

Rights & Benefits of Migrants

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Bangladesh in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has raised that not only foreign investment is a necessity for economic growth but also mobility of labour is imperative to accelerate development. Mobility of labour means migration of workers from Bangladesh. According to a report, 273,000 Bangladeshis are working abroad. The figure includes skilled, unskilled and workers and professionals.

Migration has become a "dirty word" in the West, although migrants from Third World ordinarily undertake demanding, dirty and dangerous jobs in rich industrialised countries.

It has taken more than a decade for the world to get from proposing a global dialogue on international migration to actually having the discussion. In the middle of the last year, the UN highlighted the Global Migrant situation. The former Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that migrant workers had been a boon to both host and countries of origin but the system was to be managed to prevent from abuses of migrants or xenophobic reactions from population of host countries.

In a report to the UN General Assembly, he argued that "international migration, supported by the right policies, can be highly beneficial for the socio-economic development of nations they come from and of those where they arrive."

Why Migration?

Migration is a social process that is historically seen in a politico-economic context. From time immemorial human beings have moved from one country to another country. It is not a new phenomenon. During the 16th and 17th centuries, European people migrated in large numbers to North America, Latin America and Australia.

There are several reasons for international migration and some of them deserve mention:

- (a) economic and demographic factors
- (b) civil wars, harassment or discrimination in the country of origin
- (c) promoting entrepreneurship skills
- (d) opportunities thought to be available in rich countries

It is noted in this connection that people do not ordinarily from their home. It is not a bed of roses in rich countries for migrants. Most of the unskilled and semi-skilled migrants are given three-D jobs, meaning "*Demanding, Dangerous and Dirty*" jobs with low wages. They live far from their relatives and as a result they suffer stress and psychological problems.

Migration movement in continent-wise:

The report pointed out that migrants numbered 191 million, compared with 155 million in 1990, including 115 million in the developed world. A large number of migrants are from Philippines, Serbia and Montenegro. Of the total legal migrants, 60% per cent are highly educated and three-fourths of them originate from developing countries.

The break up of world's total migrants in 2005 is as follows:

- *Europe hosted 34% per cent,
- *Asia 28% per cent,
- *North America 23% per cent,
- *Africa 9% per cent,
- *Latin America and Caribbean 3% per cent
- *Oceania (Australia & New Zealand) 3% per cent

The report has been released against the background of social tension and concern in rich countries, particularly in North America and the European Union towards migrants. The EU has been coordinating a common platform migration policy from developing countries that will prevent the migrant workers to land in Europe. Spain, Italy and Malta have been advised to keep strict control on migration in their borders.

Women Migrants:

During the last two decades, the number of women migrants has increased exponentially. During the 70s, women migrants constituted only 15% per cent of total migrants and by 1987 the number has increased to 27% per cent. Most of the women migrants are absorbed in vulnerable, low-status jobs in domestic service under conditions described as “modern day slavery” and are exposed to exploitation from employers and suffer social isolation. Studies have revealed that most women migrants do not tell their relatives of the actual nature of work in host countries because of shame.

In 1988, 78% percent of migrants in Indonesia were women and 60% per cent in Sri Lanka. Bangladesh is not far behind and most women are lured for jobs but ultimately they land themselves with human trafficking.

Rights of Migrants:

Migrants, documented (legal) or undocumented (illegal) have their rights under ILO Conventions and the 1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant People. However many of the ILO Conventions are not strictly followed in the host countries.

The 1990 Convention promotes humane and lawful conditions of migrant workers. Article 70 of the Convention states that State-parties shall take measures not less favourable than those applied to their nationals to ensure that working and living conditions of migrant workers are in keeping with the standard of health, safety and principles of human dignity.

However the Convention is not a self-executing treaty and for its implementation, states needs to be parties to it. Few Western countries have become parties to it.

Furthermore, during the current war on terrorism, migrant workers, especially from Islamic countries, are subject to various restrictions and surveillance in Western countries. Their entry and deportation or expulsion has been made easy by law from Western nations to their home countries. Mobility of labour is strictly discouraged in Western countries,

Economic Benefits of migration:

Migration to developed countries is a key element of the world economy that does not get the attention it should get. Or when it does, it is more often seen as lose-lose proposition. But it can be a “win-win situation”, if it is properly managed.

As for a sending country, total remittances from its nationals working abroad surpass its total amount of foreign aid two to three times, according to the Migration Policy Institute. It is reported that Bangladeshi workers abroad sent about US\$4.8 billion in 2005-06, according to Bangladesh Bank Statistics.

With the drastic decline of birth rates in many European countries and in Japan, the flow of migrants from developing countries is likely to increase in coming decades because of requirement of workers for economic growth in rich countries.

One report says that during the next 40 years, the demand for young migrant workers will increase on a scale never contemplated before. As an illustration, the report estimates that for Japan to keep its labour force constant, during the next 100 years, would require an immigration programme peaking at about 900,000 a year in 30 years, falling to a longer term figure of about 700,000 a year.

As regards the 1990 Convention, it provides rights for all migrants and enjoins all host nations to abide by lawful wages for the migrants and ensure favourable working conditions.

Conclusion:

The usefulness of migration lies in the discussion and proper understanding on how migration can be a plus for both developed and developing countries. Migration does not just involve money but also a generator of ideas, development and an entrepreneurial spirit.

The flow of migrants is a necessity for economic survival of many rich countries in the coming decades as birth rate falls and accordingly immigration programme is required to be formulated in cooperation between rich and developing countries. The lopsided and negative policies of rich industrialised countries will not work because of the increasing demand for young workers in the rich industrialized countries.