

Maid in Lebanon

Driven by extreme poverty in their home countries, thousands of female migrant workers go each year to the Arab States in order to earn enough money to support their families. What they find there is sometimes not what they expected. A film directed by Carol Mansour and funded by Caritas Sweden, the Netherlands Embassy in Beirut and the ILO depicts the gamble these women take when they decide to leave their families and go to work in Lebanon.

"Lebanese newspapers often draw the attention of public opinion to women domestic workers who have been abused by their employers. The media can play an important role in raising awareness of workers' rights to decent working conditions", comments Simel Esim, Gender Specialist in the ILO's Regional Office for the Arab States in Beirut.

Following a request from the Lebanese Ministry of Labour and in cooperation with it, as well as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre, the ILO organized in 2006 a national awareness-raising workshop on the situation of women migrant domestic workers as well as identifying possible measures to address the difficulties they face. Key recommendation emerging from this workshop include introducing a standardised employment contract for all domestic workers that could be promoted by employment agencies throughout the country and providing migrant domestic workers with booklets that inform them of their rights as workers.

Following-up on these recommendations, the Lebanese Minister of Labour issued a decree establishing a high-level national steering committee to review national labour law, elaborate a unified contract for domestic workers and produce a "rights and responsibilities booklet" for this category of workers by the end of May 2006. The Committee will also work out a two-year action plan between June and July 2006.

"Through the stories of women migrant domestic workers from Sri Lanka, the film highlights the need for national and international policies to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families in Lebanon and across the Arab world", she concludes.

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Tens of thousands of Asian and African women leave their homes each year to work as domestic workers in Arab States to secure better futures for themselves and their families. Tracing their journeys from Sri Lanka to Lebanon, this documentary film sheds light on the experiences of migrant domestic workers with interviews from family members, employers, recruitment and placement agents and specialists in the field. Shot on location in Lebanon and Sri Lanka - funded by EC, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre, Dutch Embassy and the ILO (2005).

Video available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rY91LCyY4s>

Maid in Lebanon II: Voices from Home

A follow up to its predecessor, this documentary film delves further into exploring the complexity of the relationship between migrant domestic workers and the Lebanese households that play a double role as employers and immigration sponsors. Shot on location on Lebanon and Sri Lanka - funded by the ILO (2008).

Video available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94rO242G6dY>