

Write-up for ILO-Dhaka Website

“Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East”

April 2013 - March 2018

‘Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East’ is a five-year, inter-regional technical cooperation programme of ILO known as “Work in Freedom (WIF)” program, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) that takes a targeted approach to prevent and reduce the incidence of trafficking of women and girls from three source countries – Bangladesh, India and Nepal through their economic, social and legal empowerment in order to promote safe migration and decent work. It is also working in three destination countries - Jordan, Lebanon and UAE to make coordination and raising of collective voice against labor exploitation and trafficking to promote legal and social justice for the female migrant workers.

> Link with the below matters:

ILO-DFID Partnership Programme on Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East

[Work in Freedom (WIF) Programme]

Background/Situational Analysis

Every year millions of men and women move across borders to seek employment abroad. There is a high concentration of movement to the Gulf and Middle East countries. A huge number of South Asian workers move annually to the destination countries like Gulf region: Qatar, UAE, Jordan, Lebanon etc. In addition, most South Asian migration is on fixed term contracts representing temporary labour migration. The GCC member states refer to such workers as ‘temporary contractual labour’ rather than ‘migrant workers’, but they are indeed migrant workers as defined in ILO and UN international instruments. Most migrant workers from South Asia to Middle East and other Asian destinations are also low-skilled or semi-skilled. These workers face numerous problems in protection in both origin and destination countries compared to skilled workers and professionals. In general, skilled workers and professionals are accorded more favorable treatment as they migrate under special schemes or move with foreign direct investments.

Another observed tendency has been the increasing share of female workers migrating on their own for overseas employment. The bulk of them migrate for low wage

occupations such as domestic work. The most important trend in total migration from the viewpoint of protection of migrant rights in Asia is the high incidence of 'irregular migration' – commonly referred to as 'illegal', 'undocumented' or 'clandestine' migration. The incidence of irregular migration is a concern in south Asian Countries specially Bangladesh and India, largely due to continuing undocumented movement of women and children through dalals and other fraudulent actors across the border from Bangladesh and Nepal into India. Undocumented movement of women and children also takes place from India into neighboring countries.

Labour migration from and within South Asia is trafficking of women and children across borders, often for labour exploitation and other purposes. Notwithstanding the existence of protective legal frameworks both at the national and international levels, migration is often subject to abusive practices. These abuses include unpaid wages, confiscation of ID documents, and excessively long work hours without rest days, restrictions on freedom of movement, deception and intimidation. Violence against women is another all too common experience faced by women migrant workers. These practices are indicative of forced labour and undocumented human movement.

The programme will contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and poverty reduction by promoting Decent Work through promotion of workplace education, good working conditions and safety and health standards; access to social protection for all families; and the elimination of child labour,

In particular its worst forms which will also address undocumented human movement for forced labour or for other forms of exploitation and promote labour rights through Multilateral and consultative processes. It will engage a wide range of partnerships to take an integrated value-chain-based approach to combat undocumented movement of women and girls for forced or exploitative labour in the garment sector

The programme will also mainstream gender concerns through the promotion of equality of opportunity in access to jobs, income-earning activities, assets, education and training; women's empowerment through employers' and workers' organizations; the promotion of social dialogue and collective bargaining for gender equality; the promotion and realization of rights at work which will contribute to the achievement of the goal of MDG.

The project will strengthen enforcement measures of the government which will facilitate greater coordination between police and labour inspectors, particularly in the areas of information-sharing and the development of anti-trafficking policies. As trafficking is still an ambiguous concept for many enforcement officials to understand, especially in terms of victim identification and prosecutor case management, capacity building training will be provided both at the national and local levels. Training will address topics such as identifying the worst forms of child labour and standard operating procedures for child victims.

While the ongoing efforts of the ILO in different countries are addressing the issues of irregular migration in one way or another, the *project* **'ILO-DFID Partnership Programme on Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East'** seeks to promote safe migration as a way of trafficking

prevention and intends to look, inter alia, closely at recruitment processes on an interregional basis in order to develop more effective responses to the problems inherent therein since this is considered as a challenge to fostering safe migration of women workers in the region.

The duration of the project: April 2013 - March 2018 (five years)

Project Location: Bangladesh, India, Nepal (source); Jordan, Lebanon and UAE (as destination)

Objective:

To reduce the incidence of trafficking of women and girls from India, Bangladesh and Nepal through economic, social, and legal empowerment.

Strategies to achieve the objective:

- Reduce the incidence of trafficking of women and girls by influencing policy and legislative reform that will enhance the protection of women workers,
- Engage with relevant actors and service providers at the community level to support the empowerment, organization and representation of women workers, and promote their access to specific support services.

Outcome:

Migrant women and girls will be empowered and risk of trafficking will be prevented by:

- Ensuring decent working conditions at the countries of destination;
- Increasing benefits of migration for workers and their families through regular remittances and a reduction of migration costs;
- Enhancing knowledge, skills, and employability of migrant women workers and education of girls.

Outputs:

1. Women migrant workers and girls are empowered in key source areas through:

- Information on safe migration channels, rights at work and how to avoid being trafficked
- Vocational skills training programs
- Access to range of information and services delivered by community groups and mobile phones
- Strengthened capacity to constituents and community groups to combat child labour and trafficking;

2. Recruitment agencies adopt ethical practices and are subject to improved monitoring and enforcement by state authorities;

3. Improved workplace practices and support services to safeguard the rights of women and girls

4. Laws and policies in place and implemented to protect women migrant workers and girls.

5. New and better evidence is available on labour trafficking of women & girls within and from South Asia and on effective preventive measures

Stakeholders

- The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE) will be the main government implementing partner of this project.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs.
- In addition, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF), National Coordination Council for Workers' Education (NCCWE) and association of recruiting agents will be the primary constituent partners.
- The project will work with other government ministries, departments, national and international NGOs and International trade unions as appropriate for achieving the project outputs.

For further information please contact:

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