



Covenant of Ethical Conduct and Good Practices of Overseas Employment Service Providers

*W***E, OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS**, represented by national associations from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Jordan, Lao PDR, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka, having been invited by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to a Regional Consultation of Recruitment and Placement Agencies on Good Practices to Protect Women Migrant Workers, and after discussions and deliberations on 14-15 November 2005 at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand,

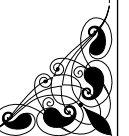

*M***indful** of the continuing increase in labor migration to labor receiving countries, especially in the service sector, as a result of globalization and the rising incidence of either poverty or unemployment in labor sending countries;

*C***onscious** of the need to protect women migrant workers, particularly those in low-end jobs, because they are more vulnerable to gender-based exploitation, abuse, discrimination, violence at different stages of the migration process, and unfair and degrading labor practices in their work places, helpless and oftentimes deprived of their basic human rights;

*R***ecognizing** the vital role and the corporate social responsibility of overseas employment service providers as a major stakeholder in the placement and/or employment of women workers in a foreign country; and

*E***xpressing full and unequivocal support** to the advocacy, mission and vision of UNIFEM and its Asia Pacific and Arab States Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia to advance the just and humane causes of women migrant workers in the region,

**HEREBY ADOPT this 15th day of November 2005 at the
United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand,
this Covenant of Ethical Conduct and Good Practices for Overseas
Employment Service Providers comprising the National Associations that
participated in the consultation:**





FIRST

We ensure and guarantee as overseas employment service providers that our corporate or institutional existence is legitimate, lawful, and our business activities and operations are undertaken strictly within the framework of the established laws, rules and regulations of our country, especially in dealing with women migrant workers.

SECOND

We commit to support, cooperate and give assistance to any or all efforts, campaign or program, locally, regionally, or globally, individually or collectively, against illegal recruitment, human trafficking, or, for that matter, any policy that will jeopardize, disturb or violate the human rights of migrant workers, particularly women migrant workers, and abhor and condemn these practices as crimes against humanity.

THIRD

We adhere to the policy of fairness, gender equality, and non-discrimination in the treatment, selection, and placement of migrant workers consistent with the laws, rules and regulations of our respective countries.

FOURTH

We obligate ourselves to engage in continuing education, information campaigns, and awareness programs or activities that will promote good practices in the business of overseas employment and provide adequate training, orientation, and sufficient knowledge to our migrant workers about the terms and conditions of their employment, and the culture, environment, traditions and norms in their workplaces.

FIFTH



We support the causes of UNIFEM for women migrant workers and encourage inter-country, diplomatic, government and stakeholder partnerships, collaboration, and cooperation that will foster protection of women migrant workers in the global or regional overseas employment or labor migration industry.

SIXTH

We endeavor to establish and implement viable and efficient social security and insurance programs, schemes or initiatives, privately or in partnership with our respective governments, to cover or indemnify risks arising from contingencies while the migrant workers are abroad for foreign employment and enhance their economic, social and personal welfare.

SEVENTH



We will respect and observe faithfully the International Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, and all other declarations, covenants, conventions or agreements that will promote the better interest of migrant workers.





TOWARD THESE ENDS, we hereby adopt, and agree to work on the following strategic and priority actions at:

THE REGIONAL LEVEL

1. Overseas employment service providers and their national associations shall protect women migrant workers by sharing information, lessons learned, distance cooperation, and help monitor, investigate, facilitate and resolve cases arising from foreign employment.
 2. Regional agreements to stop violation to migrant workers through (i) advocacy with governments of labor sending and receiving countries to sign treaties, covenants and/or binding international agreements or understanding, or (ii) inter-country or regional agreements and understanding involving national associations of overseas employment service providers and counterpart organizations, in order to stop discrimination against foreign workers, and provide better, responsive, uniform, equitable, and timely protection and welfare to women migrant workers.
 3. Establish, whenever feasible and appropriate, “resource, support and welfare centers” in labor receiving countries where there are large concentrations of women migrant workers, to provide, *inter alia*, counseling, welfare assistance, information, monitoring, and other services for their benefit.
 4. Embark on orientation, interaction and socialization activities with foreign employers of migrant workers through counterpart organizations in labor receiving countries.
 5. Pursue, with the assistance of UNIFEM, regional consultation or dialogue with labor receiving countries to discuss and address the issues confronting overseas employment and women migrant workers. Also, strengthen collaborative partnership with industry counter-part associations on protection of women migrant workers, not only within the Asia and Middle East region but also in other labor receiving countries around the globe.
 6. Call on the governments and overseas employment service providers in labor sending countries to provide and promote the standards of quality of their training and orientation programs to ensure that foreign migrant workers are better informed about the destination country. Towards this end, work on conducting regional trainings with representatives of labor sending and receiving countries to ensure the workers are well informed, better educated and are job-ready.
 7. Call on the stakeholders in the sending countries to ensure medical fitness of the migrant worker, as per the receiving country’s requirement as there were incidences of foreign workers entering the labor receiving country, who are not physically fit for work. At the same time, call on labor receiving countries to respect the sovereign rights of the labor sending countries to choose or select among recognized or accredited medical clinics within their jurisdiction.
 8. Introduce, adopt, and implement social security and insurance programs for the benefit of migrant workers, with or without government intervention, similar to the Workers Welfare Enhancement Program (WWEP) in the Philippines.
 9. Call on the government of Jordan to share its good practices on protecting women migrant workers, as a model for other countries of employment.
 10. Call on the national associations of overseas employment service providers to form a regional network of association/s to protect the rights of the female migrant workers in accordance with this Covenant.
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THE NATIONAL LEVEL

BANGLADESH

- Strengthen pre-departure training for women migrant workers and get support from counterpart agencies/associations.
- Work with UNIFEM national and regional programs on media sensitization and policy advocacy to protect and promote women migrant workers' rights.

INDONESIA

- Set up information counter at embarkation ports, to minimize illegal/non-procedural placement and minimizing "human-trafficking".
- Create 'black-list' of errant employers (using on-line system).
- Disseminate information on advantages/disadvantages of recruitment and placement overseas.

JORDAN

- Boost cooperation between recruiting agencies and Jordanian authorities to ensure the implementation of the standard contract which guarantees paying salaries on time and obtaining residency and working permits within the assigned period.
- Meet regularly with all concerned parties to solve pending issues.

LAO PDR

- Conduct research/study on migration issues, with specific focus on women migrant workers, to understand better the situation for effective policy intervention.
- Improve internal labor information system to facilitate greater in-country employment.
- Capacity building for employment/recruitment agencies on employment management and worker protection.
- Encourage recruitment agencies in Laos to set up an association.

NEPAL

- Set up special skills training program for women, combined with loan program for women in partnership with government/private sectors.
- Use tri-media and the Internet in order to provide information to women about safe migration and foreign employment.
- Develop interaction program on safe migration with the members of Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA)
- Implement Code of Conduct.

PHILIPPINES

- Heighten awareness of the need to protect the rights and welfare of the migrants through information dissemination and continuing education.
- Philippine Association of Service Exporters, Inc. (PASEI) will continue to organize consultative meetings, fora, symposia, and other available methods of disseminating information for the benefit of all overseas employment service providers from the Philippines in partnership and cooperation with: lead Philippine government agencies managing migration such as DOLE, POEA and OWWA; Local Government Units (LGUs) and Employment Offices; foreign embassies and missions in Manila; Chambers of Commerce and Industries; corporate and institutional partners.
- Emphasize the provisions of international conventions and instruments that guarantee the rights of migrant workers.
- Intensify anti-illegal recruitment campaign.
- PASEI will continue to pursue cooperative partnership with the lead Philippine law enforcement agencies, specifically in the area of anti-illegal recruitment and anti-human trafficking.
- PASEI will continue to strengthen its partnership with the Anti-Human Trafficking Division (AHTRAD) of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).
- PASEI will strengthen its partnership with its tri-media partners in its Anti-Illegal Recruitment Campaign and knowledge of their rights.

SRI LANKA

- Set up strong reconciliation chambers in respective receiving countries and encourage the Government of Sri Lanka to intervene to support women migrant workers' legitimate rights and to claim any financial dues.
- Standardize policies, practices and prices in recruitment procedures among members of Association of Licensed Foreign Employment Agencies (ALFEA), to prevent members undercutting each other to make exorbitant profit in an ad hoc way.
- Lobby the Sri Lankan Government to assist ALFEA with awareness-raising and education programs for the employers in host countries.
- Seek Government financial support for ALFEA training program for migrant workers.
- Develop an insurance policy suitable for migrant workers in all types of labor sectors.
- Lobby the Ministry of Labor and Employment to consult ALFEA when taking decisions and implementing policies on recruitment procedures.

ADOPTED THIS 15TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 2005

at the

**United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
Regional Consultation of Overseas Employment Service Providers
on Good Practices to Protect Women Migrant Workers
Bangkok, Thailand**

