**UN Women: Migration Portfolio**

Women make up approximately half of the 244 million migrants worldwide. Yet, still many of the policies that govern migration and seek to protect migrants fail to address the specific experiences and needs of women and girls. Women experience migration differently from men; from their decisions to migrate, their recruitment, to the sectors in which they are employed, the gendered risks they face, the amounts and the ways they remit and the contributions that they make. Female labour migration tends to be concentrated in occupations that are traditionally associated with specific gender roles. Indeed, many migrant women participate in precarious jobs in manufacturing, agriculture, service, and make up to 80 per cent of the care sector, including nursing, elderly and cleaning and other related work in households.[[1]](#footnote-1) As transnational agents of development, women migrants have the potential to make social and economic contributions to development. However, the positive contributions of women migrant workers can only be fully harnessed if their labour and human rights are fully protected. UN Women is committed to enhancing the promotion and protection of women migrant workers’ rights through supporting the development of gender-responsive, evidence and rights-based policies. UN Women promotes the full and equal participation of migrant women and girls in developing meaningful solutions to their needs and circumstances, whilst advocating for improving collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data.

Since February 2014, UN Women has been implementing a global project anchored in three pilot countries (Mexico, Moldova and the Philippines), entitled “Promoting and Protecting Women Migrant Workers’ Labour and Human Rights: Engaging with International, National Human Rights Mechanisms to Enhance Accountability”. With funding support from the European Union, the Project strives to promote women migrant workers’ rights and protect them against exclusion and exploitation at all stages of migration. The specific objectives of this Project are to:

1. strengthen strategic international human rights mechanisms, national human rights institutions, parliaments, governments to ensure accountability to women migrant workers all stages; and to
2. strengthen women migrant workers’ organizations to effectively engage with these mechanisms and governments to ensure greater accountability at all stages of migration.

Since 2014, this Project has produced original research and related knowledge products, has built capacity among a variety of stakeholders, and has conducted advocacy at the national and international level, focusing on the promotion and protection of women migrant workers within the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). At the global level, research has been conducted to synthesize and critically contextualize findings with broader global trends and information, with a view to influencing national and international bodies. The Project works directly with the Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW) and the Committee on CEDAW on promoting collaboration for better promotion and protection of women migrant workers’ rights within the existing international normative frameworks.

At the country level, significant project results include:

* In the Philippines, the Project’s CEDAW-based legal review resulted in the new Overseas Workers Welfare Administration Bill (signed into law in May 2016) being compliant with relevant CEDAW provisions. The Project was also the catalyst for generating a strong cohesive civil society CEDAW shadow report, which was presented to the CEDAW Committee by a CSO representative in July 2016, with the support of the project.
* In Moldova, with technical support provided by the project, the government has drafted a normative act which will ensure that all national laws on labour, migration and trafficking are compliant with the provisions of CEDAW. This is in addition to a further 53 amendments to 13 laws, which are currently under consideration by the government. The Project has also been integral to the establishment of the first women migrant workers’ rights groups in Moldova, which are actively engaging with government to demand greater accountability to their rights. A national advocacy campaign has also been developed to address detrimental stereotypes and discrimination against women migrant workers.
* In Mexico, the Project has strengthened engagement by government and civil society with the CMW and CEDAW reviews. In a meeting with experts from the CMW and the CEDAW Committees, 68 representatives of CSOs increased their capacity and commitment to 2016 shadow reporting by establishing an agreed methodology towards the process. Representatives of civil society have also been responsible for implementing a Training of Trainers programme to more than 900 government and non-government partners focused on increasing accountability to women migrant workers in legal frameworks and development planning.

As chair of the Global Migration Group (GMG)[[2]](#footnote-2) in 2016, UN Women has elevated the focus on women in the migration debate, highlighting the importance of gender-responsive and human-rights based approaches to migration governance. Further, as co-chair of GMG Working Group on Migration, Human Rights and Gender, UN Women supports the mainstreaming of gender and human rights in key migration policy processes, taking into account the rights of the most vulnerable and fostering the recognition and promotion of the important contributions women migrants make to communities, societies, and to development more broadly.

With 27 UN Women country offices in Asia and the Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Eastern Europe and Central Asian regions working on migration, UN Women offers comprehensive support for national and regional partners on migration and development initiatives. In particular, this work focuses on data collection and research; mainstreaming migration into development strategies; gender-sensitive, rights-based policy and legislative reform; gender-sensitive migration management; and capacity development for women migrant workers’ organizations.

In **Asia and the Pacific**, UN Women’s Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers has advocated for the protection and promotion of the rights of women migrant workers in the region since 2001, and has successfully contributed to key replicable results in protecting and empowering women migrant workers in many ways. For example, in 2005, overseas employment service providers and national associations from eight Asian countries adopted the Covenant of Ethical Conduct and Good Practices for Overseas Employment Services Providers at UNIFEM’s “Regional Consultation of Recruitment and Placement Agencies on Good Practices to Protect Women Migrant Workers”. This Covenant spells out business standards for recruitment agencies that protect women migrant workers.

In 2013, UN Women organized a regional workshop on the protection of Women Migrant Workers and Ethical Conduct of Recruitment Agencies in Vietnam. An outcome document was produced, highlighting key issues regarding the implementation of the Covenant of Ethical Conduct and Services by recruitment agencies, with recommendations for practical enforcement by Governments in Asia, sectoral bodies, UN and other international agencies, and development partners.

In partnership with other organizations, the Asia and Pacific UN Women office also generated new evidence and studies to advocate with high level government officials (both senior officials and ministerial levels) at regional meetings for the prevention of the exploitation of women migrant workers in the ASEAN region. Further, an awareness raising campaign was developed and launched throughout the ASEAN region to prevent and reduce the exploitation of women migrant domestic workers from the employers.

Since 2009, the UN Women **Bangladesh** Country Office has supported the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) to establish and run a women migrant resource centre to provide safe migration information in person and via a hotline. From the 70,000 migrant and aspirant migrant workers who were reached in the first 5 years, 20 per cent were women**.** The UN Women Bangladesh Country Office has also developed a number of knowledge products and tools that serve as evidence for advocacy efforts for the protection of women migrant workers.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In addition, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was developed in partnership with IOM to assist the government agencies of Bangladesh in monitoring recruitment practices more efficiently and enforce better migration management for addressing gender concerns in an adequate manner. Further, Labour attaches were trained on the issues faced by women migrant workers and received a resource kit that summarizes and provides user-friendly information to enable their support to women migrant workers in destination countries. A draft “Standardized Gender-Responsive Employment Contract for Migrant Women Domestic Workers” has been developed in partnership with the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA). This template will be used as an advocacy tool to initiate discussion through the regional consultative processes between sending and receiving countries to promote and protect the right of women migrant domestic workers.

Since 2012, **UN Women Training Centre** in Santo Domingo has conducted training and training of trainers courses for NGOs, governments and civil society staff from different regions. Based on UN Women’s “Gender on the Move, Working on the Migration-Development Nexus from a Gender perspective” Manual, trainings were replicated in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and Asia, many of which were facilitated as part of the EU funded migration project.

The UN Women Training Centre will launch an updated version of the “Gender on the Move” manual that includes new topics such as masculinities, pre-departure trainings, standard contracts, bilateral agreements, advocacy recommendations and tools, as well as emerging topics such as LGTBI migrants, climate change and migration and non-traditional sectors for women migrants.

In addition, the UN Women Training Centre’s “I know Gender” Course is used as a mandatory training at IOM. IOM and the UN Women Training Centre are currently developing a self-paced module on Gender and Migration, which will be available in its e-learning campus at the end of 2016. The Training Centre has also worked together with ITC ILO to implement courses on gender and labour migration, including the Labour Migration Academy since 2014.

In **Ethiopia**, UN Women commissioned a regional study on ‘Gender and International Migration: The Case of Female Domestic Workers in Africa” in 2013**.**UN Women consequently entered into an agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO), to implement a project with funding from the European Commission to promote safe migration for women migrant domestic workers (MDWs). 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 ran from October 2013 to July 2016, and included a country-specific study on the nature, magnitude and trends in relation to migration of MDWs from Ethiopia to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States, Lebanon and Sudan. The study findings will inform policy interventions for government on how to make migration safer for women, discourage illegal migration, encourage job creation for young women and provide support for the protection of women’s human rights as migrants in host countries.

The Project also supported regional governments with high numbers of migrant domestic workers, as well as the Police, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Women Affairs to harmonise efforts and enhance coordination on addressing human trafficking and irregular migrations. In addition, capacity building trainings and experience sharing events on migration and gender issues were conducted for experts and management staff of local government offices of Labour and Social Affairs.  The project also involved communication activities and community awareness raising, reaching out to 140,000 women and 85,000 men. With a  focus on increasing communities’ understanding of ILO’s Convention 189 on Decent work for domestic workers, and the risks involved in irregular migration particularly in relation to sexual and domestic abuse of women, the “Community Conversations” contributed to an increase in the reporting of illegal migration brokers to authorities and other important attitudinal changes at the community level. As a result of the progress being achieved with the Project, government has started upscaling several activities, including Community Conversations.

1. ILO. 2013 Domestic workers across the world: Global and regional sta­tistics and the extent of legal protection. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Global Migration Group (GMG) is an inter-agency group bringing together heads of agencies to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. The GMG is particularly concerned with improving the overall effectiveness of its members and other stakeholders in capitalizing upon the opportunities and responding to the challenges presented by international migration. http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Knowledge products include: (i)Training manual for Labour Attaches published in 2011 (ii) Housekeepers manual developed for domestic migrant workers in Bangla published in 2011 (iii) Gender dimensions of Remittance-A Study of Bangladeshi Workers working in Lebanon in 2012 (iv) Women in Foreign Employment: A study of skills diversification for Bangladeshi women workers in 2013 (v) External Market Analysis for Women Migrant Workers in 2015 and Mapping of service providers for the socioeconomic reintegration of migrant returnee workers in 2014 (Joint Project with ILO and IOM, Promoting Decent Work through Improved Migration Policy and its Applications in Bangladesh). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)