

Learning from Participating in the 26th Session of the UN Committee on Migrant Workers during the hearing on Bangladesh from 3-4th April 2017 – a report from Nayela Akter

Migrant Forum Asia (MFA) mobilised a six-member delegation of CSOs from Bangladesh, Singapore, and Philippines who were actively engaged in preparing shadow reports to present during the 26th Session of the Committee on Migrant Worker's Rights. Bangladesh was being reviewed for the first time since it ratified the Convention on Migrant Workers on 24th August 2011. Five of these delegates were DTP alumni. The shadow report from CSOs in Bangladesh was an outcome of a capacity building training for migrants' rights organisation CSOs on developing shadow reports and using instruments and processes to raise a voice for migrant workers. The report was reviewed several times and incorporated inputs from experts, DTP participants, their concerned organisations and CSOs from the country through a consultative process.

The physical presence of the CSO representatives during the hearing and having their statement delivered before the Committee with constant engagement with the Committee during the two days' hearing with the Government of Bangladesh, was worth all the hard work over the last year. Being present there and presenting those issues made it easier to convince the Committee about the magnitude of the problems that had been mentioned in the shadow report. MFA deserves thanks for all its efforts in mobilising resources and organising the meeting! MFA colleagues also arranged additional meetings with representative of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, the ILO and attendance at the first initial discussion on of GFMD on Global Compact in Geneva on 6th of April.

The process of engaging with CSOs on shadow report drafting and the process of nominating representatives have created a momentum for them to work together after GFMD. The fact that the Committee has come up with recommendations in which their views are reflected has been encouraging for CSOs and has underlined the importance of working together to raise issues concerning migration and to engage with Government on advocacy in a unified and common voice as a platform rather than working in isolation. This is especially relevant in a situation where the space for NGOs has become so limited.

It is important for the CSOs now to take stock of best practice and to remain united on the issues. It is also important to generate joint advocacy plans to create pressure on the government on implementing the recommendations and to create awareness among the CSOs, media representatives and above all the migrant workers themselves. Already the media and CSOs have taken the recommendations seriously and are highlighting in their reports the different aspects of these recommendations.

For me going there and engaging with the Committee was the best realisation or completion of the learning journey that started back in December 2015. It is also the beginning of a new cycle in engaging with advocacy on the implementation of the recommendations together with all CSOs in a coordinated manner. We have been given hands on training and space to use what we have learnt. The more time goes on, the more I am realising the relevance of the learnings from the training which is always guiding me in my work on Migration, Gender and Social Inclusion. I have thus become confident in working effectively and cooperatively with the existing networks on migration.

Photos from the 26th Session of the UN Committee on Migrant Workers

(Nayela with the Migrant Forum Asia)



