation to ensure implementation.

The particular vulnerability of women migrants and women and girls victims of trafficking are addressed in international instruments of non discrimination on the basis of sex and gender such as the *United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)* and the *Fourth World Conference on Women (1995)*. Under these instruments, destination countries of migrant women workers are under an obligation to realize the full rights of women vis-à-vis men. This addresses the issue that discrimination against migrant women workers is only perpetuated by larger existing inequalities between men and women in the country of destination.

In addition to gender based discrimination facing migrant women in destination countries we observe discrimination based on race and

ethnicity. *The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 2001*, has extensively addressed the treatment of migrant workers and gives particular attention to migrant women.

The instruments with direct relevance to migrant rights are the *1990 International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and their Families*. The Convention, which only came to force in 2003, provides a comprehensive legal framework.

4.2. The ILO Instruments

Labour rights and equal treatment of migrant workers are heavily enshrined within the International Labour Organization's Standards and Recommendations. The *Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (No.97)* and the *Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No.143)* aim to both regulate aspects of international labour migration and ensure equal treatment and protection for workers. Both Conventions have a relatively low number of ratifications, particularly by destination countries (Convention 97 has 41 ratifications and Convention 143 has 18 ratifications). In many ways destination countries tend to be more concerned with protecting the interest of their labour market.

During the late 1990s, the ILO addressed this issue through a general survey. The results were that these Conventions have been utilised by member States in guiding general national policy making with regards to laws and regulations. However, member States fell short of ratifications in terms of furthering their commitments to the protection of migrant workers. Additional reasons were related to difficulties in implementation, such as:

- High unemployment of nationals which prompts destination countries to give priority to national workers over migrant workers;
- Lack of necessary infrastructure to apply the Conventions and high financial cost of implementing and supervising the numerous provisions of the Conventions;
- Complexity of a country's immigration legislation and practice as well as the fact that the legislation on this subject is constantly evolving.⁷

⁷ For a fuller discussion of these Conventions and their ratification, see ILO: *Migrant Workers*, International Labour Conference, 87th Session 1999, International Labour Organisation, Geneva. In addition to a more recent Survey in ILO: *Towards*

Several other ILO Conventions are relevant to the labour rights of migrants:

- *Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No.29)*;
- *Freedom of Association Convention, 1948 (87)*;
- *Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No.100)*;
- *Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No.105)*;
- *Right to organize and Collective bargaining Convention, 1949 (No.98)*;
- *Discrimination in Employment Convention, 1958 (No. 111)*;
- *Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138)*;
- *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (169)*;
- *Worst forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (182)*.

5. Redressing discrimination and abuse: guidelines for action

The scope and variety of the measures that can be taken by the different actors in both source and destination countries to redress discrimination and abuse against migrant women workers have substantially increased in recent years. Redressing discrimination, exploitation and abuse of migrant women requires complementary approaches and strategies by all stake holders. The following section elaborates on suggested guidelines and examples of good practices.

5.1. Some guidelines for sending countries

'Everything must start from a well-defined international policy advocacy of sending government. To be able to address this, it is important to realize that because of the predominantly poverty-driven migration of domestic workers, individual sending countries, on their own, are coming from a position of weakness. While there is a persistently growing or at least stable demand for foreign domestic workers globally, the environment of their employment remains largely demand-determined. Sending countries can turn the table to alleviate the gaps in the playing field by building the stake of host countries in protecting migrant workers.'⁸

a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy, International Labour Conference, 92nd Session, Geneva 2004.

⁸ R. Casco: *Regional Cooperation for the Holistic Migration management response to the Use of Foreign Migrant Domestic Workers*. Paper presented in the Regional Summit on Foreign Migrant Domestic Workers, 26-28 August 2002, Columbia, p. 1.

Sending countries have a role to play in facilitating safe and protected gender-aware migration of workers. Following are some guidelines:

- Strengthening labour recruitment procedures so that irregular recruitment is curtailed before migrants departure;
- Undertaking pre-departure training;
- Initiating and monitoring bilateral labour agreements with destination countries;
- Strengthening the roles of Embassies and Consulates in destination countries by:
 - Keeping regular register and information on migrants and keeping regular contact;
 - Posting labour attachés;
 - Provision of support services, migrant associations support and training programmes;
 - In cases of disputes and/or abuse, representing migrant workers in negotiations with authorities and police.

5.2. Some good practices from sending countries

The Philippines have the most developed legislation and regulations with regard to leaving migrants. This is basically organized by the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration. A mandatory one day pre-departure orientation seminar is organized. Information is provided on various issues from travelling procedures to workers rights and pitfalls of living abroad. At work sites, particularly where there are large concentrations of female migrant workers, the Philippines government has posted female Filipino Overseas Labour Officers, who are labour attaches, welfare officers and centre coordinators. There are female attaches assigned in places such as Hong Kong, the Republic of South Korea, Singapore, Saipan, Taiwan, Spain, Italy, Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

In the United Arab Emirates as well as Lebanon the Embassy of the Philippines offers programmes for educating female domestic workers and helping them to move out of the unskilled labour category. The programme carried out at the Dubai Consulate on weekends is exemplary as self-sustained community work. Under the programme, the embassy provides classes ranging from computing to cooking and sewing to photography and other skills free of charge. Filipinos from the Dubai and UAE community themselves sustain these

lessons, teaching and organizing the classes free of charge. Filipino men and women, sometimes accompanied by their children, go in and out of the classes, registering, chatting and asking for information, often in the atmosphere of a fair⁹.

During the Philippines presidential and parliamentary elections of 2004, some 7 million Filipinos residing abroad will have a chance to vote for the first time at the diplomatic missions.

5.3. Some guidelines for destination countries

A key area for the authorities in the receiving countries is the need to acknowledge the importance of developing and adopting a comprehensive and effective national policy which is paralleled with practical measures to manage migration and combat discrimination, exploitation and abuse of migrant workers. Other specific guidelines are:

- Strengthening administration and management of migration as a key labour market issue:
 - Conclude bilateral or multilateral labour agreements with sending countries;
 - Ensure that immigration policies are gender-sensitive;
 - Regulate and supervise the activities of recruitment agencies;
 - Provide adequate checks on employers;
 - Strengthen complaints mechanisms
- Consider specific legislation to cover domestic workers;
- A sound governance through adequate labour and social protection and the establishment of functional support facilities and services for migrant workers;
- Allow freedom of association and facilitate organization and representation of migrant workers;
- Take measures to promote gender equality and end xenophobia and racism.

5.4. Some good practices from destination countries

The Canadian Government has been integrating gender concerns into its national immigration programme. A model of gender directed immigration policy-making has been developed. Following a 'gender based

⁹ R. Sabban, *Migrant women in the United Arab Emirates: The case of domestic workers* (ILO, GENPROM Series, Gender and Migration, 2002), p. 40.

analysis' matrix, every new immigration policy and legislative issue is subjected to the test of potential gender impacts.

Taiwan has changed its regulations to allow a worker to be transferred to a new employer when there is adequate evidence of the employer's wrongdoing. Such wrongdoing covers not only withholding of passports, physical abuse or violation of the legal rights of the migrant worker but also non-payment of salary for three months or non-observance of the salary stipulation of the contract.

In South Africa a legislation for domestic workers, which covers domestic workers, gardeners, drivers and persons who take care of children, the old and the disabled, became effective in 2003 and provides domestic workers with all labour rights and standards starting from minimum wage setting, working hours, over time, annual leave, maternity leave, sick leave etc. The Legislation includes a mandatory wage increase of 8% from all employers. It also obligates employers to register workers with the Unemployment Insurance Fund and pay a monthly contribution.¹⁰

In Costa Rica, the National Institute for Women, which is the national mechanism for women established by law has been working closely with ASTRADOMES (the organization for domestic workers in the country) and with the cooperation of the Office of the Ombudsperson and other women's NGOs to change the current labour legislation as well as the immigration legislation to better protect domestic workers.¹¹

The Ministry of Labour in Jordan had endorsed a special working contract for non-Jordanian domestic workers in early 2003. This contract strengthens the coordination between sending countries, guarantees migrant workers rights to health insurance, medical care, rest days, and reiterates migrant women workers rights to be treated in compliance with international human rights standards.

Italy has made several provisions in its legislation to cover migrant workers, observing the principle that social security for foreigners should not be at a level inferior to that of nationals. The Immigration Act regu-

¹⁰ <http://www.labourguide.co.za/new_legislation-for-domestic-wor.htm>.

¹¹ A. I. Garcia, M. Barahona, C. Castro and E. Gomariz, *Costa Rica: Female Labour Migrants and Trafficking in Women and Children* (Geneva, ILO GENPROM Series on Women and Migration, 2002), p. 47.

lates in detail social security benefits for migrants seasonal workers. In this case the employer must contribute to the national institute for social security the amount of family allocations and insurance against non-voluntary unemployment. Such amounts finance the national fund for migrant policies, established by Article 45 of the Immigration Act.

The Ministry of Manpower of Singapore has issued a guide for employers of foreign domestic workers in four main languages to enable employers to 'develop a close and cordial relationship with your foreign domestic worker' and to highlight some important work permit requirement as well as other employer obligations.

The Hong Kong Home Affairs bureau has published 'Your Guide to Services in Hong Kong' in different languages, a document which is given to arriving migrants. The Guide provides information on such issues as obtaining and renewing work permits, rights and obligations, and the addresses of different organizations for support services.

5.5. Some guidelines for trade unions in destination countries

- Defend the right to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining for all workers, national and migrant (with particular attention to the right of migrant domestic workers to freedom of association). Migrant workers should be able to join existing trade unions or to form unions of their own;
- Lobby to ensure that governments do not deal with immigration policies and administrative procedures for migrant workers separately from labour market issues;
- Represent migrant workers, whether they are union or non-union members, in advocating for laws that prevent discrimination, exploitation and abuse, including trafficking of women migrant workers;
- Develop a clear trade union policy to address migrant workers issues, especially in workplaces that are known to be problematic to migrant workers. Where appropriate, establish migrants desks/units within national trade unions that can assume specific responsibility for organizing migrant workers and dealing with migrant workers issues;
- Raise awareness among union members, so as to sensitize them on the role and contributions of migrant workers and the problems that migrant workers, in particular women migrant workers, encounter. Trade unions can do much to dispel some xenophobic and fallacious notions about migrant workers, by:

- Providing support services and facilities for migrant workers, in particular for women migrant workers; widely publicizing these services, so that migrant workers know where to go for assistance;
- Working with other civil society groups to promote the rights of migrant workers and to fight racism and xenophobia;
- Strengthening networking and solidarity between unions in destination and source countries, so as to exchange information on recruitment practices, the modus operandi of traffickers, labour market developments, problems of women migrant workers, etc.

5.6. Some good practices of trade unions in destination countries

In Costa Rica, the Household Workers Association (ASTRADOMES) was established as a labour union in 1991. It has some 400 members, most of them Nicaraguan, although there are also Salvadorans, Hondurans and Guatemalans. It is affiliated to the Latin American and Caribbean Female Household Workers Confederation.

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which has a membership of more than 125 million workers worldwide, has a section specifically on migrant workers in its No to Racism and Xenophobia! Plan of Action. The Plan states that trade unions should:

- Urge governments to legalize undocumented workers;
- Lobby for legislation to protect those working in the underground economy;
- Work with communities to provide support and legal assistance for undocumented workers;
- Undertake special campaigns to organize migrant workers, including those who are undocumented;
- Be actively involved in shaping immigration and migration policies in order to protect the interests of working people and their families;
- From both sending and receiving countries, work jointly to protect and defend the rights of migrant workers.

Public Services International (PSI) has been focusing on twinning unions from sending and receiving countries in order to pressure governments to develop bilateral agreements for migrant workers

protection. One example relates to the agreement between the Philippines and the United Kingdom on the fair employment of nurses from the Philippines.

5.7. The crucial roles of NGOs and migrant associations

An increasing number of NGOs around the world address the needs and concerns of migrant workers and in particular of migrant women workers. According to the Asia Migrant Centre in 1999 there were at least 300 NGOs in Asia providing support for migrants. These organizations have their established and active networks as well as their agendas and strategies. As for Europe there are also increasing numbers of organizations with extensive networks addressing migration and racism. Many of these are funded by the European Commission to serve as networking and lobby platforms. Latin America also has its NGOs and associations addressing forced migration, coalitions for domestic workers, etc. This is in addition to the international NGOs that provide specific attention to migration.¹² These associations, NGOs and other civil society groups have a very wide range of activities in targeting women's needs. Overall, these can be categorized into the following three levels of strategies:

- *'Compassion and defence' strategies*: providing crisis intervention and welfare service, exposing and defending against abuses and rights violations, lobbying for rights protection at local up to international levels;
- *'Empowerment and enabling' strategies*: building, organizing and training grassroots migrants as well as support groups/NGOs to respond to migrant issues; building migrant trade unions; training migrants and NGOs to campaign, organize and address issues; forming migrant networks at the local, regional and international levels; building migrants' movements;
- *'Social justice' strategies*: collectively challenging the root causes of migration and trafficking (poverty, national policies, unemployment,

¹² Examples of International NGOs and other bodies are the International Catholic Migration Commission, the World Council of Churches, The international Movement Against Discrimination and Racism. For more on the roles of civil society see P. Taran, 'Human rights of migrants: challenges of the new decade', *International Migration Quarterly Review*, Volume 38 Number 6, Special Issue 2/2000, p.19.

corruption, etc.); advocating for social justice, including changing social roles/relationships which result in class, gender, and social exploitation/oppression; promoting social, economic and political participation of migrants; mobilizing migrants' resources for economic and political empowerment; establishing reintegration programmes and building migration alternatives.¹³

5.8. Some good practices from NGOs

- *A holistic approach aimed at integration: example from Italy*

In Turin, Italy, an NGO, ALMATERRA, has activities covering several fields to address the main needs of migrant women. ALMATERRA was founded by Italian and migrant women of different nationalities to create a focal point for migrant women. Initiatives of ALMATERRA are mainly carried out at the Centre Alma Mater, where several permanent support services are placed.

- *Awareness raising on migrant workers rights: example from the USA*

The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) runs a community education and outreach programme as one of its activities. It assists multiethnic low waged migrant workers through providing them with the necessary information when laws are passed, when documentation procedures change or when people need to know their rights at work.

- *Welfare services and crisis intervention: example from Lebanon*

The Pastoral Committee of Asian and African Migrants (PCAAM), established by Caritas, administers social and legal assistance to migrant workers. The Committee's three centers meet the needs of African and Asian migrant domestic workers by: assisting women in detention centers and prisons (mostly because they do not have valid documents); providing lawyers and legal aid, initiating contact with embassies of sending countries, administering a safe house for victims of abuse and arranging alternative employment or repatriation.

- *Capacity building and employment assistance: example from Costa Rica*

The Foundation for assistance and progress of Nicaraguan migrants in Costa Rica has two major objectives: the elimination of discrimination against migrant workers and equitable labour conditions for Nicaraguan

¹³ V. Rex: 'Regional strategies on Migration: A decade of Collaboration', in *Asian Migrant yearbook 1999*, Asian Migrant Centre, Hong Kong p. 53.

Migrants. Some of its activities are: an educational project so that migrants, who are mostly Nicaraguan women domestic workers, can earn their basic school degrees; an employment office where migrants are assisted in obtaining appropriate jobs; legal assistance so that migrants understand the procedures related to their legal residence. These complement other services such as medical attention and a radio newscast which acts as a communication medium between the migrants in Costa Rica and their families in Nicaragua.

- *Administrative and legal assistance: example from Hong Kong*

The United Migrant Workers Interim Trust was established in 1992 by and for migrants. It provides assistance and advice in matters dealing with immigration such as obtaining extensions of stay, changing employers, help for people who overstayed their visas etc. They provide legal aid and representation in filing and following up on claims and labour tribunals. The Tribunal also assists those migrants facing legal accusations of criminal acts.¹⁴

- *Capacity building for migrants organizations:
example from a regional network*

The Asian Migrant Centre (AMC) is a regional NGO based in Hong Kong established in 1989. The AMC promotes migrants' empowerment by building and strengthening migrant's organizations and supporting efforts to organize and unionize migrants in various Asian countries. AMC helps to build the capacity of these organizations to dialogue and lobby governments in destination and source countries for the promotion of migrants' human rights issues, the adoption of national protection laws and the ratification of UN human rights related texts. Some of the activities of the AMC are data collection, training and education for groups, particularly by organizing lobbying and sensitization, reintegration programmes and providing alternatives for migrants.

¹⁴ Hong Kong Administrative region, *Home Affairs Bureau Your Guide to Services in Hong Kong*, 2002, p. 138.