



BURMESE WOMEN'S UNION

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Caught Between Two Hells: The Burmese Women's Union Gives Voice to Migrant Workers

Press Release
December 18, 2007

International Migrant Worker's Day is celebrated to commemorate the day, 18th December 1990, on which the UN adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Unfortunately, 17 years on, migrant workers from Burma still face discrimination and abuse, and lack protection both in their home country and in their host countries.

Sharing their personal stories of experiencing a living hell in Burma - only to live day in, day out in another hell outside Burma – migrant women and girls from Burma speak out on exploitive labour practices and the grave human right's abuses they routinely experience.

The Burmese Women's Union (BWU) has released the publication *Caught Between Two Hells* – an in-depth report documenting female migrant workers' experiences in which BWU researchers conducted 149 interviews with women and girl migrants working in Thailand and China between November 2006 and March 2007.

The report gives both women and girls the opportunity to assert their own voices regarding their lives as migrant workers and documents the powerlessness and frustration associated with being a female migrant worker from Burma.

Migrant women and girl workers have very limited work opportunities in their host countries and due to their irregular legal status they have few or no labour rights. They are highly vulnerable to human rights abuses due to both their legal status and their gender. This double marginalization means female migrant workers face grave security concerns as they regularly experience threats of sexual harassment and violence while working in host countries.

The report clearly shows the root causes of the problems that female migrants face and highlights the lack of protection and justice in host countries.

It is the BWU's hope that by writing about these brave migrant women and girl workers' sacrifices, hardships, perseverance, and their future hopes, their voices will be heard by others and advocates will work to ensure that migrant workers' human rights will be protected

A founder and a member of the Women's League of Burma, the BWU exists to promote the role of women and to efficiently increase their contributions to the political and social leadership functions in the struggle for democracy and human rights and the establishment of a democratic federal union in Burma.

To mark the release of this new report, the BWU would like to invite you to the launch of *Caught Between Two Hells*.

Where: Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand (FCCT)
The Penthouse, Maneeya Center, 518/5 Ploenchit Road, Pathumwan, Bangkok

When: Wednesday 19th December at 10.30 am.

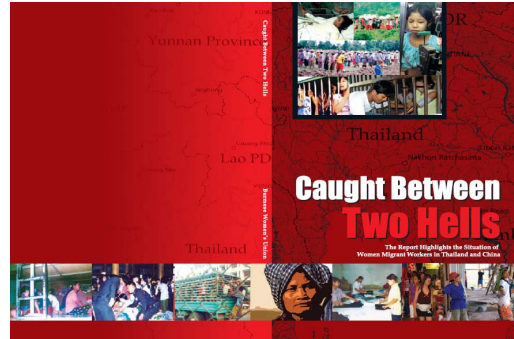
Directions: <http://www.fccthai.com/location.html>

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Caught Between Two Hells

Executive Summary

Ten BWU researchers conducted 149 in-depth Interviews with migrant women and girl workers in Chiang Mai, Mae Sot, Ranong (Thailand) and Rullu (China) between November 2006 and March 2007. Women working in diverse areas of work, ethnicity and age were asked to participate in the research so that the report could represent a wide range of experiences. The research highlights the atrocious day-to-day working conditions and human rights abuses encountered by migrant women and girls working in irregular situations and provides insight into the occupational hazards and harms migrants from Burma face in Thailand and China. The interviews were designed to provide women workers with a much-needed opportunity to speak their mind and assert their own “voice” regarding their work, a power that was often denied in their host countries.



The research has showed that:

- Migrant women and girl workers from Burma have very limited work opportunities in their host countries due to their irregular status and are often relegated to working in so-called 3Ds jobs (dirty, dangerous and demeaning) with little or no labor rights.
- Migrant women and girl workers are doubly marginalized and highly vulnerable to abuses of their human rights due to both their lack of legal status and their gender.
- Security concerns for migrant women and girl workers are grave as they regularly experience threats of sexual harassment and violence while working in host countries.

The BWU strongly urges the SPDC and governments of the host countries to consider migrant workers' needs and basic human rights. BWU insists that international human rights law be upheld and states work to protect migrants working in irregular settings, by protecting their human and labour rights, and by providing channels for redress when they are abused.