

Through the eyes of migrants: the search for decent work

solidar

decent work
decent life 

GLOBAL
PROGRESSIVE
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TAKE ACTION
Migrant workers
have rights!

Foreword

It is widely acknowledged that a lack of decent living and working conditions is one of the main push factors behind the decision by people from the developing world to leave their home countries. In fact, 90% of total international migrants, estimated by the International Labour Organisation at 214 million in 2010, are migrant workers and their families.

Looking at the history of the SOLIDAR network, it has always been our mission to organise solidarity for displaced persons, political refugees and migrants. For example, our members helped refugees from the Spanish Civil War, organised resettlement programmes after World War II and gave 'Aid to Hungary' in 1956. Since the 1960s we have focused increasingly on international cooperation, development aid and migration, and integration of migrants in Europe.

Workers everywhere need a job that pays enough to provide for themselves and their families, a job which gives them paid leave and decent working hours, a job in which they can join a union that will defend their rights, and a job in which they are protected by individual and collective labour law, in short, a decent job. This is a reality for many citizens of the European Union, but not for the majority of non-European migrants living and working in the EU.

The growing anti-immigrant sentiment across Europe is deeply concerning. The crisis has contributed to the sharpening of this debate and to a rhetoric that stigmatises immigrants and results in even more restrictive immigration policies. In view of our shrinking population, it is also in Europe's interests to recognise that we need migration for our own prosperity in the long-term.

With our project "Decent Work for All! Making Migration work for Development", SOLIDAR and our partners are working to demonstrate that decent work is a necessity for all workers, wherever they happen to live. With this booklet, we invite you to learn through the eyes of migrants themselves about their reasons for searching for jobs abroad and the reality of decent work in Europe and in their homes in developing countries.

The six case studies in this booklet were carried out by SOLIDAR member organisations, Global Network partners LEARN (The Philippines) and PLADES (Peru) as well as Badara Ndiaye (Senegal) and l'Association Malienne des Expulsés (Mali) through the summer and autumn of 2010. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to it.

Join our struggle to make decent work a reality for all and for European policies to respect the rights of migrants!



Conny Reuter
Secretary General

About the case studies

Introduction

In each case the migrant workers were asked about living and working conditions both in their country of origin and of destination, about what made them choose to leave their home country, and the attraction of the host country. They were also asked to describe their contribution to their home and host country, not only financially but also in terms of development, and whether reality met their expectations. Each study looks at the rights of migrant workers, notably from the point of view of decent work, including the situation of legal migrants and the vulnerability of undocumented migrants.

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AME (Mali), Fall Fatou Cissé / Enda
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/ Panafrican network for Migrants'
rights (France), Aminatou Diouf /
Alternatives Parcelles Assainies
(Senegal) and Ahmed Iyane Sidibé.

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TO EARN A LIVING IN EUROPE

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Sindical (ENS) – Colombia)



01. Czech Republic

THE HIGH COST OF EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES FOR VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS

Case profile

- Industrial expansion and increased modernisation has increased the demand for labour in the Czech Republic, turning it into a country of destination for migrant workers.
- There were 31,179 Vietnamese residents in the Czech Republic by 2004 (largest non-European minority group).
- Nearly three quarter of the Vietnamese residents live in bigger cities and major urban areas, working principally in the service sector and small businesses. According to some estimates 90% are self-employed, although in reality they work on a contractual basis, usually for relatives in catering and commerce.
- Overall flow of foreign remittances to Vietnam was 3.5 billion euros in 2007 which represented approximately 7% of Vietnam's GDP².

¹ Foreigners: by type of residence, sex and citizenship; Directorate of Alien Police; Ministry of the Interior of the CR (30 June 2010).

² World Bank (2010) "Country Pages and Indicators".

Ten Vietnamese migrants now living in the Czech Republic were interviewed, only one of whom was a woman. They range in age from 20 to 55, and in educational background from university graduates to one man who only had primary education.

"I am not here to have fun but to do my job and send some money to my family."

Sinh, male, 25.

³ It corresponds to the requirements of the UN Convention with respect of the protection of migrants' rights.



⁴ Ondřej Hofírek, Michal Nekorjak (2010) "Od pásu ke stánku - a zpět? Proměny ekonomických aktivit Vietnamců v České republice".

⁵ Foreigners registered by labour offices, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (31 March 2010).

Legal framework for migrant workers in the Czech Republic

According to UNESCO³ Czech legislation is broadly in line with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The legal situation, and therefore protection, of Vietnamese migrants, can be precarious however, particularly as they are not covered by the recent Green Card initiative by the Czech government designed to facilitate the entry of migrant workers. They usually arrive on a working visa arranged by relatives or agencies. In order to get a work permit and permanent or long-term residence permit in the Czech Republic, Vietnamese migrants have to prove they are employed in line with the Czech labour migration legislation. Many circumvent this by getting a Business Certificate to set up their own business. Alternatively, workers may arrive via an employment agency, but these agencies are a cause of serious concern. Some are owned by members of the diaspora in the Czech Republic recruiting workers for local Vietnamese businesses. Their legal status and practices can be problematic, they demand a huge fee from the workers, and rarely provide social security. There are also well-established, legal, Czech-owned agencies, which predominantly provide temporary jobs in industry. The workers are in a precarious situation however because they are "leased" to companies by the agency on very short, often monthly, contracts, which impacts on their ability to pay for their social security or health insurance.

Living and working at home in Vietnam

There is a huge difference in living and working conditions in Vietnam, between the educated and the uneducated, urban areas and rural areas. The general standard of living remains relatively low but as 55-year-old Trong explains there have been significant improvements in recent years. *"In the large cities one can find living standards comparable with European cities. But there is still no drinking water or electricity in some mountain villages"*. Even within urban areas however inequality is high, and the welfare system does not cover all basic needs. *"You have to pay for everything"* says 23-year-old Thao. *"Almost 80% of people do not have money to pay for quality services, in particular health care, but also education."*

Jobs can be found, but not necessarily decent ones. Education makes a huge difference. *"Without an education, you do not have any chance of finding a well-paid job in Vietnam"* says 42-year-old Kim-ly, the only woman in the group. Moreover, employment in the private sector or agriculture is often associated with very hard and demanding physical work, with no prospects for improvement.

Living and working in the Czech Republic

In 2008, almost one third of economically active Vietnamese in the Czech Republic, just over 16,700 people⁴, had employee status. Most were working in catering and commerce however where jobs are temporary and salaries lower than average. In the wake of the economic crisis, the number of Vietnamese registered as employed fell to 3,386 in 2010⁵. Those who run their own small businesses in catering or food retailing consider their living

conditions relatively good, despite the impact of the crisis. These are usually family companies, and provide work or contacts for newly arrived relatives or friends. Those who look for employment in Czech companies through agencies however are in a more difficult situation. They do not know about wages and working conditions, and often have to borrow over 7000 euros to cover flights and agency fees⁶, leaving them with huge debts. They are regarded as third class workers and many face hard work and much lower pay than they expected. They are usually on short-term contracts, without the same rights and protection as corporate employees. The hardest hit are those who lost their temporary jobs as a result of the crisis, some of whom want to return home.

Impact of migration on migrants and their contribution to society

Although the older generation of migrants miss the Vietnamese way of life and the rest of their family, they find the quality of life better in the Czech Republic, and want to stay for the sake of their children who have grown up in the Czech Republic. They are well-educated, speak Czech and have Czech friends. They believe they have career prospects outside the traditional commercial activities of the Vietnamese Community. Many from this well-educated second generation want to make their own contribution to Vietnam by going there for at least a couple of years to transfer their knowledge and skills and invest in business activities. Some have built hotels, helped develop tourism and established successful companies. Sending money to their families back home is also important, as 25-year-old Sinh explains. The most recently arrived have the most contacts with their family at home and send the most money home, while those working for agencies face uncertainty, which limits their capacity to support their families.



“My name is Kim-ly⁷, I am 42, self-employed, and I come from Phu Tho in Vietnam. I left because I only have a vocational certificate and with that it is not possible to find a well-paid job at home. The living conditions in many Vietnamese villages have significantly improved, but it is still misery compared to Czech cities. Salaries are low and the work is physically demanding in Vietnam. But the reality in the Czech Republic can be a shock to many people. We work from early morning till evening, sometimes even seven days a week. We have little time to spend with our children and it is not possible to speak about any free time.”

⁶ Ondřej Hofírek, Michal Nekorjak (2010) “Od pásu ke stánku - a zpět? Proměny ekonomických aktivit Vietnamců v České republice”.

⁷ Not her real name. All the names given in this case have been changed.



02. Italy

BETTER CONDITIONS BUT NO CAREER OPTIONS FOR FILIPINO DOMESTIC WORKERS

Case profile

- In January 2009 there were 113,000 Filipinos in Italy, including 66,000 women (sixth largest migrant community in Italy)⁸.
- 83,500 have residence permits⁹. About 80% live in major cities, working predominantly in the domestic and care sector. Only 4% have a skilled job¹⁰.
- In 2008 migrants' remittances to the Philippines totalled 12 billion euros, over 10% of GDP. In 2007 Italy was the fourth largest source of remittances to the Philippines¹¹.

⁸ Istat data www.istat.it (1 Jan 2009)

⁹ Italian Ministry of the Interior, www.demostat.it (2008)

¹⁰ Istat, Labour Force Survey, www.istat.it (2006)

¹¹ UN-INSTRAW data, Factsheet Filipino Migration to Italy.

Ten Filipino migrant workers, seven women and three men between 30 and 60 years old, were interviewed about their lives in Italy. They have mixed educational backgrounds, some with only primary education, while others had completed secondary and even tertiary education. Their employment background, back in the Philippines, was also varied: one was a government official, two were teachers, one an actor and another was a secretary. In Italy however they all work in the domestic and family care sector. They all have residence permits.

Legal framework for migrant workers in Italy

The 1991 Martelli law recognises both the rights and obligations of immigrants, while a 2009 law regarding public security makes illegal immigration a criminal offence. Foreigners wishing to stay in Italy for more than three months must apply for a residence permit within eight days. Permits can be granted for up to six months for seasonal work (nine in the fields), and up to two years for self-employment, permanent employment or family reunions. A 1998 law regulates entry flows, establishing a three-year plan, and an annual quota for the number of foreigners allowed into Italy for employment and family reunion, known as the Flows Decree.

Living and working at home in the Philippines

The majority of interviewees had never had an employment contract in their home country, and there was very little to define their working conditions. Oral agreements allowed them to take paid leave and sick pay, and some had health insurance. In many cases wages were not sufficient to cover basic expenses. The government official had a stable contract but no opportunities to advance in her career. The less qualified began work helping their families, with no rights or protection. *“At five years old I already knew everything about working in the fields”* says Teresa, now 33. Welfare services in the Philippines are run mainly by private companies, and paying for their children’s education or visiting a doctor had a heavy impact on household budgets. As 31-year-old Olivia explains *“Every kind of service in the Philippines is very expensive. With the average salary, only basic necessities can be covered.”* Like most of her fellow migrants, Olivia chose to leave in search of better living and working conditions and a better future for her children.

Living and working in Italy

Most of those interviewed arrived on a tourist visa, using contacts with relatives or acquaintances to find a place to stay. It was because of those contacts that they chose Italy. Usually they found work, on an irregular basis, within weeks. Some waited years for a written contract, because they had to wait for the first amnesty¹² to get a residence permit. Yet even without a contract, many said their employers allowed them to take leave, sick days and holidays, and they were able to save from their wages, as they usually lived at their employer’s house and did not have to pay rent. The work was physically hard, however, and they worked long days. Finally getting a residence permit meant their social contributions were paid, there was less anxiety and they could visit their home country. None of those with higher qualifications had been able to find work in other sectors that reflected their skills and experience. *“In the Philippines, if you study you can find a better job”* says Benjamin. There was a feeling among those interviewed that in Italy, all Filipinos are treated the same – as low-skilled workers.



“My name is Gill. I am 60 years old. When I lived in the Philippines, I had a job in the civil service, but no career opportunities. In Italy we all end up employed in the same type of work, which involves taking care of families, their children or the elderly.”

¹² The “amnesty” is a government regulation that allows all the non EU citizens, living in Italy without a permit to stay to submit a request of “sanatoria” (regularization) in order to obtain a new indefinite permit, within a specific and limited period of time.



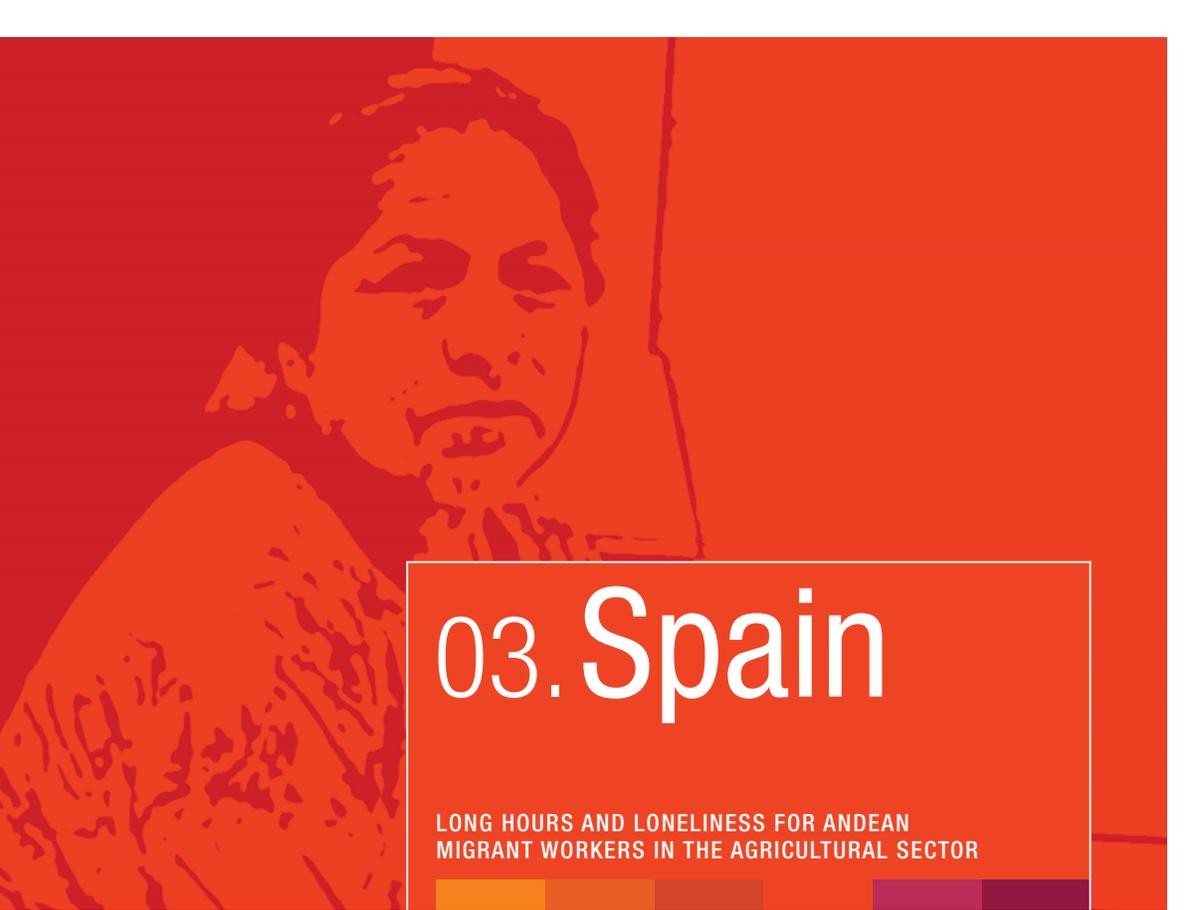
"In the Philippines, no one can help you, it is very hard."

Celeste, 39

Impact of migration on migrants and their contribution to society

The presence of the Catholic Church was hugely important to helping the Filipinos feel at home in Italy. *"I love Italy because it is a deeply Catholic country, and I received a Catholic education."* explains 39-year-old Celeste. The churches run by the Filipino community also perform a strong social role. *"I am part of a choir in the church"* says 37-year-old Gloria. *"We meet once a week to train. For us the community is an important landmark, it keeps us united and strong."* All the Filipinos surveyed were a member of an association, usually cultural (music etc.) or a trade union. Many associations are run for and by women and geared to their needs and interests. The cultural associations are attended by Filipinos only but theatrical performances are given in Italian to make them accessible to everyone. In addition to providing a social structure they can help people at home. Sioni, 55, explains what she and her friends do: *"Every year we put on a show and we collect funds to be sent to associations in the Philippines."* Others had joined and begun to play an active role in trade unions, such as 47-year-old Willy. *"I entered the union because I needed fiscal assistance. Then I began to help them, with permits and translations...."*

All those interviewed compared services in Italy favourably with life in the Philippines. *"In Italy everything works better than in the Philippines"* said Celeste. For them it was a good reason to stay. Children were an important factor in their decision to remain, as they had got used to living there, some were even born there. *"My children are almost Italian. They speak Italian, write in Italian, and have many Italian friends."* says Gloria.



03. Spain

LONG HOURS AND LONELINESS FOR ANDEAN MIGRANT WORKERS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Case profile

- The rapid expansion of Spain's agricultural sector over the last 30 years has been accompanied by a rise in the number of precarious and temporary jobs.
- Migrant workers arriving in Spain without a work permit usually find their first jobs in agriculture, where low wages and difficult working conditions deter Spanish workers.
- While foreign workers make up 10% of the working population of Spain, that figure rises to 30% for agriculture¹³.

Ten migrant workers from the Andean countries of Ecuador (7), Bolivia (1), Colombia (1) and Peru (1) were interviewed about their experiences of working in Spain's agricultural sector. They have all been in Spain for at least three years, and are now all legally employed in the country, although some were irregular migrants to begin with.

¹³ Ministry of Labour and Immigration, June 2010.



“My name is Zoila, I’m 34 and separated. My two children still live in Ecuador. There, I had my own small business, but now I’m working here in the fields. In my country you see people in Spain sending money, building houses, buying cars, and you think that they live very well. You cannot imagine how hard it is. Here in Spain we work far away from home and have to get up at half past three in the morning, cook to take some food with us everyday... We come back home from work late, go to bed at 11, 12 or one in the morning, and have to get up again at three or four in the morning. Sometimes we work for nine to ten hours a day. It is very hard.”¹⁴”

¹⁴ In Spain’s agricultural sector, there are many different harvests throughout the year. Workers therefore often have long and tiring daily journeys as their work moves around the country for the different harvests.

Legal framework for migrant workers in Spain

Work permits have to be obtained in the country of origin, on the basis of a bilateral agreement. Only four Latin American countries (Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Peru) have bilateral migration agreements with Spain, which in addition to regulating migratory flows contain clauses protecting migrant workers rights (see section on Andean countries). Migrants arriving in an irregular situation can obtain one in Spain after signing an employment contract. A permanent residence permit can be obtained after five years of regular residence and work in Spain. Temporary residence permits can be granted for a few months and are either unrestricted but non-renewable, or restricted to a sector and province and renewable. After one year the sectoral and territorial restrictions do not apply.

Living and working at home in Andean countries

The migrant workers interviewed had jobs or ran small businesses in their country of origin, but their incomes were too low to ensure a decent standard of living. Their working conditions at home were acceptable, and in some cases less harsh than in Spain, although they did face instability.

Living and working in Spain

Some of those interviewed already had a contract when they arrived, and most had relatives in Spain. Those who came on a tourist visa found it difficult to find work without a permit. *“Looking for a job was very hard for me. I used to spend all day looking for a job, with nothing to eat”* explained Angel, 37, from Ecuador. For many in Angel’s situation, the first job is an illegal one, which employers take advantage of. *“They make you work harder, quicker, and you cannot say anything. If you work overtime you are not paid for it. When you are undocumented, they can just dismiss you. Once you are in a legal situation you can demand your rights.”*

Most migrants found the reality of working in Spain more difficult than they expected, working long hours and not being able to return home or bring over their families as soon as they had thought. The higher pay however allows them to send money home and to ensure a decent standard of living for their families there. *“I earn in Spain every month (working in agriculture) what I would earn in Ecuador (as a secondary school teacher) in ten months”* says 38-year-old Cleopatra from Ecuador. But this comes at a cost - some said they had no leisure time, and have not been able to take a holiday in years.

Those who had lived in Spain for some time appreciated the quality of the state education, the health service and maternity pay, unemployment benefit etc. *“Working in Spain has allowed me to balance personal and working life better than I would have been able to in Peru. My mother does not have a retirement pension in Peru, or sick pay”* says Gina, 29. Almost all, however, would return home if they thought they could make a living from running their own business. Some would like to have their qualifications recognised in Spain so they can get a better job, but think it unlikely.

Impact of migration on migrants and their contribution to society

The hardest thing of all for the migrants is separation from their children, which can be painful and distressing. It can take at least one or two years to earn enough money to bring their spouse and children over, and deal with the bureaucracy. *“I would never separate from my children again, it has been seven years since I arrived in Spain, and they are still in Ecuador”* said Zoila, a 34-year-old mother from Ecuador. The men miss their children too, and the rest of their family. *“I have felt very depressed sometimes, so lonely...”* says Manuel.

Many migrant workers make friends with other workers from their country or region of origin, building social networks. All send remittances home to their families, helping them build homes, finish their studies etc. They see their contribution to Spain as twofold: they help the development of the agricultural sector doing the jobs that Spaniards do not want, and the local economy through taxes and social security contributions.

All of the interviewees have become members of the Spanish national trade union centre, the Union General de los Trabajadores UGT. In some cases they joined after having problems with employers over unpaid wages etc. As Vicente, 31, from Ecuador explains *“In Spain companies do not pay wages sometimes and they mistreat workers. Trade unions help people.”*

“In the beginning all migrant workers come for one year, but when you arrive you find that things are different from what you thought. First you have to find a job, then you have to repay the money you borrowed to come here... I was thinking of staying in Spain for one or two years when I arrived and that was ten years ago...”

Nieves, 37, from Ecuador.



04. South-East Asia

INSTITUTIONALISED MIGRATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Case profile

- The Philippines ranks 97th in the world on the Human Development Index 2010, and fifth in the South-East Asia region.
- Per capita GDP was USD 1,746 (1,283 euros) in 2008 (according to UN data.)
- With a population of 93.3 million the country has an unemployment rate of 7.3% and underemployment is at 19.7%¹⁵.
- Every year the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency processes over 200,000 Filipinos willing to work abroad¹⁶.
- It is estimated that 8.7 million Filipinos live abroad, and in 2009 remittances from overseas workers amounted to 12.4 billion euros or 10.4% of the country's GDP¹⁷.
- Only 10% of that is from Europe however, as half of all Filipino migrants work in other Asian countries¹⁸.
- The migrants work in a broad range of sectors including manufacturing, construction, health and domestic service.

¹⁵ Philippines' National Statistical Coordination Board (January 2010). http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_labor.asp

¹⁶ S. Ruggunan, 2005

¹⁷ UN-INSTRAW data, Factsheet Filipino Migration to Italy.

¹⁸ Migration Policy Institute 2010. www.migrationpolicy.org/datahub

Four domestic workers, three who had returned from Europe and one potential migrant to Europe, were interviewed about their experiences.

Legal framework for migrant workers in the Philippines

Migration has been institutionalised in the 1995 Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act, which established greater protection for the rights of migrant workers and their families. It bans unlawful recruitment, and prescribes the provision of services, including information and legal assistance, to migrants.

Living and working at home in the Philippines

The current daily minimum wage in the Philippines amounts to 404 Philippine pesos (6.75 euros) per day, yet the National Wages and Productivity Commission estimates that the minimum living wage should be about 917 pesos (15.31 euros) per day. Two of the three women interviewed were in low-paid jobs in the Philippines: One, Neneth, a 56 year old widow with seven children, migrated because she could not earn enough as a part-time teacher to send her children to school, the other, Paz, 52 years old, was the only care taker for her four children, and despite being a high school graduate had worked as a factory worker, cook and vendor. The third, Aida, left as soon as she finished her studies to work in Kuwait, Hong Kong and Italy. She took this decision together with her husband as he could not find a job in the Philippines. Instead he agreed to take care of their children while Aida was working abroad. For Virginia, when her children started going to school and her husband was suffering from diabetes, she took the decision to go abroad to support them. Eddie, a single 29 year old, could not find a long-term job in the Philippines, despite his double bachelor degrees in economics and management.

Living and working in Europe

Working in Europe enabled the migrant workers interviewed to double their income. Anita earned between 600-800 euros a month while working as a freelance domestic worker in Italy. A huge increase compared to HK\$400 (40 euros) monthly salary in Hong Kong. Paz was able to supplement her 100 euro salary in France by taking part-time jobs such as dog-walking, etc. Eddie, who plans to join his ageing mother and grandmother in Italy this year, expects to earn more than the income he received while working in the Philippines. Eddie says that he is eyeing a job as a cashier in a cafeteria owned by the brother of his mother's boss. Only Anita was able to fund her own travel to Europe among those interviewed, by using her savings after working for 10 years in Hong Kong. Paz and Virginia were brought to Europe by their former employers who were EU citizens. In addition to the cost of travel, the stringent entry regulations in Europe also make it difficult for Filipino domestic workers to enter Europe, leading some to resort to a "backdoor" entry. Anita's case is a classic example of a backdoor entry to Europe. She paid a huge amount for a fake employer in Hong Kong who then arranged for her Schengen visa to Europe. Her papers identified her as travelling with an employer on a holiday in Europe. Anita flew via Moscow and Paris to Italy then procured a tourist visa and worked as a freelance domestic worker.

"My name is Anita. I went to Italy in 2004 as an irregular migrant, working as a freelance house cleaner. I stayed with my sister-in-law at first, then in various dormitories, but my living conditions were always uncomfortable. I could clean as many as three houses a day, to earn more money, but I got very tired. I didn't have a health card because I only had a tourist visa. I didn't have what they call there: 'permiso de soggiorno' [residence permit]. I just drank energy drinks to energise. I left Italy in 2007, suffering from stress and exhaustion."

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ALYSSA KARLA FADERA



Eddie. Papers almost ready. It won't be long before Eddie flies to Italy.

“I would work as a domestic help in the Philippines if I had good wages, social security and health benefits and paid vacation and sick leave.”

Paz, 52 years old,
single mother with four children
from Tarlac City.

Having a legal contract has a huge impact on working conditions. Paz and Virginia both had contracts and enjoyed the relative legal protection from their employers while working in Europe. Anita on the other hand, had to fend for herself in Italy as she did not have proper documents or an employment contract. She had no rest day, no bonuses, and no insurance and medical benefits. She could not even go to a hospital for fear of being arrested by immigration officers. The absence of access to medical service accompanied by overworking and constantly moving from one residence to another took their toll on Anita's health. She had a medical breakdown due to exhaustion, stress and later on was diagnosed with leukaemia. She returned home in 2007, separated from her husband and children.

Impact of migration on migrants and their contribution to society

Migrants support their family at home through their remittances, a portion of which goes to the government, thereby also supporting the state. As Neneth pointed out, by paying for their children's education they are also contributing to their country's future, reducing the number of children without an education and the number of poor, unsupported citizens. For Aida, her personal efforts as a migrant worker contributed little to the social and economic development of her home community and host society. For a long time, she had to repay the agency for her Overseas Employment Contract to the detriment of her family and personal life. She felt her life did not improve after thirteen years of working abroad. It was difficult to regain her children's affection and to rebuild family relations; also she was struggling to correct the misconceptions and bad reputation of her being a domestic worker abroad. At least, she was able to put a down payment on a lot on which to build the house and send her children to school.

In their host countries, the migrants felt their main contribution was to relieve their employers of their routine domestic tasks. Ironically, while freeing European women to remain in the labour market after motherhood, by looking after their children, these migrant women are unable to be with their own children. If domestic workers were to receive the normal minimum wage plus social security in the Philippines, the returned domestic workers interviewed said they would not have chosen to work abroad.

05. West Africa

LOSING VALUABLE MEDICAL STAFF FROM MALI AND SENEGAL

Case profile

- Mali and Senegal both rank low on the Human Development Index, in 160th and 144th place (out of 169) respectively in 2010.
- In 2009 per capita GDP in Mali was estimated at 852 euros and in Senegal at 1,288 euros¹⁹.
- An estimated 312,000 people emigrated from Mali in the period 1988-1992, out of a total population of about 13 million²⁰.
- In 2007, 112 million euros were sent to Mali by Malian emigrants, about 3.3% of GNP²¹.
- Official statistics for Senegal for the period 2003-2004 estimate the total number of emigrants at 648,600, out of a total population of 12.9 million²².
- Official remittances sent to Senegal amounted to the equivalent of 832 million euros in 2007 with at least as much sent informally. Total remittances represented 9.1% of GNP in 2007²³.
- The great majority of West African migrants stay within the African continent to live and work, but a significant and growing proportion are heading to Europe particularly the more educated, notably medical staff.
- Half of all trained doctors in Senegal now live and work abroad²⁴.

¹⁹⁻²¹ IOM

²² See the IOM publications on Mali http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/Mali_Profile_2009.pdf and Senegal: http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/Senegal_Profile_2009.pdf

²⁴ Omar Nd, August 2006, Working Paper Number 95 (Center for the Global Développement) Rapporteur de la CECAC pour les questions relatives au VIH/SIDA Au Sénégal plus de 50% des médecins formés exerçaient à l'étranger en 2003, (Ndoye, O. . 2010)

Qualified medical personnel from Mali and Senegal were interviewed about their experiences of work in their home countries, in other countries on the African continent, and in the countries of the North.



“My name is Cheikh and I am a paediatrician from Senegal. It was difficult to work properly there, we did not have the right equipment, just getting to work was complicated, and my salary did not reflect my skills or workload. I signed a contract with the hospital in Chartres [France], so I migrated legally. It means I can work with better equipment, I’m learning a lot and I earn more. The cost of living is high so I can’t afford to go and see my family, and there is some racial discrimination.”

Legal framework for migrant workers in West Africa

Both the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) have taken initiatives in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation to facilitate tripartite social dialogue and the integration of decent work in national policies. The WAEMU has set up a social dialogue council, although it has no specific policies to protect migrant workers. The ECOWAS 1979 Protocol guarantees protection for migrant workers in the region. In practice, these guarantees are undermined by the nature of international financial cooperation, such as the Economic Partnership Agreements, which go against the spirit of the international agreements and conventions protecting migrant workers. In recent negotiations between the European Union and the African Union, however, there has been an increased focus on social protection and decent work.

At EU level, the so called Blue Card Directive²⁵ provides a framework for the entry and employment of highly qualified migrant workers who are welcomed and provided with rights. At the same time, the draft of the not yet adopted directive on seasonal work is aimed at less skilled workers who will only be allowed to enter the European Union temporarily and with far fewer rights and guarantees.

Living and working at home in West Africa

Doctors in Mali and Senegal repeatedly cited the lack of decent working conditions, notably low wages, poor infrastructure and a badly managed system, in their home countries. Doctors in Senegal felt they were underpaid given their level of qualifications. Some, such as paediatrician Cheikh, complained of the poor quality of the equipment they had to work with, and the difficulty of travelling to the workplace. In Mali, says Maiga, the 50-year-old head doctor of a community health centre, doctors are faced with low pay (the equivalent of 183 euros per month on average for new doctors) and poor equipment, as well as poor training and the lack of a career structure, with little or no prospect of promotion. Samba, 37, another community health centre director, explained that although his salary was correct according to the civil service salary structure, it in no way reflected the quality or quantity of his work. Furthermore, his heavy workload (35 consultations per day plus administrative tasks) impacted on how efficiently he could work. Some were not able to find work appropriate to their skills, such as Traoré from Mali, a qualified general practitioner (GP) who resorted to odd jobs including hairdressing, sewing and even tyre repairs to make a living, or the radiologists who emigrated because in Mali they just did not have the equipment with which to do their job.

²⁵ Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment

Living and working conditions in Europe

The respondents' experiences of living and working abroad were very mixed. In general they encountered better pay, but sometimes long hours, several mentioned racial discrimination and the fact that they missed their families. One very positive experience of south/south migration was that of Goita, a newly qualified Malian GP who gradually lost her sight. Thanks to a cooperation agreement with Tunisia, she studied there for four years and qualified as a physiotherapist. Sadly she has never been able to find a job in Mali. She also appreciated the opportunities in Europe. *"European countries have more opportunities for the disabled, particularly the highly skilled."* Alkaou, a 31-year-old doctor specialised in medical imagery, spoke of his a negative experience in Europe. *"We are often mistreated in Europe and given jobs below our level of training. When I was in Toulouse I encountered racist attitudes. I was called "darkie", instead of being called by my name and one trainer commented that he had seen black cleaners, black stretcher bearers but never black radiologists."* Alassane, 33, specialised in neuro-radiology, had a more positive view of working in France however, noting that he could work with far more specialised equipment, and that is was therefore more satisfying professionally. *"My aim was to get better basic clinical training. In Mali we have not got the right materials or sufficient training."*

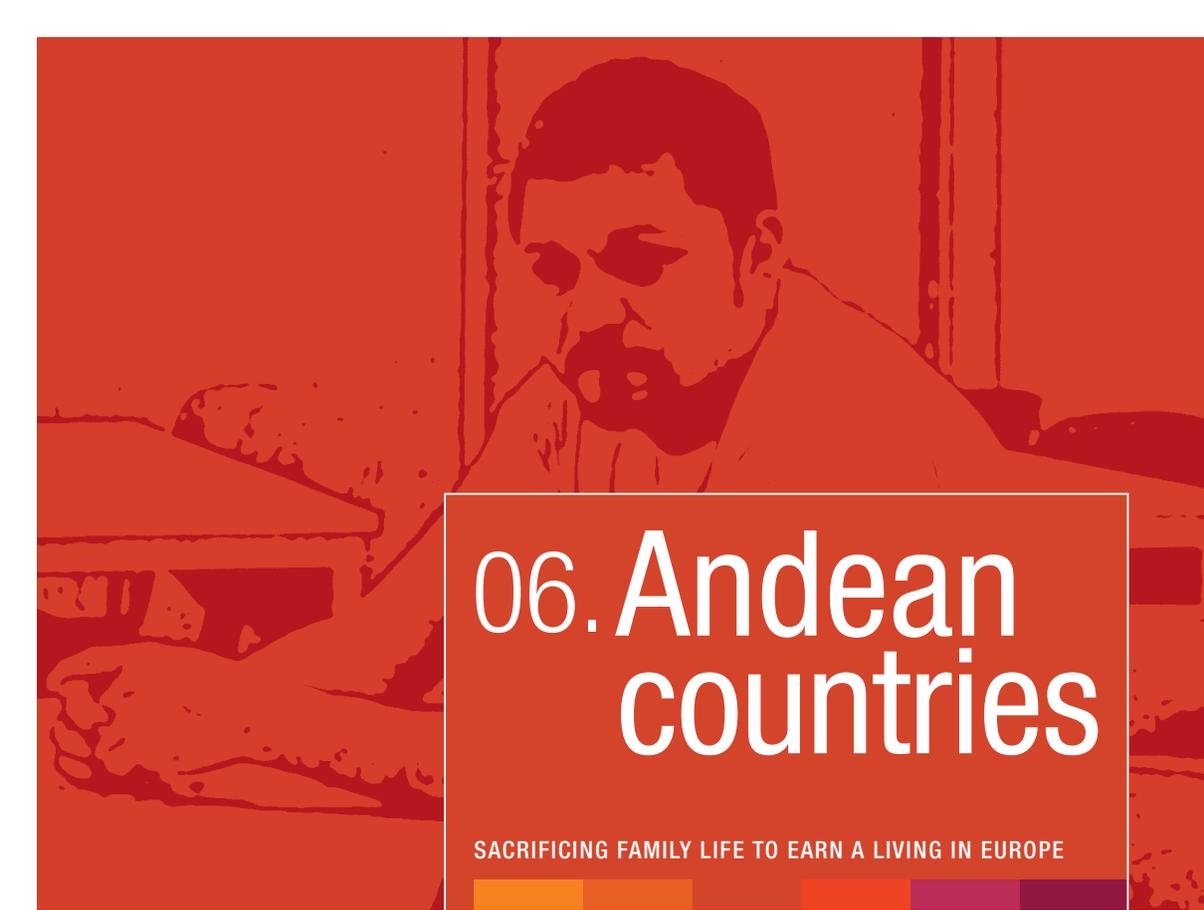
Impact of migration on migrants and their contribution to society

Migrants who went to live in Europe feel their main contribution to the host country is through the payment of their taxes. At the same time they contribute to their home country by sending money to their families, which for many was the primary motivation of their decision to migrate. According to the Senegalese Foreign Ministry, remittances from Senegalese nationals living abroad amounted to 7.6% of GDP in 2008. Figures from 2002 show that remittances from Malian migrants to their home country amounted to 6.67%.

Return migration was viewed as very positive, as returnees can bring back their skills and experience and drive up standards in their home country, contributing to their country's development. Several respondents were dubious that people would return however. *"They know the situation and some have emigrated a second time after failing to find decent work in their home country"* says Traoré. Another problem, says 32-year-old midwife Djélika, is that some people are trained abroad in special skills that are simply not applicable in Mali, which is a waste of resources and a huge loss for a developing country. To stay or return home, the respondents would like to see better pay, better training, more investment in equipment and infrastructure, and a better career structure.

"If living and working conditions at home were better, I'd go back."

Cheikh



06. Andean countries

SACRIFICING FAMILY LIFE TO EARN A LIVING IN EUROPE

Case profile

- Latin America has one of the highest levels of migration worldwide with 19.72 million people according to the Human Development Index (HDI) leaving South America for the North of the continent in 2009, with a further 3.13 million going to Europe.
- Despite 15 years of economic growth (Colombia, Peru and Ecuador now rank in the medium to high development range on the HDI), migration from the four Andean countries of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru has risen steadily owing to continued high levels of unemployment, social exclusion and inequality. Economic and political instability as well as violent conflicts are also major driving forces for migration. Nearly half of these migrants (47.42%) go to other countries in South America, for example to Argentina and Chile, while 28.52% migrate to North America, and 12.5% to Europe²⁶.

Five migrants from the region, two from Peru, one from Bolivia, one from Colombia and one from Ecuador, were interviewed about their experience of living and working in Spain, and in the case of one Peruvian, in Italy and England as well.

²⁶ Julio Gamero "Migrantes y migración en la región Andina" (2009), Andean Consultative Labour Council.

Legal framework for Andean migrant workers

Agreements have been signed with Spain, the principal European country of destination for the Andean countries, aimed at protecting migrant workers' rights. The Agreement Regulating Labour Migration Flows between Spain and Colombia, for example, establishes that workers from both countries have the right to work under "regular" conditions as migrants, while the Social Security Agreement between Colombia and Spain asserts the rights of migrants and seeks to improve migration policy between the two countries. The Migration Cooperation Agreement between Spain and Peru seeks to promote training for staff working on migration issues, and the exchange of information to improve cooperation on migration. Many migrants do not have legal status, however, and are therefore not protected by such agreements.

Living and working at home in Andean countries

The women interviewed were unable to find work in their own countries, other than Milagros who struggled to live on her earnings from low-paid informal sector activities. A study of the booming agricultural sector however suggests that working conditions are poor. According to research by the Labour Development Programme (PLADES) in 2008-2009, average salaries in agribusiness in the Ica region of Peru for example (which employs a high proportion of low-skilled women) were 19.5 soles (4.60 euros) per day, for 11 hour days. Health and safety conditions are hazardous, as the work involved exposure to strong sunlight, sudden changes in temperature and to fertilizers and pesticides. Some workers do not have social security cover and therefore no health care, unless they pay for it themselves. According to the Catholic University of Peru, 52% of the workers they surveyed did not have an employment contract, and 44% had no social cover. The average monthly wage of 59% of those surveyed was 585 soles per month (152 euros), barely 30 soles above the minimum wage. As for trade unions, there are very few, employers ban them and harass those who are members.

Living and working in Spain

Andean workers in Spain tend to occupy low skilled jobs in the service or agricultural sector, with little job security. Many are in the country illegally, and therefore do not enjoy labour or social rights. Male migrants often find themselves in precarious jobs, in construction, trade, agriculture and the lower end of the service industry, even if they have university degrees, but the pay is still more than they would earn at home. Women migrants tend to work mainly in domestic service, as well as caring for children, the elderly or sometimes tourism. They can often be vulnerable to exploitation and severe restrictions. Claudia from Ecuador recalls that when she was employed as a child carer she "worked 12, sometimes 15 hours a day, and could only go out at weekends". Her employers helped her apply for legal status, but several attempts were met with rejection. Maria Teresa from Colombia said that when she worked in a bar she had a set starting time but no finishing time. "Sometimes I worked until three in the morning. If customers wanted to stay until five, I worked until five. I was not paid as much as a Spanish waiter – but it was still good pay." Milagros, a Peruvian migrant, worked on a CD assembly



"My name is Miguel and I come from Bolivia. There is no work there, and I had to find a way to support my wife and daughter, so I came to Spain, like my brother before me. I was an illegal migrant but I found work in the agricultural sector. Agricultural workers in Spain are no more educated than at home, and because of their ignorance I encountered racist attitudes. Migrant workers suffer police harassment, and I was even treated badly in the supermarket, where I had to let Spanish clients go first."

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"I was lonely in Spain and missed my country. I would have gone home much sooner, but it was hard to save up because life in Spain is more expensive than you think. I would never have left my country if we had had better opportunities there."

Miguel, Bolivia.

²⁷ According to the World Bank, remittances in 2007 amounted more than double the amount of official development aid. Furthermore, while there are no global figures to confirm this, women seem to send more money home than men because of their strong family ties and concern for their children's welfare.

²⁸ ANSIÓN, Juan, Rosa Aparicio and Pedro Nel (editors). Más allá de las remesas. Familias de migrantes en América Latina. (English: Beyond remittances. Migrants' families in Latin America). CISEPA, Federación Internacional de Universidades Católicas (FIUC). Lima, 2009. Pp. 32.

line, where she had to work eight hour shifts without a break and was not allowed to sit down. The pay was good however (5.75 euros per hour), compared to what she would earn at home. Another issue mentioned by the women was discrimination and being snubbed by Spanish colleagues, owing to the poor image of Latin Americans in Spain.

The impact of migration on migrants and their contribution to society

According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), migrants' remittances to Bolivia and Ecuador amounted to 9% and 8% of GDP respectively, while in Colombia and Peru they amounted to 3% of GDP²⁷. The money was used principally to support the migrants' families, to pay for the health care and education costs of family members and to invest in property or business ventures. *"I have bought an apartment in Lima with my savings, and I am getting it ready to rent out"* says Milagros from Peru. Remittances are now set to fall however, as a result of the recent international economic crisis, which has meant less work for migrants in the US and Spain. On a more personal level, migration can have a strong impact on family life. The separation it imposes is very difficult for the families concerned, and it can change the whole structure of the family, the assignment of roles and family relations²⁸. More broadly, remittances contribute to the development of the home country while the migrants themselves, if they return, can become agents of development by bringing with them their human and financial capital, and in some cases social capital (networks and access to savings).

Conclusions

From the European studies, it is very clear that for most of the migrants concerned, their principal motivation was the lack of job opportunities and/or decent pay and working conditions that drove them to migrate, in some cases – notably medical staff – depriving their own countries of skilled workers. Many said that if conditions had been better at home they would not have left. The regional studies paint a similar picture, but also show from the migration flows that migration within their own region is still far greater than to Europe and North America, although trends vary.

TAKE ACTION
Migrant workers
have rights!

In addition to the fundamental and human rights that all migrants should enjoy, there are a number of international conventions applicable specifically to migrant workers, notably:

- The UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
- ILO Convention 97 on Migration for Employment
- ILO Convention 143 on Migrant Workers.

Yet while many countries from the South have ratified the UN Convention, not a single EU Member State has done so. Similarly, only eight EU Member States (Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the UK) have ratified ILO Convention 97 while just four, Cyprus, Italy, Slovenia and Sweden, have ratified C143.

Give your support and

- Ask your government to ratify these three core conventions
- Get involved in national debates on migration and development
- Help organise migrant workers' associations in your town
- Encourage migrant workers to become members of trade unions

About the project

“Decent Work for All! Making Migration work for Development” is a three-year project (2010-2013) which aims to raise awareness among European citizens and policy-makers about the links between development, migration and decent work; as well as the need to guarantee equal basic rights for all workers in the EU, irrespective of their origin or legal status.

SOLIDAR is carrying out this project with seven member organisations: ADO SAH ROM (Romania), Czech Council on Foreign Relations (Czech Republic), ISCOD (Spain), ISCOS (Italy), Solidarité Laïque (France), Pour la Solidarité (Belgium) and Progetto Sviluppo (Italy).

Find out more on www.solidar.org

About Decent Work

The four strategic objectives of Decent Work:

- access to freely chosen employment (including equal treatment and equal opportunities;
- fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards (including the right to organise and to bargain collectively and freedom from discrimination;
- social protection and social security;
- social dialogue (including the right to be represented) and tripartism.

solidar

SOLIDAR is a European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide. **SOLIDAR** voices the concerns of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the policy sectors social affairs, international cooperation and lifelong learning.

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