

A JOINT STATEMENT FROM REPRESENTATIVES FROM CSOS AND MIGRANT DEVELOPMENT SOCIETIES OF SRI LANKA

We, the representatives of Civil Society Organisations and Migrant Development Societies working in various regions of Sri Lanka, in collaboration with the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, have concluded a two-day consultation on **Safe and Fair Labour Migration of Sri Lankan women**. The CSO representatives who participated in the consultation are from the [Eastern Self Reliant Community Awakening Organisation](#), [Centre for Human Rights and Community Development](#), [Community Development Services](#), [Women and Media Collective](#), Voice of Migrants Network, PREDO, SWOAD, SAMADANAM, FIRM, SAFE Foundation and VOICE. Participants representing the Migrant Development Societies are from Kurunegala, Batticaloa, Putlam, Anuradhapura, Ampara, Kandy, Vavuniya and Nuawara Eliya.

During the last two days our discussions focused on all stages of labour migration: pre-decision and pre-departure, while in employment abroad and life upon return. Based on our long experience of doing research, advocacy and ground level work and the rich lived experience and community engagement of Migrant Development Societies, we would like to make the following recommendations to the concerned authorities. We sincerely hope that our recommendations will be taken into consideration.

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION

The 28-day Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) must focus on **enabling migrant workers**, especially women workers in low-waged jobs, to **uphold rights and dignity** of all migrant workers. The Government should also **actively include returnee migrant women's experiences and concerns to improve the curricula** for pre-departure orientation programmes.

- Invest in modernizing facilities and equipment for training. And decentralise spaces and training programmes to reach the district level.

- Migrant societies should be consulted in the review and assessment of training curricula to capacitate migrant workers with language skills, technical skills and background knowledge of the destination countries.
- Recognise the lived experiences of returning migrants and allow opportunities for migrant returnees to participate in the facilitation of training programmes.

RECRUITMENT

Address and take action on recruitment irregularities such as high payments, contract violations, trafficking, dual contract signing etc.

- **Ensure the implementation of the existing code of ethics and monitoring mechanisms** with regard to the recruitment agencies.
- Recognise and regularise the intermediaries, for example, the sub-agents
- **Re-instate the process of signing the employment contracts in the own language of workers (e.g Sinhala and Tamil)** at the Bureau office to ensure protection of their rights.
- Given the increasing number of persons migrating on 'visit visas' **make dedicated efforts to reach out and encourage them to register with the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment.**

WHILE IN EMPLOYMENT ABROAD

- Strengthen **bilateral agreements and MOUs** to focus on labour rights protection and the promotion of human rights.
- Expand the mandate of Embassies and Consular Offices in destination countries to include **legal and psycho-social support for distressed migrant workers.**

- Develop communication channels for addressing complaints by migrant workers
- The Embassy should serve as a link between employers and agencies in handling cases of abuse
- Consular assistance services must be gender-responsive and the quality of humanitarian support for distressed migrant workers in crisis situations must improve.
- Labour attaches placed in countries of destination should be sensitized and undergo specific training to respond with empathy to deal with labour disputes.
- Migrant workers must be able to exercise their **voting rights** while they are employed overseas. (Develop a system for absentee voting as they do in the Philippines).
- Increase the percentage of registration fees from 10% to 30% for the **insurance scheme** to cover the **welfare of migrants**.

RIGHTS UPON RETURN

Return and Reintegration programmes should **address the socio-economic challenges** of returnees and their communities

- The State must **invest resources** into better public services and welfare at the grassroots level that **recognise the valuable contributions of migrant women workers**, and address **harmful stereotypes and the stigma** facing returnee migrant women workers.
- Ensure adequate implementation and monitoring of the Return and Reintegration Sub Policy by providing programmes to enhance women

migrant workers' skills, and access to opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship.

- Ensure **access to upskilling programmes** for all women workers and implement RPL system for NVQ level certifications.
- Develop pension schemes for returnee migrants.
- Establish identity cards for migrant returnees for special benefits (healthcare, public transport, banking etc.).
- Recognise existing research studies on migrant workers and incorporate trends and patterns in policies and programmes to understand the impact of labour migration on women and communities.
- Ensure participation and involvement of Migrant Development Societies to strengthen programmes focusing on migration.