

**“LET MY PEOPLE GO!” (Exodus 7:16)**  
*Justice for Migrants and Trafficked People*

*(Statement of the WSCF AP 2008 Human Rights Workshop on Migration and Trafficking)*

We the 30 participants<sup>1</sup> of the WSCF AP Human Rights Workshop on the theme, ‘Youth, Migration and Human Trafficking’ held from 2 - 10 of June 2008 in Bogor, Jawa Barat, Indonesia, gathered together to learn and share about the social, cultural, gendered, political, religious and economic problems concerning ‘forced’ migration and human trafficking. The workshop enabled us to deepen our analysis of the problems experienced by people who are ‘forced’ as migrant workers or victims of human trafficking, draw parallel stories from the Bible and reflect upon our role as Christian youth in responding to the problem of Migrations and Trafficking.

Migration of people and human trafficking are over-arching themes in the Bible, as we explored in our bible studies. In Exodus, we were encouraged by the example of Moses, to go out and proclaim to “LET MY PEOPLE GO!” from bondage, slavery and exploitation. In Leviticus, we understood God’s intention of liberating people from slavery and economic injustice by freeing the slaves and returning their properties in the “Year of the Jubilee.” Both biblical texts speaks powerfully of the parallelism in the conditions and aspirations of migrants and trafficked people today and the Israelites in the Biblical times.

The inputs from our resource persons, country reports from participants and group discussion helped us to understand the varied aspect of forced migration and trafficking in different countries, such as forced marriage between migrant women and local men in Korea and Taiwan, the right of abode for mainland Chinese women coming to Hong Kong, the Labor Export Policies (LEPs) in the Philippines and Indonesia, trafficking of Thai women for prostitution to Australia, cross-border trafficking in Thailand, child-trafficking in India, forced migration due to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka.

Without confining ourselves to the discussions and bible studies, we saw the face of migration as we exposed ourselves to the realities of Indonesian migrants settled in the 2 villages of Sukabumi in West Indonesia. We understood their pain and pathos as we lived and interacted with families and migrants returnees from Malaysia and Middle East, who shared their experiences, and grievances. Families feared for the lives of their loved ones who have left them to work abroad but are now missing. Stories of physical abuse, sexual abuse, none payment of salary, overworking by the employers and exploitation by recruitment agencies were common among the almost 30 families we lived and shared our time during our exposure. Without seeing the help from the government, migrants fall prey to unscrupulous agencies and syndicates, who victimize them again and again even in their own locality where they come from. The so-called development impact of migration claimed by the Indonesian government is

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<sup>1</sup> *Student Christian Movements as affiliated and associated members of the World Student Christian Federation of Asia and the Pacific Region (Aotearoa - New Zealand; Australia; Timor Leste; Indonesia; Sri Lanka; India; Pakistan; Bangladesh; Thailand; Myanmar; Cambodia; Hong Kong; Taiwan; South Korea; Philippines).*

contradictory to the current living conditions of the migrant people and their families in these communities.

### **Our Analysis of the problem**

Political instability and the internal conflicts within many countries in the Asia Pacific region drives people to migrate and seek shelter elsewhere. Armed conflict within ethnic groups, human rights violations, abductions, disappearances, political persecution force people to flee and secure their lives in other countries as refugees and asylum seekers. In some of these countries, interference by developed countries, thru aid and armaments fuels and aggravates the conflict.

The post 9/11 and US led “War on Terror” has impacted and changed world-wide immigration policies in developed countries, victimizing migrant workers and immigrant communities in the US, Canada, UK, and Australia. While we are against Terrorism, we condemn immigration policies and practices that segregates and fuels discrimination and violence against people of certain racial background.

People migrate not because they enjoy working abroad far from their loved ones, but because the economic conditions in their countries force them to do so. Governments, following the dictates of neoliberal globalization, are unable to provide its people employment opportunities in their home countries. Instead, governments enter into multi-lateral and bi-lateral trade agreements or Free-Trade Agreements (FTAs) following the WTO and IMF-WB regulations. Under these agreements, policies of trade liberalization, privatisation and deregulation, developing countries are unable to protect their national economies from the onslaught of capitalists interest aiming for zero tariff. Furthermore, basic social services are privatised and are no longer accessible to the people under these agreements.

Finally, neoliberal globalisation encourages Labor Export Policies (LEP), as the way of “solving” the economic problems of developing countries. The local labor forces of developing countries are commodified and bought on cheap prices. They are exported overseas as migrant workers, and are neglected of their rights and benefits as workers. Remittances from migrant workers are used to props-up ailing economies and as payments of foreign debts. LEP are used to overhaul educational system of developing countries, imposing education curriculum and courses that will generate endless source of cheap labor for the global market. In the Philippines, the Revised Basic Educational Curriculum was implemented, after the dictates of IMF-WB, teaching students to forget nationalism in order to meet the “global demands” or that they be “globally competitive.”

Majority of the migrant workers and trafficked people in Asia and the Pacific are women and young people. This is because of the position and value of the women in the society. The nature of work of migrant women are extension of the traditional role prescribed to women in society, such as care-givers, nurses, entertainers and domestic workers. Young women migrant workers are also most vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse, as women are seen as properties that can be dominated and exploited. Women migrant works endless hours, in hard labor and with less pay in the Middle East and Malaysia. Conditions of women trafficked into prostitution are far worst than women migrant workers.

As a result of our collective learning experiences, we are committing *ourselves* to the following action plan:

**As Individuals;**

- Volunteer for organizations who help victims/survivors of trafficking and forced migration
- Participate in rescue missions, campaigns and advocacy actions
- Share our experiences and learning to fellow SCMerS, and other Forums and groups
- Create network among participants to continue the exchange of ideas and discussion.

**As a collective of SCM;**

**Education and awareness raising**

- Researching Case studies on social impact of migration among young people
- Development of awareness programs in schools and universities
- Education programs about the realities of forced migration, globalisation and related sectors.(Training, workshops, rallies, pamphlets)
- Bible Study and Practical Reflections

**Organizing**

- Strengthening and expansion of SCMs
- Development of Fellowship programs among Migrant Workers.

**Advocacy and Solidarity Actions**

- Advocacy on related issues
- Resistance against globalisation, and *colonial* education.
- “Arouse, organize and mobilize”

**Networking**

- Establish linkages with WSCF in wider regions, international cooperation on the issue of Migration and trafficking.
- Establish relationships with local NGOs
- Continual development of statements and proposals.

***Furthermore, we recommend the following concrete actions consideration of the WSCF AP and the global community;***

1. Join efforts to call on governments to sign the Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.
2. Stop the exploitation of Migrants Worker through the Labor Export Policies of governments.
3. Promote, Protect and uphold the Human Rights of all Migrant Workers and Trafficked people.
4. Stand in solidarity with the struggle of Migrant Workers by joining the International Migrants Alliance (IMA) as an associate member.
5. Participate in the International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees, during the Global Forum on Migration and Development
6. Urge the WSCF Global Federation through the General Assembly to participate in global campaigns to protect the Migrants and Trafficked People.