



ACTRAV/ITC-ILO Course (A155169)

**Trade Union Actions for Achieving Decent Work for Migrants
(Kisumu, Kenya, 21 – 25 May 2012)**

The Working and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers

Working and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers



Working and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers

Safety and Health at Work:

- ✓ Often carry out the “3-D” jobs:
 - Difficult
 - Dangerous
 - Degrading

- ✓ Employed in sectors that are renowned for high levels of fatal accidents, injuries and diseases e.g. agriculture, construction, mining, meat processing, recycling, etc.

Working and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers

- ✓ Language and cultural barriers hinder migrant workers understanding of specific occupational safety & health communications, instructions and training approaches.
- ✓ Excessive working hours.
- ✓ Often live in makeshift accommodation, shantytowns and substandard accommodation.
- ✓ In Europe occupational accident rates are about twice as high for migrants as for non-migrant workers.

Working and Living Conditions of Migrant Workers

Freedom of Association:

- ✓ Many migrant workers are denied the right to join or form trade unions.
- ✓ In some countries, they are implicitly excluded from the labour law e.g. Kyrgyzstan.
- ✓ Imposition of restriction on migrant workers from holding offices in trade unions e.g. Mauritania and Rwanda.
- ✓ Active hostility towards migrant workers who try to organise.

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Wages:

- ✓ Lower wages
- ✓ Exploitation of wages and long working hours
- ✓ Wage disparities between groups of migrants
- ✓ Wages of women migrants are worse off

Discrimination:

- ✓ Migrant workers suffer discrimination in employment

Unemployment

- ✓ Unemployment rates for migrant workers are higher than for national workers

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Social security:

- ✓ Temporary contracts are used as a means of avoiding social security liabilities for most migrant workers.
- ✓ Many migrant workers actually pay social security contributions but will never receive any benefits.

Racism and Xenophobia:

- ✓ Victims of physical attacks and verbal abuse from racists

HIV/AIDS, reproductive and maternal health:

- ✓ Migration heightens both risks and vulnerabilities of exposure to HIV/AIDS.
- ✓ Vulnerability to HIV infection because migrant workers live and work in conditions of poverty, social exclusion, loneliness and anonymity.
- ✓ Victims of sexual abuse.

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Dangerous journeys:

- ✓ Migrant workers often move dangerously e.g. inside containers, ships or boats in avoidance of immigration control.



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Housing conditions:

- ✓ Often substandard housing conditions
- ✓ High cost of inadequate housing
- ✓ Dangerously crowded conditions
- ✓ Some sleep out doors, in tents, vehicles, etc.

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Exploitation on return:

- ✓ Harassed by immigration and customs authorities.

Trafficking in persons:

- ✓ Human trafficking is an extreme form of irregular migration.
- ✓ Women and children are often trafficked for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation.
- ✓ Smugglers may demand an exorbitant fee and may expose migrants to serious dangers in the course of their journey.