Migrants and the Global Economic Crisis

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www.mfasia.org

Seminar on Migration and the Economic Crisis
21 May 2009
Global Economic Crisis: Official perspectives

- “This is a global crisis and it needs global solutions ... a downturn in global economic development.”
- “The global financial crisis ... might now be called the great recession .... Its impacts will be severe. And the threat is not only economic, there is a real risk that millions will be thrown back into poverty.” – IMF
- December 2007: global crisis considered to have started;
- Global contraction in 2009: (-)1.3% [IMF] to (-)1.7% [WB]; first global contraction in 60 years;
- Losses from the global crisis could be over US$4 trillion by end 2009. [IMF WEO, April 2009]
Even without the global crisis, migrant workers in Asia are already widely abused and exploited.

- Differentiated abuses, oppressions, exploitation across gender, race, class lines;
- Crisis will exacerbate the abuses, vulnerability, discrimination, abuse and exploitation of migrants;

Worst impacts of the current crisis to hit the hardest in the second half of 2009 until 2010.

- at least 1 million migrant workers lost their jobs in 1998-1999; over 27,000 MDWs lost jobs in HK.
The government in Thailand announced that it would not re-register migrants in 2009 in the hope that some will leave when their work permits expire, opening jobs for Thais as unemployment rises.

The Malaysian government froze new entries of migrant workers to make more jobs available for Malaysians, and ordered employers to lay off foreign workers first.
Taiwan: unscrupulous employers and companies take advantage of the situation by hiring migrants even when work is not available, increasing placement fees, contract replacements.
The crisis is global, but the impacts will vary:

- Differentiated and exacerbated along gender, race, class biases;
- Women migrants, especially in informal, casual, temporary sectors will be disproportionately negatively affected.
- Migrant domestic workers will be less impacted by layoffs (vs export, tourism sectors); but will be more severely affected by reduction in wages, benefits, protection; deployment might be reduced or bans imposed/reinforced.
## Impacts on Asian Migrant Workers (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impacts on MWs</th>
<th>MWs?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job losses; increased job vulnerability</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td><em>AMC: Around 5 million foreign workers will lose their jobs in East and SEA host countries by 2010;</em></td>
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<td><em>Another 5 million may lose their jobs in the Middle East, esp in the 6 States of the GCC.</em></td>
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<td>*20 to 30 million “floating population” in China will lose jobs by 2009</td>
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<td>Reduction or slowdown in deployment, restrictions in the entry and/or expulsion of migrants in the host countries; undocumented, lower skilled migrants will be targeted;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Wages: reduction, non-payment, underpayment, delays</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Increase in abuses and worsening of working/living conditions of migrants; deterioration of quality of life of migrants and families.</td>
<td>Expected</td>
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<td>Reduction or removal of benefits of migrants (and local) workers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>More restrictive migration policies and practices.</td>
<td>Expected</td>
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### Impacts on Asian Migrant Workers (2)

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<tr>
<th>Impacts on MWs</th>
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<tr>
<td>More exploitative/opportunistic practices by recruiters, money lenders.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Increased irregular migration / trafficking</td>
<td>Expected</td>
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<td>Increased discrimination or anti-migrant or xenophobic sentiments; increased criminalisation of migrant workers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Reduced remittance flows</td>
<td>Expected</td>
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<td>&quot;Instrumentalisation” of women migrants – family care/support and social reproductive roles of women migrants - intensified</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Government responses to the global crisis (eg. Stimulus measures) – generally exclude migrant workers.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Problems with return / reintegration of the migrants;</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>* absence or lack of government programs, services or capacity to handle migrants’ return and reintegration;</td>
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<td>* lack of livelihood and job options for migrants who return</td>
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<td>* many migrants cannot return (eg Burma).</td>
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Coping Mechanisms

- Accessing savings
- Accessing reintegration programs
- Re-trainings
- Applying for work in a different country / different skill category
- Continuing work in country of destination under a different contract or as undocumented workers
Responses
MFA Network
Migrant Forum in Asia: network of migrants, advocates

200+ member-organizations and contact groups

Legend:
- □ Members
- ■ Some key contacts
- □ National Networks

Countries and regions represented:
- PHILIPPINES
- JAPAN
- SOUTH KOREA
- TAIWAN
- SINGAPORE
- INDONESIA
- SRI LANKA
- NEPAL
- BANGLADESH
- MONGOLIA
- MID-EAST
- CHINA
- VIETNAM
- CAMBODIA
- MYANMAR
- THAILAND
- MALAYSIA
- SINGAPORE
- MFA Secretariat
Migrant Forum in Asia

MFA’s Multi-Strategy Response Framework

Target group

Key objectives/strategies

Results/impacts

Type 1: Upholding Dignity, Redressing Violations

Type 2: Building Collective Capacity & Actions

Type 3: Advocating Just Policies & Conditions

Type 4: Addressing Root Causes & Building Alternatives

Organisation

Sector

Society

Person

Social justice; migrants/families as development partners; just alternatives

Rights-oriented policies & practices; just treatment & conditions; removing vulnerabilities

Organised capacity & strength of migrants & advocates; collective actions

Personal dignity, health & well-being; basic human rights; access to relief & redress
LEVEL 1: Upholding Personal Dignity and Well-being

- Case handling, legal assistance, temporary shelter, repatriation assistance to migrants in cases of distress, in particular migrants who are being repatriated because of the global econ. crisis
- Malaysia: Dialogue with buyers of electronics factory. Products of electronics factory will not be bought unless factory owner compensate the workers properly
- Taiwan: Collecting data and information on factories that closed or no longer employing migrants. Data submitted to the embassies
- Taiwan: Collecting data and information about brokers and recruiters that hire migrants even if there are no jobs available. Data is also submitted to the embassies
Type 2: Building collective capacity & Actions

- Organizing migrants into associations and encouraging migrants to form and join unions
- Capacity building for migrant organizations on the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers
- Organizing of migrant workers into reintegration and savings groups in countries of destination
- NGO and Trade Union Collaboration: migrants rights to form and join unions, affiliation of migrant trade unions with national union centers
Supporting the organizing of the Asian Migrant Domestic Workers Alliance (ADWA)
Asian Domestic Workers’ Alliance

- MFA, together with the Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR), Asian Migrant Centre (AMC), Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) and Human Rights Watch (HRW), coorganized the Asian Domestic Workers Assembly (ADWA) in June 2007 in Manila, Philippines, which led to the creation of the **Asian Domestic Workers’ Alliance**.

- The alliance is a joint Asian regional platform to promote the rights, welfare and empowerment of migrant domestic workers (MDWs).

- During the 2nd ADWA held on 1-4 May 2008 in Jakarta, Indonesia, MFA together with the Asian Migrant Centre (AMC), Coalition for Migrants Rights (CMR) and the Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME) in cooperation with the Serikat Buruh Migran Indonesia (SBMI) launched a **regional campaign on the recognition of domestic work as work.**
Regional Campaign on the Recognition of Domestic Work as Work

1 May 2008
Jakarta, Indonesia

● Recognize domestic work as work
● Respect and advancement of the rights, status and dignity of migrant domestic workers
Regional Campaign on the Recognition of Domestic Work as Work

1 May 2008; Jakarta, Indonesia

The key areas of advocacy are:

- Adoption of valid, fair and standard employment contract for MDWs (based on decent work principles including wages, rest days, working hours, and living and working conditions);
- Recognition and protection of MDWs under national policies/laws, and the removal of policies that discriminate or marginalize MDWs;
- Adoption of migration regimes that recognize MDWs as legal workers and provide safe and transparent migration channels for them; and
- Adoption of international instruments that universally recognize and define minimum standards on the rights and status of MDWs.
Level 3: Advocating Just Policies & Conditions

- Advocating for rights based policies that protect and promote the rights and well being of migrants and their families
- Lobbying and dialogue with embassies and governments: provide assistance to migrants who are being repatriated
- Lobbying for policies and programs that promote sustainable and holistic reintegration programs
- Research and analysis on the impact of global financial crisis to migrant and their families
Engagement in UN and other regional / international processes

- UN Human Rights Council
- International Labor Conference
- World Trade Organization
- IMF/World Bank
- Global Forum on Migration and Development
- Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN)
- South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)
- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
World Trade Organization (WTO)

Building Migrant and People’s Solidarity in Challenging Neoliberal Development and WTO, July 2005

brought together key migration, trade and development movements to converge efforts on the WTO and the 6th Ministerial Conference in December 2005 in Hong Kong

MFA CALLS:

- Stop the neoliberal agenda of WTO, IMF and WB
- Derail the WTO
- No deal in WTO: No deal is better than a bad deal
- Stop the corporate and exploitative agenda of WTO
- People before Profits
- Services out of WTO, WTO out of services
- GATS out of WTO
- Migrants are not for sale
- Stop the commodification of women and workers
World Trade Organization (WTO)

- MFA joined the **People’s Week of Action** in December 2005 in Hong Kong, together with trade groups, women, peasants and other groups protesting against the 6th Ministerial Conference.
- The Doha Round of the WTO collapsed in July 2006.
Highlights in advocacy

2008 MCM Theme:
Justice and Dignity for ALL Migrants

- Asia-wide campaign where MFA members conduct various activities to celebrate the gains and continue the struggle of migrant workers and advocates in protecting and promoting the rights of migrant workers and their families.
LEVEL 4: Addressing Root Causes & Building Alternatives

- Information education and capacity building on for reintegration:
  - Financial literacy
  - Entrepreneurship Trainings
  - Facilitation of access to capital for migrants who would like to start their own business.

- Organizing migrants for reintegration through the Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment (MSAI)
- Organizing of reintegration savings groups
- Lobbying for countries of origin to have programs and policies for returnee migrant workers
**MDW’s savings and investment project**

FAMDEV farm (Bukidnon, Philippines): the 8-hectare farm is currently being developed; from savings of FDWs in HK, Taiwan.

Trainings / Orientations on Migrant Savings for Alternative Investment (MSAI) in Malang, Indonesia
Coping Strategies & Long-term Responses

- Country missions, Skills matching, Diversification
  - Job creation and protection
  - Social protections
  - “Voluntary return”
  - Invest in social infrastructure
  - Radical change of development paradigm (migration for development)
Recommendations

- Fundamental change in development model and the “migration and development” paradigm ... Rights-based, people-centered, sustainable, social justice-oriented, gender-fair;
- Job creation and protection should be paramount ... Gendered and sustainable.
- Recognise DW as work and ensure coverage under national laws, international standards; appropriate migration channels for MDWs; standard employment contract. Minimum protection for MDWs should include basic labour rights, minimum wage, social security, occupational safety and health, family and reproductive rights.
- Visa status of MDWs not tied to employers.
- Social protection for migrant workers during and beyond the crisis – should be gendered and have specific characteristics for MDWs;
- Government measures and stimulus packages (home and host countries) – focus on job protection, providing social services; support women’s unpaid household/family roles.
- Adopt, enforce migrants’ rights policies, laws and protection mechanisms (national, regional, international); adopt ILO convention on DW, ratify MWC and core UN/ILO conventions.
- Ensure participation of MDWs in policy and decision-making in host and home countries.
Thank You Very Much!

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