High-Level Task Force for the ICPD

Are We Really Leaving Nobody Behind?

Equality & Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All

Side event on the occasion of the Beijing +20 Commemoration

Commission on the Status of Women

Speech by Barbara Young

New York, 10 March 2015

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Thank you, -Laura------as an immigrant women, this video is very troubling for me to see and it’s not new. You all have just witness, migrant women workers facing a range of rights violations of their labor rights, lack of pay and leisure time, sexual abuse, and harassment even being deprived of food.

According to the latest published records there are 230 million International migrants worldwide, which nearly half of them are women, and many more women migrate within their own Country from rural areas to City hubs. Seeking better opportunities, and the prospect of greater freedoms.

From Nursing and factory work to agriculture or the Care economy migrant women workers contribute to Local, National, and Global economies, to the growth of industries, tax bases, the domestic workers contribute to the well being and prosperity of their employers taking on the care of their employers homes and the nurturing care and love for the children of their employers, allowing then to pursue their professional Careers. The remittances from migrant women workers are also the lifeline to their relatives and children living in poverty back home.

Gender discrimination also makes migrant women workers more susceptible to rights violations and abuse, especially for those in low income and unregulated sectors of the economy jobs such as domestic work puts them’ behind closed doors’ making them invisible without legal protections and increase their risks. In the absence of laws or enforcement policies permitting family reunification or travel, many women may spend years without seeing their own children grow up back home.” We need to take care of the caregivers.”
Currently here in the US only 27% of all employment visas are issued to women and the majority of women migrating through legal channels are dependent on their employers or husbands visas when they have no visa this entraps them in abusive and exploitive situations with little or no legal recourse, this compounded by the lack of knowledge of their rights and sometimes language barriers. Impunity for such abuses is still the norm. And we should not forget in these U.N halls, the cases of Diplomatic immunity this have to end, giving women the right to report abuses and violations and for violators to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Sexual and reproductive rights violations can start as soon as women leave home rape during journey to the destination countries is so common in some migration streams that women and girls take contraception before they leave to avoid pregnancy. Mandatory HIV testing, mandatory pregnancy testing and forced sterilization and other violations. If they test positive for HIV results may be reported to their employers trampling their rights to privacy and confidentially and they can end up being fired or deported, This put women at risks and keeps them from reporting abuse or seeking health services.

What are the solutions: We need to Ratify and align national polices and legislation with international human rights standards and international conventions that protect the rights of migrants women workers such as the convention on the protection of migrant workers, (CEDAW) which only 47 States have ratified the committee’s recommendation calls for migrant women to be able to denounce abuses regardless of migration status and ensure access to legal aid justice and shelters. And the ILO Convention 189 on “decent work for domestic workers,” 2011 which was ratified by 17 countries.

Local authorities have a huge role to play. A leading example is the New York State domestic workers Bill of Rights 2010 It took us 6 years the first of it’s kind in the nation granting domestic workers time off, overtime pay, protections from discriminations and inclusion in NY labor laws. Undocumented workers are entitled to these rights when employed as a domestic worker.

We must end Visa dependency on employers and husbands that undermine women’s safety and rights, We must advocate for clear solutions and accessible pathways to citizenship that will allow all migrant women workers to come out of the shadows and e-elevate their fares that they can fully contribute to their communities.

Finally we need to support grassroots organizations and networks of migrant women. To sustain advocacy for rights and protections and provide essentials support to other migrant women to inform of awareness of their rights. To enable women to break free from unjust and slave like conditions. These migrant women have already travelled far in Geography and in life challenges their resiliencies is what makes them thrive despite all the adversities.
Much more can be done to protect women workers rights and to end Impunity with sound ethical legal and policy protections

Thank you.