

► Publications by ILO's Work in Freedom Programme (2013-2024)

August 2024

► Policy briefs

1. [Innovative approaches to protect the rights of women migrant workers and tackle forced labour - Lessons from the Work in Freedom programme \(2013-2023\)](#), July 2023

Summary: This brief provides a short summary of the Work in Freedom programme outreach and activities conducted to tackle forced labour and trafficking with the key lessons it generated over the ten-year period (2013-23) of its implementation.

2. [Policy Brief on Policies Related to Migrants and Unemployment in Times of Crisis](#), June 2020.

Summary: The purpose of this policy brief is to explain influence of misperceptions during times of economic crisis, on public discourse on migration and employment and recommend laws, policies and practices to overcome these misperceptions.

3. [Policy brief on anti-trafficking laws, policies, and practices](#), February 2017. Also available in [Arabic](#), [Nepali](#) and [Hindi](#).

Summary: Donors, Governments, international organizations, unions, employers and other civil actors often seek solutions to prevent human trafficking. This is a list of the ten most common misconceptions among policy makers, related facts and recommended laws, policies and practices drawing on the experience of the Work in Freedom Programme.

4. [Policy Brief on Common Myths and Facts about Domestic Work](#), February 2018. Also available in [Hindi](#) and [Nepali](#).

Summary: The policy brief includes related facts and recommended laws, policies and practices drawing on the experience of the Work in Freedom Programme.

5. [Policy Brief on Practices and Regulations of Recruitment to Garment Work](#), July 2017. Also available in [Hindi](#).

Summary: The policy brief maps common recruitment practices and regulations observed along recruitment pathways to garment and textile work in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Jordan and Lebanon.

6. [Policy Brief on Practices and Regulations of Recruitment to Domestic Work](#), July 2017. Also available in [Hindi](#) and [Nepali](#).

Summary: The policy brief highlights common recruitment practices and regulations observed along recruitment pathways to domestic work in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Jordan and Lebanon.

7. [Policy Brief: Women's Mobility and Domestic Work](#), February 2016

Summary: This policy brief reviews policies and practice of restricting the mobility of women migrating for work or seeking employment. It examines such policies and practices in relation to international human right standards and effectiveness.

► Lessons learned

1. [Summary of Lessons Learned from the Work in Freedom Programme](#) (Parts, 1, 2 and 3), April 2023. Also available in [Spanish](#)

Summary: This document summarises the lessons learned (Parts 1, 2 & 3) by the Work in Freedom Programme, a ten-year bi-regional programme (2013-2023) that aimed to reduce vulnerability to human trafficking and forced labour among women workers in occupations such as domestic work and garment manufacturing.

2. [Lessons Learned Part 3: Policy and programme responses to unfree labour in destination countries for migrant women workers](#), June 2022.

Summary: This document describes the lessons learned by the Work in Freedom programme (201 on policy and programme responses to unfree labour in destination countries for migrant women workers.

3. [Lessons Learned Part 2: Recruitment of migrant workers](#), September 2021

Summary: This document describes the lessons learned by the Work in Freedom programme on recruitment of migrant workers. It lists and describes the nature of both conventional and non-conventional interventions and reviews some of the assumptions behind the rationale for these interventions.

4. [Lessons Learned Part 1: Outreach to migrant women in areas of origin](#), April 2021

Summary: This document describes the lessons learned by the Work in Freedom programme on outreach to migrant women in areas where they migrate from. The findings are important to inform Governments, donors and civil society groups on their policies regarding the protection of migrant women, safe migration, pre-departure training and orientation and more.

5. [Lessons Learned from Work in Freedom Programme](#), February 2019

Summary: This is a working document which captures lessons learnt by ILO's Work in Freedom Programme during its implementation in five countries: India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Jordan and Lebanon from 2015 to 2019.

► Handbooks, manuals and method notes

1. [Methods for spatial sampling of urban neighbourhoods by socio-economic status in Indian cities](#), Pratyush Tripathy, Krishnachandran Balakrishnan, Teja Malladi, Amruth Kiran and Gautam Bhan, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, December 2022

Summary: This brief note lays out an approach to neighbourhood selection and house listing for large surveys in urban cities. This approach was used for a multiple round household survey in two India cities using quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand the dynamics of paid and unpaid works within households and employers' perceptions on working conditions of domestic workers.

2. [The Work in Freedom Handbook, A critical glossary of terms relating to freedom and unfreedom in the world of work](#), Igor Bosc, June 2021. Also available in [Spanish](#)

Summary: The purpose of this critical glossary is to deconstruct some of these commonly used concepts related forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking in order to flag their blind spots, merits and other characteristics.

3. [Frequently asked questions by migrant garment workers in qualified industrial zones in Jordan](#), Suneetha Eluri, 31 August 2021. Also available in [Nepali](#)

Summary: This handbook is a compilation of the frequently asked questions posed by migrant workers in qualified industrial zones (QIZs) on their employment conditions, employer–employee relationships, and their rights and entitlements while working in Jordan as migrant garment workers.

4. [Worker Centers from a Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Lens](#), Igor Bosc, 2020

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to explain how a worker centre can also perform functions that support fundamental principles and rights at work. The paper draws on the experience of the ILO's Work in Freedom programme in supporting worker centres in South and West Asia.

5. [Working Paper on Operational Parameters to Assess Fair Recruitment Practices](#), June 2016

Summary: These parameters list a series of questions and issues that should be assessed when reviewing recruitment of migrant workers practices.

► Reports

1. [Placement-agencies-and-migrant-live-domestic-workers-indian-metro-city-view](#)
Indrani Mazumdar, May 2024
This report explores the evolving role of placement agencies for live-in migrant domestic workers from Ganjam, Odisha to Mumbai, Maharashtra in India. Based on fieldwork conducted in Mumbai in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, it highlights shifts in profit-sharing dynamics, wage negotiations, and the growing involvement of global internet companies in local placements. It underscores the need for further research on placement agencies and calls for nuanced policies to improve access to rights and safety during the process of seeking placement as well as in the workplace.
2. [Home-village-metro-city-looking-back-and-ahead-labour-migration-corridor](#)
Indrani Mazumdar, May 2024
This study investigates the migration of women from Ganjam, Odisha to Mumbai for domestic work, examining changes in intermediation processes before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through longitudinal qualitative research, it highlights the evolving dynamics of migration, labour conditions, and gender-specific challenges faced by migrant women at risk of ending up in forced labour conditions.
3. [Gendering-internal-labour-migration-corridors-migrant-women-workers](#)
Indrani Mazumdar, March 2024
This report is based on a study to examine long-distance internal women's labour migration in India's garment industry, highlighting their challenges and resilience especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study critically examines policy frameworks, industry practices, and regional contexts, providing a comprehensive analysis of gendered processes of labour migration. Drawing upon qualitative interviews across three states in India, the report highlights the important role of state policies and intermediation processes involved in mobilising migrant garment workers.
4. [Gendering-migration-pathways-bangladesh-jordan-and-lebanon-and-after-covid](#)
Thérèse Blanchet, March 2024
This research report offers valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by Bangladeshi migrant workers, particularly, women, before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It also highlights the unique characteristics of Jordan and Lebanon as destinations for women workers and the complexities of the kafala system's various arrangements.
5. [The social life of industrial disputes: Exploring workers' centred industrial relations in India's garment labour regime](#), Dr Alessandra Mezzadri with Rakhi Sehgal, June 2023
Summary: This report describes the nature of labour relations from a perspective of worker grievances in three garment production clusters of India, namely the National Capital Region, Bengaluru and Tirupur. It establishes a connection between the evolution of regional labour regimes and the social history of industrial relations and grievances in these three clusters. The report is an important reference to understand the differences and commonalities of working and living conditions of garment workers across these locations.
6. [Media representation of women migrant workers: A critical look](#), Nazneen Ahmed, Drishti Research Centre, February 2023

Summary: The study reviews how overseas women migrant workers are characterized in print and electronic media in accordance with gender, class and geographic stereotypes. It critically assesses how women's multiple roles as workers, earners, investors, mothers and daughters, etc. are overshadowed by simplistic narratives focusing on exploitation and victimhood.

7. [Deficits in decent work: Employer perspectives and practices on the quality of employment in domestic work in urban India](#), Dr. Gautam Bhan, Dr. Divya Ravindranath, Antara Rai Chowdhury, Rashee Mehra, Divij Sinha, Amruth Kiran, and Teja Malladi, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, January 2023

Summary: This study report contributes towards understanding employers' perspectives on existing working conditions and practices relating to recruitment, income security, employment security and social security available to domestic workers.

8. [Reproducing a household: Recognizing and assessing paid and unpaid domestic work in urban India](#), Dr Gautam Bhan, Dr Divya Ravindranath, Antara Rai Chowdhury, Rashee Mehra, Divij Sinha, Amruth Kiran, and Teja Malladi, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, January 2023

Summary: This study report is an important contribution towards understanding employers' perspectives, by recognising and assessing the paid and unpaid domestic work that goes into reproducing a household.

9. [Employer practices and perceptions on paid domestic work: Recruitment, employment relationships, and social protection](#), Dr Divya Ravindranath, Antara Rai Chowdhury, Rashee Mehra, Dr Gautam Bhan, Divij Sinha, Amruth Kiran, and Teja Malladi, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, 2 January 2023

Summary: This study report is an important contribution towards understanding employers' perceptions, rationale and bases that underlie how employers in urban India engage, value, and perceive domestic work.

10. [Rebels, victims, agents of change: The singular histories of women migrant workers](#), by Thérèse Blanchet, Anisa Zaman and Hannan Biswas, Drishti Research Centre, November 2022

Summary: The purpose of this ethnographic study is to shed light on how women view their migration and work abroad. The findings challenge conventional narratives on labour migration of women and bring out important perspectives that invaluablely inform policymaking.

11. [Industrial relations in the ready-made garment sector in Jordan](#), Dr. Babu Mathew, Mohan Mani and Kavya Bharadkar, of the Centre for Labour Studies, National Law School of India University, October 2022

Summary: The report aims to shed light on the status of industrial relations in Jordan's garment manufacturing sector. It also seeks to inform forward-looking efforts led by ILO constituents and other stakeholders towards the continued establishment of a robust, sustainable system for addressing decent work deficits, and improving working and living conditions in the sector through social dialogue and respect for fundamental principles and rights at work.

12. [Migration and gender in Bangladesh: An irregular landscape](#), Therese Blanchet and Hannan Biswas, December 2021

Summary: This survey is part of a series of studies commissioned by the Work in Freedom Program of the ILO in order to document the motives and trajectories of migrant women workers. The survey explores the local and regional gendered specificities of migration and work-seeking in selected localities of Bangladesh by collecting gender disaggregated data and analyzing contrasting patterns that inform women and men's migration.

13. [The invisible workers: Bangladeshi women in Oman](#), by Therese Blanchet, December 2021

Summary: The purpose of this ethnography is to follow the lives of working women from Bangladesh and document and analyse the diversity of their individual and collective experiences. The findings reveal a reality that contrasts from the usual characterisations of migrant women.

14. [State of occupational safety and health practices at workplace for domestic workers in COVID-19 and possibilities for action](#), Dr. Gautam Bhan Antara Rai Chowdhury Rashee Mehra, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, July 2021

Summary: The report identifies Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practices for domestic workers, which could be implemented to respond to pandemic conditions. Based on insights provided by domestic workers themselves, trade unionists working with domestic workers and experts in India, the report lays out expansive medium-term changes in a post-pandemic world that would be ideal.

15. [The Labyrinth of Justice: Migrant domestic worker before Lebanon's courts](#), Legal Agenda, March 2021. Also available in [Arabic](#). A [video](#) of the presentation is available.

Summary: This study is documentary research of jurisprudence regarding migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. It reviews and identifies the systemic flaws of Lebanon's judiciary system in delivering justice to migrant domestic workers and explains why migrant women keep a distance from law enforcement processes.

16. [A review of industrial relations in the garment sector in Gurugram](#), Rakhi Sehgal, December 2018

Summary: Industrial relations shed light on the development challenges of specific occupational sectors and the locations in which they are documented. The peaceful resolution of labour disputes underpins decent work and sustainable development, and tension and violence foster an environment that is unconducive to sustainable business and decent work. This report describes industrial relations in Gurugram's garment sector.

17. [No easy exit – Migration bans affecting women from Nepal](#), Bandana Pattanaik, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, November 2015

Summary: The ILO undertook this study with the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW). It explores whether Nepal's age ban deterred younger women from migrating for domestic work and improved working conditions for women migrant domestic workers over 30 years of age. It also explores to what extent the age ban and other bans have had unintended consequences for women, including an increase in irregular migration and trafficking in persons. Finally, it highlights steps the women themselves propose be taken to improve their migration experiences.

► Background Papers

1. [Understanding patterns of structural discrimination of migrant and other workers in some countries of South and West Asia](#), Igor Bosc, Dr Jens Lerche, Dr Alpa Shah, Miranda Fajerman and Dr Neha Wadhawan, April 2022. A webinar presenting the report is available [here](#).

Summary: This background paper reviews the literature that sheds light on the structural patterns of discrimination against migrant workers in some countries of South and West Asia. It also articulates recommendations that would help officials in UN agencies, international organizations, constituents and other civil society individuals and groups, while referring to the existing evidence of structural discrimination to support the application of international labour standards.

2. [Reclaiming space for workers in the 21st century: A literature review on worker centers](#), Dr Miguel A. Martínez, Dr Margherita Grazioli, Dr Patricia Yocie Hierofani and Dr Alberto Violante, June 2021.

Summary: The past two decades have witnessed a significant increase in the number of worker centres as facilities dedicated to workers. The purpose of this literature review is to review the documentation of these trends, understand the causes for the emergence of such centres, the different contexts in which they were created and their functions. Workers' centres are usually meant for all types of workers; however, literature shows that they tend to cater primarily to the needs of informal workers, migrant workers and other workers in precarious jobs. They also tend to exist and be located in areas where fundamental principles and rights at work (FFRPs), such as non-discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining as enshrined in International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 111, No. 87 and No. 98, are a distant reality for its users or members. Practices in different parts of the world indicate that workers' centres can play an important role, albeit non-exclusive, in creating more enabling conditions for the exercise of some fundamental principles such as freedom of association. The paper includes a list of good practices of workers' centres.

3. [A comprehensive analysis of policies and frameworks governing foreign employment for Nepali women migrant workers and migrant domestic workers. Exploring the migration policymaking process with a specific focus on bans and restrictions on foreign employment \(Nepal\)](#), Dr Mark McCarthy, May 2021

Summary: This background report is a comprehensive analysis of legal and policy frameworks governing foreign employment for women migrant workers and migrant domestic workers. It complements ILO's previous study of migration bans, 'No Easy Exit: Migration Bans Affecting Women from Nepal' published in 2015, by describing this time the political economy of bans on women's migration. The study also presents a series of recommendations.

4. [In the shadow of the state: Recruitment and migration of South India women as domestic workers to Gulf Countries](#), Dr Praveena Kodoth, June 2020

Summary: This background paper describes and analyses the drivers, pathways and experiences of migrant women from South India as domestic workers in Gulf countries. It is based on primary and secondary research.

5. [Resisting servitude and gradual shifts toward recognition and dignity of labour: A study of employers of domestic workers in two metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai](#), Dr Preet Rustagi and Dr Ritu Dewan, 2017. [This video](#) summarizes the findings of the study.

Summary: While many studies had been conducted on working and living conditions of domestic workers, limited evidence is available on the demand side of domestic work and about employers' attitudes on domestic workers. The purpose of this study was to bridge that critical gap. It explains how domestic workers are hired in Delhi and Mumbai, how wages are negotiated and how employers perceive workers.

6. [Migrant domestic workers and garment workers in Jordan. A baseline analysis of trafficking in persons and related laws and policies](#), Alix Nasri, 2017

Summary: This study reviews the legal context of migration and work in Jordan's garment and domestic work sectors. It describes gaps in law and practice in relation to international labour standards.

7. [Working conditions of migrant garment workers in India](#), Meghna Dasgupta, March 2017

Summary: This paper presents a literature review of the state of employment in the Indian garment sector in the context of changing institutional and production structures.

8. [Intertwined: Employers and migrant domestic workers in Lebanon](#), Dr. Sawsan Abdulrahim and Zeinab Cherri, American University of Beirut, September 2016

Summary: The study focuses on the critical role of employers of domestic workers in recruiting and managing the employment relationship within the current normative framework of Lebanon. It documents their perceptions and attitudes towards domestic workers.

9. [Indispensable yet unprotected: Working conditions of Indian Domestic Workers at Home and Abroad](#), SEWA Union, 2015

Summary: This is a general review of the working conditions of Indian domestic workers in Kerala and in the Gulf documented by the Self-Employed Women's Association.

► Online outreach

Webinars and videos

1. [Webinar: Working in Freedom, Mobility with Choice! Preventing Trafficking and Forced Labour of Migrant Domestic Workers: Progress, Challenges and Ways Forward](#) organised by the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) and ILO India office to share lessons learned by the ILO's Work in Freedom Programme and reflect on the current situation and demands of migrant domestic workers from the global South, July 2024
2. [Webinar: Presentation of background paper on understanding patterns of structural discrimination of migrant and other workers in some countries of South and West Asia](#), January 2023
3. [Webinar: Dynamics of paid and unpaid domestic work in urban India](#), January 2023
4. [Hybrid Webinar: Presentation of lessons learned \(video\)](#), 26 September 2022
Summary: The ILO hosted a session in its headquarters in Geneva on the lessons learned by the ILO's Work in Freedom Programme when working on reducing forced labour and trafficking among migrant women workers over the past decade.
5. [Domestic Workers' Rights, Working conditions & Occupational Safety and Health \(OSH\) Concerns: Challenges Prior to and During COVID - 19](#), July 2021
6. [Webinar: Presentation of report: The Labyrinth of Justice - Migrant domestic workers before Lebanon's courts](#), Legal Agenda, March 2021
7. [Trafficking in the wake of COVID-19: Understanding challenges ahead & evolving collective strategies](#), July 2020
8. [Conversations on Working in Freedom](#) June 2020 to July 2021
9. [Interview: Forced Labour is still a modern-day reality](#), Bharti Birla, 2018
10. [Documentary: empowering stories of women on the move](#), WIF Nepal, June 2018.
11. [Webinar: Persisting servitude and gradual shifts toward recognition and dignity of labour: A study of employers of domestic workers in two metropolitan cities of Delhi and Mumbai](#), Dr Preet Rustagi and Dr Ritu Dewan, 2018.

Blog posts

[The Blind Spot of Efforts to Tackle Human Trafficking](#), Igor Bosc, 2015

Work in Freedom webpage on the ILO website

[Work in Freedom, Phase II - Fair recruitment and decent work for women migrant workers in South Asia and the Middle East \(ilo.org\)](#)

Work in Freedom Blog

<https://workinginfreedom.wordpress.com/>

Contact details

International Labour Organization
Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

T: +41 22 799 6111
E: ilo@ilo.org
wadhawan@ilo.org