

CIMUN VI Research Report

Committee: SOCHUM

Issue: Ensuring fair treatment and protection of migrant workers while addressing economic growth and global labor challenges

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1. Committee Introduction

The Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (GA-SOCHUM) is the third committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), focusing on the resolution of social, humanitarian, and cultural issues that affect the global population. Specifically, these resolutions focus on upholding indigenous rights, ensuring equal treatment for all genders, and protecting global communities. SOCHUM was created in response to the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Abiding by these values, SOCHUM seeks to solve the questions regarding the rights of individuals. The committee, since its creation, has established 51 resolutions.

All countries are represented in SOCHUM, with 193 seats out of 193 countries. One key point that SOCHUM attempts to resolve is the ongoing Venezuela crisis. Due to the collapse of the domestic economy and hyperinflation, all citizens under the government face economic difficulties. As such, many have fled to other countries. In such a situation, marginalised or indigenous communities face disproportionate discrimination, with basic rights such as job placement or refugee protection being denied. In response, SOCHUM attempts to combat the unfair treatment of marginalized communities, such as migrants and refugees, connecting to the specific case resolution in the first agenda and a broader discussion in the second agenda.

The experience of SOCHUM, as a delegate, will provide an authentic and orthodox experience of MUN for delegates to use in future conferences. The achievements of SOCHUM will greatly impact the world.

2. Agenda Introduction

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), migrant workers earn 13% less income in More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC). In some countries, such as Cyprus, the wage gap was as uneven as 42%, highlighting the particular need for solutions to uphold equality in working conditions for migrant workers. Beyond statistics, the International Organization for

Migration (IOM) suggests that there are underlying social and individual discriminations happening within workplaces. Such problems result in migrant workers' disability to integrate into the given society, perform decent economic activities, or actively socialize with others. When cases of disparities increase among migrant workers, other problems may simultaneously emerge, including human trafficking, exploitation of migrant citizenship status, and more. These issues are not just unfair treatments of migrant workers, but a clear violation of their rights.

To combat this issue, the Office of the United States High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has created the "International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families" in 1990. Despite having been ratified by over 20 key nations and integrated into many domestic laws since 2003, disparities among countries are persistent. Since 1990, the number of migrants has increased almost twofold. Current tensions or wars between countries are augmenting the number of migrants around the world. Recipient countries are burdened with the flow of migrants, and the process of domestic integration is becoming alarmingly sedate. With economic turmoil and job shortages, a country's ability to connect migrants to job opportunities is becoming increasingly difficult.

Another point to consider on the agenda is the gender disparity. Among hired migrants globally, the ILO found that the male-to-female ratio was 103 million compared to 65 million women. This inhibits dependency among female migrants, as they are not economically independent without a proper job. Current gender issues may be exacerbated in the status quo of migrants. A possible explanation for this social ratio of male and female migrants is that much of the work performed by migrants is physically intensive labor, meaning men, with physical advantages, bear a stronger foothold in such job fields. If this explanation were to be true, it would justify the need for solutions in upholding equality for migrants, as migrants are faced with norms that guarantee only the most basic forms of work.

As members of SOCHUM, delegates are encouraged to devise feasible, creative, and persuasive solutions to resolve this problem from a global perspective. As migrant workers are not an inherent problem of just one or two countries, countries should collaborate in understanding viewpoints and perspectives.

3. Definition of Key Terms

Migrant Workers

People who move to another country to find employment, especially for seasonal or temporary work. Migrant workers can work for various periods and generally intend to return to their home country once they have achieved financial stability. Migrant workers often encounter challenges and abuse of their human rights and labor rights due to discrimination against them.

Labor Rights

Legal rights and human rights that focus on the relationship between workers and employers. The United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO) promotes international labour rights, including freedom of association, collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, child labour, and discrimination. Labor rights vary significantly from country to country, depending on the culture, economy, and political context of each country.

Labor Migration

The movement of people from one country to another or within their own country for the purpose of employment.

Global Labor Market

The interconnected network of work opportunities across borders. Global Labor Markets are used to recruit skilled employees from different companies around the world and manage global employment relationships. The expansion of the global labor market reshaped traditional employment ways as companies can efficiently hire foreign workers.

Pay Gap

The difference in average earnings between migrant workers and native workers in a given country. Due to the discrimination towards migrant workers, lack of legal protections, or limited access to high-paid jobs, this gap is about 13% for high-income countries and can be as high as 42% for certain countries.

Remittances

Money that migrant workers send back to their families in their home countries. This often plays a significant role in the home country's households and is the reason why migrant workers move to other countries for income.

Human Trafficking

The act of recruiting, transporting, or harboring people for the purpose of exploitation and forced labor. This process involves force, fraud, or coercion and the use of violence or fraudulent employment agencies. Many people become victims through fake promise of education and job opportunities.

4. Timeline of Key Events

1919: The International Labor Organization (ILO) was set up as a response to harsh working conditions that had arisen during the Industrial Revolution. The ILO was established under the Treaty of Versailles to establish social justice and labor standards, such as workers' rights.

1948: The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) moved to Paris and created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a reaction to World War II. Specifically, the right to work, equal pay, and safeguarding of migrant workers are stated in Article 23 of the UDHR.

1990: The UNGA adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The Migrant Workers Convention aimed to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families.

2008: There was a major global economic recession that was referred to as the Global Financial Crisis. The crisis resulted in unemployment and vulnerability among workers especially migrants. This crisis recognized the need of increased labor protection.

2015: The United Nations created the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). Target 8.8 specifically mentions protecting labor rights and the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers.

2020: The worldwide pandemic, COVID-19, strongly affected labor markets and migrant workers. Government restrictions and lockdowns caused migrant workers to lose their jobs and return to their home countries. The ILO proposed Fair Recruitment to make sure that the recruitment process is ethical and does not exploit migrant workers.

2024: The Migration and Asylum Agreement was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. The pact aims to create a fairer and more unified approach towards migration and asylum. This will ensure the Union has secured external borders, guaranteed people's rights, and no EU countries left under pressure. Asylum Procedure Regulations prevent abuses through clear obligations of cooperation for asylum seekers.

5. Positions of Key Member Nations and Bodies

Germany

Germany has been a popular destination for migrant workers, where more than 12 million foreign nationals reside in the country as of 2024, with many playing an important role in areas such as healthcare, agriculture, and architecture. The nation advocates a rights-based labor migration, as observed in the Skilled Workers Immigration Act (2020), which facilitates the immigration of non-EU skilled employees. Germany has a national minimum wage (12.41 euros per hour in 2024) and has increased protection with measures such as the Fair Mobility Program or measures against abuses in seasonal work, especially in agriculture and meat processing, after the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, issues still exist: cases of exploitation, wage theft, and low living standards are still reported, particularly in the case of subcontracted or seasonal employees. Germany is connected to the international labor standards by being a contributor to the ILO and the Global Compact for Migration, and entering into bilateral labor agreements with the countries of origin to provide safe and regulated migration. Although Germany advocates for excellent protection of the law for migrant workers, the government has admitted that there are loopholes in enforcement, and efforts are underway to ensure better supervision and access to justice for the workers.

Colombia

Colombia is a sender and a recipient of migrant workers, and as such has a dual role in the migrant labor situation. By 2024, it had more than 2.8 million Venezuelan migrants, the majority of whom work in the informal sector and do not have fixed contracts or the ability to enjoy labor protection. The Colombian government reacted by providing the Temporary Protection Status (TPS) program to regularize and assimilate these migrants, giving them access to health services, education, and formal sources of employment. However, problems are persistent, particularly in applying labor rights in areas like agriculture, domestic work, and construction. Colombia, as a country that sends refugees, is also interested in how its nationals are treated when they work abroad, especially in Spain, the United States, and the rest of Latin America. With the aid of consular services and labor cooperation treaties, Colombia keeps advocating improved safeguards to its diaspora and tackling domestic labor exploitation of new migrant groups.

Afghanistan

Decades of conflict, economic instability, and lack of domestic opportunities have led Afghanistan to become an overwhelming source country of migrant labor. More than 6 million Afghans are residing outside the country, mostly in Iran, Pakistan, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, where most Afghans are employed in the construction sector, household labor, or farm companies under temporary and mostly exploitative contracts. Wage theft, absence of legal documentation, dangerous working conditions, and limited access to justice are common experiences of Afghan migrant workers. The present Taliban led government does not have any international recognition, as well as diplomatic capability to represent the cause of the Afghan

workers in foreign countries. Systemic abuse is often permitted with international organizations like the ILO, UNHCR, and humanitarian NGOs stepping in to offer assistance. Afghanistan tends to agree with international endeavors in enhancing the protection of migrant workers but can do little in adopting or affecting the standards established because of its domestic instability and poor governance.

Syria

Syria is also a significant source country of migrant workers and refugees, caused by more than 10 years of civil war and economic downturn. There are approximately 5.2 million Syrian refugees in the neighboring countries, especially in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, where most of them work informally in fields such as agriculture, construction, and service provision. Syrian migrant workers are especially prone to exploitation, wage discrimination, child labor, and hazardous housing because they frequently do not have a legal right to work or reside in the country. Host nations have come under pressure to enhance legal access to work among Syrians, yet labor market saturation, xenophobia, and poor implementation have persisted to impede serious improvements. The Syrian government, distracted by civil war and sanctions, does almost nothing to represent the interests of these workers, and the international NGOs and worker rights groups are taking the lead in pressing to obtain at least minimal standards.

USA

The U.S. is among the most popular destination countries of migrant workers in the world, and there are approximately 28 million foreign-born employees, which constitute roughly 17 percent of the U.S. workforce, as of 2024. The agricultural, construction, domestic, hospitality, and healthcare sectors highly depend on migrant labor. The U.S. labor law protects all workers, irrespective of their immigration status on paper, though those employed under temporary visa programs (such as H-2A (agriculture) and H-2B (non-agriculture)) and undocumented migrants are often not protected equally. These programs were questioned due to inadequate monitoring, forced labor-like working conditions, and decreased movement among employers. Although the U.S encourages the protection of migrant workers via bilateral labor accords and engaging in international discussions, the U.S has not ratified the essential ILO Convention regarding the protection of migrant workers. The reform of immigration, border protection, and workplace rights is a controversial topic, and the way migrant workers are treated is becoming a significant point of domestic and foreign policy.

6. Questions A Resolution Must Answer

Why are migrants so hard to handle? If so, how can countries collectively make a difference to the solution?

How can countries implement better integration models to make the process of migration more efficient? What are the economic implications of that solution? Is it feasible?

Do culture or social norms play a role in creating disparities? If so, what should countries work towards to change such norms?

What are some domestic and communal solutions? (What are solutions targeted more at domestic measures, and what are some solutions targeted more at global measures?)

What legal protections should be universally guaranteed to all migrant workers, regardless of status, and how can international law better enforce those protections?

How can technology and data sharing be used to monitor migration flows while still respecting the rights and privacy of migrants?

In what ways can international cooperation prevent exploitative labor practices, especially in industries that heavily rely on migrant labor?

How can migration policy balance national security concerns with humanitarian obligations under international law?

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