



ILO Chair Report

Topic 1: Ensuring Fair Labor Rights and Decent
Employment Conditions for Migrant Workers

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Personal Statements

Chair – Lokesh Prasad

My name is Lokesh Prasad, and I am an IB student at the International School of Stuttgart. This year, I have the honor of serving as the Chair of the International Labour Organization (ILO), marking this as my 6th MUN conference and my 3rd as a Chair. Our second topic focuses on Mitigating Job Loss and Ensuring Stable Employment Opportunities in the Age of AI and Automation. This study guide will help you prepare your resolutions, but I encourage further research to better understand your delegation's stance. If you have any questions about the topic, committee, or conference, feel free to contact me at prasal26@issev.de. I look forward to meeting you all!

Kind regards,
Lokesh



Deputy Chair – Maxi Kurz

As someone who runs on caffeine and efficiency, I'm always looking for the next big move. Whether it's debating, leading, or keeping things in check, I like to keep it straight to the point and get things done. If I'm not in a debate, I'm probably working on a new idea, making sure everything runs smoothly, or questioning why I took on even more responsibilities. Expect solid arguments, quick thinking, and maybe a sarcastic comment here and there, purely for educational purposes, of course. Can't wait to see you all.



Introduction

Migrant workers are essential to the functioning of numerous industries, including agriculture, construction, and domestic work. Despite their significant contributions, they continue to face severe injustices, including unfair treatment, discrimination, and poor working conditions. Ensuring that migrant workers receive fair labor rights and access to decent employment is not only a moral imperative but also crucial for maintaining economic stability and promoting social justice globally.

Glossary

- **ILO (International Labour Organization):** A United Nations agency that focuses on setting labor standards, developing policies, and devising programs to promote decent work for all. The ILO plays a major role in advocating for migrant workers' rights worldwide (**International Labour Organization**).
- **UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees):** While primarily responsible for refugee protection, UNHCR also provides assistance to migrant workers, especially those who become displaced due to economic hardships or unsafe working conditions (**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**).
- **ILO Convention 97 & 143:** These are key international labor conventions focused on migrant workers. Convention 97 (1949) establishes rules on the treatment of migrant workers, while Convention 143 (1975) addresses migrant labor exploitation and the rights of undocumented migrants (**International Labour Organization, "International Labour Standards on Labour Migration"**).
- **Decent Work:** A concept promoted by the ILO that refers to fair employment with adequate wages, safe working conditions, job security, and social protection (**International Labour Organization**).

- **Kafala System:** A labor sponsorship system used in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries where a migrant worker's legal status is tied to their employer. This system has been criticized for enabling labor exploitation, as workers often face restrictions on leaving their jobs or changing employers (**OHCHR, "Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families"**).

Issue Explanation

Issue Explanation Migrant workers are essential to global economies, yet they face widespread exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and lack of legal protections. Ensuring fair labor rights is critical to preventing human rights abuses and economic disparities



Key Issues Humanitarian Impact: Many endure poor working conditions,

wage theft,

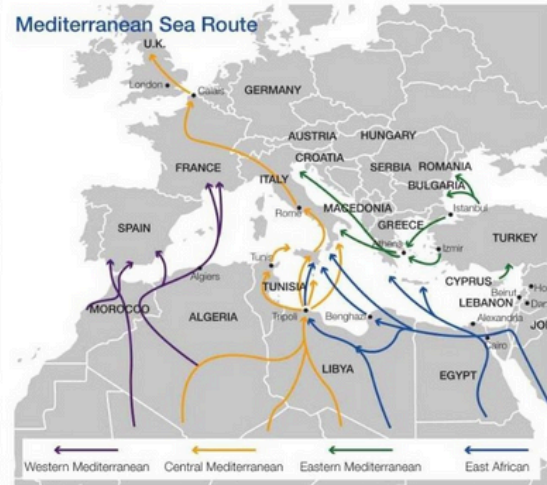
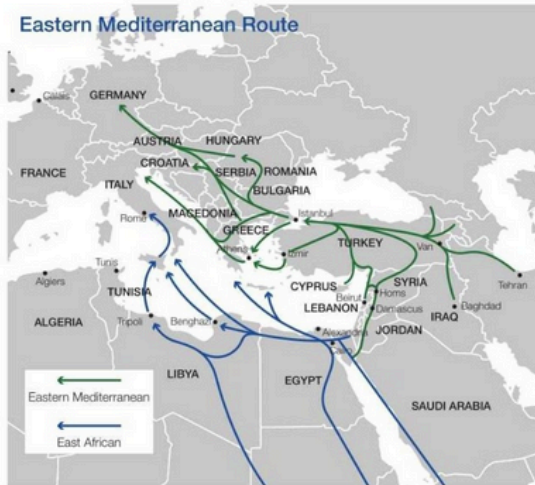
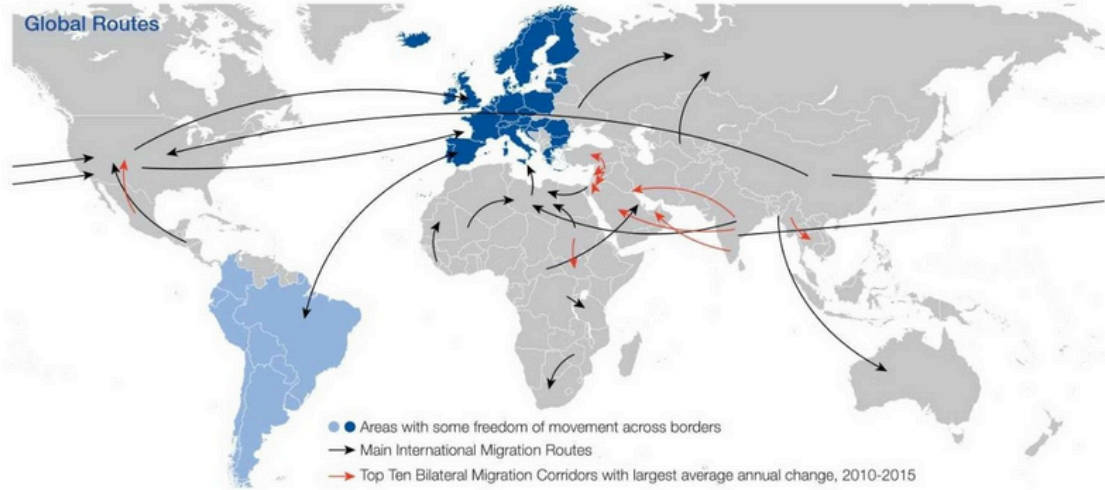
and lack of healthcare, leading to severe physical and mental health issues. Exploitative practices, including forced labor and human trafficking, disproportionately affect them.

Economic Impact: Migrant workers fill crucial labor gaps but often experience wage suppression and unfair treatment. Their remittances support home economies, yet exploitation reduces their ability to contribute effectively.

Social Impact: Migrant workers face discrimination and exclusion, limiting access to social services and justice. Fear of deportation discourages them from reporting abuses, worsening their vulnerability.

Figure 12: Some of the World's Many Migration Routes

Sources: Adams, 2015; Conant, Chwastyk & Williams, 2015



Migration and Its Impact on Cities 23



Consequences of Inaction Failure to address these issues perpetuates labor exploitation, damages economic stability, and fosters social unrest. Host countries may face labor shortages, diplomatic tensions, and declining worker productivity. **Who is**

Affected?

- **Migrant Workers:** Primary victims of labor rights violations.
- **Employers & Businesses:** Risk legal and ethical challenges.
- **Host & Home Countries:** Economic and social impacts on both sides.
- **International Organizations:** Advocate for labor protections and fair practices.

Addressing these concerns requires stronger regulations, international cooperation, and enforcement of labor rights to ensure dignified working conditions for migrant workers.



Perspectives of Parties Involved

Major Countries

- **United States & European Union:** Advocate for labor rights yet struggle with undocumented migrant workers. While labor protections exist, enforcement gaps allow for exploitation, especially in agriculture and domestic work.
- **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries:** Rely heavily on migrant labor but operate under the Kafala system, often criticized for restricting workers' rights and freedom of movement.
- **South & Southeast Asian Countries (India, Bangladesh, Philippines):** Source countries advocating for stronger protections for their migrant workers abroad due to high remittances and frequent cases of abuse.
- **China & Russia:** Have growing migrant workforces but weak labor protections, leading to concerns about forced labor and unfair treatment.

Organizations & Groups

- **International Labour Organization (ILO):** Prioritize fair labor standards and enforcement mechanisms to protect migrant workers.
- **United Nations (UN) & Human Rights Watch:** Advocate for stronger global labor rights, particularly targeting abuses in high-risk industries.
- **Multinational Corporations:** Often benefit from cheap migrant labor but face pressure to uphold ethical supply chains and fair wages.
- **Trade Unions & NGOs:** Work to improve labor conditions and raise awareness about migrant worker exploitation.

Each party has a unique stake in the issue, with differing levels of commitment to labor rights. Balancing economic needs with ethical labor practices remains a global challenge.



History of the Topic

Migrant labor has been around forever—people have always moved around looking for better jobs, better pay, or just a way to survive. But the **real problems with migrant workers' rights** started showing up in the modern era, especially as economies became more global and labor laws struggled to keep up. Some countries rely heavily on migrant workers, but at the same time, those workers are often the first to get exploited, underpaid, or left out of legal protections entirely.

How It Started *During the 19th and early 20th centuries, labor migration increased*

significantly due to industrialization and the expansion of colonial economies. Wealthy nations sought inexpensive labor, while developing countries had a workforce willing to accept low wages. Although this system benefited businesses, it often came at the expense of workers, who faced hazardous conditions, a lack of legal protections, and little ability to advocate for their rights. Significant changes began after World

War II, particularly with the incorporation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) into the United Nations in 1946. This marked the beginning of a global conversation on labor rights. However, despite these advancements, migrant workers continued to face systemic discrimination and were often treated as second-class citizens in many regions.

Important Dates in Migrant Labor Rights

- **1951:** The **Refugee Convention** was adopted, which wasn't directly about migrant workers but helped those fleeing economic hardship.
- **1975:** The ILO passed **Convention No. 143**, trying to prevent migrant labor exploitation, but enforcement was weak.
- **1990:** The **UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers** was signed, but major economies



refused to ratify it (basically, they didn't want to commit to protecting workers)

●**2000s:** The **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)** countries started getting called out for their **Kafala system**, which basically traps migrant workers in bad conditions by tying their visas to their employers.

Where **We** **Are** **Now**
Migrant workers continue to be the backbone of numerous industries, particularly in construction, agriculture, and domestic work. However, the challenges they faced decades ago persist:

- COVID-19** showed how disposable migrant workers are to some countries—many lost jobs and had no protections.
- Automation & AI** are starting to replace low-skilled labor, which puts even more pressure on migrant workers.
- Legal protections are all over the place**—some countries have strong labor laws, others barely acknowledge migrant workers exist.

Has the Situation Improved or Worsened? The answer varies by region.

While awareness of migrant labor rights has significantly increased, and some countries have strengthened labor protections, exploitation remains widespread. Many industries continue to prioritize cost-cutting at the expense of workers' rights, leaving migrant laborers vulnerable to unfair treatment. **Final Thoughts** Migrant labor has

long been a double-edged sword—offering workers economic opportunities while subjecting them to systemic injustices. Understanding the historical context is essential in identifying effective measures to protect migrant workers. Although progress has been made, there is still a considerable journey ahead to ensure fair and dignified working conditions for all.



Potential Solutions for the issue:

There are many approaches to the issue- however, A comprehensive approach which ensures fair labor rights for migrant workers requires a very coordinated action across multiple problem roots. Strengthening legal frameworks remains a good approach, with focus needed on tailoring and implementation of existing international conventions. Countries should Improve their visa systems that could connect well with workers to specific employers. When implementing this, origin countries can strengthen pre-departure training and support services. Enforcement mechanisms require significant enhancement, including increased labor inspections, specialized units focusing on industries with high migrant worker concentrations, and protection for bodies who report violations. Access to justice mechanisms must be improved through measures like legal aid services, multilingual complaint systems, and separation between immigration enforcement and labor rights protection. Technological/Modern solutions offer promising changes, including **blockchain- based** contract verification, digital portals connecting workers with legitimate employers, and mobile applications providing information on rights and reporting mechanisms in multiple languages and great accessibilities. Engaging with the private sector is also ideal- as there are countless opportunities. Ethical certification programs can help consumers identify products made under fair labor conditions- similar to food labels like fairtrade, creating investor and stakeholder pressure which drives companies to address labor rights in their operations and supply chains. Comprehensive bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries should cover recruitment, working conditions, social protection, and return migration, with strong monitoring and enforcement provisions between each other.

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