Empowering Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Sri Lanka

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In 2014, remittances formed 9.6% of total GDP and 86% of foreign reserves. However, national data on remittances sent by women migrant workers is not available.

Despite their immense contribution, women migrant domestic workers undergo...

- Risk of exploitation at the hands of recruitment agencies/agents/intermediaries
- Discrimination in accessing regular migration due to a lack of gender-sensitivity in recruitment procedures
- Contract substitution by the recruitment agency in the country of destination
- Significantly longer hours of work with lower wages
- Linguistic and cultural barriers

EMPOWERMENT

- Remove discriminatory barriers to women’s mobility by repealing the Family Background Report
- Institutionalize gender-responsive ethical recruitment practices
- Explicitly address protection measures for women in the National Labor Migration Policy
- Introduce online recruitment systems leaving no leeway for intermediaries
- Create platforms for women migrant workers to voice their achievements, needs and concerns

PROTECTION

- Promote gender-responsive employment contracts
- Introduce prevention strategies to respond to sexual and reproductive rights in the National Migration Health Policy
- Strengthen gender-responsive Global and Regional Platforms on Labor Migration
- Negotiate more gender-Responsive Bilateral Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding; for example the Bilateral Agreement with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia & Sri Lanka
- Ensure grievance mechanisms are accessible to all migrant workers including women by decentralizing the grievance handling mechanisms to the regional offices of Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment

CAPACITY BUILDING

- Create robust specialized accreditation and skills development opportunities targeted to labor market needs
- Staff and train missions adequately to address issues experienced by women migrant domestic workers such as sexual & gender-based violence

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What Can Be Done?

- Promote gender-responsive employment contracts
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VOICES OF WOMEN

I silently suffered physical abuse and psychological trauma at the hands of my employer in Saudi Arabia because I wanted to fulfil my dream of owning a house.

I was forced into captivity when I decided to change my employer in Kuwait. My passport was confiscated and my salary withheld. When I attempted escape, I was caught by the police and put behind bars. It was only after spending several months in an Embassy run shelter that I was able to return home.

When I was sick, with high fever and vomiting that lasted for more than a week, I was not taken to a doctor. I was given some tablets that was at home by my employer. As I did not know what the tablet was, I did not take it.

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