

REINTEGRATION OF ETHIOPIAN RETURNEES FROM SAUDI ARABIA *

Through the development of a Tripartite Framework for the support and protection of Ethiopian and Somali women migrant domestic workers to the GCC States, Lebanon and Sudan, the ILO has started working on re-integrating Ethiopian returnees from Saudi Arabia into the labour market, while preparing awareness raising programmes to avoid stigma and discrimination for these returnees.

Saudi Arabia began a crackdown on undocumented foreign workers after a seven-month amnesty period that expired on Nov 3rd. Since then, around 155,413 Ethiopian migrants have repatriated to Ethiopia after being held for weeks in deportation camps in reportedly extremely poor living conditions. The return of these 155,413 young migrant workers has sparked fears that the arrival will worsen the already existing high youth unemployment rates within the country. In response to these pressures, the Ethiopian Government recognizes the need to increase livelihood opportunities in order to reduce the likelihood of re-migration and to guarantee security.

This project will specifically support the re-integration of 1,000 women returnees from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Women returnees from Saudi Arabia come mainly from very poor households and often vulnerable situations. Many have returned with children, many have no families to turn to, and some face psychosocial difficulties.

There is a great need to foster the socio-economic re-integration of these returnees so that they can sustain their families and contribute to the development of their country. As an immediate response to this crisis, the ILO provided USD 100,000 to support the emergency relief efforts made by the government. In addition, an integrated plan of activities which includes business and entrepreneurship training, capacity building, mentorship and coaching is being launched to help the returnees get back on their feet, provide for themselves and their families, and become part of a productive segment of society.