

Intervention: On Indigenous Women Migrants

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I would like to draw special attention to vulnerability of indigenous women migrants under the present global economic, food and environmental crisis. An increasing number of indigenous women are forced to seek work overseas due to displacement from their ancestral lands and traditional livelihoods and pushed by conditions of food insecurity and poverty in their homelands. Today, not only our ancestral land, but our people as well, are being commoditized under the pressures of the economic crisis.

In the Cordillera, Philippines, there is an increasing trend of exportation of indigenous women as laborers, domestic helpers, entertainers, caregivers, nurses and other dirty, difficult and dangerous jobs. We find large concentrations of Cordillera indigenous women in countries like Hong Kong, Japan, US, UK, Saudi Arabia and other host countries. This diaspora of Cordillera indigenous people form part of the 9 million Filipinos, 80% of whom are women, working in 182 countries around the world.

The life of these indigenous women migrants is very difficult, having to endure emotional, psychological, sexual and physical deprivation and abuse. They experience wage and racial discrimination, and are often denied their basic human rights. Meanwhile, the dollars they send home contribute billions of dollars monthly to sustain the country's economy. Despite this, they are not given adequate protection from abuse by their government. Back home, their families are beset with social problems. The increasing out-migration of indigenous peoples has also resulted in the weakening of community ties and the disintegration of indigenous culture in our communities.

We urge the UN to stop the dislocation of indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands and livelihood, which is one of the root causes of out-migration of indigenous women.

We hold governments to their obligation to look after their welfare and provide protection and services to the millions of indigenous women migrants around the world. #