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PAMUN XVII RESEARCH REPORT— QUESTION OF LABOUR MIGRATION

Introduction of Topic

The International Organization for Migration defines labor migration as ‘the movement of people from one country to another for the purpose of employment’. This is as opposed to a humanitarian migrant, or a refugee, who would move to a different country to escape persecution out of fear of death or some other such atrocity. Humanitarian migration is considered a human right which is fairly universally acknowledged. In comparison, labor migration is considered the type of migration which happens by choice. This makes it very controversial as, in the view of certain citizens of the receiving nation, the immigrants could be opportunistic and greedy without any thought for the citizens of the country they’re migrating to. The International Labor Organization (ILO), along with numerous other international organizations, instead believe that labor migration can be beneficial in many respects and that labor migrants deserve to have their human rights protected as they are often vulnerable to exploitation.

Labor Migration has been described as as ‘one of the best ways to reduce poverty in developing countries while also benefiting employers and residents of receiving countries’. The destination country is able to benefit from a larger labor pool meaning more people with different talents are available for employers to choose from. This allows research and innovation to occur more efficiently as there is no shortage of talents. Furthermore, destination countries can receive tax from the migrants’ income and as such have more resources to invest in social infrastructure and economic growth. The country of origin also sees benefits in terms of the remittance that migrants send back home to family, friends, or other relevant entities. This introduces labour migration in the context of a stimulant for economic growth and paints it as economically favorable which would lead us to implement measures to maximize its economic benefits.

The process of traveling to the destination country can be costly and difficult for the migrant and, as such, reaffirms the importance of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) that ‘promotes the... safe and regular migration of people’. By tying it in with the SDG in such a manner regarding the migrant’s safety, we can see labor migration from a humanitarian perspective, which would encourage us to implement measures to ensure migrants’ human rights as well as from a legal perspective as helping migrants safely and legally reach their destination country would significantly decrease the reliance of migrants on illegal methods of transportation provided by traffickers and smugglers who have little regard for safety or the law.

In order to address either of the two aforementioned facets of this issue, it's important to be aware of them both. As was shown above, the two are clearly very closely related and it's impossible to have an overview of the topic of Labor Migration without them both and therefore those two facets will be the focus of this research report, although delegates should remember that simply reading this research report will not leave them sufficiently prepared for debate. Any implementing of a new measure, regardless of whether it concerns economic or humanitarian action, should be done with awareness of both topics as neither aspect exists in isolation.

Definition of Key Terms

Migrant

A migrant is someone who moves from their home country to another country. This can include refugees as well as economic migrants and can designate either a temporary or permanent move. This word places particular focus on the action of moving as a whole rather than putting focus on either the exit from a country or entrance into a country. A labor migrant is a person undertaking labor migration with the goal of finding employment in another country.

Emigrant

This word designates a person who is leaving their home country with the goal of making a home in another. This word places focus on the action of exiting one country e.g. 'This emigrant left his home country several years ago for France to give his children a better life.' An emigrant intends to make their home somewhere else, meaning that they do not intend to come back and reside in their country of origin.

Immigrant

An immigrant is a person who has entered a new country with intent to settle down. This refers to a migrant who intends to reside permanently in the country they've entered. This word puts focus on the fact that the person is entering, or has entered, a new country to live there.

Country of Origin

This is the country the migrant is emigrating from.

Country of Destination or Receiving Country

This is the country the migrant is immigrating to to find employment.

Remittance

This term designates the money that labor migrants send back to their country of origin to family members, friends, their community etc. In other words, it is money the migrant makes through their employment in the country of destination that ends up in the country origin.

Economic Shock

This term refers to a, usually unpredictable, occurrence that results has significant impact on an economy despite having taken place outside of it. Generally, this change will affect the supply and demand in that economy.

Fiscal Position (of an immigrant)

In this research report, the fiscal position of an immigrant can be taken to mean their social and tax related contributions to the receiving country with relation to the individual benefits they get from said country. For example, a migrant who doesn't work and contributes nothing to the government of the country but sends his/her children to school, making use of the public education system of the country, is in a bad fiscal position as they contribute relatively little compared with how much they get from the country.

Background Information

In order to understand this subject, it is important to distinguish between a migrant, a labor migrant, and an immigrant or emigrant. Knowing someone is a migrant doesn't tell us the motivation behind their migration or for how long they intend to stay a migrant. A labor migrant is a migrant who has migrated with the distinct purpose of finding employment. An immigrant, or emigrant, is someone who moved with the intent of settling in another country. The distinction between immigrant and emigrant is purely semantic in nature, depending only on whether the context is meant to accent the act of leaving or the act of entering a new place. The difference between a labor migrant and a immigrant/emigrant lies in the purpose motivating their migration. While both intend to reside permanently in a country other than their home country, only a labor migrant, by definition, seeks employment. This is relevant to understand the motivation behind and causes of labor migration. According to a study conducted on some of the migrants who made up a recent influx of labor migration to Punjab, the major factors that motivated their migration were higher wages and more employment available to them. This means that those migrants, whose motivations can be fairly confidently extrapolated to be the motivations of most labor migrants, given the fundamental nature of a labor migrant, felt that the employment options or wages were not good enough in their home countries for them to stay. It follows, then, that labor migration can stem from economic crises or recessions, or be common in countries where the economic infrastructure is not very stable, or even non-existent; in this context it is a logical decision for a family to decide that sending

someone to migrate will be worth the cost or struggle of actually sending them there in return for the benefits that will come to the family in terms of the migrant's remittance.

Regarding Economic Stimulation

The impacts of labor migration, of course, will vary depending on the state of the receiving country's economy as well as the skillset of the migrant in question, however, certain generalities can be considered. British studies have shown that overall wages have not seen any significant change, however if we look at the wage earning groups separately we see an impact. The Migration Observatory of Oxford University found that higher and medium wage earners were shown to see a positive change in their wage; meanwhile, lower wage earners, saw a negative change in their wages which allows the wage average to remain steady. They also found, however, that the greatest impact on wages was experienced by workers resident who are, in fact, migrants themselves.

According to the ILO, as of 2013, there were around 232 million international migrants, approximately 150 million of which were labor migrants. Not all of those migrants are the same. Migrants go into many different occupations; they can represent between 15 and 22% of people entering the occupations with large growth depending on the region and they can represent 24-28% of the people joining the sectors that are declining such as craft) showing that migrants can help revive dying occupations or fill labor shortages for certain occupations. The mobility of migrants between different countries is another important point that Christophe de Bassompierre, a delegate of Belgium to the United Nations, highlighted as being beneficial to both the country of origin and the receiving country. This is because the free movement in the European Union allows for migrants, both from inside the European Union and outside of it, to move freely as the demand for labor changes. A study has estimated that a significant portion of labor market shock has been absorbed by this mobility. Given that a recent study (Dixon) has drawn an 'unambiguous' link between labor market shocks and unemployment, that isn't insignificant. Contrary to that is that the Migration Observatory in Oxford found evidence that migration from outside the European Union could result in a an unfavorable impact on the employment of native-born workers. They also discovered that the scale of this impact was inversely proportional to the education of the native-born worker in question. In other words, workers who are less educated are more impacted by the negative effects migrant labor than their better educated native-born counterparts. Regarding employment, they found that the impact of migrant labor to a host countries employment prospects also depends on whether the migrant's skills compete with the skills of the native-born or whether they, instead, fill in a labor shortage.

A third factor to keep in mind is the fact that many new labor migrants are young and economically active. Introducing people of this demographic lowers the dependency ratios particularly of European countries with generous welfare states because it lowers the ratio of older people who rely on retirement from the government to young economically active people who contribute to the welfare state through tax. The final factor to consider is the skillset or education level different migrants possess. Low

educated immigrants actually have better fiscal positions than their native low educated counterparts; in situations where their fiscal positions aren't better, this can be due to low wages rather than any increase in dependence on social welfare.

More recently, younger labor migrants tend to be better educated. The number of migrants with a tertiary education in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries has increased by about 70% over the decade of 2004-2014 with the total coming to 30 million in 2010/2011. In the United States skilled immigrants have been shown to ameliorate research, innovation, and technological advancement.

Regarding Humanitarian Issues

Migrant workers have long been considered a very vulnerable population. Due to the fact that they often are not aware of the language and/or language of the country of destination, unscrupulous employers find them easy to exploit. Particularly undocumented workers who can be blackmailed into receiving pay way beneath what it should be and in some cases, even no pay at all. Particularly unskilled, or low skilled, workers in more manual or physical labor related fields tend to experience more severe violations of their rights. Migrant workers are often the targets of employers who are seeking to avoid paying for pensions. They can misreport the number of hours a week of the worker and force them to work over the legal limit. They can blackmail the migrant workers by threatening to not allow them to renew their visas and/or other legal paperwork. The scope of migrant worker grievances as well as the scope of their respective severities is large and therefore there is no way to succinctly list them all.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

International Labour Organization (ILO)

The International Labor Organization, a UN agency, is a major player concerning labor migrants. Labor migration is a major topic and it often acts to help both nations and migrants. It fights for migrants' human rights and endeavors to show nations that migration can be beneficial. They host forums and conferences to allow discourse and the sharing of data and information. In recent times, they have even launched an international media competition ("[ILO Launches 2017 Global Media Competition on Labor Migration.](#)") to encourage awareness and the spreading of information regarding labor migration. They have a multiplicity of projects in progress, both with others and of our own, such as the Integrated Program on Fair Recruitment (FAIR) or facilitating talks between China and the European Union about labour migration ("[Projects on Labor Migration \(Labor Migration\).](#)"). In order to find out more about our involvement, as the ILO, visit our [Labor Migration topic portal](#).

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Another major player in this area is the IOM; in fact, the ILO, has collaborated quite often with the IOM in the past on many programs and projects. This organization is currently the UN migration agency,

working as the ILO's counterpart in this topic. This organization is involved in 70 countries and works to help migrants, governments, employers and in conjunction with other organization. The IOM's work is quite analogous to the ILO's: they work to maximize the effects of labor migration on development as well as working to improve the conditions and rights of migrants and their families socially and economically. They are particularly invested in encouraging regular and safe migration pathways to stop irregular (illegal) migration and have such have launched programs such as the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) which is a system that allows employers and migrants to enjoy ethical and correct recruitment of migrant laborers. For more information on the IOM and their work visit [their Labor Migration page](#).

The United States of America (USA)

According the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the America is the country with the most international migrant residents in the world. The number of international migrants in America increased from 35 million to 47 million in the period from 2000-2015. That has led to many benefits. The increase in migrant workers employed in STEM field was found to increase the productivity of native-born workers which allowed for an increase in the average salaries of college educated workers of 7-8% and an increase of 3-4% for less educated workers. Additionally, immigrants tend to live in big cities or generally more metropolitan areas. These areas, due to population density, tend to be the most productive. They find employment and are economically active in these areas, which has led the average productivity of the US to increase.

India

According to the UNDESA, India is the country with the largest diaspora on Earth with about sixteen million Indian-born people living outside of India. Emigration started under British colonization when Indians of low socio-economic class migrated between British colonies. Nowadays, though, Indian emigrants represent the most educated group of immigrants to the United States of America. This has allowed the steady growth in the amount of remittances India received every year, growing from \$2.8 billion in 1980 to \$50 billion in 2009. This accounted for almost 5% of India's GDP at the time. This has resulted in many benefits for India, for example it has, allowed India to engage in more trade and it has helped the value of the rupee exchange rate stabilize among many other things.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 18 December 1990 (**A/RES/45/158**)
- ILO Resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector, 1993

- Resolution concerning a fair deal for migrant workers in a global economy, 2004 (**ILC 2004 Resolution on Migrant Workers**)
- ILO Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labor underutilization, 2013

Main Issues

As was previously explained, there are two types of issues that can be tackled: humanitarian and economic. Economic issues could include tackling the root of the problem: the fact that people are having to emigrate. The disparity between economic opportunities in developing and developed nations must be addressed. Also there are many developing countries experiencing economic difficulties who could be helped. Next would be tackling the negative effects that labor migration can have on host countries. This could include addressing the fact that migrants with certain skillsets could help solve shortages in the labor market while others would depress the average wages in that country and have adverse effects on the employment prospects. Another issue, related, would be that countries who feel they are receiving too big an influx of labor migration aren't collaborating enough with the countries of origin to try to find a compromise and work out agreements that could help development and diplomatic relations as well as migration. This would also include figuring out how to ameliorate the fiscal position of the migrant workers. Another economic issue could be the fact that there is a lot of public debate about migrants impeding any progress from happening so perhaps informing the public of the economic benefits of migrants could fall under this. Countries such as Spain and Sweden were able to pass legislation that favored migration because they were able to introduce migration as a conduit for economic growth.

Humanitarian issues include the fact that migrants are being exploited due to their lack of cultural understanding and integration with regards to the destination country. These two factors also contribute to the bad image many people have, especially recently, of labor migrants. Another humanitarian issue is the fact that there are undocumented workers who live in fear of exposure and as such are extorted by their employers. They have to accept extremely low wages which then depress the wages for the natives of the country too, lowering the standards of living for all the people in that occupation. Another issue is that migrants are having to undergo perilous, and expensive, ordeals to arrive at their country of destination. There is no system in place to ensure the regularity and safety of passage for legal migrants from one country to another.

Possible Solutions

The ILO has been a long-time proponent of its 'Fair Migration Agenda', which outlines the objectives the ILO is committed to fighting against. One of the objectives is 'Respecting the human

rights, including labour rights, of all migrants' and a similar one is 'Countering unacceptable situations through the promotion of the universal exercise of "Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work"'. Working towards those would involve protecting the migrant laborers from abuse and protecting the rights the UN and the ILO, a UN agency, give to them. For example, a lot of problems migrants have such as being paid illegally low wages or being charged overpriced rents for practically uninhabitable units stem from migrants not being fluent enough in the language of the receiving country and/or not being integrated into their country of destination due to a cultural divide. To solve this integration programs could be devised. These could be run by governments, who could see at as bettering the social conditions of their countries both for the migrants and for their citizens who don't necessarily benefit from an unintegrated group of immigrants. Alternatively, they could also be run by employers, who would be making an investment by giving their employees language skills and cultural knowledge which could help them be more productive in the long run. Regarding the exploitation of undocumented workers, it could be possible to explore opening legal channels of recruitment in sectors with rampant undocumented worker problems. It would be a good idea to familiarize yourself with previous resolutions and projects regarding migrant rights both from the ILO and other organizations so that you know what we're generally aiming for and what our goals are as an organization not just what the goal of the country being represented is.

Regarding the Economic Issues, the ILO has an objective that reads 'Making migration a choice and not a necessity, by creating decent work opportunities in countries of origin' which refers to the idea of targeting the cause behind labour migration. This could involve sending aid to nations or regions that are suffering economic downturns or are developing areas. This would give these regions the resources they need to invest in infrastructure and the economy allowing opportunities to improve in home countries. People could be less inclined to abandon their home country if they saw more opportunities for employment being created. The ILO also endeavours to "Promote bilateral agreements for well-regulated and fair migration between member States", which would mean improving relations between countries that would allow countries to agree on mutually beneficial levels of migration. An idea would be to encourage agreements between developed and developing nations that would link development policy with migration policy. This could mean, for example, drafting agreements that encourage developing nations to control the flow of labour emigration by providing them with aid if they maintain migration from their country at a certain level.

Another objective is 'Ensuring fair recruitment and equal treatment of migrant workers to prevent exploitation and level the playing field with nationals.' Regarding this, it would also be a good idea to think of finding ways to, either through the government, or through employers, train migrants and give them skills as it might allow them to become highly skilled, thereby boosting innovation and research as previously mentioned. It could also be a good idea to determine which skills should be taught as the type of skill a worker has could allow that worker to find employment in a sector that has a shortage of labour.

In terms of more general solutions, it would be beneficial to investigate the factors that help migrants find employment, and thereby improve their fiscal position. Also, it would be important to be aware of the public perception of migrants and how people tend to be misinformed about the impact of having migrant labour in their country so exploring ways to correct the public view and widely believed conventional wisdom in this respect. While drafting resolutions regarding economic issues, it is also important to keep in mind that policy regarding migrants must also be coherent with national policy.

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