



# VOICES FROM THE SOUTH

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

## Current structures on Migration and Development

The need for rights-based frame and wider grassroots participation

*According to most estimates, there are currently more than 215 million people (ca 3% of the world's population) working and living outside their country of birth. These numbers have doubled in the last 50 years, and continue to rise as global economic conditions, demographic forces, globalization, and climate change have exacerbated migration pressures within both "sending" and "receiving" countries.*

*Questions related to international human mobility have therefore been given increasing attention on the global political agenda, as international migration impacts the economic, political, cultural, and social landscape of many countries. Especially in the last decade, a number of international political initiatives have been undertaken to respond to challenges posed by international migration. Yet more often than not, these state-centered initiatives focus on strengthening inter-state cooperation on international migration rather than addressing the need for genuine human development, dignity, and rights for migrant communities.*

*In this month's Voices from the South, **Ramon Bultron** – director of Karibu partner the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) – critically reflects on the modern international architecture related to migration and development, current global models which commodify human labor, and vital need for rights-based systems and structures that support the inalienable rights of migrant communities.*

***This article will be the first of several throughout the year related to international migration and development, the advocacy focus of the Karibu Foundation in 2013.***



Migrant labourers in Dubai, Photo by Brent Stirton



**“The international migration and development dialogues of governments are not centered on rights...and are not concerned with how development will lead to an end to the forced migration and commodification of migrant labour.”**

**RAMON BULTRON, APMM**

**By: Ramon Bultron**  
**Director, APMM**

International migration is a global phenomenon that impacts the economic, political, cultural and social landscape in many countries. As the numbers of people living and working outside the country of their birth increases, attention to the impacts of international migration on a global stage also increases. The vast numbers of meetings and studies by bodies and institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Economic Cooperation (IOEC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) related to concerns on international migration indicate it is fast becoming a topic of concern in international cooperation.

The fact that the world is still very much in crisis is undeniable. The global economic meltdown that started in 2008 is still rippling, and it has inevitably compounded intensifying parallel crises, including food and climate, which hit the world's poor and marginalized the hardest. Populations and peoples are forced to move in order to secure their livelihoods. Thus, international migration is expected to continue to be a significant concern of individual countries, regional platforms of cooperation, and of the world.

### **Migration, Remittances and Development**

Given that over 215 million people live and work outside their country of birth, there is

increasing evidence to support that remittances from abroad are crucial to the survival of communities in many developing countries. This, among other things, inevitably raises questions on the relationship between migration and development.

In 2011 alone, official remittance from migrants reached US\$440 billion with US\$350 billion going to developing countries. This was about three times more than the official development assistance (ODA) in the world. If remittances sent through informal channels were included, the amount would be significantly higher.

Remittance has become the second largest source of external finances for many countries. In fact, remittance from their overseas nationals constitutes from 10% to 35% of the GNP of major sending countries. Remittances are considered more stable than other finance sources – the World Bank noted its resilience and

quick recovery since the economic crisis started – and the ADB even remarked on its altruistic nature referring to increase in remittance if natural crisis occurs.

With such dynamics between international migration and remittance coupled with the current global situation where growth in investment and aid is sluggish if not regressing, the increased attention to the interconnection of migration to development is expected.

### **Architecture Related to Migration and Development**

While many platforms exist to pursue dialogue and collaboration on international migration, the most notable is the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The GFMD, the brainchild of the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2006, was created to address the interconnections between migration and development.







## PARTNER PROFILE:



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. THEY ARE BASED IN HONG KONG.

VISIT [HTTP://WWW.APMIGRANTS.ORG](http://www.apmigrants.org)  
FOR MORE INFORMATION.

The GFMD and other similar institutions have been touting the development potential of migration – related to remittances and other topics – but are conveniently forgetting that migrants are casualties of skewed development practices. The development paradigm and strategies prescribed by powerful countries under the neoliberal globalization frame are aimed at maintaining the global economic and political structure – in the minimum, give temporary relief and resolution from the current crisis and contraction of the global economy – that sets the stage for forced migration to intensify.

In this context, migration for development is but a pipedream. Current migration trends and practices are not an exercise of the right to mobility, but are dictated by the purposeful underdevelopment of sending countries to keep the army of unemployed and underemployed as a perpetual source of labour for export, on one hand, and the focus of receiving countries to corner the biggest number of skilled but cheap foreign labor, on the other.

The international migration and development dialogues of governments are therefore not centered on rights, have no regard on how international rights instruments (economic, social, cultural, civil and political) are being applied to migrants, and are not concerned with how

development will lead to an end to the forced migration and commodification of migrant labour. Similarly, governments are more focused on the management of migration as reflected in the major discussion points and recommendations of the series of GFMD.

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This concern must be shaped to gear the discussions towards ensuring that migration originates from rights, is ruled by rights-based standards, and serves to uphold the human dignity and rights.

### Conclusion

In Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development, it is stated that “the right to development is an

*inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.”* That development is a human right was further upheld in the Vienna Declaration of 1993 during the World Conference on Human Rights.

This is the standpoint on development that is important for governments to adopt. Without such, the discussion on migration and development will not be one that revolves around genuine human development, dignity and rights but just a continued negotiation on trading of goods.

To ensure that a rights-based standpoint is asserted, the participation of grassroots migrants and grassroots-based civil society organizations in migration and development dialogues must be increased. Grassroots migrants are development actors and not merely end receivers of development policies. It is from their realities and aspirations for a rights-based migration that changes in directions and policies on migration platforms, such as the upcoming UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development and future sessions of GFMD, must come from. ■

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