



Background Guide

United Nations
Human Rights
Council

1 | Strengthening the protection and rights of
migrant workers to combat exploitation and abuse

SDG: 3. Good Health and Well-being, 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth, 10. Reduced
Inequality

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Committee Introduction

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) is an intergovernmental body that addresses issues related to human rights violations. It is responsible for strengthening the protection of human rights and highlighting the importance of specific human rights issues that require attention from the international community. It was established in 2006 by the General Assembly and replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights. UNHRC is composed of 47 member states and there have been 54 regular sessions, 36 special sessions, and 1481 resolutions held and adopted until 2023.

In the past years, the council reviewed human rights records of all the member states of the United Nations through the Universal Periodic Review and appointed Special Procedures, who are the independent human rights experts who may focus on specific aspects of human rights agendas or closely monitor the human rights violations in countries. The Advisory Committee in the council provided necessary information and advisory opinions on specific human rights issues and the Complaint Procedure allowed people to highlight specific human rights issues to the attention of the council.

Agenda Introduction

How can we ensure the basic human rights of those who leave their homes in search of better opportunities? What measures can be implemented to protect migrant workers from exploitation and abuse? These questions lie at the heart of our committee's agenda. Migrant workers, more likely than not driven by economic necessity, face numerous challenges in their host countries, from inadequate working conditions and unfair wages to lack of legal protections and social security. Migrant workers often leave their home countries in pursuit of better opportunities, only to encounter significant challenges and barriers. It is incumbent upon this committee to develop comprehensive strategies to safeguard these vulnerable individuals from exploitation and abuse, and make sure their fundamental rights are protected.

As different countries maintain varying stances on migrant workers' rights, it is a complex task to guarantee migrant workers' rights in all parts of the world. For instance, Canada and Germany have implemented robust legal frameworks to protect migrant workers, including minimum wage guarantees and access to healthcare. Conversely, some Gulf countries have faced criticism for their kafala sponsorship system, which has been associated with worker exploitation. Recent reforms in Qatar, prompted by international pressure, highlight the potential for positive change when global attention is focused on this issue.

According to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) most recent estimates, there were an estimated 169 million migrant workers around the world annually, underscoring the urgent need for strengthened protections and legal pathways for migration. Many of these individuals work in informal or unregulated sectors, leaving them particularly susceptible to exploitation.

With these in mind, now is the time for different nations with different policies to come together to ensure the safety of migrants' rights and to combat exploitation and abuse.

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

We are Iris Kang, Hazel Kim, and Chloe Cho from Korea International School Jeju (KISJ), who will serve as the Chairs of UNHRC in the upcoming GECMUN XI conference. It is an honor to welcome you to the UNHRC committee, where we expect numerous meaningful discussions. As experienced chairs, we will guide you through the process of negotiating with your fellow delegates and developing favorable solutions that represent various perspectives.

The agenda for this year's UNHRC committee is "Strengthening the Protection and Rights of Migrant Workers to Combat Exploitation and Abuse." Migrant workers in most countries are in a vulnerable position in which they are abused by the deceptive recruitment strategies of employers but are unable to improve their conditions due to the lack of social support systems and the fear of being detained and deported back to the country where they escaped from. Coming up with solutions for this issue is of vital importance and could improve the working conditions of both migrant workers and nationals in search of job opportunities. We highly encourage you to propose innovative and actionable solutions that address the root causes of exploitation, enhance legal protections, and promote international cooperation to safeguard the rights of migrant workers globally.

We chairs are not only here to facilitate the conference but also to guide you through the process and give advice. If you have any questions or need assistance in the preparation for the conference, please reach out to us. We are looking forward to making some unforgettable memories and building lasting friendships. See you in March!

Best Regards,

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Key Terms

Emigration

The act of leaving one's own country to settle in another; moving abroad.

Exploitation

Unfair treatment or use of individuals, often for profit. In the context of migrant workers, it involves practices such as underpayment, overworking, poor working conditions, and lack of legal protections.

Forced Labor

All work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.

Human Trafficking

Involves the illegal trade of humans for purposes such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and slavery. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to trafficking due to their often precarious legal and economic status.

Immigration

The action of coming to live in a foreign country.

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

A United Nations multilateral treaty outlining the protections of migrant workers and their families. This treaty was adopted in 1990 through a UN General Assembly Resolution and is the first legal framework that addresses multiple aspects of the migrant workers' rights, such as right to a safe and a fair working environment as well as social and medical services. While countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia ratified the treaty, United States, France, Qatar, and many other countries didn't ratify it.

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Founded in October 1919 under the League of Nations, the International Labour Organization is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social and economic justice by setting international labor standards.

Kafala System

A sponsorship system used in many Gulf countries, where a migrant worker's legal status is tied to their employer. This system has been widely criticized for facilitating worker exploitation and limiting workers' freedom and rights.

Migrant worker

A person who moves to another country or area in order to find employment, in particular seasonal or temporary work.

Regularization

A process by which irregular migrants (those without legal status) are granted legal residency or work permits. This process aims to integrate migrant workers into the formal economy and provide them with legal protections and rights.

Social Security

Refers to government programs designed to provide financial support and assistance to individuals in need, such as healthcare, unemployment benefits, and pensions. Ensuring social security for migrant workers is crucial for their well-being and protection.

Historical Background

International Labour Organization (ILO) Formation (1919)

The ILO was created in 1919 as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, in the belief that lasting peace can only be achieved through the implementation of social justice. In 1946, the ILO became a specialized agency in the United States. It aims to give workers, employers, and governments an equal voice, ensuring that decent working conditions are provided to all women and men.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted by representatives of various nations of different legal and cultural backgrounds and was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. The document set out fundamental human rights to be applied permanently at global and regional levels. Article 13 of the document protects the rights of migrant workers and their families, specifically outlining that their universal rights are retained regardless of whether they moved across borders.

Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)

The Migration for Employment Convention is an international treaty established by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to protect migrant workers. It outlines the rights and obligations of migrant workers and the guidelines for member states to follow to ensure that such workers are provided with fair treatment and equal opportunities. The Convention demands that migrant workers receive the same treatment as nationals regarding employment conditions, trade union rights, and social security. It also protects migrant workers from misleading information and exploitation, so that they are not disadvantaged.

Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)

This convention regulates international migration for employment. It emphasizes the need to combat illegal migration, often in the form of trafficking and the exploitation of migrants. It also ensures that migrant workers are provided with accurate information about their employment conditions and their rights. Additionally, it encourages cooperation between member states to regulate migrant flows.

Adoption of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, recognizes the contributions of migrant workers to both their home and host countries and seeks to ensure their rights and dignity. It establishes a framework that protects their civil, political,

economic, social, and cultural rights, aiming to improve labor conditions, family unity, access to education and healthcare, and protection against exploitation and abuse. This convention emphasizes the importance of collaboration among countries and encourages states to adopt policies that promote migrants' human rights, regardless of their legal status.

Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (1995)

This act was enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines to establish policies that protect the rights and welfare of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). It mandates the establishment of resource centers in countries that have a significant number of OFWs as well as the implementation of reintegration programs for workers who are returning to the Philippines. This act also set harsh punishments for agencies that exploit OFWs or recruit them illegally.

Establishment of the Global Commission on International Migration (2003)

The Global Commission on International Migration was the first global panel addressing international migration. It was launched by the United Nations Secretary-General and a few other governments in 2003 in Geneva. By inviting 19 members, it was able to bring together varying perspectives and expertise on migration. Through this debate on international migration, the Commission issued three mandates: place international migration on the global agenda, analyze gaps in policy approaches to migration, and present recommendations to the United Nations Secretary-General and other stakeholders on how to strengthen the governance of international migration.

2008 Financial Crisis

The 2008 Financial Crisis, or the American subprime mortgage crisis, led to a global recession in 2009. The economic slump began when the U.S. housing market crashed as large amounts of mortgage-backed securities (MBS) and derivatives such as CDOs plummeted in value as people could not pay back their mortgages. This economic downturn led to widespread job losses, particularly in industries that relied heavily on migrant workers, such as construction, manufacturing, and services. Since it strained public resources as well, migrant workers could not receive proper legal protections and fell vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, migrant workers were blamed for the economic hardship in many countries, which exacerbated xenophobia and discrimination against them.

Adoption of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) (2011)

This convention provides standards that aim to improve the working and living conditions of domestic workers, including workers who are migrants or members of disadvantaged communities. By requiring states to take a series of measures for the improvement of the living and working conditions as well as laying down specific rights and

principles, the convention provides protection to domestic workers. Under the convention, domestic workers can mobilize support for the implementation of the convention by their governments and use the provisions of the convention to influence existing laws related to the living and working conditions of migrant workers. Since the adoption of the convention, domestic workers gained legal protection in many countries. However, there are still many domestic workers who suffer in their living and working conditions, indicating a long way to go.

Launch of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (2018)

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration is the first intergovernmental agreement that aims to cover all aspects of international migration comprehensively. It is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the nine core international human rights law instruments, upholding the principles of non-discrimination and non-regression. Regardless of the migration status, this agreement protects migrant workers in all stages of their migration cycle. Some of the commitments of this agreement include strengthening evidence-based and human rights-based policy-making and public discourse on migration and ensuring migrants' rights to access basic services, including health, education, and social support, without discrimination.

COVID-19 Pandemic (2020-2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic heavily affected migrant workers's access to stable work due to lockdowns and border closures. Also, many migrant workers who had taken on debt to travel were unable to depart, obtain refunds, or earn income to repay their debts. Not only in the aspect of work but also in the area of healthcare, many migrant workers lacked access to basic healthcare services. Female migrant workers, particularly, received lower social protection and limited income security due to the lingering impact of the gender wage gap. Many returnees were not able to receive adequate reintegration assistance due to many reasons, including the stigmatization that the migrant workers would be highly likely to carry the disease. In response to the devastating impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers' lives, the International Organization for Migration and the International Chamber of Commerce released the "Guidance on Protection for Migrant Workers During the COVID-19." Some of the commitments include "Implement health-related measures and ensure access to health care" and "Mitigate stress and anxiety related to COVID-19."

EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration (2021)

EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration lays out measures to strengthen the legal and operational framework for voluntary returns from Europe and from transit countries and to improve the functioning of return and reintegration programs. Also, it seeks out measures that can better establish relationships and cooperation with partner countries. The commission, EU member states, high representatives, Frontex, EU delegations, partner

countries, and relevant stakeholders, work to implement this strategy. According to the Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, voluntary returns are always the better option: they put the individual at the core, and they are more effective and less costly. Thus, this strategy promotes the importance of voluntary return and takes measures with countries to bring the implementation to reality.

Current State of Affairs

Social security is a basic human right. Yet, 4.1 billion people worldwide have no access to social protection including healthcare. This includes millions of migrant workers, refugees, and their families who face major legal and practical obstacles in accessing social protection benefits. Many policy options exist to secure and maintain social security rights across countries; however, the global landscape for migrant workers' rights is varied and complex. Countries like Canada and Germany have implemented robust legal frameworks that include minimum wage guarantees and access to healthcare, offering a model for protecting migrant workers. In contrast, the Gulf countries have faced significant criticism for their Kafala sponsorship system, which has been associated with severe worker exploitation. However, recent reforms in Qatar, prompted by international scrutiny, demonstrate the potential for positive change when global attention is focused on these issues.

Despite international efforts, the protection and rights of migrant workers remain inconsistent across different regions. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, with many migrant workers losing their jobs, facing heightened risks of exploitation, and lacking access to adequate healthcare and social protections. The pandemic also highlighted the critical role of migrant workers in essential sectors, further emphasizing the need for strengthened legal frameworks and protections. Additionally, many migrant workers are employed in informal or unregulated sectors, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Efforts to address these challenges are underway but remain uneven. International frameworks, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, aim to establish comprehensive guidelines to protect migrant workers at all stages of migration. However, implementation varies significantly by country, often influenced by domestic politics and economic conditions.

As countries recover from the pandemic and face additional challenges such as rising discrimination and even losing their jobs, the protection of migrant workers requires renewed international cooperation and commitment. The committee must focus on fostering global collaboration to create and enforce regulations that protect migrant workers from exploitation and abuse, ensuring their rights are respected regardless of their location or legal status.

Stances of Parties

Australia

Recently, the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Act 2024 amended the Migration Act 1958 to implement new laws to tackle migrant worker exploitation. The law prevents employers in the labor chain from using a person's migrant status to exploit them, creating an environment where the businesses doing the right thing are not disadvantaged. Still, in Australia, one in six migrants are paid less than the national minimum wage. They also face other threats such as racism and discrimination, being forced to pay the middleman to obtain a job, and being reported to the Department of Home Affairs.

Bangladesh

According to the International Organization for Migration, Bangladesh is the 6th largest migrant-sending country in the world, as well as the 8th largest remittance-receiving country. Despite this, there are insufficient regulatory frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to protect the rights of migrants. Bangladeshi migrant workers, primarily employed in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, often face harsh working conditions, underpayment, and lack of legal protection. According to a 2019 survey by the ILO, 51 percent of Bangladeshi migrant workers reported facing exploitation, non-payment of wages, etc. To address these issues, the Bangladeshi government must enhance its labor policies and establish bilateral agreements with the countries of destination to improve support services abroad.

Brazil

There were major setbacks in Brazil in terms of the rights of migrants due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the Brazilian government issued decrees authorizing summary deportation and arrests of migrants, particularly against Venezuelans, violating international principles and Brazilian law. The enforcement of these decrees had cruel effects, such as how in 2020, dozens of people were deported to Brazil's Acre state border with Peru, being left without food, water, hygiene, or shelter, and being unable to return to their country. Brazil needs to end its selective openness to economic interests and violations of migrants' fundamental rights.

Canada

Canada has a robust system for managing labor migration, admitting over 600,000 temporary foreign workers in 2022 through its Temporary Foreign Worker Program. Migrant workers enjoy the same labor protections as Canadian citizens, including minimum wage and health coverage. However, issues of exploitation remain, particularly in agriculture. In response, Canada introduced regulations to enhance protections for temporary workers,

including increased employer inspections and prohibiting recruitment fees. The government is also exploring pathways for temporary workers to achieve permanent residency while improving housing standards in various sectors.

China

Being one of the most populated nations in the world, China experiences the most extensive internal migration. According to national statistics, by the end of 2009, China had a total of 229.8 million rural migrant workers. China is also a source and a destination country for an immense number of migrants from all over the world, with 10 million Chinese migrants living and working overseas, and approximately a million foreign migrants registered in China. There are numerous areas of improvement. For instance, China must enhance immigration and border management-related structures and policies under the EU-funded “EU-China Dialogue on Migration and Mobility Support Project Phase III”, improving knowledge and cooperation to prevent smuggling and trafficking. Moreover, according to the International Organization of Migrants, the organization has assisted in the implementation of China’s Second National Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking, which aims to protect migrants from human trafficking.

Cuba

Among the countries of the Caribbean, Cuba is the one with the lowest migrant population compared to its total, with immigrants accounting for only 0.1 percent of its total population. Additionally, Cuba sends the most number of migrants in the Caribbean, with more than 1 million emigrants, accounting for almost 10 to 15 percent of the country’s population. Most of its immigrants settle in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Currently, due to its communist government, Cuba is experiencing an unprecedented exodus of migrants to the United States. For decades, Cuba has limited emigration of its citizens, and many Cubans living abroad claim that there are bureaucratic hurdles and exorbitant fees for staying connected and renewing travel documents with their home country.

Ethiopia

As the country of origin, transit, and destination of diverse migratory flows within the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia confronts a multitude of complex challenges. According to the 2021 labor force survey, 17.1 percent of its population are migrants, with women migrating more frequently than men. Low-skilled labor migration to the Middle East is fueled by political and economic issues, such as serious unemployment rates, and Ethiopia is home to 942,000 refugees and a transit country to Europe. There are many risks associated with irregular migration, including human trafficking abuse, and exploitation, as well as the possibility of inadequate documentation for many migrants. Unauthorized migration persists despite the government's efforts to enhance oversight, modernize data systems, and sign bilateral labor agreements (BLAs). Ethiopia must approve international treaties to create a thorough labor

migration policy and make sure that memorandums of understanding and business licenses adhere to global norms.

France

Known as the French Labor Code, the country asserts that all workers are protected by the Code regardless of their immigration status. However, with inspection records revealing the Olympics sites not meeting basic safety standards, the French government was challenged regarding the promise of safety for migrant workers. Prevalent infrastructure construction projects in France came with costs, as evident in the 2023 rally in honor of Amara Dioumassy, a killed supervisor at a construction project. As France is no exception in the overrepresentation of migrant workers in low-skilled sectors such as construction, and with the recent strengthening of the restrictions toward undocumented immigrants, there needs to be a stronger protection of the basic rights migrant workers in France can enjoy.

Germany

In Germany, the protection of the rights of migrant workers is a critical issue particularly since the country depends heavily on sectors like agriculture, construction, and care services. While Germany has laws in place like the Minimum Wage Act and the General Act on Equal Treatment, migrant workers often face challenges such as language barriers, lack of information on their rights, and dependence on employers for legal status, which can lead to exploitation. In the meantime, Germany is a key partner of the International Labour Organization (ILO), collaborating with the KfW Development Bank, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. In 2022-23, Germany contributed over US\$ 1 million to the ILO Regular Budget Supplementary Account, providing flexible funding.

India

India is a major country of both origin and destination for workers all across the world. According to the International Labour Organization, there are over 30 million Indian workers overseas, with over 9 million of the Indian diaspora concentrated in the GCC countries (Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf). Over 90 percent of Indian migrant workers work in the Gulf region and Southeast Asia. Moreover, being the world's top recipient of remittances, India received over US\$ 62.7 billion in 2016. Hundreds of millions migrate for jobs within India as well, often moving into cities like Mumbai, seeking better employment. However, they are often concentrated in precarious, low-paid work with little political power to negotiate better wages.

Italy

A major issue in Italy concerns the exploitation and mistreatment of migrants, especially those working in agriculture and domestic service. Much like modern slavery, many migrants are exposed to instances resembling slavery conditions which include; long working hours, poor wages and bad living conditions. The term "caporalato" refers to illegal recruitment practices by intermediaries who exploit migrant laborers. In response, Law 199/2016 was enacted by Italy to strengthen penalties against this exploitation and introduce mechanisms for protecting laborers. Organizations like Caritas Italiana and International Organization for Migration (IOM) support workers' rights through providing legal aid. Nevertheless, problems persist such as the need for better enforcement and safety nets due to incidents like when Malian activist and farm worker Soumaila Sacko died tragically in 2018 while advocating for improved conditions. In Italy, it is crucial that immigration laws are made stricter while simultaneously ensuring support systems for migrant workers.

Japan

In Japan, the protection of migrant workers has emerged as a critical issue, particularly in light of the country's Technical Intern Training Program (TITP). The program provided vocational training to foreign workers; however, it has been criticized for facilitating the exploitation and abuse of the interns. For example, several interns reported long working hours without compensation and poor living conditions. In response, the Japanese government has enacted some reforms, such as setting up OTIT—short for Organization for Technical Intern Training—to oversee and improve conditions. Critics say that these measurements are insufficient, and organizations like Amnesty International, along with local labor unions, have urged Tokyo to enforce its labor laws more strictly and to protect the workers better from abuse. The issue has been particularly highlighted for Vietnamese interns, who form a large share of Japan's migrant workforce.

Malaysia

Every year, thousands of people travel from Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, Vietnam, and more countries to Malaysia for economic opportunities. According to a report released by Amnesty International, almost all employers hold their migrant workers' passports and documents necessary for them to return to their home countries. Furthermore, migrant workers are seen as easy targets by the police and the People's Volunteer Corps for mistreatment and abuse. Earlier this year, the United Nations presented a new EU-UN project aiming to support the women migrant workers in Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia. Relevant agencies will work to strengthen the laws to guarantee extensive human rights and improve access to information and services for migrant workers.

Mexico

According to the Migration Data Portal of 2020, the total number of international migrants in Mexico was 1.21 million. It was also reported that the unemployment rate of the

international migrants in Mexico was 1.9 percent higher than the national migrants. With Tijuana as the most populous region, a migrant worker resource center was established to support a fair recruitment and safe working environment of the migrant workers. Also, projects such as the 'Cortando el Patriarcado' supported female migrant workers who were especially struggling in poverty and exploitation.

New Zealand

According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment in 2021 and 2022, the migrant worker population was diverse with 21% of workers migrating from India, 16~17% from Philippines, and from more countries. Around two-thirds of the migrant workers had at least a Bachelor's Degree and around 92~93% had outstanding English speaking skills. Areas such as Construction and Manufacturing were male-dominated while Healthcare and Social Assistance and Education and Training were female-dominated. Around 20% of the migrant worker population reported that their job doesn't match their skill, and especially the female workers had more difficulties navigating their paths.

Nigeria

In 2023, Nigeria ratified the International Labour Organization's Conventions No. 143 and No. 181, showing their commitment to uphold the rights of the migrant workers. The experts of the Committee on Migrant Workers recognized and praised Nigeria's efforts of raising issues concerning the phenomenon where highly-educated individuals leave developing countries for high-income countries with better working environment and the persecution of repatriated lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex migrants following a refusal of asylum status in other countries.

Pakistan

Pakistan is primarily a source country for migrant workers, with millions seeking employment abroad, especially in Gulf nations like Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment regulates recruitment and provides pre-departure briefings. However, many workers face exploitation, including wage theft and poor living conditions, exacerbated by a lack of bilateral labor agreements. Recent initiatives include an online complaint system for overseas workers and efforts to enhance skills training before departure.

Philippines

According to the International Labour Organization, there are around 10 million Filipinos who live abroad and more than a million Filipinos leaving the country to work in another country. The Philippines played an advocacy role for the migrant workers' human

rights in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, and hosted the Second Global Forum on Migration and Development. The nation called on countries to accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Saudi Arabia

Previously, the committee of Human Rights Watch expressed concerns over the Saudi Arabian government's report on the migrant workers' rights as it contained insufficient information on how the convention was implemented in practice. With religious issues and agendas taking a big part of the society, there was a case in which over 200 migrant workers from Bangladesh and Burma were arrested for attending a party in celebration of St. Valentine's Day, where alcohol was allegedly consumed. Also, the tolerance of domestic violence in Saudi households played a role in the occurrence of physical and sexual violence of migrant women domestic workers.

South Africa

South Africa hosts approximately 4 million international migrants, primarily in sectors such as mining and agriculture. The Employment Services Act of 2014 regulates the employment of foreign nationals, and the country has ratified several ILO conventions to protect migrant rights. Despite these efforts, challenges like xenophobia and limited access to social protection persist. The government is currently developing a National Labour Migration Policy to better manage labor migration and improve data collection on migrant workers.

South Korea

South Korea is considered as one of the countries with growing labor shortages in specific industries. Indeed, according to the Ministry of Employment and Labor, South Korea announced that it will bring in an all-time high of 165,000 non-professional migrant workers in 2024. However, many experts offered negative opinions toward the working environments for the migrant workers in South Korea. Previously, the government data showed that foreigners accounted for 18% of its 184 accidental deaths in the manufacturing workforce. In an effort to support the rights of the migrant workers, the Korea Support Center for Foreign Workers was established in 2004. This center provides counseling services to foreign workers who have been facing difficulties in navigating their paths as well as informing them about the traditional cultures of South Korea to help them adapt to their new environment.

Spain

In the early terms of 2024, Spain, with Indonesia, signed an agreement on accrediting Indonesian migrant deckhands in an effort to protect the migrant workers in the fishing industry. With an outstanding number of migrant workers working in the Tech field, Spain has

been seeing a virtuous cycle boosting the supply of labor and contributing to the economic growth of the nation. While Spain has not made a significant investment in strengthening primary and early secondary education to reduce the inequality suffered by the migrant worker families, the government made efforts such as by adapting immigration law to provide a more inclusive environment for migrant workers in the labor market.

Thailand

With migrant workers constituting over 10 percent of the total labor force in Thailand, various institutions such as the International Organization for Migration have been working with Thailand officials to enhance social services and assistance as well as life-skills programs to support migrant workers. Although the migrant workers made an important contribution to the economic growth of Thailand, the general public attitude toward them was reported to be negative. With the Myanmar migrants struggling to work legally, worker management policies should be implemented with more care.

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is one of the countries with the largest foreign labor-receiving countries in the world as it hosted 8.7 million migrants. With the cooperation of the International Organization for Migration, the nation has been building institutional capacities to create healthy workplaces for migrants. However, according to Human Rights Watch, the migrant workers in UAE have been facing widespread abuses. As a significant part of the migrant workers come from climate-vulnerable countries, there have been many concerns of the health conditions of the migrant workers in the nation.

United States

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, the migrant and immigrant workers made up 18.6% of the workforce in 2023, taking up an important part of the labor force. The United States Department of Homeland Security previously announced a guidance that allows migrant workers who experienced or witnessed labor or civil rights violations to receive temporary protection against deportation and access to work authorization. In 2023, around 34.7% of the migrant worker population had a bachelor's degree or higher. During the World Cup in Qatar, the mistreatment of migrant workers in the United States was highlighted, concerning the right violations.

Qatar

In 2019, Qatar had over 2 million migrant workers, comprising 95% of its entire labor force. As the second country in the Gulf region to set minimum wage for migrant workers, the country introduced several reforms through time. In 2019, the country abolished the Kafala system in cooperation with the International Labor Organization (ILO) which required

permission from the employers to change jobs. In the previous year, the country established a workers' support and insurance fund. Despite these reform efforts, controversies came to surface when the world learned about the abuse of migrant workers in the 2022 Qatar World Cup. Hundreds of migrant workers were abused both physically and psychologically through the stolen wages when they were building the stadium. Moreover, the absence of a proper compensation by Qatar and FIFA brought even more problems in the aftermath.

Possible Solutions

Solution #1: Strengthening Legal Frameworks

Governments can protect migrant workers through attempts to protect them by developing robust legal frameworks that define the rights and duties of all parties engaging in migration processes. Among these are ratification and enforcement of international conventions, including ILO conventions on migrant workers. In addition, enforcement mechanisms must be reinforced with regular inspections, penalties for violations, and accessible legal redress for workers. States can discourage abusive practices and equip migrant workers with the means of redress by setting clear legal standards and effectively enforcing them. When specifying the solution, try researching the existing legal frameworks that aim to protect the rights of the migrant workers. Think of their strengths and weaknesses. If you spot a weakness, think about why that weakness is not being addressed. Are you going to recommend a new framework that might corroborate the existing one so that the protection can be strengthened? Or are you planning to recommend a modification?

Solution #2: Improving Access to Support Services

Most migrant workers do not have access to legal assistance or required support services due to fear of retaliation or simple lack of information. Governments and NGOs can open special legal aid and support centers that offer free or low-cost services. This will provide legal consultancy, interpreting facilities, and aid to go through the legal process. This could also involve confidential counseling and hotlines provided via telephones and the Internet. Access to such facilities would enable migrant workers to enforce their rights and seek support as necessary. When specifying the solution, try researching your country's social services that aim to protect the rights of the migrant workers. Are they actually effective? If yes, what are the components that make the services successful? Can you find any survey results that show their success? How do those survey results reflect the concerns of the migrant workers? What are some other solutions that can address those concerns?

Solution #3: Raising Awareness through Education

Education is always a viable option when it comes to raising awareness of a certain issue. Growing students can have the opportunity to understand the various human rights violations migrant workers are facing and brainstorm possible solutions the global community can implement moving forward. As students are the leaders of the future, exposing crucial agendas like the migrant workers' rights to students would be an important step toward reducing violation cases. To add specificity, will this be a mandatory education? A temporary education workshop? To what extent is education going to be implemented? Both public and private? Where would the budget come from? Come up with a general idea of what you would like your solution to look like, then ask yourself those questions to bring them to life.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the economic consequences of migrant workers in host countries?
2. What are the social consequences of migrant workers in host countries?
3. What are the cultural consequences of migrant workers in host countries?
4. What international legal framework can be established to ensure the consistent protection of migrant workers' rights, and how can we ensure that all member states ratify and implement these standards?
5. How do migrant workers affect the host country's population dynamics? How do fluctuations in population influence the host country's policies on migrant workers?
6. Should access to fair wages, decent working conditions, and social security be considered fundamental human rights for migrant workers? How can nations balance the rights of migrant workers with their own economic and labor policies?
7. How can international organizations cooperate to combat human trafficking and exploitation of migrant workers?
8. What is the optimal stance between promoting the economic benefits of migrant labor and ensuring the protection of migrant workers' rights?
 - a. How can countries with different approaches to migrant labor reach a consensus?
9. Can member nations negotiate on the standards of working conditions and legal protections for migrant workers?

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