



Newsletter

July to Sept 2008

IAC: Migrants' Issues Echoed



Migration and HIV-related travel restrictions received substantial coverage in this year's International AIDS Conference (IAC) held in Mexico from 3 to 8 August 2008. It was certainly better than Toronto and Bangkok. All CARAM Asia members made presentations in the non-abstract driven sessions.

A slightly modified poster presentation format was introduced in this year's IAC – where a cluster of poster presenters were given a chance to orally present their poster and engage in some discussion with the audience, Brahm Press (CARAM Asia's Convener for its State of Health Programme) and Amara Quesada (from CARAM Asia member, ACHIEVE) were having poster presentation.

Also getting prominent coverage in the conference was the International Task Team on HIV-Related Travel Restrictions where Brahm represents CARAM Asia as co-chair of the Working Group on Long-Term Travel Restrictions (the co-chair is the Philippines government represented by ACHIEVE's partner in DFA, Grace Princesa). There was a lot of momentum with regards to discussions on HIV-related travel restrictions and the opportunity is there for CARAM Asia to really play a critical role in this Task Team. It also means that there are a lot of current discussions taking place – even the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon and outgoing UNAIDS Director Peter Piot spoke about HIV-Related Travel Restrictions in various occasions during the conference.

Migrants were explicitly mentioned in every session with the International Task Team on HIV-Related Travel Restrictions. Every conference bag had a little booklet on HIV travel restrictions with "10 things you should know about HIV travel restrictions" (in English and Spanish). CARAM Asia was referenced from its State of Health 2007 report and Suksma Ratri, its programme officer on the Empowerment of Migrants Living with HIV and Their Spouses Programme, was quoted from her speech at the recently concluded UN High Level Meeting on AIDS.

There was International media coverage by AFP regarding migration and travel restrictions, featuring quotes from Ratri. Another interview was done by Radio Rumania, while the "Challenging HIV-related Travel Restrictions" session led by UNAIDS was covered by 5 local news channels in Mexico.



CARAM Asia members were featured in the *Global Voice* – the daily newsletter of the IAC. Sessions with CARAM Asia's speakers were also put on webcast.



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Human Aspect of Migration

The migration discourse have mainly focused on the labour issues. Few have looked into a major dimension that affects the total well-being of migrant-health. there is a gap in linking the health dimension to migrants' overall well-being. Therefore, CARAM Asia's task force on Migration, Health and Globalisation initiated the understanding of the global processes in migration; not just looking at it from the vantage point of why people migrate and what is affecting them but also the root causes.

The task force on MHG aims to conduct a Participatory Action Research (PAR) into the actual conditions of work, debt burdens faced by migrants, means of utilisation of wages and remittances, the social costs and benefits, and impact on the quality of life resulting from current strategies, policies and practice. The task force wants to challenge the myth that remittances are a tool for development.



The PAR planning workshop has been conducted from 23 to 25 July 2008 and now CARAM ASIA members have a research framework, guiding questions for research and indicators for the data gathering analysis. This will guide the research to be conducted in 11 countries. The research will address the gender component of migration as well as look at both source and destination country dimensions. cross-border

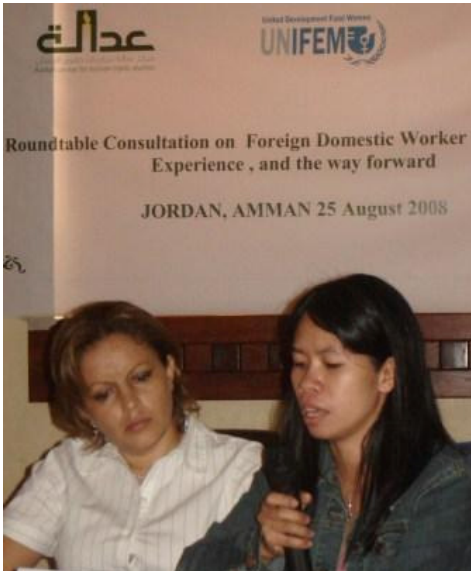
participatory action research will be carried out with focal partners studying the situation of migrant workers in the Gulf. The task force will use outputs from the PAR research for key regional advocacy and capacity building activities aimed at creating a regional and international response to improving the health and well-being of Asian migrant workers.



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Breaking Ground in Middle East



From the 25th to 28th of August 2008 in Jordan, CARAM Asia pioneered its advocacy in the Middle East with its successful roundtable meeting on Foreign Domestic Workers (FDW) issues with multi-stakeholders and its subsequent campaign strategies workshop. The campaign strategies workshop is for its on-going “One Paid Day off Weekly” for domestic workers campaign. The high-level roundtable forum which was hosted by the ADALEH Center for Human Rights Studies and co-organised by UNIFEM and CARAM Asia was attended by representatives of the Jordanian government, the Solidarity Center, CARITAS Lebanon as well as groups from Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burma, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Thailand.

The consultation and campaign strategies workshop takes forward the reflections and processes that were initiated when the campaign was launched at the third ASEAN Civil Society Conference (3rd ACSC) in Singapore. It called to action for the recognition of domestic work as work by including domestic work in the national labour laws of countries. Such a call to action can only be achieved through the legal and social recognition of domestic work as work, subsequently realising the human and labour rights of domestic workers.

The campaign demands that:

- Governments enact laws and adopt other measures to ensure that the rights of domestic workers are protected legally, and to change the national labour laws to include the protection of domestic workers' rights;
- Governments to ensure the right to a paid day off to all domestic workers immediately
- The UN and ILO develop new mechanisms for the protection and realisation of domestic workers' rights;
- Member States ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and
- Governments develop redress mechanisms for more effective accountability of non-State actors (employers, recruitment agencies, brokers) for violations against domestic workers.





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Making Malaysia Accountable

Reaffirming its intervention at the South East Asian Regional block, ASEAN, CARAM Asia as a member of the ASEAN Task Force on Migrant Workers co-organised a national consultation in Malaysia. The two-day consultation aimed to finalise recommendations to concerned Malaysian government agencies, ASEAN Labour Officials and related stakeholders. These recommendations to both Malaysian government as well as the ASEAN Secretariat will support the implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. The recommendations will be fed into the draft framework instrument on harmonising the rights of migrant workers.

CARAM Asia's intervention with this ASEAN taskforce on migrant workers is crucial for the network's regional advocacy as the task force reports directly to the Secretary General of ASEAN. The task force together with a Malaysian NGO core organising committee conducted a national consultation on the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers in Malaysia on 13 and 14 August. TENAGANITA, a CARAM Asia member, is the leading Malaysian NGO in the local organising committee.



CARAM Asia made a presentation on “State of Health of Migrant Workers” during the panel on “Social Dimensions”. CARAM Asia also chaired another panel on “Law Enforcement and Access to Justice” and moderated a workshop on “Health and Social Dimensions”. There were lots of debate and question raised by a member of Parliament, some local Faith based NGOs and the Malaysian Trade Union Congress representatives during the presentation its subsequent discussions while finalising the recommendations. Generally, some Malaysians defended the policy on health testing for Public health concerns, but TENAGANITA & CARAM Asia addressed the crowd and attended to the question. Both pushed for the recommendations to include “Removal of mandatory health testing on migrants as a pre-condition to work”. The final recommendations also called for voluntary HIV counseling and testing for migrants with follow-up access to treatment. As CARAM Asia moderated the workshop on “Health and Social Dimensions”, there's direct intervention in the drafting on of the recommendations in the section on “Health, Safety, Education and Social Dimensions Affecting Migrants”.