Migrant Domestic Workers in Action

Tripartite Framework for the Support and Protection of Ethiopian women Domestic Migrant Workers to the GCC States, Lebanon and Sudan
Leaving home to be domestic workers in other people’s homes is an arduous choice, but one that hundreds of thousands of women make every day. According to figures from Ethiopia’s Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in 2012, around 200,000 Ethiopian women migrated to the Middle East seeking employment in the domestic work industry using regular routes. The number of women migrating using irregular routes is estimated to be double that figure. Top destination countries in the Middle East are Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Lebanon, and more recently Sudan, usually used as transit country.

While some are treated well, a significant number of Ethiopian domestic workers in the Middle East face undue hardships and abuse in the form of low or withheld wages, poor working and living conditions, virtual absence of social protection, denial of freedom of association and workers’ rights, discrimination and xenophobia, as well as social exclusion. Working conditions committed in contracts – if contracts exist at all - are often not kept, and working time as agreed is not respected. Moreover, cases of physical, sexual and psychological abuse have been reported in increasing numbers, and in some instances this has lead to death. Despite the hardships recounted by returnees, many women still choose to migrate, driven by poverty and lack of employment opportunities at home.

The recent mass-deportation of undocumented Ethiopian migrants from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia captured the attention of regional and inter-regional stakeholders. Between November 2013 till March 2014, 163,018 Ethiopians are back in their country and many more are being flown in. It is clear that most of the returnees have not changed their life for the better, as they came back without any resources. Once back home, these citizens need to be able to provide for themselves and their families, and to become a productive part of society. Therefore, there is a great need to re-integrate these returnees so that, they become a benefit rather than a burden for their country.

The ILO through the Development of a Tripartite Framework for the Support and Protection of Ethiopian women Domestic Migrant Workers to the GCC States, Lebanon and Sudan project, is providing technical and financial support, to improve decent work standards for women migrant domestic workers travelling from the Horn of Africa to the Middle East, throughout their journey from their country of origin to their country of destination, and until they return home. The project also aims to make regular migration more accessible, in order to curb irregular migration and ensure safety and rights for the migrants.

**WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE:**

- To develop a coherent multi-stakeholder framework to promote the rights of MDW from Ethiopia to the GCC countries.
- To streamline and de-centralize the migration process in the country of origin and strengthen oversight and monitoring process in receiving countries.
- To provide MDW with relevant information and substantive training prior to departure, and on return home to ensure their successful performance and reintegration.
THE PROGRAMME WILL PROMOTE GOOD LABOUR MIGRATION GOVERNANCE BY:

1. Improving the operational framework for regular cooperative action and exchange of information established between sending and receiving countries.

2. Increasing awareness and dialogue on ratification of ILO Convention 189.

3. Enhancing capacity and legal basis to provide decentralized, more efficient and coordinated services to migrant domestic workers, aspiring migrant domestic workers and returnees.

4. Strengthening commitment of stakeholders including government and Private Employment Agencies to enforce the legislative and regulatory framework pertaining to overseas employment.

5. Establishing support centers in Ethiopia.

6. Strengthening remittance system between sending and receiving countries.


8. Preparing migrant domestic workers prior to departure, and on return, to fully contribute to the economy of receiving and origin countries.

9. Extending access to social protection for migrant domestic workers and aspiring migrant domestic workers.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The project is implemented by the ILO CO for Ethiopia and Somalia (for more information please go to http://www.ilo.org/beirut/projects/WCMS_226943/lang--en/index.htm) in collaboration with the following partners and associates:

Partners:

- Ministry of Labour & Social Affairs in Ethiopia (http://www.molsa.gov.et/English/Pages/index.aspx)
- UN Women (www.unwomen.org)

Associate: IOM

Donor: EU

Duration: 3 years

Target Beneficiaries: Ethiopian and Migrant Domestic Workers

Geographical Focus: Ethiopia, GCC, Lebanon, Sudan

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