



# Coordination of Action Research on **AIDS** and Mobility

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PRESENTATION

**“REMITTANCE: Impact on Migrant Workers’ Quality of Life”**

At

**ASEAN INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (AIPA)**

**Seminar on**

**The Role of Parliamentarians on the Protection and Promotion of  
the Rights of Migrant Workers in ASEAN**

**3-6 April, 2011, Sunway Hotel, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of  
Cambodia**

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# Overview

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# Organizational Background

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- ❑ Established as local NGO in 2000;
- ❑ Previously, CARE Cambodia was the host of the project and the implementing partner from 1997 to 1999.
- ❑ Repatriated over 200 victims & labor exploitation (2000-2011)
- ❑ Over 6000 Cambodian & Vietnamese

Migrant Entertainment workers received

Outreach Education Program

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# Vision

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- All people have the rights to stay or move, and live and work in dignity with equal rights in a society where their quality of life is ensured. CARAM seeks to achieve this vision through empowerment of migrants, their families and communities.

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# Mission

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- The empowerment of migrants, their families and communities in the migration process for the promotion and protection of human rights, including health, reproductive and sexual rights.
- The production of knowledge using participatory action research on vulnerability, health status and potential of migrant workers for planning and implementing appropriate and effective regional interventions and advocacy work.
- The mainstreaming of migration and HIV/AIDS from the migrant perspective as specific areas of intervention in policy and program development.
- Advocacy for improvement of quality of life of migrant workers including proper and equal access to health care and services.
- Promotion of gender equality and justice.

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# Goal/Objectives

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- Production of information on health status and vulnerability of migrant workers to HIV/AIDS;
- Development of grassroots or community based interventions to conscientize and empower migrants and their communities to resist and fight HIV/AIDS;
- Strengthening of advocacy, especially policy development to ensure an enabling environment for migrant workers and to promote and protect migrant rights in order to reduce HIV/AIDS vulnerability;
- Initiation and development of action research models with migrants to collect data for effective advocacy to realize change at various levels.

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# CARAM Program Areas

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- Sustainable Action against HIV and AIDS in Community (SAHACOM)
- Community Based Information Program on HIV/AIDS, Sexuality and Mobility;
- Official Pre-Departure Training Program;
- Repatriation and Support;
- Advocacy, networking and partnership;
- Participatory Action Research;
- Regional Coordination;
- Legal support for Migrant Workers;
- Domestic Worker Program.

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# INTRODUCTION

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- The findings of research was undertaken from 2008 to 2010;
- The study includes analysis of migration policy and practice within three destination countries: the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and Thailand;
- Families and migrants workers from nine source countries were interviewed along with policy analysis of labor export policies from Pakistan, India, Philippines, Sri-Lanka, Cambodia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Burma.

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- Remittances as a tool for development;
- Globally remittance flows from migrant workers are estimated to be over US\$414 billion worldwide (in 2009);
- More than three-quarters (US\$316 billion) sent to developing countries;
- In 22 countries, remittances were equal to more than 10 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2009; in 11 countries they were equal to more than 20 percent of GDP;
- World Bank's Outlook for Remittance Flows 2009-2011 indicate that the flow of remittance capital, coming primarily from cheap and undervalued labour exports, has reached \$325 billion, representing a 15% increase from the year before.

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# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

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1. To challenge the current migration discourse which promotes remittances as a tool for development within the context of neo-liberal globalisation policies and structures;
2. To define and highlight non-monetary indicators and dimensions of the quality of life of migrants and their families;
3. To provide migrant community perspectives on remittances as a tool for development and identify the reality of conditions of work and burden of debt incurred by migrants and the social costs of the unwavering reliance on remittances as a tool for development;
4. To address dependencies on remittances and its role in inducing forced remigration and neglecting genuine sustainable economic development.

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# KEY FINDINGS

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- Remittances from migrant workers can be used by developing countries of origin as a policy of sustainable development;
- The IMF, the World Bank and other representatives from the private sector that seek to push for corporate globalisation and deregulation of state government controls on migration policies;
- Advocates of the remittances and development approach highlight the ever-increasing remittance inflows to source country economies;
- Increasing Gross Development Product (GDP), reducing deficits and by extension reducing the dependence on borrowing from foreign states;
- Resulted in commoditisation of migrant workers, making developing countries competing each other to maximize their citizen's potential for overseas employment;
- Countries of origin find themselves undercutting their own citizens' standard of employment and labour rights in order to increase their own viability overseas.

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- Produce cheap labor for developed countries;
- Trap developing countries in a state of interdependence in stead of improving the rights and well being of migrant workers;
- Limited analysis of exactly how these remittances are being used to further develop infrastructures and economic stability within source country economies or in fact lead to improvement in the quality of life of migrants and their families.



# POLICY FINDINGS

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- Strong reliance on labour export policies in sending countries in Asia, aimed at capitalising on growing international demand of cheap unskilled foreign labor;
- The policies however fail to protect migrant workers;
- There are high levels of exploitation on the migrant workforce within the region despite MoU and international labor and human rights convention signed;
- Inadequate commitment to effective development, implementation and monitoring of migration policy;
- Sending countries commonly fail to monitor and regulate migration pre-departure processes, leading to high levels of corruption and overcharging from both state and private sector recruitment agencies;
- Gender based discrimination is common to many sending government countries in terms of restriction of women migration;

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- Sending country governments lack of effective repatriation, compensation and reintegration services for returning migrant workers and their families;
- Destination country governments have failed to ensure basic labor protections for migrant workers - including minimum wages, occupational health and safety protections and the right to organize.
  - Destination country government commonly fails to implement MoU with sending countries which leads to rampant contract violation by employers who exploit, abuse and violate both the human and labor rights of migrant workers with impunity.
- Access to the justice system for migrant workers in destination countries is minimal with multiple barriers and minimal resourcing of emergency repatriation and support programs from sending country governments.

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# QUALITY OF LIFE FOR MIGRANTS IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES

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- Migrant workers are routinely trapped by the oppressive migration system which limits their rights and basic freedom at every step;
- Experienced widespread contract violation, exploitation, debt bondage to employers and recruiting agencies;
- They face high levels of abuse, maltreatment and violence perpetrated by employers, police, migration officials and recruiting agents, including documented cases of rape, assault and deaths of migrant workers;
- Live and work in general climate of racism, discrimination and xenophobia, in over-crowded, substandard housing, and sometimes inadequate food and sanitation;
- Restriction of movement with employers withholding documentation and limited access to health care , emergency or otherwise for most workers.

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- Gender based violence at the hand of authorities, agents and employers is common for female migrant workers;
- Female migrant workers commonly live and work in slavery work condition, are confined in their place of work with limited external communication and face high level of violence with limited opportunity for redress;
- Domestic workers along with workers in sex industry are excluded from national labor law protection;
- Male and female migrant workers have poor access to reproductive or sexual health services both prior and during migration; and experience high levels of distress and anxiety as well as sometimes debilitating levels of homesickness and concern for their spouses, parents and children at home.



# REMITTANCE AND FAMILY SURVIVAL

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- Many were unable to earn any remittance money at all;
- Short-term remittance use used for daily household survival, with minimal longer term benefits in terms of household savings, community level investment or long term improvements to family economic survival;
- No evidence that remittances were being used to develop communities, improve the status of women or were in anyway sustainable;
- The burden of debt incurred in the departure process severely affects the benefits of remittances;
- Burden of debt are central to the question of remittance-sponsored development.

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# Conclusions

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- The severe exploitation, violence and abuse, the daily struggle and overwhelming isolation and loneliness for migrants working overseas, coupled with severe, unrestrained labour rights violations that continue with impunity – begs the question – is it worth it?
- Parents, children and spouses also suffer the deep loneliness, increased poverty and insecurity of struggling to survive whilst awaiting the promised remittances;
- Whilst for many the outcomes for migration are clearly not worth their while;
- Each day thousands of workers in the region will continue to leave with the promise of a dream – the chance for employment, the chance to improve their lives, travel and support their families.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Both sending and receiving countries must immediately sign and ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990);
- Migrant workers must be protected by core Labour Rights and Decent Work Standards set out in the ILO conventions and related human rights instruments;
- Migrant workers must be protected by core Labour Rights and Decent Work Standards set out in the ILO conventions and related human rights instruments;
- ASEAN governments must amend the ASEAN Declaration for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families, to ensure all documented or undocumented migrants are entitled to fundamental human rights including the right to health, equal access to justice, freedom of movement, freedom of association and to freedom from abuse and exploitation including torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Governments should ensure that adequate and informed pre-departure orientation is given to all migrant workers including health and rights awareness;
- States must stop the propaganda the myth of remittances as tool for development and start to work on fundamental , lasting political, economic and social reforms needed in countries including infrastructure for sustainable development by creating employment opportunities , universal healthcare, education and security of life at home while protecting and promoting the rights and well being of migrant workers.

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