



International Labour Organization
Regional Office for Arab States

Questions and answers on a new report: “Working with Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon (1980s-2012): A Mapping of NGO Services”

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This report was produced in the context of ILO’s EU and SDC funded Action Programme for Protecting the Rights of Women Migrant Domestic Workers (PROWD) in Lebanon. The report traces the history of NGO involvement with women migrant domestic workers (WMDWs) in Lebanon since the early 1980s to explore the approaches underlying NGO interventions and partnerships. Further to this analytical component, the report includes a directory of the services currently available to WMDWs across Lebanon. The findings of this report are expected to guide NGOs in establishing efficient referral systems for WMDWs, new entrants in carving out their niche in the WMDW subfield, and donors in supporting initiatives for the promotion of decent working and living conditions for WMDWs.

Why is it important to understand the work of NGOs with WMDWs in Lebanon?

Absent legal protections and a functioning national referral system for WMDWs, NGOs have had to coalesce for the purpose of establishing referral mechanisms for WMDWs. In the mid-1990s, faith based organizations joined efforts to deliver pastoral care, legal aid, shelter, and counseling to WMDWs. The Pastoral Care for Afro-Asian Migrant (PCAAM) exemplified said coordination. The sessions of the National Steering Committee on Women Migrant Domestic Workers (since 2006) brought the problems faced by WMDWs to the attention of emergent civil society organizations. Today, there are over 18 NGOs delivering legal, medical, and social services to WMDWs in Lebanon. The pace at which these organizations flourished led to a number of *ad hoc* and low-impact interventions. For instance, NGOs were not always aware of other actors working in the field and proceeded to duplicate initiatives. Also, NGOs initiated programs well beyond their mandates which led them to operate at less than optimal capacity. The report takes stock of these initiatives in order to optimize referral mechanisms and to point to gaps in service delivery relative to international labour standards.

What are the main recommendations of this report?

1. NGOs must be cautious to ensure proper sequencing and complementarity of efforts between older and emerging initiatives.
2. Absent legal protections and national referral mechanisms, NGOs tend to allocate much of their resources for the alleviation of migrant workers’ legal, social, and medical problems. This service provision tendency must be complemented with an investment on the preventive end of the MDW subfield. Effective prevention requires NGOs to build on MDW realities and experiences to inform labour migration management schemes, and policy advocacy strategies.
3. NGOs are encouraged to cooperate with relevant international organizations and government agencies to address the major issues confronting migration policy makers at national and international levels. Because of their extensive networks and access to communities at the

grassroots level, NGOs offer perspectives and evidence-based research that can encourage as well as inform migration policy debate. Furthermore, through their participation in international coordinating councils like Migrants Forum in Asia (a network of migrant support and advocacy groups in countries of origin and destination), NGOs are able to mobilize efforts in order to campaign for the ratification of international conventions like C 189.

4. NGOs are encouraged to invest in sensitizing faculty in schools and universities to the rights of MDWs. By building the ability of faculty to integrate MDW relevant issues in their classroom curricula, the sensitization process gains a life of its own outside donor agendas and project lifecycles.
5. Finally, NGOs are expected to engage workers' unions in the planning and implementation of relevant programs and activities if only to emphasize the "worker" in domestic workers. When unions become thoroughly informed about the working and living conditions of domestic workers, their commitment to domestic workers' issues during tripartite dialogues on migrant workers becomes more significant.
6. Opportunities for MDW education abound in Beirut and the Greater Beirut areas. NGOs are encouraged to expand the geographical reach of skills-building classes and activities to help build the capacities (languages, computer, and entrepreneurship) of MDWs in more remote parts of the country.
7. NGOs are encouraged to collaborate with the business sector. Nonprofit/for profit partnerships open up the subfield to new entrants, to new resources, and to new technologies. These partnerships also sensitize companies that employ migrant workers, and employees who employ migrant workers, to the rights of MDWs.
8. NGOs are encouraged to institutionalize their partnerships with other entities through the development of joint programs. These programs will grow beyond the conjectural nature of the referrals, research initiatives, and workshops to guarantee the sustainability of the action and its further fine-tuning.

How will the information be updated?

The mapping of NGOs services is available in the form of an interactive map at <http://www.mdwguide.com/interactivemap.aspx>

The map will be updated regularly to reflect changes in service delivery to WMDWs.

How will WMDWs become aware of these services?

In addition to the report and interactive map, a user-friendly brochure will be distributed to WMDWs across Lebanon. The brochure includes a description of the services, the contact information for the service providers, and specific dates or times during which these services are available.

An online copy of the brochure is available at

http://www.mdwguide.com/MDWs_Brochure_final_full.pdf
