

**Regional NGO Workshop: Addressing Women Migrants  
through CEDAW  
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Good Morning everybody, I'm Kopila Rai from Nepal. I'm a returnee migrant women worker, from Kuwait. I had worked in Kuwait from 1995-1997 as Domestic worker and before leaving for Kuwait, I had completed intermediate level. It's not a wish; rather, it's out of need that people go to foreign lands to earn their bread. Likewise, for me as well, it wasn't just a wish as I had to leave my studies and go for the work.

I returned after completing my 2 years contract and gave continuity to my studies. Till now I have completed my Masters' Degree in Sociology and have also done research work in migration issue

(Thesis work). Then I joined POURAKHI which had been established in the year 2003. Let me begin with my experiences in foreign employment. As I was preparing to leave for foreign employment, I had no idea about it, to tell you the truth, I did not know one has to learn the language of the particular country or that one has to be trained. But fortunately, there was no interference on the way and I reached safely with the help of some Nepali guys. With time, I got used to the work as well.

As for my experience in foreign land where I had worked, My Employer was from Pakistan and Madam from Philippine who were very kind to me. I used to get a leave once a week as per my agreement. They trusted me fully as I used to work sincerely. I had to work eight hours a day. I had to do all household work though my madam used to help me in work so working as domestic workers was not difficult to me. Every year they used to go for vacation leaving everything behind in my responsibility. So I'm very grateful to them. Actually I was not eager to return home but I wanted to continue my study so I came back home. And continued my study. So in over all I had a good experience about foreign employment.

But still, one cannot judge the average women worker's condition by just looking at one or two good examples. On top of that, the Condition of working women in Gulf countries is very sensitive.

Relating to this topic I'd like to share you all about an incident I had witnessed. There (Kuwait), was a Nepalese women, who was working as a domestic worker. She had escaped from her workplace and was walking aimlessly on the streets as she could not tolerate the mental and physical torture inflicted upon her by her master. One Nepali along with us on finding her had brought her to the Nepali Agent situated at that place. Had the police found the women instead of the Nepali, she could have been locked up in the jail as she had no documents with

her, and the landlord had kept her passport with him. Plus, she didn't even know how to speak Nepali properly.

From this example we can learn that the blame of sending incapable people to foreign countries goes to the Government. As well as the organizations involved.

Being in this workshop we can ponder over questions such as why do working women face such problems. Why can't exploit us their full rights? Etc. Aside from thinking over we can also work to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, hence I'd like to link short points which show that women are discriminated in the aspect of foreign employment.

Lack of social awareness has made even the court of Law to object women from sending them abroad.

A few years back, even the court of law has formed different kinds of barriers in the process of foreign employment for women. Even though in the present, the gender discrimination is found, lessening in the written form of the laws it is not yet to be found in practical for effective. In the midst of all the happenings, the growing rate of unemployment in Nepal, as well as due to various reasons, the women are compelled to support them selves by migrating abroad.

Since there's no clear strategy placing the women in foreign employment, woman has to suffer from problems without any reason. Most nations have banned women foreign employment, compelling the people to go via illegal mediums, thus making it risky for their securities.

The management sector of the labour and employment departments which bears the responsibility of sending millions of women abroad for foreign employment, has not yet even built a separate branch for women.

The southern Asian nation Sri Lanka has a bureau for foreign employment under which 200 people (staffs) are working; Likewise, Bangladesh also has a ministry for foreign employment. But sadly, Nepal is compelled to work with its limited supplies and resources that too, located in a single department. This has, in fact, obstructed foreign employment from developing and instead limited the department's services to only permitting people to go abroad. Due to this cases have risen in which wages are delayed, holidays are cut off, and agreement are not obeyed fully in gulf countries, which have further complicated the risk in foreign employment for women. It is nature that has separated women from man mentally and physically. Ignoring this difference, there do arise cases where they have to do some job forcibly even though they cannot. The concerned agencies. Which have taken up the responsibility to raise their voices against such actions (such as the embassy, counsellors) is found rather inactive and uninterested in doing their jobs.

The ban imposed by the Hong Kong government has lessened the chances for women to get employment, as Hong Kong has got a vast scope of employment opportunities. Till date, the

Nepalese Government is unable to convince the Hong Kong government.

The countries almost all the women prefer going to are found to be Gulf Countries (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Bahrain) where unfortunately no embassy representing our country is found. Due to the absence of embassies, the visa renewal has to be done in the Saudi, but even there, since the workers are very less, the Nepalese have to wait for the renewal for as long as months.

The decision has been made by the Government which implies that the nation where number of Nepalese workers in a nation exceeds 5000 *labour attach* although it has not been applied till present. In the nation where there are women workers, the Government has to keep *labour attaché* which is compulsory. E.g. Philippines has been keeping it.

So due to the reason above, opportunities of women foreign employment are not being used properly. Even in the same types of job, which is done by both men and women, discrimination is found while discussing about salary and wages.

*"...the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields." (CEDAW)*

Thank you.

