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Migrant workers and advocates display the Migrants' Quilt on International Migrants' Day, 18 December 2005, Hong Kong.

MIGRANT FORUM IN ASIA: UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES IN 2005

This report was contributed by Ma. Isabelle Licmoan, MFA Secretariat.

In the last couple of years, migration has been increasingly recognized by the international community as a major issue, and a number of institutions and governments have scrambled to take up the issue. In the process, however, inter-linkages between projects and programs have not always been possible. In contrast, MFA has been well placed as a membership-based organization to be able to create alliances and linkages between projects and issues on labor migration. In many ways

the projects undertaken in the past two years have been possible because of the many years of sustained coordination and networking, despite limited resources. In particular, the past two years have gone a long way towards the institutional capacity building of MFA as a regional network focusing on the promotion and protection of migrants' rights.

The challenges faced by the MFA network is that with migration finally being recognized as a major global social issue of our time, there has been much to do, to catch up with, and to follow through within in a short space of time. More effort and resources need to be focused on how to draw linkages between migration and other social issues. While MFA at the regional level has been able to mainstream

the migration discourse and highlight it as a cross-cutting issue, this has yet to be realized fully in terms of programs and partnerships at the local and national level of operations.

At the every day level of networking and coordination, the MFA Secretariat works through a task force mechanism established at the 9th Regional Conference on Migration (RCM)/General Forum (GF) of the MFA held September 2004 in Seoul Korea. The establishment of task forces was considered important in order to be able to coordinate the various activities/issues in which the network engages, and in order to develop them further into key program areas essential for the promotion and protection of all migrant workers and members of their families. The four task forces are; i) advocacy and capacity building, ii) gender and feminization, iii) migrants' savings for alternative investment, and iv) West Asia networking.

Advocacy and Capacity-Building

Capacity Building for Migrant Workers and Advocates

MFA worked to build the capacity of migrant workers and advocates through following up on its regional training of trainers program, continuing its Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) as well as providing orientation and training on its Migrants Rights Violation Reporting System (MRVRS).

MRVRS Orientation & Training

In July 2005, the MFA Secretariat gave an orientation to MFA members on the Migrants Rights Violations Reporting System (MRVRS). The MRVRS is an MFA project which was conceptualized by the members during the 7th RCM in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2001 to enable MFA members and other migrant advocates to report cases on migrants' rights violations (MRVs) by accessing the MFA website. The reporting of incidents was intended to generate indicative factors whereby a society's/state's health could be measured by the way it treats foreigners in its land. The development of the MRVRS was framed within the over-all context of developing the capacity of MFA member organizations to effectively address the concerns of migrant workers and seek redress for violations of their rights.



Photo courtesy of MFA

MFA members attend a training on MRVRS in Jakarta. 12-16 September 2005.

During the MRVRS orientation, the MFA Secretariat presented to its members the initial design of the system and how information would be processed. The system was intended to be a reference for members to use in their on-going advocacy for the rights and well-being of migrant workers. One initial comment on the design by the members was that it would be difficult to put together a generic system, as different countries had different concepts and terms in identifying a migrant's human rights violation. It was agreed, however, that as far as a generic system is possible, it would be based on the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (MWC) and would also be gender sensitive.

MFA members met in Jakarta to undergo training on how to use the MRVRS, and gave recommendations on how to improve the system. The training also marked the launching of the MRVRS, as participating members registered as users of the system and uploaded at least 2-3 case files each, from cases being monitored by their respective organizations. The MRVRS is now operational and can be accessed by registered MFA members. Non-members can also report cases of migrants' rights violations by logging in to the MFA website, www.mfasia.org. The MRVRS is currently in the Beta stage as it will need the interaction of members/persons for the system to be tested for bugs and kinks, before it can be fully operationalized.

TOT Follow-up Meeting

In January 2005, a follow up meeting to the 2004 Regional Training of Trainers (TOT) was organized in Bangladesh and the Philippines. The original TOT aimed to strengthen the capacity of NGOs to develop and carry out training activities on the rights of migrant workers in Asia, with a particular focus on women, while the follow-up meeting was designed to give the alumni of the TOT an

opportunity to develop a common strategic agenda to enable them to influence policy and decision making at the national level as well as the regional level. The Bangladesh meeting brought together alumni of the TOT from the South Asian Region while the Philippines meeting concentrated on Filipino alumni.

DTP Training

In Bangladesh, a Training Program on the Human Rights of Migrant Workers was co-organized by the MFA Secretariat, the Diplomacy Training Program - Australia (DTP), and by the Welfare Association for Repatriated Bangladeshi Employees (WARBE) and Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMRU), MFA's local partners in Bangladesh. The training was the second (the first one was in Indonesia in 2004) successful partnership between MFA and the DTP in putting together a training course on the human rights conventions and mechanisms that address the issue of labor migration. The course brought together human rights defenders currently working on the rights of migrant workers or desiring to build their competencies in the area and integrate their learnings in their particular area of work or concern.

At the practical level, the course helped identify the key challenges to implementing the MWC in the Asia-Pacific region and the development of advocacy skills. The course also provided the participants with background knowledge about key aspects of the MWC and its monitoring and reporting regime. Additionally, the program provided a venue for the participants to develop practical skills in lobbying and working with the media to advance migrant workers' rights. The general evaluation of the participants and the assessment of the organizers was that the course is timely, useful and focused and must be institutionalized within the region as a regular event.

Advocacy and Campaigns

MFA Engagement with the ASEAN

As a regional network MFA has identified ASEAN as a key institution/forum to raise its concerns in the area of labor migration. An MFA delegation participated in the Fourth ASEAN People's Assembly (APA), held in May 2005 in Manila, in order to identify strategic areas for intervention in the ASEAN process as a collective forum, while also bearing on it at the national level in relation to commitments made by respective countries.

The MFA delegation met with other civil society organizations to discuss and finalize its recommendations to be submitted to the APA working group to ensure that migration is included as a key thematic area that calls for more discussion, analysis, and programming within the ASEAN framework of 'creating sharing communities.' The recommendations presented were:

1. To promote human security by eradicating root causes of forced migration such as poverty, armed conflict, and inequality;
2. To protect migrant workers under the national labor laws, including granting the right to form trade unions;
3. To develop a set of labor standards for the region with respect to workers' rights and in preparation for greater labor mobility in the region;
4. To urge its member countries to guarantee the safety of migrants during the deportation process and upon return to their home country and to immediately stop mass deportations;
5. To ratify the UN Convention for the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and relevant ILO Conventions;

Participation at the APA was a breakthrough for MFA in engaging with the ASEAN, and was followed by a series of interventions throughout the year leading to active participation in the

preparations for the ASEAN Summit scheduled for December 2006 in Cebu, Philippines. The Secretariat is currently working with efforts in promoting engagement with the ASEAN Charter process, the ASEAN Social Charter, the ASEAN working group on Human Rights, and ASEAN Eminent Persons Group.

As a follow up to the Fourth ASEAN People's Assembly in May 2005, MFA attended the Regional Conference on Civil Society Engagement in the ASEAN (October 2005, Kuala Lumpur) to further strengthen its engagement with ASEAN as a platform for policy advocacy.

MFA organized a panel in one of the workshops and discussed the various issues faced by Asian migrant workers. Highlighted in the panel was the importance of the role of the ASEAN in developing policies that will promote and protect migrant workers. Currently there is no legal framework for labor migration at the ASEAN level. Bilateral agreements and MOUs between countries in the region upon analysis do not further the ASEAN agenda of building communities but in fact give in to market processes which foster competition and practices which reduce the migrant worker to being a tradable commodity, and/or vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation.

World Social Forum (WSF)

Preparatory Meeting

Various Asian movements, groups and NGOs attended the Asian Consultation Meeting on the World Social Forum held in June 2005 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Having engaged in the 3rd and 4th WSF, MFA sent a delegation to the meeting to engage in the process and ensure that migration issues will continue to be part of the discussions in the WSF events scheduled for 2006.

Through engaging and participating in the WSF process, MFA members and partners are able to draw and strengthen their linkages with social movements at the local and regional

level. Using these linkages, MFA can highlight labor migration within and from the region as a major social issue that intersects with the other critical themes, thereby engaging in alliance and coalition building on the level of a common advocacy platform. In the series of interactions with the WSF process MFA has been able to establish itself as the regional network within Asia that is able to mobilize and develop analysis and critique on the current migration regime being put in place by national governments within the region and through bi-lateral and regional/sub-regional agreements.

Follow up to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance (2001)

Following up on its active participation to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in 2001, MFA attended the regional experts meeting organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in September 2005 in Bangkok. The meeting was called for as a follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action 2001. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action includes at least 40 paragraphs on migrant workers, making it a very significant document for the promotion and protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.

The seminar aimed to identify obstacles and challenges impeding the implementation of the commitments contained in the Durban Programme of Action in the field of education. It also aimed to identify obstacles posed by racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance with regard to access to primary and secondary education as well as human rights education.

In the post-9/11 global environment, the Durban Declaration and Programme of

Action appears to have been shelved, and little progress has been made towards its popularization and implementation. The global fight against terrorism has reinstated fears, prejudices, and discriminatory and restrictive practices in the efforts towards safeguarding national sovereignty, and very often migrants have found themselves to be disadvantaged and discriminated against in the process and practice. This was pointed out to the organizers of the Seminar, and in follow up discussions it was agreed that more should/would be done towards eliminating discriminatory policies and practices towards migrants.

As an education, awareness and advocacy program against discrimination the MFA task force for capacity building and advocacy decided to launch a campaign on “Equal Pay for Equal Work”. The campaign aims to promote equal, fair and humane treatment, just living and working conditions, access to opportunity for advancement and well-being, and equal pay for equal work among migrants, and local workers. (See further discussion below.)

The campaign was launched on 18th December, International Migrant’s Day, together with the participation of global civil society at the anti-WTO mobilization in December 2006, in Hong Kong. The campaign will run for a year and information about it or shared towards it has been made available on MFA’s website.

In November 2005, the Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) and Casa Asia organized the 7th Talks on the Hill, entitled “Beyond Black and White: Confronting Modern Realities of Racism and Xenophobia in Asia and Europe”. MFA identified the ASEF 7th Talks on the hill as an important project to engage in with the objective of highlighting the ‘Modern Realities of Racism and Xenophobia in Asia’ regarding migrant workers.

The report of the 7th Talk on the Hill feeds into the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) at the policy-making level and serves as

a working document to inform process and mechanisms that facilitate a greater cooperation, collaboration and solidarity among people of Asia and Europe. The full report and recommendations of the Barcelona Dialogue are available on MFA's website in the publications/resources section.

Migrants' Month Campaign

MFA annually celebrates the Migrants' Month Campaign, which runs from November 25 to December 18. The beginning of the campaign, November 25, marks the end of the 16-day campaign against gender violence, while December 18 is International Migrants Day.

Three major activities were identified for the celebration of Migrants' Month 2005:

1. 'Equal Pay For Equal Work' campaign

MFA embarked on a campaign which will be implemented by its members in Asia to promote equal, fair and humane treatment, just living

and working conditions, access to opportunity for advancement and well-being, and equal pay for equal work among migrants and local workers.

Objectives of the campaign include highlighting discriminatory practices and policies experienced by migrant workers based on race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, faith, age, job category and immigration status. This involves identifying existing initiatives, campaigns and partners working to address the above stated discrimination; establishing links to strengthen the campaign; and identifying the gaps in practice vis-à-vis standards and implementation.

The campaign also calls for the ratification, implementation and monitoring of ILO conventions, CEDAW, MWC, WCAR program of action and other UN conventions and the passage of national legislation consistent with international standards, and specifically calls



MFA's 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' campaign was launched in December 2005.



Photo courtesy of FTUB

Women workers often get paid less than their male counterparts; wage discrepancies in Asia are also based on nationality, immigration status, and other factors.

for the recognition of domestic work as work and its inclusion in national, labor and social legislation. In addition, the campaign objectives are to expose and oppose the ill effects of neo-liberal economic globalization, and to raise public awareness on the positive socio-cultural, political and economic contributions of migrant workers in both the host and sending countries.

The campaign was launched on December 18, 2005 during the WTO Action Week and will run for a maximum of one year. An assessment of the campaign will be conducted in October 2006 during the 10th RCM.

2. MFA's participation in the WTO Action Week in Hong Kong;

MFA's participation in the People's Action Week was a follow-up to a series of activities initiated by the network to engage in issues concerning WTO/GATS and its over-all framework of globalization. As a co-organizer

of the event, MFA joined forces with various civil society organizations in highlighting the issues and concerns that bear upon the WTO as an institution that is anti-development, corporate-driven and anti-poor. MFA also disseminated information and worked to raise awareness among civil society, the government trade negotiators, the media and the general public on the impact of WTO, GATS and in particular Mode 4, to the migrants' sector. In addition, accredited MFA members monitored trade negotiations inside the WTO in order to de-brief the wider civil society who had not been accredited as NGOs to the on-going negotiations.

3. Migrants' Quilt

During the WTO Action Week, a Migrants' Quilt was woven together by MFA members with the theme: "Celebrate the gains and continue the struggle". It focused on the gains and continuing struggle of migrant workers,

members of their family, and migrants' rights advocates in promoting the rights and well-being of migrant workers. The quilt was unveiled during the International Migrants' Day celebration in Hong Kong.

As a symbol that identifies the process of gains and struggles in the protection of the rights of migrant workers, the quilt would be brought to every MFA regional or sub regional program/activity and at every Regional Conference on Migration organized by the MFA. Member organizations hosting national level events could request the secretariat for the presence of the quilt at particular events or to house the quilt whenever MFA programs are not in session.

International Migrants' Day 2005

The MFA Secretariat called for a global

celebration of the International Migrant's Day, December 18 during the Anti-WTO Action Week in Hong Kong. A peaceful rally through the streets of Hong Kong was organized to celebrate International Migrant's Day in conjunction with the protest against the WTO 6th Ministerial Meeting, and the arrest and detention of more than 500 farmers and activists who had rallied against the WTO on December 17, 2005.

At the local level, MFA member organizations also hosted activities in solidarity with other people's organizations, highlighting the significance of the day, and calling on their respective governments to do more towards ensuring the protection and promotion of the rights of their nationals through all phases of the migration cycle in both host and home countries.



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Migrant workers in Hong Kong spend their day off to work on the Migrants' Quilt. Hong Kong, 2005.

Campaign Against the Crackdown on Undocumented Migrant Workers in Malaysia

In March 2005 MFA launched a campaign calling for an immediate stop of the crackdown on undocumented migrant workers in Malaysia, in response to the Malaysian government's plan to deport undocumented migrant workers on 1 March 2005 after an extended amnesty period. The crackdown alarmed civil society and triggered various responses ranging from appeals to the Malaysian government to stop the crackdown to providing assistance to the deported workers.

The first phase of MFA's campaign commenced with appeals to the Malaysian government to stop the crackdown and uphold the rights and dignity of all migrant workers. A letter of appeal was sent to the Malaysian Prime Minister and various Malaysian Embassies in Asia by MFA members.

In line with the campaign, the MFA Secretariat and Philippine MFA members together with various migrant organizations lobbied the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs to urge the Philippine Government to appeal to the Malaysian government to stop the crackdown on undocumented migrant workers. The campaign triggered various consultations with civil society groups.

Initiatives to gather data on the status of undocumented migrant workers in Malaysia were also undertaken by two MFA members in Indonesia, Migrant Care and FOBMI. In addition, MFA joined a multi-party Fact Finding Mission from the Philippines to collect information focusing on undocumented Filipino migrant workers. The results of the fact finding mission both from the Philippines and Indonesia was compiled by MFA into one report.

Campaign Against the World Trade Organization (WTO) and General Agreement in Trade and Services (GATS), particularly

Mode 4

Recognizing that the intensifying neoliberal globalization agenda had varying effects on labor migration, MFA organized several venues and activities for joint discussions, analysis, position-making, planning and joint action particularly in relation to APEC, ASEM, IMF/WB and the WTO with emphasis on the GATS.

In preparation for the WTO Ministerial Meeting held in December 2005 in Hong Kong, MFA participated in the International Coordinating Network Conference (ICN) meeting (February 2005, Hong Kong) to plan and prepare for civil society activities that will be held parallel to the Ministerial Meeting. The MFA delegation actively engaged in the GATS and migrants' group workshops to put forward its planned activities on the ICN and HKPA agenda. Discussion focused on the issues brought about by WTO and how it affects the migrant workers, and migrants' groups identified strategies and a plan of action. Specifically highlighted in the plan of action was the education campaign series about WTO/GATS and how it affects the migrants' sector.

Regional Conference on WTO, Development and Migration

In July 2005, MFA co-organized a regional conference on WTO, Development and Migration, with the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC), Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR), Focus on the Global South, and Jubilee South – Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JS-APMDD). The conference carried the theme "Building Migrants and People's Solidarity in Challenging Neoliberal Development" and provided an opportunity for people's and migrants' advocates to discuss how to counter the neo-liberal agenda by mobilizing migrants' power, position, and resources for a people's alternative.

Realizing that the battle does not stop in Hong Kong in December 2005, the participants

reviewed the preparations and planned activities of each network leading to involvement in the WTO MC6 spearheaded by the HK People's Alliance on WTO, and also identified strategies that they would employ after the WTO meeting in December 2005. Further studies to look at the complex linkages between remittances and development, as well as GATS and migration, were identified as actions that need to be undertaken. The participants agreed to work with sub-regional formations and networks to expose the WTO through mass education, capacity building, national level demonstrations, and media campaigns. At the advocacy level it was decided that there must be continuity in pressuring national governments to uphold people's rights and the national interest, and refrain from furthering the WTO agenda.

WTO People's Action Week

As a critical engagement in the WTO 6th Ministerial Conference held in Hong Kong from December 13-18, 2005, MFA participated in the People's Action Week to protest against WTO, particularly on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). To fully maximize its initiatives at the Action Week, MFA employed an inside-outside strategy where, while actively participating in the various mobilizations and protest marches in the streets on Hong Kong, MFA partners who were able to secure accreditation were continuously monitoring the negotiations inside the Convention Centre and lobbying with governments representatives to be more accountable to their nationals when at the negotiation table.

MFA also strengthened its links with other civil society organizations by participating in the different forums organized during the Action Week. MFA was among the panel of speakers in the following forums: Forum on WTO, organized by Public Services International (PSI) on December 14; Beijing +10 Meets WTO +10, organized by the International Gender Trade Network (IGTN), December 15; "Migrant

Workers, Human Rights & Trade: Unpacking GATS Mode 4" co-organized by Migrants Rights International (MRI) on December 16; and "Young Women's Dialogue with Maturing Women – Shaping Globalization: Women's Resistance and Alternatives" organized by the Women's March Against Poverty, and "GATS Mode 4" organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) – Germany.

NGO and Trade Union Collaboration

MFA recognizes the need for migrant NGOs and trade unions to collaborate in order to further advocacy for the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers. MFA is the only Asian migration network in the region that has migrant worker union members and is actively spearheading the unionization of migrant workers in the region.

MFA's program of collaboration is built on the premise that continued dialogue, information exchange and possible partnerships in campaigns promoting migrants' rights and the ratification of ILO standards on migration between MFA and unions would further its agenda for the recognition, promotion, and protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.

ICFTU-APRO 18th Session

MFA, exploring the possibility of collaboration with trade unions on the issue of labor migration, attended the 18th Session of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions – Asia Pacific Regional Office (ICFTU-APRO) Regional Conference held in February 2005 in Katmandu, Nepal. Participation at the Conference was seen as an on-going capacity and advocacy building program of the network as a follow up to its participation at the 92nd Session of the ILC in June 2004 in Geneva, where MFA built alliances with the ICFTU and many trade unions.

The subject of migration was taken up in the ICFTU-APRO conference and included in

the final statement that highlighted the areas of concern and advocacy of labor unions in the Asia Pacific region. The need for trade unions to link up with NGOs was also highlighted in the statement. MFA's participation to the conference also gave way to establishing links with trade unions in Malaysia, Singapore, and Bangladesh.

TU – NGO Dialogue

MFA, together with its Indonesian members, organized a dialogue among sending country NGOs and host country trade unions in August 2005 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Sending country NGOs were represented by MFA members from Indonesia while trade unions were represented by Singapore National Trade Union Congress (SNTUC) and the Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC). The dialogue came up with a concrete plan of action identifying follow up activities and lead roles of organizations in plan of action.

Workshop on Migrant Labor in Southeast Asia

MFA was invited to the Workshop on Migrant Labor in Southeast Asia in August 2005, organized by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Philippine Office and the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore (NUS), to further MFA's collaborative work with trade unions in protecting and promoting the rights of migrant workers.

The workshop provided a venue for discussion among FES, the consultants/authors of the country studies, representatives of trade unions, and MFA to discuss the country studies and explore specific project components, activities, responsibilities and timetable for the next phase of the project. A greater partnership between NGOs and trade unions in order to initiate new forms of organizing for migrant workers and awareness-raising among the different organizations on how to apply different methods in organizing migrant

workers was forged in this workshop. At the end of the workshop it was agreed that MFA and FES would continue to engage in exploring partnership.

Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration

A Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the Multilateral Rights Based Framework of the ILO on Labour Migration was held to debate the draft framework that was drawn as a specific output of the ILC 2004. MFA participated in the debate after getting feedback from its network on the positions that had been indicated in the draft. During the debate MFA had aligned itself with the workers' group and participated in the discussions that were held to fine tune the arguments in particularly contested articles of the draft.

At the end of the meeting of the committee of experts, the draft framework was finalized and recommended for the approval of the ILO Governing Body scheduled to meet in March 2006. The Secretariat has launched on a program to popularize the draft framework and call for the approval of the same by the ILO Governing Body. The draft framework is also used as a tool for advocacy and lobby with both governments and labor unions to take up the issue of labor migration as a labor and human rights issue and to work closely with NGOs in developing supportive mechanisms that recognize these rights.

ICFTU / GUF and SSO Asia Pacific 2005 Annual Meeting

MFA participated in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Global Union Federations (GUFs) and Solidarity Support Organizations (SSOs) Asia Pacific Annual Meeting held on 9-12 November 2005 in Singapore. During the meeting MFA presented its programme on advancing greater collaboration between NGOs and labour

unions in the area of labour migration and held substantial meetings with different SSOs and GUFs on the possibility of support and partnership in the programme.

Highlighted in the Action Plan was an FES-ILO-MFA-GUFs Regional Conference to be held on August 2006. The conference aims to bring together leaders of trade unions and migrant labor NGOs within Southeast Asia in a dialogue for better understanding between the two groups.

Campaign and Advocacy on Health and Well-Being of All Migrant Workers

Critical to MFA's campaign and advocacy to promote and protect the rights and well-being of migrant workers is the interfacing of concerns relating to migration and HIV/AIDS.

UNDP HIV/AIDS and Mobility Task Force

As a member of the UNDP Task Force on Mobility and HIV/AIDS Vulnerability Reduction, MFA continues to engage within the task force in developing spaces, processes, and mechanisms that look at the connections between migration, mobility and HIV/AIDS from a human rights perspective.

In 2005 the Task Force had come to the end of its first phase of operation, and most of the meetings held were focused on evaluation of the first phase and development of the second. In terms of the program for the second phase, the MFA representative pointed out the need to look at the connections between migration, mobility, and HIV/AIDS from a wider framework of migrants' right and access to health services, lest the program become too fragmented and miss out on the wider discourse on migration in a globalized economy and its implications to health and well-being. The MFA representative also pointed out that in considering the drawing up of policies in relation to these concerns it would be important to involve the real participation of migrants and other actors on

the ground.

In implementing activities and/or developing or influencing strategies and policies, the Task Force will not simply highlight critical issues but will move towards long-term sustainable action at the regional and national level for reducing HIV vulnerability in mobile populations.

ASPBAE Positive Learning Working Group on HIV/AIDS

MFA is a member of the Asia-Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) Positive Learning Working Group on HIV/AIDS. MFA was invited to participate in the Working Group meeting which provided a venue for the participants to share their organization's work on HIV/AIDS education, achievements, policy statements/positions and future plans. A strategic planning on the HIV/AIDS Education Policy and advocacy work of ASPBAE was an agenda item of the working group meeting.

MFA focuses on the overall health framework for migrant workers, which takes up the issues of occupational health and safety, psychological and social health, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS in relation to migrant and mobile populations. MFA believes that migrants should not become target populations for specific health programs lest it increases their vulnerability to stereotyping, exclusion and discrimination. It was pointed out that access to health facilities and services must be approached within a holistic framework which recognizes the right to health as a basic human right made accessible to all without distinction or discrimination.

APEC Workshop on HIV/AIDS and Mobility

In December 2005, MFA attended a workshop on HIV/AIDS and Mobility that was supported by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation to further its 2004 initiative on Fighting

Against AIDS in APEC. The workshop aimed to increase APEC members' awareness and knowledge of the linkages between mobility and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, and the related economic and social impacts. An understanding of the interaction between HIV/AIDS and population movements was seen as an important component in developing comprehensive, multi-sectoral, and effective national and regional AIDS strategies.

MFA strengthened its links with existing partner-organizations in addressing the issues of HIV/AIDS and explored working with the APEC as inter-governmental process on the issue of labor migration through the issues of access to health services for migrant workers and the drafting of migrant friendly health policies in relation to economic cooperation.

MAP-4 Meeting

As a partner in the Canadian South East Asia Regional HIV/AIDS Program (CSEARHAP), MFA was invited to participate in the Second Mobility AIDS Partnership Meeting of representatives from the four key areas in the Mekong: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam (MAP-4).

During the meeting it was emphasized that, while the CSEARHAP project is one that has a multi-sectoral approach, the country level partners had made little progress in securing the partnership of civil society organizations at the local and national level. MFA is currently discussing with the CSEARHAP leadership the possibility of playing a lead role in ensuring the civil society participation and partnership in the MAP-4 countries through a series of capacity building trainings on the issues of 'Gender, Health and Migration.'

Gender and Feminization

MFA's Gender and Feminization task force was created at the 9th RCM to identify the different issues brought about by the feminization of

migration to highlight the responses and best practices adopted by those working with women migrants.

Asian Women's Forum

As a follow-up activity to the recommendations of the 9th RCM, in September 2005 MFA organized a women's forum in Seoul, Korea as a capacity-building activity for the gender/feminization task force. It was hosted by the Joint Committee for Migrant Workers in Korea (JCMK), along with Women Migrant Workers Human Rights Center, Namyangju Migration Center for Women and the Korea Church Women Migrant Counseling Center.

The forum, carrying the theme "The Feminization of Migration and Women Migrants Human Rights", brought together 50 women from 13 countries across Asia to analyze and discuss trends and issues of women migrant workers in the region. Specific issues on trafficking, intercultural marriages, health and GATS Mode 4 were discussed. The forum also provided a venue for the participants to formulate strategies at the regional level to address the issues affecting women migrant workers. The task force's contribution will be vital in providing a regional perspective on the issues faced by women migrant workers.

Among the highlighted recommendations from the forum was to call for the recognition of domestic work as work i.e. domestic workers should be entitled to the same rights and protection just like any other worker. It was also agreed that there is a need to advocate for the recognition of migrant workers, especially women migrant workers, as development partners.

The task force is currently in the process of translating the recommendations in a program of action that can be presented to the wider network and identifying the human, institutional, and financial resources that would be required in realizing each of the above recommendations.



Women from all over Asia attend the Womens Forum on Migration in Seoul, South Korea.

GAATW Working Group

MFA participated in the working group meeting of the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in women (GAATW) held on 19-20 December 2005 in Bangkok. The Secretariat was invited to be a member of the working group of GAATW as it looked into the cross-cutting issues of trafficking, migration, labor and human rights, with the specific objective of exploring new strategic directions for advocacy and initiatives. The meeting focused on identifying new areas of research in order to create a substantive evidence-base for making strategic shifts.

MFA as a network has in the past worked with both the GAATW and the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women (CATW) based in Manila on the issue of women trafficking. MFA members at the local level hold different perspectives on the issue of sex work/women in prostitution and the network has yet to come to a consolidated position on the same. As an on-going process at the regional level, the Secretariat therefore engages with both the major women networks on trafficking in the region with the hope of coming up with

a clearer analysis on the grey area between migration and trafficking, while at the same time trying to engage in the macro level issues of the discourse in relation to globalization.

Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment (MSAI)

At the 9th RCM, the MSAI task force was designated to serve as the coordinating body for all MSAI activities.

Empowering Migrant Workers in Host Countries Towards Organizing for

Their Rights and Security through Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment / Asset Building

MFA is currently undertaking a project on sustainable reintegration and Asset-Building using the MSAI paradigm with the Levi's Foundation. The project involves the fielding four country focal persons (Bangladeshi, Indian, Indonesian and Thai) for three visits of two weeks each over a period of one year in Singapore. Some of the project's aims include: to introduce the MSAI strategy pioneered in the MFA network, focused towards asset building among migrant workers, which is essentially a sustainable reintegration program; to strengthen and build the capacity of groups and MFA network members in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Thailand, and India working on reintegration programs; to lobby support groups in the receiving countries to extend their services to migrant workers and to widen the scope of their services to include organizing, advocacy and support for sustainable reintegration of migrant workers in their country of origin; and to facilitate/help build a network between

support groups in host and home country of migrant workers with the objective to come-up with a coordinated regional (MFA) agenda for an alternative model of development (MSAI –An Asset Building Strategy in the Migration Phenomenon) in the context of increasing labor migration.

The first phase of the project was implemented in September 2005. A nine-member delegation coming from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Thailand and the MFA Secretariat went to Singapore from 16-20 September 2005 to conduct a preliminary visit to share and exchange experiences, increase mutual awareness and appreciation of the current situation on migrant workers' issues in Singapore and the region. The visit also aimed to foster bilateral understanding and relations regarding ongoing efforts and challenges and develop better understanding of the situation of migrant workers in Singapore.

West Asia Networking

Following up on its exploratory visit to West Asia in December 2004, where MFA worked to reestablish its links in the region with contact groups it had met in various meetings, the Secretariat coordinated a follow-up visit in May 2005. The delegation visited Egypt, Dubai and United Arab Emirates, with the objective of strengthening and expanding linkages through a possible collaboration at a project/program level, leading to a conference or symposium on labor migration from Asia to the Middle East and Arab World.

As an outcome of the visit, MFA was able to identify a list and profile of organizations and formations of migrants and advocates responding to Asian migrant workers' issues. A preliminary strategy note on what initial steps could be undertaken by MFA (as a network) to support the existing initiatives of response groups/persons in the cities/countries

visited was also identified. In addition, MFA formulated a concept note for a West Asia Sub-regional Consultation, to be held in mid-2005.

In November, a workshop on migration was organized by the ICFTU in cooperation with the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU), National Trade Union Centre of Bahrain (GFBTU) and International Labour Organization-Gulf Cooperation Council (ILO-GCC) in Bahrain. Recognizing this as a separate initiative that was in line with both the program area of NGO/Labor Union collaboration, and networking with West Asia, the Secretariat negotiated with the ILO for the opportunity to participate in the workshop.

At the end of the workshop the MFA delegation was able to identify key contacts within the trade union groups and affiliates present with the objective of linking them up within its wider outreach program. These contacts were seen as an important resource for developing a multi-sectoral approach to the advocacy issues concerning labor migration in the West Asian region.