

JOINT STATEMENT BY

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Agenda Item No. 7: Half-day discussion on Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration

Respected Madam Chairperson, distinguished members of the UN-Permanent Forum, and fellow indigenous participants from around the world,

This statement gives a short summary of a case study regarding migration of young tribal women/girls as domestic workers and their serious situation in New Delhi. It should be noted that there are also migration of young boys, children as bounded laborers or seasonal construction workers and other kinds of migration too.

Though there has never been a comprehensive survey, serious NGO's estimate that the number of young tribal women could be somewhere between 80 to 100 thousand in New Delhi alone. There are more than 500 agencies of all kinds in the city who mediate/arrange/supply these young women. Some of these are run by tribal youth but many of them are run by non-tribals who often hire tribals both in villages and in cities to ensure a steady supply.

These agencies charge a first month's salary and a good sum as a registration fee. Once the girls are brought to the so-called "placement agency" they are made/compelled to sign a "contract" which binds them for a minimum of eleven months or similar period without break. This way they are made practically helpless. The real problems are far too complex since the business involves huge sums of money and there are many other groups including gangsters to authorities who are directly or indirectly involved in the matter.

The situation of the girls is more than pitiful. Many of them do not get a regular salary. Mistreatment, physical and mental harassment, as well as rape are very common. Four killings have been officially reported during the last six months. The real number should be very high. Cases of human trafficking and forced prostitution as well as AIDS and HIV positive cases have been reported. In reality, there is hardly anybody to look after them although there are a few sincere NGO's who show concern but are unable to solve such vast problems. There are many NGO's who claim to work for their welfare but most of them are engaged in making money out of their misery.

Poverty, unemployment, lack of future perspective, and ignorance maybe some factors that contribute to their migration. However, the extreme inhumane exploitation by the dominant society with all kinds of tricks cannot be overlooked. They often give serious and Christian names to their agencies because most of the girls are come from tribal Christian backgrounds. Many/most of them are misguided and believe that they are going to work for a religious or serious organization.

This is a brief narration of a case study but it seems that in reality that the problem is taking vast international dimension in the third world countries. Therefore, it is suggested that this matter should be taken very seriously from the UN/human community. ILO/World Bank may/should take up this problem and perhaps take steps to organize international workshops/seminars in order to analyze, find out and implement steps towards a solution.

May I thank you Madam Chairperson, respected members of the Permanent Forum, and my fellow participants for your kind listening.