Efforts to end violence against migrant workers in Myanmar

By Michelle Russell | 31 August 2018

The European Union (EU), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women are to work together to try to find ways to promote labour rights and end violence against migrant women in Myanmar, in workplaces including factories.

The national Consultative Dialogue will introduce the new ILO and UN Women 'Safe and Fair' Programme to key partners and identify activities that build on efforts by Myanmar's Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Settlement to promote safe and fair migration practices.

Government authorities, embassies, labour organisations, overseas employment agencies, community-based organisations, INGOs and UN agencies will elaborate a shared roadmap that will inspire the work in Myanmar over the next five years. They will also ensure the project aligns with country and ASEAN level priorities, and international legal frameworks on migration, anti-trafficking, ending violence against women, and promoting women's rights. The national Consultative Dialogue is part of a series of ten national consultations being held in each ASEAN country.

Women make up nearly half the migrants in Thailand, China and Japan and just over half in Singapore. Women work as domestic workers, factory workers, sex workers and in agriculture and construction. According to the World Bank's Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, Myanmar migrants remitted US$3.5bn to Myanmar in 2015, nearly 5% of the country's gross domestic product.

"Through migration, women can inform and change social, cultural, political and gender norms and can influence positive change across households and communities," the ILO says. "Yet, some women migrants
find that they cannot access legal and social support when they face problems. They can also suffer from
discrimination – both as migrants, and as women – which can result in isolation, unfair working conditions, or
abuse and exploitation."

The Safe and Fair programme provides an opportunity to ensure labour migration policies are gender-
sensitive, and that there are laws, institutions and programmes in place to eliminate violence against migrant
women.

Funded by the EU, with a budget of EUR25m, the programme will be implemented through a UN Women and
ILO partnership. The programme will run for five years, starting 2018, and focus on ASEAN countries.

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