

## **Oral Statement by VIVAT International on Migrant Workers' Contribution and the Protection of their Rights**

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at the UN Thematic Session and Multi-Stakeholder Hearing on the Preparatory Process for  
A Global Compact on Migration at the UN Headquarters in New York, 24 - 26 July, 2017

I am Robertus Minsel, representing VIVAT International, a faith based organization working in more than 100 countries, and member of NGO Committee on Migration.

VIVAT welcomes the Thematic Session and Multi-Stakeholder Hearing on the Preparatory Process for A Global Compact on Migration. We appreciate the commitment of the United Nations to the process of developing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and for the inclusion of civil society and the stakeholders in the GCM process.

The significant contributions of migrant workers in all dimensions of human life have been long recognized. Data released in 2016 by International Organization on Migration (IOM) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) report in 2015 highlighted the positive economic and social impacts of migration on their countries of origin as well as on the countries of destination. Remittances to their home countries contribute to the increase of family income, education, access to health services, reduce child labor, increase access to information technology and small businesses, food and other family needs as it has happened in countries like Ghana, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and many others. Knowledge and information transfer from the countries of destination to the countries of origin and vice versa is another positive contribution of migration.<sup>1</sup>

However, these positive and significant contributions could have been maximized, if the migrant workers' rights had been protected, respected and fulfilled. In several countries migrant workers are vulnerable to human rights abuses. Their rights tend to be violated in their own countries as they prepare themselves to leave countries. They are often cheated by fake organizations or agencies and individuals who recruit them. In recruitment process, their identities (name, age, education and address) are often manipulated or changed.

In host countries, migrant workers often experienced wage theft (unpaid or late payment of wages and underpaid of wages), unauthorized wage deductions, wage manipulation, wage depression and wage discrimination. Their documents, including passports, cellphones and other means of communication are often confiscated either by host families or companies in order to control their movements and communication with others.<sup>2</sup> Still

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\\_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Contributions-of-Migrants-and-Migration-to-Developm.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ODG/GCM/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Contributions-of-Migrants-and-Migration-to-Developm.pdf) [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_436343.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_436343.pdf);  
[https://sydney.edu.au/arts/sociology\\_social\\_policy/docs/news/MDW\\_Final-April\\_12.pdf](https://sydney.edu.au/arts/sociology_social_policy/docs/news/MDW_Final-April_12.pdf);

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theonlinecitizen.com/2017/02/01/wage-theft-and-exploittion-among-migrant-workers-singapore/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/nov/21/samsung-panasonic-accused-over-supply-chain-labour-abuses-malaysia>.

in other cases, those undocumented migrants are vulnerable to be trafficked as forced and cheap labors or as sex workers.<sup>3</sup>

We also found that the rights of the migrants' families left behind, especially women and children tend to be neglected and discriminated against in absence of their husbands and fathers. Wives and/or their children deliberately and discriminately cannot benefit from government programs and policies in receiving social aids and services due to the absence of their spouses and fathers.<sup>4</sup>

We strongly believe that if the migrant workers are to be able to maximize their contributions to achieving SDGs both in their countries of origin and countries of destination, the protection and fulfillment of the civil, political, economic and cultural rights must become of top priority.

Therefore, we recommend Member States and relevant institutions to:

1. provide wider availability of reasonable money transfer operators and easy access to information to compare costs and services to send remittances.
2. increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict labor recruitment agencies, brokers, and corrupt public officials involved in the violation of migrant workers' rights;
3. adopt and apply the ILO 2016 "Check Points on Eliminating and Preventing Forced Labour" to monitor whether or not agents and companies that recruit the people comply with the international and national regulations;
4. ratify the Conventions and International Agreements that would help protect, promote and fulfill the rights of migrant workers;
5. develop a regional collaboration to monitor how migrant workers are treated in terms of work conditions, wages, and other related matters.
6. ensure that everyone has the right to represent his or her family in the absence of his/her husband or father in receiving government aids.

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<sup>3</sup> TIP Report 2016; <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/Indicators/WP5\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/Indicators/WP5_en.pdf)