



Voices *from the South*

HIGHLIGHTING VOICES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH WHO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVES TO THE DOMINANT PARADIGMS OF POWER, DISTRIBUTION, AND DEVELOPMENT.

Launched in 2006, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) is an UN initiative which seeks to provide a venue for “dialogue and partnerships” among governments and other stakeholders in order to develop policy which “maximizes migration’s development benefits while minimizing its negative impacts.” From its first meeting, however, the GFMD has been subject to intense criticism by civil-society organizations which have perceived it as a tool for promoting labor-export, and a platform for promoting neoliberal, ideological models of “development” where the structural causes of poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and forced migration are left unaddressed.

In 2012, the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) released a comprehensive research study mapping the reflections and experiences of stakeholders in the migrant sector and the impact of the GFMD. In this month’s “Voices from the South,” Ramon Bultron, Managing Director of APMM, discusses the main findings of their report: “Relevance, Nexus, and Prospects: An Impact Study of the GFMD and Its Migration Paradigm”.



Critiquing GFMD and Organizing Migrants

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While the relevance of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and its paradigm had been under question by grassroots migrant organizations since its inception, there was a lack of empirical studies that would serve to bolster their arguments. The Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) sought to fill in this shortcoming in 2011 by conducting an impact study on this concern, with the timely support of the Karibu Foundation of Norway.

Main Findings of APMM’s Impact Study on GFMD

The GFMD Impact Research conducted by APMM set as its objectives the study and substantiation of claims by GFMD critics that it is “irrelevant” and that its ideological line is “bankrupt”, two hypotheses that were substantially validated by respondents involved in this primary research project.

Among migrant grassroots organizations and advocates, there is overwhelming rejection of the main propositions of the “migration for development” line. There is also firm consensus among principal

migration stakeholders that the GFMD is no longer relevant in the migration discourse nor has it been able to fulfill even its avowed objectives.

Most respondents believe that the migration discourse is facing a dead-end. They said that GFMD’s paradigm is not borne out by concrete realities in underdeveloped countries. For migrant organizations and advocates alike, migration is impelled by underdevelopment at home, and so the solution must begin with creating sound economic and political fundamentals in sending countries.



Partner Organization:



Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) is a cause-oriented regional center committed to support the migrants' movement through advocacy, organizing, building linkages for the advancement of migrants' rights.

<http://www.apmigrants.org>

There was also considerable skepticism regarding the impact of international instruments to uphold the rights of migrant labor. The ILO has decried the gross disregard of migrant workers' core labor rights among countries in the migration flow, noting that "the implementation of policies to protect migrant workers has lagged far behind the growth of labour migration."

Some recommendations were also forwarded by the study's respondents, and positions ranged from reforming the GFMD to realign itself towards a "rights-based approach"; to abolishing it altogether and replacing it with a grassroots-led global forum of migrant organizations. Others toed the middle line by proposing to tilt the balance of GFMD participants in favor of migrant civil-society organizations (CSOs).

Models of Rights-Based Organizing of Migrants

Among migrant organizations and advocates in the Asia Pacific, there is general recognition of the need for organizing and advocacy within the sector and of linking up with other marginalized sectors of society, based on their self-organization in migrant associations and trade unions.

Generally, organizing models among migrants are anchored on promoting various rights and welfare advocacies, and most have strategic views that range from "humanizing" labor migration to eliminating the need for it by addressing supply-push factors at the roots. On the other hand, conducting organizing activities cannot but start from the simplest form that all migrants appreciate

– the struggle for their rights and welfare. It is a struggle that takes various forms, from providing "distressed migrant" services to supporting migrant worker campaigns for higher wages, better jobs and democratic rights.

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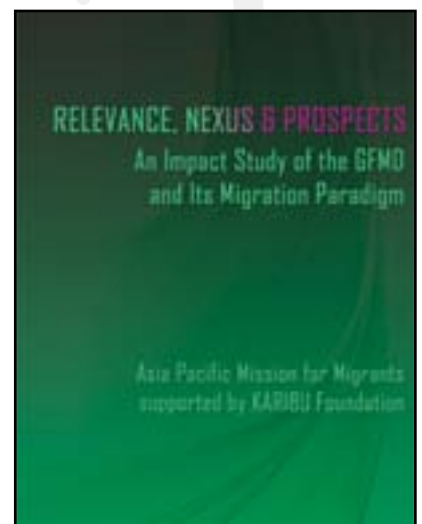
While it is but proper that serious attention be paid to the well-being of distressed migrant workers, there is also the need to create venues for raising the political awareness of migrants' vis-à-vis the roots of the diaspora, i.e., neoliberal globalization and its local modes of operation. This can help migrant organizations deal with the push factors of labor migration in a strategic way.

Migrant Organizing and International Solidarity

Grassroots organizing among migrants would usually involve the following steps: contact-building, core-group building, consolidation and expansion. Throughout the process, education and mobilization in advocacy issues are crucial ingredients in building cohesion

and experience among the newly-organized, especially in developing leaders from among their ranks. Migrant service institutions are indispensable in building the organizational capacity of such grassroots organizations, and have a substantial role to play in linking up them up in networks and alliances.

International solidarity work can proceed once a grassroots migrant organization has built up enough strength and networking at the local level. Although considered an external and secondary factor to the internal consolidation of an organization, cross-border solidarity work helps to facilitate the overall growth of grassroots migrant associations, while also enhancing their effectiveness in advocacy and lobbying work.



To read APMM's study, "Relevance, Nexus, and Prospects: An Impact Study of the GFMD and Its Migration Paradigm" in full, visit:

<http://www.apmigrants.org/>