



# Young Workers

## Why is migration an issue for you?

### Migration affects us all

Migration is an issue that affects us all. It cuts across many realities either at work or in the community

PSI works with trade unions worldwide to protect migrant workers. PSI also works to improve wages and working conditions – to reduce the economic pressure to migrate and to improve the quality of health and social services.

Trade unions protect migrant workers' rights and promote international solidarity among workers worldwide. Trade unions are also concerned about social justice and the impact of migration on brain drain in developing countries. The quality of public services in developing countries suffers because developed countries are not investing in training and retention of their own nationals, particularly in the health and education services.

These issues particularly affect young workers and women, both as workers and as users of health services.

In many countries, skilled health and social care workers feel they must leave their families behind and work abroad to earn a decent income. They brave exploitation and discrimination, racism and xenophobia. Their departure weakens health and social services in their home community. There are many reasons why health and social care workers, mostly women, choose to leave their families behind and migrate to other countries. They are pushed out by low wages and impossible working conditions. They are drawn by a desire to gain experience and qualifications. They hope to earn more so they can send money home to improve the lives of their children.

There are also problems in the developed world. Many have left due to deteriorating working conditions caused by cuts in financing. And the workforce is aging, with many choosing to retire. To temporarily address the growing staff shortages, rich countries recruit health workers and professionals in huge numbers from developing countries, where the health situation is even worse and skilled staff is badly needed.

In many cases, migrant health workers are badly treated. They are often placed in positions unrelated to their skills and training – for example, nurses may be placed as elderly care home support workers. They may suffer from lower than expected pay, higher than expected living costs, poor working conditions, and new workload pressures. They sometimes face gender and racial discrimination, and often lack access to union support.

PSI has undertaken a major, on-going campaign to address the issues of migration, and the needs of migrant workers. This initiative aims to help fully inform workers before they migrate, assist them in connecting with unions in receiving countries, and assist

them in putting their new skills and experience to work to improve health care delivery when they return home. Workers have the right to migrate and seek to improve their lives. They must be treated with respect. The developing world should not be used as a source of cheap labour. The positive side of migration must be encouraged. When workers return home after a time abroad, as most of them do, they must have the opportunity to share new skills, improved qualifications, and experience with new technology to benefit people in their own country.

## **The role of PSI and public sector trade unions**

PSI works with its affiliated public sector trade unions worldwide to strengthen the trade union response to migration and to promote quality public health services.

Unions are calling for the application of ethical recruitment guidelines so that developed countries in the North will refrain from recruiting health workers in the South where there are shortages of skilled workers. Ensuring the application of human rights norms and labour standards for migrant workers is vital to ensure that migrant workers are protected from exploitation and abuse by unscrupulous employers and recruitment agencies.

Unions are also working together in both origin and destination countries to organize migrant workers, to provide them with pre-decision information, in the case of those who are deciding to migrate, and to negotiate for equitable pay and better terms and conditions of employment.

## **Young people are needed in the health care workforce**

The average age of the health workforce in industrialized countries is rising, as young people are not being recruited. Over the next 10 to 15 years, many nurses and doctors in developed countries will be retiring. Not only is the health workforce ageing but so is the population. In the coming years, these countries will be faced with a crisis of an acute staff shortage and an increased demand for health care, especially care of the elderly.

Young workers will only be encouraged to join the health workforce if training programmes are accessible and affordable, and there are good employment opportunities available. Health care work, which is predominantly performed by women, is undervalued and underpaid in all countries. Unions are calling for a revaluing of the terms and conditions of health care employment, a decent working environment, well-resourced facilities and fair and transparent career paths.

Young people may consider migration in view of better work opportunities, training or career development. All workers have the right to pursue a career. However, if young workers are thinking of migrating, it is important to make the decision based on proper information. PSI and its affiliated unions are there to assist you in getting the right information.

## **Justice, equality and non-discrimination at work**

Trade unions were founded to promote justice, equality and non-discrimination at work. All workers, regardless of their gender, age, and ethnicity, are entitled to justice, equality and respect. Young workers can help reaffirm these principles by welcoming migrant workers into our community and into our union.

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