

World Day against Trafficking in Persons: ICMC calls for the implementation of effective legal systems

Geneva, 30 July 2015 - On the occasion of [World Day against Trafficking in Persons](#), the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) calls for more cooperation among governments, international agencies, businesses, and NGOs to implement effective legal systems that prevent and combat human trafficking and forced labor.

More than 21 million people worldwide are victims of forced labor. People are being sold, exploited or offered a promising future against money. Almost 19 million victims are exploited by private individuals or enterprises, who consider them as mercantile objects and a source of revenue. Forced labor has become a profitable business, generating an estimated 150 billion USD each year.

Lured by the prospect of a job abroad, many migrant workers often end up in forced labor mainly in the domestic work, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and entertainment sectors. Without proper norms and laws, safe migration routes and clear rules for employment agencies, labor mobility remains a trap for the many who are seeking a better future abroad.

In the Philippines, millions of labor migrants turn to employment agencies or other intermediaries to obtain jobs as domestic helpers or caregivers in the richest countries of Asia, the Gulf and the Middle East. Once in the new country, they often face exploitation and abuse: deprived of their documents and indebted for many years, they remain at the mercy of abusive employers.

Sally* is one of the many Filipinos recruited by an agency in the Philippines. She was offered a job in Malaysia as a caregiver. After signing a contract written in a foreign language without translation, Sally discovered that she was bound to 16 hours of work seven days a week and had very limited rights. "I arrived in Malaysia in March, and 26 April was my first rest day", she remembers. "The family would only give me small amounts of food. I was constantly exhausted and in pain. When I complained about my weakness, they only gave me a painkiller".

In April, Sally was hit by her employer. When she reported the incident to the recruitment agency, she was advised not to submit any complaint, since she didn't have bruises or wounds to provide evidence. In May, the employer tried to hit her again, and she fought back. "As a result, my contract was terminated and I was sent away. My employer didn't even allow me to collect my belongings."

11.4 million women and girls worldwide end up in similar situations. International standards and initiatives to promote fair recruitment practices and prevent human trafficking need to be effectively implemented. The civil society's [5-year 8-point Plan for Collaboration](#), the ["Stockholm Agenda" on migrant and migration-related goals and targets](#), the recent [proposal of the European Commission to combat smugglers and traffickers](#), the [ILO Fair Recruitment Initiative](#), and the [IOM Initiative on Ethical Recruitment](#) are good steps forward, but need to be given the necessary political support, financial means and global commitment.

** The name was changed to protect the person's identity.*