

**Statement by the Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW)<sup>1</sup>  
To the Civil Society Interactive Hearings (15 July 2013) and the UN General Assembly High-level Dialogue on  
International Migration and Development (3-4 October 2013)**

New York, 15 July 2013

The Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW is a regional organisation that has been working since 1993 to advance women's health, affirmative sexuality and rights, and to empower women through information and knowledge, engagement, advocacy and mobilisation. We work across the Asia-Pacific as well as in partnership with other regional organisations in the global South and international organisations.

During these important meetings, we would like to draw your attention to a major challenge being faced by migrant workers, particularly women and undocumented/irregular migrant workers, which rarely receives mention: that of sexual and reproductive health and rights.<sup>2,3</sup> Structural barriers, which include discriminatory laws, lack of protective policies, costly, privatised or unavailable health supplies and services, and cultural attitudes and communication barriers, among others, lead to poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes among migrants, including unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, STIs, HIV infection, reproductive tract infections and reproductive cancers. Migrant workers' sexual and reproductive rights are often denied, including their rights against compulsory screening for HIV, STIs and pregnancy, and the right to form relationships, to found a family, and to have children in countries of destination, especially for unskilled women workers. Mental health, gender-based and sexual violence are also critical health and rights issues for migrant workers.

Today, a large part of our population is on the move, whether they cross borders or move to cities. All of us know migrants—whether they be domestic workers, restaurant wait staff, nurses, caregivers, IT professionals, entertainment industry workers, sex workers, factory workers, or international organization/UN staff. In fact, there were 214 million international migrants globally in 2010—more than the 194 million population of Brazil, the 5<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world. Of this total migrant stock, half are women and 15.6% are between ages 0-19.<sup>4</sup> Asia-Pacific, the region where I come from, has 6 of the top 10 countries of origin,<sup>5</sup> and the region represents many important migration flows. Meanwhile, there are so many more internal migrants, as people migrate from rural to urban areas, seek a better life or are forced to move due to various circumstances like conflict, land grabbing or climate change-induced disasters. Migrants, whether international or internal, contribute significantly to the economic, social and cultural development of countries of origin, transit and destination, as well as in their own countries.

In line with the above, we urge Civil Society representatives, international organisations, and State Parties to adopt a strong resolution that calls for the following:

- SRHR for all! Migrants are human beings with the same basic human rights as citizens and permanent residents. The CPD resolution should call upon governments, international agencies, employers and other key stakeholders to respect, protect and fulfill all migrants' rights, including the right to health and sexual and reproductive rights, which are basic human rights.
- The immediate ratification, implementation and reaffirmation of governments' commitment to agreed international human rights standards, as well as international conventions and agreements, related to migration, women's rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. These include the International Convention the

<sup>1</sup> A version of this statement was also submitted to the 46<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development, New York, and was signed on to by more than 30 international, regional and national organisations working on issues of SRHR, women's rights, migration, human rights, youth and others.

<sup>2</sup> ARROW. 2013. Labour Migration, Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. ARROW for Change, Vol. 19 No. 1. Kuala Lumpur: ARROW. <http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/AFC/v19n1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Marin, M.L. 2012. "International Labour Migration, Gender and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Kuala Lumpur: ARROW. [www.arrow.org.my/uploads/Migration\\_WorkingPaper.pdf](http://www.arrow.org.my/uploads/Migration_WorkingPaper.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> IOM. 2011. World Migration Report 2010. Geneva: IOM.

<sup>5</sup> UN Commission on Population and Development Forty-sixth session, 22-26 April 2013. New trends in migration: Demographic aspects; Report of the Secretary-General.

Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, various ILO standards, the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD POA), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Beijing Platform of Action.

- The repeal of discriminatory laws and regulations targeting migrant workers, particularly based on their health, pregnancy, occupational (including sex work), and sexual orientation and gender identity status. These include removal of HIV-related travel restrictions and forced deportations of migrant workers due to pregnancy and HIV status.
- Ensuring the gender-responsiveness of international, regional and national policies and programmes and addressing gender inequalities and discrimination faced by women, youth, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender migrants.
- Developing rights-based migrant health indicators and collecting and generation of disaggregated data, including for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ensuring accessibility. Establishing migrant-friendly policies and mechanisms that enhance social protection, health and safety of migrants; and eliminating disparities in access to health information, services, facilities and goods between migrants and host populations. This necessarily means integrating key human rights concepts into sound public health approaches, where health policies and services are holistic, culturally competent, gender-sensitive, age-responsive and migrant-friendly. Responses that address sexual and reproductive health issues—including safe, effective, affordable and acceptable modern methods of contraception, including emergency contraception; safe abortion services; maternity care; prevention and treatment for RTI, STI, HIV and AIDS, and reproductive cancers—as well as responses for mental health and gender-based violence should be funded and implemented. Similarly, programmes that reach out and empower migrants, including undocumented workers, including making choices and decisions that affirm their human rights, including for bodily integrity and sexual and reproductive rights, should be funded and implemented. These include provision of comprehensive, rights-based information and education related to human rights of migrants, sexuality and SRHR, in schools and at all states of the migration cycle.
- Provision of services to women, young girls and LGBT migrants who are victims/survivors of violence, including provision of safe spaces, access to health services, including emergency contraception and safe abortion, access to seek justice and redress, and protection from further violence.
- Upholding migrants' rights to decent work, including the right to fair wages, to change employers, to maternity, paternity and sick leaves, and to rest days; as well as recognising domestic work as work.
- Making available and accessible migrant-friendly legal justice and recourse at national and international levels, across and beyond borders, including specialised services, translation services, legal assistance, temporary shelters, and the right of migrants to stay and work during the legal process.
- Adopting a cross-border, collaborative and multi-country approach to international migration, gender and health and rights issues, including for sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Finally, ensuring empowerment of and inclusive and meaningful involvement of migrant worker communities (including women, LGBT and youth), CSOs and unions as active partners in all matters related to migration.

Only through the above would we be able to harness migration as a force for sustainable development, and make migration an empowering process that benefits all, most of all migrants themselves. Thank you very much.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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