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Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) to Support WiF2

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Contents

Contents	2
Abstract.....	7
1. Introduction.....	12
Objectives of the project.....	12
Contribution to the literature	12
ROAD process analytical framework.....	13
Innovation and relevance to CEDIL	17
2. The intervention	18
Activities and context	18
The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.....	19
Theory of change or model.....	21
Mechanisms.....	23
Outcomes.....	26
3. Technical design	28
4. Results	30
Workstream 1: ROAD process, KIIs and literature reviews	30
Workstream 1.1: KIIs and literature review to inform the WiF-2 theory of change	31
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Background on the South Asia to the Middle East Migration Corridor</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Reducing women’s forced labour and trafficking along migration pathways.....</i>	<i>35</i>
o Push and pull factors increasing vulnerability to migration	35
<i>Countries of origin, pre-departure</i>	<i>36</i>
o <i>Migration bans, age limits and restrictive regulations in countries of origin</i>	<i>36</i>
o <i>Pre-departure training, networks, and rights awareness.....</i>	<i>37</i>
o <i>Pre-departure networks.....</i>	<i>39</i>
o <i>Improving regulations on intermediation in countries of origin</i>	<i>40</i>
o <i>Indebtedness</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Departure.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>In destination countries</i>	<i>42</i>
o <i>Tackling economic exploitation in destination countries</i>	<i>42</i>
o <i>Racism</i>	<i>42</i>
o <i>Improving migrant worker awareness of support services</i>	<i>43</i>
o <i>Supporting existing safe spaces.....</i>	<i>43</i>
o <i>Virtual safe spaces.....</i>	<i>43</i>
o <i>Employment agencies</i>	<i>44</i>
o <i>Employer attitudes.....</i>	<i>45</i>
o <i>Strengthen embassy support</i>	<i>46</i>

○	<i>Unionization</i>	46
	<i>Reintegration</i>	47
○	<i>Reintegration assistance</i>	47
	<i>Interventions in the institutional and policy framework</i>	48
○	<i>Laws in the country of origin</i>	48
○	<i>Laws in receiving countries</i>	50
○	<i>Bilateral Agreements</i>	51
○	<i>Regional agreements</i>	52
○	<i>Limitations of laws and policies</i>	52
○	<i>Key legal options</i>	52
○	<i>The role of NGOs and civil society</i>	53
	<i>Additional considerations due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic</i>	53
○	<i>Exclusion from support programs and information</i>	54
○	<i>Loss of employment, shelter, and networks</i>	54
○	<i>Repatriation and financial assistance</i>	54
○	<i>Racist attitudes in the pandemic</i>	55
○	<i>Healthcare</i>	55
○	<i>Program activity disruption</i>	55
○	<i>Exposure of violations in the sponsorship system</i>	56
	<i>Effective mechanisms and implementation through a sample project: The Work In Freedom phase II program</i>	56
○	<i>Outflow countries</i>	57
○	<i>Inflow countries</i>	57
○	<i>Labour intermediation</i>	58
	<i>Workstream 1.2: ROAD process: Key actors in the migration pathway</i>	66
	<i>Countries of Origin: Bangladesh and Nepal</i>	68
	<i>Destination Countries: Jordan and Lebanon</i>	71
	<i>Workstream 1.3: ROAD process: Causal risk maps</i>	75
	<i>Workstream 1.4: Systematic review: Health of women domestic migrant workers</i>	89
	<i>Workstream 2: Quantitative survey to measure impact of WiF-2 interventions in districts with high migration and WEMI pilot, Bangladesh</i>	112
	<i>WS2.1 Impact of WiF-2 activities in Bangladesh</i>	113
	<i>Sampling</i>	114
	<i>WS2.2 Understanding women’s agency in migration</i>	125
	<i>Data collection</i>	129
	<i>Sources of disempowerment</i>	131
	<i>Validation</i>	133
	<i>Robustness checks</i>	134
○	<i>Association (Cramer’s V) between WEMI indicators</i>	134
○	<i>Rank robustness for different weighting schemes</i>	136

o	<i>Rank robustness for different empowerment cut-off scores</i>	137
	<i>Conclusion</i>	137
	WS2.3 Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	139
	Workstream 3: Qualitative evaluation of the role of women’s empowerment.....	153
	Workstream 4.....	164
	Workstream 5: Qualitative Study to Assess the Role of Social Networks for Elderly Care Workers and Care Recipients.....	171
	Workstream 6: Qualitative evaluation of the WiF-2 freedom of association intervention in (Jordan and) Lebanon	193
	Workstream 7: Recap and Recommendations.....	225

List of Figures:

Figure 0.1 Risk and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) Process	14
Figure 0.2 Theory of Change of WiF-2	21
Figure 0.3 Outcomes that WiF-2 aims to achieve.....	26
Figure 1.1 Observed Net-Maps from Bangladesh and Nepal	67
Figure 1.2 Observed Net-Maps from Bangladesh and Nepal	68
Figure 1.3 Migration System in the South-to-West Asian Pathway.....	75
Figure 1.6: Flow diagram	90
Figure 2.1 Inverse Probability Weighted Distribution of the Confounding Variables.....	114
Figure 2.2 Intervention and Study Area (at the district level)	115
Figure 2.3 Marginal Effects of Intervention on Exposure and its Relationships with Area and Education.....	119
Figure 2.4 Marginal Effects of Exposure on Migration-Related Deliberation and its Relationships with Age and Education	120
Figure 2.5 Marginal Effects of Intervention on Perceived Migration Risk and Their Relationships with Age, Education, and the Number of Assets Owned.....	121
Figure 2.6: Contribution of Subdomains to the Disempowerment Score	133
Figure 2.7 Distribution of Sample by the Last Employment in Destination Country	140
Figure 2.8 Reasons for latest migration	142
Figure 2.9 Sources Used to Fund Migration Expenses.....	144
Figure 2.10 Exposure to Discriminatory Attitudes, by Last Country of Migration	145
Figure 2.11 Exposure to Discriminatory Attitudes by Employment Type	146
Figure 2.12 Main Reason for Migrant’s Return to Country of Origin	147
Figure 2.13 Obstacles Facing Returnees in their Reintegration Process in the Home Country	147

List of Tables:

Table 01 Key mechanisms derived from the WiF-2 ToC and evaluation activities	23
Table 1.1 Mechanisms for outflow countries (countries of origin)	59
Table 1.2 Mechanisms for inflow countries (countries of destination)	61
Table 1.3 Mechanisms for labour intermediation	62
Table 1.4 Actors and Linkages	68

Table 1.5 Top Influential Actors.....	70
Table 1.6 Descriptive Network Features.....	71
Table 1.7 Distribution of Actor Types	71
Table 1.8 Distribution of Edges.....	71
Table 1.9 Distribution of Participant Assigned Influence Score.....	72
Table 1.10 Distribution of Degree Score.....	72
Table 1.11 Most Important Actors and Coalitions.....	73
Table 1.12 Actors Coalitions	74
Table 1.13 Drivers and Triggers for Bangladesh ROAD Workshop	78
Table 1.14: Consequences identified in the Bangladesh workshop	81
Table 1.15: Priority Controls & Mitigants for ensuring safe migration of WMWs from Bangladesh	83
Table 1.16: Triggers and Drivers, Lebanon	85
Table 1.17: Consequences identified in the Lebanon workshop.....	86
Table 1.15: Literature	92
Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics of Relevant Variable.....	117
Table 2.2 Major Finding: Logit Estimates (log-odds) with Inverse Probability Weights	118
Table 2.3 Distribution of Risk-Perception Categories by Intervention	121
Table 2.4 WEMI Indicators and their Definitions of Adequacy.....	126
Table 2.5 Sample Characteristics of WEMI Respondents	130
Table 2.6 Summary of High-Level Indices from WEMI Methodology.....	131
Table 2.7 WEMI Results by Type of Work in the Destination Country	131
Table 2.8 Headcount Ratios of Inadequacy in WEMI Indicators.....	132
Table 2.9 Relationship between Empowerment Score and Selected Wellbeing Indicators.....	134
Table 2.10 Association (Cramer’s V) between WEMI Indicators	135
Table 2.11 Sensitivity to Different Weights	136
Table 2.12 Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient between Different Weighting Schemes	137
Table 2.13 Rank of 3DE Scores by Districts for Different Empowerment Cut-Offs.....	137
Table 2.14 Sample Characteristics	141
Table 2.15 Experience of Latest Migration by Type of Work.....	143
Table 2.16 Test of Means of Outcome Variables by Time of Return to Bangladesh	149
Table 2.17 Impact of COVID-19 on Return to Country of Origin	150
Table 2.18 Impact of COVID-19 on the Reintegration Process of Returnee Migrants.....	150
Table 2.19 Percent of Respondents Adequate in Indicators of Agency by Employment Sector	151
Table 2.20 Associations of Empowerment with COVID-19 Shocks to Employment Abroad	152
Table 4.1: Employer practices in Lebanon.....	166
Table 4.2: Discriminatory attitudes of employers	167
Table 4.3: Bivariate associations (Chi-square tests of significance) between socio-demographic factors and mode of recruitment of the WMDW, and four employer practices	168
Table 4.4: Bivariate associations (T-tests of significance) between knowledge of Kafala, knowledge of the contract, and discriminatory attitudes, and four employer practices	169

Table 4.5: Regression models to predict non-payment of salary, not giving a worker a day off, not giving her a day out, and locking her inside, adjusting for sex, age, education, and religion 169

Annex

- B.1 Publications linked to the ROAD migration project**
- B.2 Net-Map process guidance (Example Lebanon)**
- B.3 The ROAD process guidance**
- B.4 ROAD causal diagrams**
- B5 Additional WS2.1 tables**

Abstract

The Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) to Support WiF-2 (ROAD migration project), a partnership coordinated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Australian National University, American University Beirut, Lincoln University, and University of Dhaka, evaluated the ILO-DFID Partnership Programme on Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East (Work in Freedom, Phase 2 project [WiF-2]), which operated from 2018 to 2023. The WiF-2 project specifically aimed “to reduce vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour of women and girls across migration pathways leading to the care sector and textiles, clothing, leather and footwear industries (TCLFI) of South Asia and Arab States” (ToC WiF-2).

In this context, the International Labour Organization (ILO) describes three dimensions to forced labour: (i) unfree recruitment; (ii) work and life under duress; and (iii) impossibility to leave employer. Forced labour exists if any one of these dimensions exists. Exploitation relates to one or all of the following three elements: (i) restricting freedom of movement; (ii) economic exploitation; and (iii) violence or the threat of violence. Trafficking relates to migrants’ interactions with a network of individuals who organize the migration process, including brokers in origin countries and employment agencies, as well as employers in destination countries, with elements of deception, coercion, debt bondage, and slavery-like conditions. Trafficking also includes involuntary child labour.

To address women and girl’s vulnerability to forced labour, exploitation, and trafficking, the WiF-2 program implemented pre-migration outreach interventions in countries of origin (Bangladesh, India, and Nepal). At the micro-level, this included training of a group of social workers who would engage women, girls, and other community members in countries of origin through door-to-door visits, community/courtyard meetings, and orientation events, and by providing referrals for vocational training.

In destination countries, the program supported a worker’s center in Jordan that provides legal aid and aims to address migrants’ grievances with garment factories as well as the Migrant Community Center, which supports demand-driven training for migrants as well as other services on a needs basis. The WiF-2 program also included a small set of activities aimed at engaging employers in the domestic care sector, through a short video and a play.

At the macro or policy level, the WiF-2 program collaborated with state and non-state actors (including government agencies, NGOs, and worker and employer organizations) to bring about policy changes to create a “sustained situation” in which women in the countries of origin and destination are less vulnerable to trafficking and forced labor. As an example, in Lebanon, ILO supported the effort to align the standard labour contract of migrant workers with ILO Convention No. 189 on domestic workers. ILO’s WiF-program also engaged with recruitment agencies and implemented recruitment assessments in countries of origin and destination countries.

In all of this, the program had a strong advocacy focus and also implemented a learning agenda with various studies directly commissioned by the WiF-2 program.

The ROAD migration project evaluated the ILO WiF-2 activities and interventions and identified a series of additional activities and opportunities that WiF-2 and other programs that aim to reduce women migrants vulnerabilities in the South Asia to West Asia corridor could undertake. The project worked in two countries of origin (Bangladesh and Nepal) and two destination

countries (Jordan and Lebanon), using mixed methods approaches within the causal ROAD process framework.

The project used the Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) framework, a systems approach to support decision-making under uncertainty that provides a broad analytical frame for assessing factors affecting women migrants' vulnerabilities. We applied the ROAD framework together with a network analysis using data collected through facilitated virtual (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) and in-person workshops in the four study countries. This analysis provided insight on the key risks, triggers, and drivers of women migrants' vulnerabilities in the South Asia to West Asia migration channel. It also identified measures to reduce adverse consequences faced by women migrants and other measures to mitigate the negative impacts of adverse consequences when they arise. Analyses of the various actor networks from the four countries supported identification of key actors that bridge from countries of origin to destination countries, as well as identification of network vulnerabilities and weaknesses that can amplify women migrants' vulnerabilities. Additional foundational research included a literature review and Key Informant Interviews with migration actors to review and update the WiF-2 program's Theory of Change, in response to a specific request from FCDO, as well as a synthesis of knowledge on health impacts experienced by women migrants working in Arab countries.

This foundational work was followed by qualitative data collection with women migrants and their spouses in Bangladesh and Nepal focused on precarity and vulnerabilities in migration. In Lebanon, women migrants themselves were trained as researchers as part of the ROAD migration project; they collected and analyzed data to assess the topics of freedom of association and support services, which were the focus of the WiF-2 program in Lebanon. In view of new vulnerabilities for migrants as well as elderly employers' need for migrants for care work, we implemented additional qualitative fieldwork including Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews with these two groups to assess the role of collective agency among both communities. The project also analyzed quantitative and qualitative data related to employers in the domestic care sector in Lebanon to identify measures to reduce women migrants' vulnerabilities. For Jordan, following the realization that privacy could not be maintained during qualitative fieldwork in the garment factory setting, we interviewed returnees in Bangladesh who had previously worked in Jordan's garment sector. Interviews were conducted using a qualitative phone survey protocol.

To assess the impacts of the WiF-2 training activities and to better assess women's agency, resources, and achievements in a migration setting, we implemented a large face-to-face intrahousehold survey in districts with high outmigration, including districts where WiF-2 had operated as well as areas within these same districts where WiF-2 had not operated. As part of this data collection, we piloted the Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI). Based on suggestions from CEDIL, we implemented a phone survey with migrant returnees to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the vulnerabilities of returnee migrants.

The project made contributions by highlighting how women's agency, precarity, and empowerment in shaping migration, and how social networks can contribute to collective agency for reducing women's vulnerabilities. It focused on the entire migration pathway by examining women migrants' vulnerabilities pre-departure, in destination countries, and following their return. In terms of innovations, the project used the ROAD process to identify migration networks that affect vulnerabilities and to identify triggers, drivers, consequences, controls, and mitigants related to women's adverse migration experiences.

The ROAD migration project, moreover, developed an innovative index, the Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI), which can be used to identify the key sources of disempowerment that women face in the migration process. This index goes beyond traditional qualitative assessments of victimhood that fail to consider women as agents of change and limited quantitative measures, such as number of women migrants or remittance flows. The project advanced participatory action research in the migration field by training women migrants as co-researchers. It also implemented quantitative and qualitative phone surveys to overcome COVID-19 and other constraints in reaching women migrants in the domestic care and garment sectors.

Based on the research and dissemination workshops, much of which is now under review with journals, we identified a series of policy recommendations that supported the WiF-2 program and other migration interventions and can support future migration programs in the South-to-West Asia migration corridor and beyond.

For the WiF-2 Theory of Change and migration programming

1. Improve linkages between migrant women in their home countries (pre-departure) with NGOs and advocacy groups in destination countries in the South-to-West Asia migration channel, with targeted support to subchannels, such as the recruitment process for migrants to the garment sector in Jordan, which is challenging for migrants to navigate without working with costly agents. Better contacts and information channels at the beginning of the migration process can increase the sense of safety for migrant women and reduce their indebtedness, thus reducing overall migration-related risks and vulnerabilities.
2. Involve migrant workers in the design and implementation of WiF-2 trainings and other migration interventions. This can ensure that migrants themselves can communicate the challenges they face, and thus interventions are more likely to reflect lived realities.
3. Add interventions focused on reintegration. Lack of reintegration programs can lead to a cycle of continued distress migration. Of note, several programs, including WiF-2, initiated ad hoc reintegration support following the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Incorporate COVID-19 pandemic and other health concerns into programming. This includes providing information on COVID-19 and other health challenges in local languages, advocacy for access to health services, and direct support to homeless and income-less migrants abroad.
5. In Nepal, focus advocacy activities on government agencies that are considered most influential because their policies directly affect women migrants' safety.
6. In Bangladesh, focus advocacy activities on both government (General Directorate of General Security and Ministry of Labour) and private sector actors; they are perceived as equally influential, but not collaborating adequately.
7. In Jordan, operate WiF-2 type activities through NGOs and the private sector, as engaging the government is unlikely to reduce vulnerabilities in the current policy environment.
8. Work actively with embassies to support vulnerable women migrants in all destination countries. South Asian countries can learn from Southeast Asian countries, for example, the Philippines.

In countries of origin—WiF-2 training activities

1. Provide accurate information on likely salaries as well as risks associated with migration, which is important to help migrants make informed decisions. WiF-2 training activities increased access to information on migration compared to areas where WiF-2 did not operate; potential migrants in areas where training took place had a better understanding of migration risks.
2. Provide language training, as lack of language skills needed in the destination country is a key source of vulnerability.
3. In Bangladesh, continue and expand training in villages. Training provided by WiF-2 in villages was preferred over training provided by the government, due to easier access and content; however, such trainings and information still only reach a small share of potential and actual migrants; trainings need to be targeted to more remote areas and poorer women.
4. Focus on training activities for potential migrants, rather than the general population, to best reduce vulnerabilities in migration.

In countries of origin—Recruitment actors

1. Reduce or remove reasons for migrants' reliance on recruitment actors, whose involvement can lead to long-term indebtedness for migrants. This requires coordination between government agencies and NGOs that work directly with migrants, and also requires that migrants' voices be heard by government and NGOs. As long as migration information is not transparently shared through channels accessible to potential women migrants, recruitment actors or middlemen/women have the opportunity to exploit migrants.
2. Require registration of recruitment agents. Agents with substantial complaints against them should lose their license or registration.

In destination countries—Activities in the employer space

1. In Lebanon, raise employers' awareness regarding the content of labour contracts as an effective means to reduce vulnerabilities.
2. In Lebanon, continue to advocate for an update to the standard labour contract for alignment with ILO Convention No. 189.
3. In Lebanon, support recruitment that bypasses recruitment agencies to reduce vulnerabilities of women migrants.
4. In Lebanon and Jordan, implement a large-scale advocacy program focused on reducing racially motivated treatment of workers in both the care and garment factory sectors.
5. In all West Asian countries, make worker contracts available in languages that the migrants understand.

In destination countries—Activities with recruitment agencies

1. In Lebanon, increase oversight over recruitment agencies, with a focus on ensuring they comply with labour laws.
2. In Lebanon, facilitate recruitment without engagement of recruitment agencies.

In destination countries—Activities focused on freedom of association and social networks

1. In Lebanon, create spaces for migrant domestic workers who provide elderly care to associate; and facilitate information channels that allow elderly care recipients to speak directly with each other.
2. Continue to support migrant and worker centres that can help reduce immediate vulnerabilities.
3. Facilitate women migrants' mutual support systems through migrant centres, collective action institutions, and virtual (digital) channels.
4. At the micro level, support migrant domestic workers' social networks by providing technology, such as cell phones or cell phone data packages, to migrant workers to ensure that they can develop and retain social networks.

1. Introduction

Objectives of the project

The Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) to Support WiF-2 (Work in Freedom, Phase II) applies the gendered ROAD process, including mixed qualitative and quantitative data collection, to assess how the Work in Freedom, Phase II program (ILO-DFID Partnership Programme on Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East)¹ has contributed to reducing short-term women migrant workers' vulnerabilities in the South Asia to West Asia migration corridor and to identify additional measures that various actors can use to reduce vulnerabilities to forced labour and trafficking.

The WiF-2 project specifically aims "to reduce vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour of women and girls across migration pathways leading to the care sector and textiles, clothing, leather and footwear industries (TCLFI) of South Asia and Arab States" (ToC WiF-2). WiF-2, which operated from 2018 to 2023, aimed to reach at least 350,000 women and girls at migration sources in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, and at migration destinations in Oman, Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon.

The ROAD migration project evaluated key components of the WiF-2 intervention, identified additional measures needed to reduce women migrants' vulnerability, and responded to specific needs and suggestions identified by FCDO and ILO. These include 1) focus on the entire migration pathway (given the focus of previous evaluations on country of origin); 2) collection of quantitative data where such data had not previously been collected; 3) support to WiF-2's Theory of Change (ToC); and 4) identification of indicators in the enabling environment (i.e., drivers) that can be monitored by selected migration stakeholders. The ROAD migration project collected and analysed data in two countries of origin—Bangladesh and Nepal; and two destination countries—Jordan and Lebanon.²

Contribution to the literature

Until recently, the literature on women migrants from South Asia to West Asia has been limited in scope. It primarily focused on the *kafala* system through which employers sponsor migrant workers in destination countries (Khattab et al., 2020; Pande, 2013) and on women's experiences with abuse and exploitation (Pande, 2013). Although this focus is vital for international (and local) organizations that advocate on behalf of migrant workers and strive to provide them with better protections, there is also great need to expand knowledge on gender and migration and reducing vulnerabilities (Briggs, 2014). For this, we conceptualized women's migration as a process, not an event, that can only be understood by examining the migrant's interaction with a network of individuals who organize the process, including brokers in origin countries and employers in destination countries (Tinti and Reitand, 2018; Kern and Müller-Böker, 2015; Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). Similarly, we considered migration under duress, considering, for example, forced labour as a progressive coercive relationship (Romero, 2018).

¹ For the purposes of this report, we refer to the intervention as the WiF-2 project and to our evaluation as the ROAD migration project. While the intervention uses Middle East, we use West Asia, whenever feasible due to the colonial undertones of the term Middle East.

² The ROAD migration project did not work in India, where WiF-2 worked with domestic and international migrants, due to earlier evaluations focused on India, and also not in exploratory countries where WiF-2 had intended to work, such as Kuwait and Oman, as activities had not started in 2020 and were cut or reduced after starting due to funding challenges.

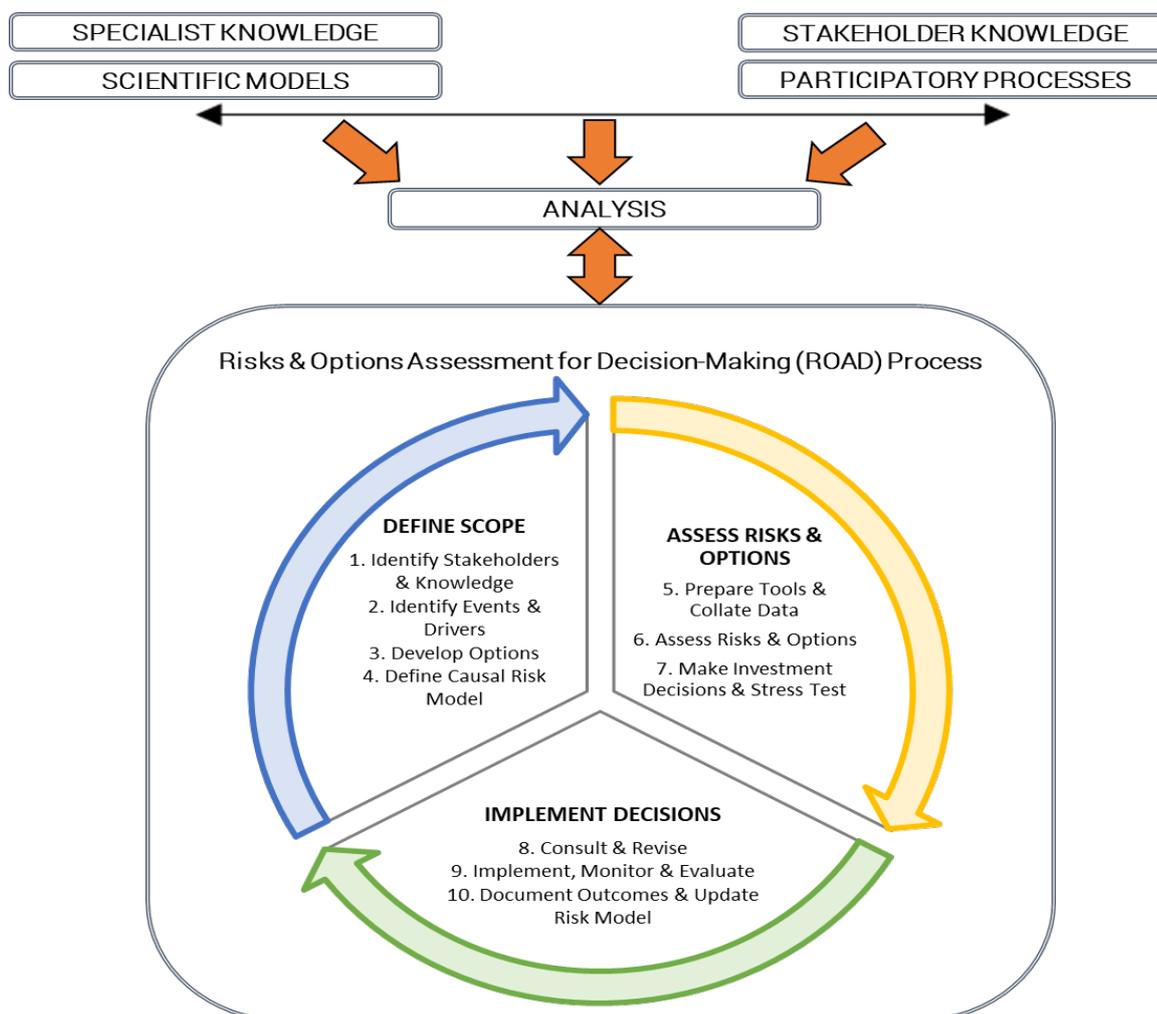
The ROAD migration project had set out to make three major contributions within the broader *ROAD process analytical framework* (Figure 0.1) (Abdulrahim et al. 2020). The first was a focus on the *role of women's empowerment* in countries of origin and host countries. Our hypothesis was that women's empowerment in the country of origin affects their decision to migrate as well as their migration experiences. This also links to the WiF-2 first outcome ('Women have a greater ability to make their own decisions throughout the migration process in an enabling atmosphere for safe migration into decent work'). The second contribution homed in on the *role of social networks* or collective agency of women, primarily in destination countries but also in countries of origin. We hypothesized that stronger collective agency and networks of women lead to more positive migration experiences. The third planned contribution was the study's focus on the *entire migration pathway*, as opposed to focusing on conditions that impact women migrants only in sending or only in destination countries.

This expanded focus aimed to generate a more realistic portrait of migrant women's experiences as they prepared for migration, during the migration process, in the destination country, and following their return home. While the project team developed contributions in all three areas—a broader analytical framework and approach; a focus on women's empowerment and social networks; and consideration of the entire migration pathway—our analytical timeframe was severely shortened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Beirut harbour explosion, oil price shocks, and a series of administrative and bureaucratic hurdles exogenous to the project. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affected the South Asia to West Asia migration corridor and reduced the length and quality of fieldwork under the project (see also COVID-19 section). Details on our contributions are described in the following.

ROAD process analytical framework

A key literature contribution is the application of the *ROAD process analytical framework and facilitated learning process* to the topic of vulnerabilities experienced by women in short-term, low-skilled migration in the South Asia to West Asia migration corridor. ROAD is a causal systems approach to support decision-making under uncertainty (Grafton et al., 2016), providing a broad analytical frame for assessing factors affecting women migrants' vulnerabilities.

Figure 0.1 Risk and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) Process



Source: FE2W Network (2019).

Application of this framework included the development of networks of migration actors ('stakeholders') that covered countries of origin and destination as part of Step 1 (Scope) of the ROAD process as well as the four national risks and options frameworks that were all developed through facilitated workshops ('Identify Events & Drivers' and 'Develop Options'). Analysis of these data (Step 2 [Analyse]) helped us to assess WiF-2 activities as well as identify potential additional interventions (Choudhury n.d.).

Women's precarity and empowerment

The contribution to women's empowerment focuses on the qualitative analysis of the *precarity* concept, which was explored through Key Informant Interviews as well as gendered Focus Group Discussions in Bangladesh and Nepal and enriched through qualitative fieldwork with women garment factory workers in Jordan and "freelance"³ migrants in Lebanon (Wu et al. n.d.; Kilby & Wu 2021; Wu & Kilby 2022). Women's agency and empowerment were also explored through the development, application, and analysis of the Women's Empowerment in Migration

³ Freelance migrants generally work for multiple employers in the domestic care sector and do not live with an employer, even though they are generally bound to an employer through the kafala system.

Index (WEMI), which explored contributions to women's disempowerment in migration (Alvi et al. n.d; Sufian et al. n.d.). We confirmed our hypothesis that less-empowered women are more vulnerable to adverse migration experiences. This supports WiF-2's activities that aimed to strengthen women's agency.

Role of social networks

The role of social networks was explored through a series of qualitative field studies focused on destination countries and enriched through quantitative data collection in Bangladesh. We confirmed our hypothesis that social capital and networks can reduce vulnerabilities of women migrants in the South Asia to West Asia migration corridor. This supports WiF-2's assistance to worker's centres in destination countries. Of note, some of our social network and collective action activities were adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Focus on the entire migration pathway

We found that ROAD workshop participants in Bangladesh and Nepal noted that actors in destination countries played important roles in women migrants' vulnerabilities, while ROAD workshop participants in destination countries accorded importance to migration actors in countries of origin. We also found that the type and strength of connections across countries of origin and destination affect vulnerabilities (Choudhury n.d.; ElDidi et al. 2021). Moreover, vulnerabilities are generally higher in first-time migration and decline in subsequent migrations (Wu & Kilby n.d.). Finally, we find that vulnerabilities differ by type of work and by country; as an example, garment factory workers in Jordan who came from Bangladesh felt that vulnerabilities were often higher in Bangladesh than Jordan.

Policy relevance

The ROAD migration project provides policy-relevant insights on how to reduce women's vulnerabilities in migration in the important South Asia to West Asia corridor, with some findings also applicable to immigrants from other countries of origin.

The study fills key evidence gaps related to all contributions described earlier. There is currently insufficient knowledge and understanding regarding the role of women's empowerment in determining migration experiences. There is also insufficient knowledge regarding the role of social networks in migration experiences. Social networks can be particularly important in cases of confinement and forced labour in destination countries.

The South Asia to West Asia migration corridor is particularly important, as the destination countries in West Asia, and among these particularly the Arab countries, have the highest share of migrant workers in the total workforce in the world, at 41 percent, compared to an average share of 5 percent of migrant workers in the total workforce globally (ILO 2021). However, the share of women in total migrants in the region is low, at 17 percent in 2019, compared to a global average of 41 percent, with most women limited to work opportunities in the domestic care sector, and in some instances, including Jordan, also the garment sector (ILO 2021). As such, the number of women facing vulnerabilities is particularly high, linked to the limited work opportunities and overall large number of migrants, but remains understudied due to the dominance of men workers.

The two destination countries in the study, Lebanon and Jordan, have been experiencing heightened political and economic challenges, which has meant that the rights of migrant

workers are increasingly perceived as secondary, if not unimportant. In Lebanon, policies regarding labour migration have been extremely resistant to change given chronic political instabilities and frequent turnover of ministers of labour.

The policy relevance was further heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had particularly large and lasting impacts for women and girls, worsening global gender and equity gaps. As a result of the pandemic, an estimated additional 47 million girls and women were pushed into extreme poverty, reversing decades of progress; and in 2021, at least 150 million more women than men were experiencing food insecurity. Women were more likely to lose jobs during the pandemic, and girls were at higher risk of dropping out of school as well as gender-based violence, including early or forced marriage and economic or sexual exploitation (Bryan et al. 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted migration corridors, and particularly the South Asia to West Asia corridor. Hundreds of thousands of migrants lost their employment in destination countries as a result of the pandemic, without accessible or affordable ways to return to their countries of origin. Further events that increased vulnerabilities of women in the corridor included severe economic crises caused in part by declining and/or fluctuating oil prices and the Beirut harbour explosion, which deepened Lebanon's economic crisis. Our own findings (reflected in ElDidi et al. 2021) suggest that while many domestic workers lost employment, others in the domestic care sector had to work even longer hours and their freedom of mobility was further restricted as employers sought to reduce exposure to the coronavirus. Racist attitudes toward migrant workers increased, health vulnerabilities grew, repatriation was challenging, wages were delayed or unpaid, and returnees experienced stigmatization upon return.

Based on a review of the evidence on measures that had been employed to reduce vulnerabilities of women migrants conducted in support of our re-analysis of the ToC of the WiF-2 project (ElDidi et al. 2021; ElDidi et al. 2022), and in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, an abstract we submitted in early 2021 was accepted for development into a Think20 (T20) policy brief (Wu et al. 2021). (The T20, hosted by the Government of Italy 2021, is the official engagement group of G20, bringing together leading think tanks and research centres worldwide.) The brief called on G20 countries to proactively focus on precarious migration of women from the Global South, who work in the much needed domestic and care sectors. The key messages of the 10 policy recommendations provided are as follows:

Along the entire migration pathway:

1. *Elevate the voice of vulnerable migrant women to catalyse action*
2. *Seek regional and multilateral solutions in support of female migrating workers*

In countries of origin:

3. *Officially recognise female short-term labour migrants*
4. *Support certification of migration agents*
5. *Improve training quality and access for first-time migrants*
6. *Develop social assistance programmes for female migrants*
7. *Develop reintegration programmes for female returnees*

In destination countries:

8. *Support development and implementation of standard employment contracts*
9. *Formalise a redress mechanism to quickly address complaints*

10. Provide access to health services in countries of work (Wu et al. 2021)

We also believe that the development of the WEMI is highly policy-relevant, as it allows government agencies, donors, and practitioners to assess changes in disempowerment linked to migration over time, across countries, and as a result of interventions.

Our work on social networks can help implementers, such as ILO, to strengthen links between intervention locations in countries of origin and destination. Social networks that are developed during interventions in countries of origin should be retained in destination countries. ILO's mandate might not relate to returnees, but any findings could be brought into the policy process.

Publications linked to the evaluation can be found in Annex B.1.

Innovation and relevance to CEDIL

The ROAD evaluation includes four key innovations that are also relevant to CEDIL as they support complex evaluation processes, including the ROAD process analytical framework and facilitated learning process, the WEMI, and radical participatory action research.

ROAD process

To our knowledge, our study was the first to apply the ROAD process to the topic of women migrants' vulnerabilities. For this evaluation, ILO and FCDO asked us to reassess the ToC of the WiF-2 project and to identify indicators in the enabling environment that affect women's vulnerabilities in the migration process. We identified the ROAD process as suitable to support these requests. We do not posit that ROAD is a superior approach; but it can provide a useful analytical frame in complex migration studies.

Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI)

Based on the dimensions developed under Project Level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) (Malapit et al. 2019), the project team developed, tested and validated the Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI).

Participatory action research with migrants

While participatory action research is a common qualitative methodology, this study went further by training women migrants as co-researchers who would interview other migrant workers, translate the transcripts, and analyse the findings as integral members of the research team.

Phone surveys

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many research studies relied on phone surveys to aid data collection. The ROAD evaluation similarly implemented one quantitative phone survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 on women migrants' vulnerabilities; and a second, qualitative phone survey study to better understand working conditions of women garment factory workers from Bangladesh in Jordan. This second phone survey is a pivot from a study originally planned to take place at garment factories in Jordan. That approach had to be abandoned when it became clear that the privacy of participants could not be ensured in the factory setting.

2. The intervention

Activities and context

Work in Freedom (WiF) is a ten-year UK Aid-supported International Labour Organization (ILO)-implemented program focused on reducing women's vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour in South Asian countries of origin (Bangladesh, India and Nepal) and in selected destination countries (India, Jordan, Lebanon and some Gulf countries). WiF uses an integrated and targeted approach in developing practices and multisectoral policy measures and has engaged women migrants, trade unions, civil society organizations, businesses and regulators in a collaborative effort to address multiple facets of forced labour⁴ with a focus on the domestic care and garment sectors. Interventions and work of the programme include: (1) outreach to migrant women in areas where they come from; (2) worker empowerment interventions and employer advocacy; (3) improving practices related to recruitment and working and living conditions; (4) law and policy work; and (5) research on labour migration trajectories. This evaluation focuses on the WiF phase 2 (WiF-2) which was implemented during 2018 to 2023, following the earlier WiF-1 that operated from 2013 to 2018.

In countries of origin, collaborating NGOs provided trainings for women on alternative livelihood opportunities as well as on empowerment, human rights, and risks associated with international migration. ILO was not able to provide us with any of the training materials as materials were continually adjusted to context and no specific or sharable set of materials existed. Moreover, while WiF-2 focuses on districts with high outmigration, training activities were provided to all women, regardless of intention to migrate. Finally, ILO was working with governments on improving recruitment practices and implemented studies for learning purposes.

The key (cumulative) impact indicator of the program is "At least 240,000 women with an increased knowledge and/or skills" (ILO 2022). Key additional indicators include changes in recruitment practices and a change in the discourse on women's migration; an increase in the number of workers recruited through improved practices and strengthened laws, policies, practices, and systems for social protection; safe labour migration; and decent work for women.

In Lebanon, where many migrants from South Asia work in the domestic care sector and in Jordan, where women migrants tend to work in the garment sector, ILO supported freedom of association or worker centres where migrants can come for legal and other assistance, cultural events, a gym (in Jordan), and meet up with other migrants. ILO also worked directly with the governments of Jordan and Lebanon on improving migrant worker conditions. The overall outcome aimed for is women's greater ability to make their own choices, as reflected, for example, in the number of cases where women were able

⁴ ILO suggests three dimensions to forced labour: unfree recruitment; work and life under duress; and impossibility to leave employer. Forced labour exists if any one of these three situations exists. Trafficking also includes debt bondage and involuntary child labour.

to collectively negotiate fair and equal wages. Finally, ILO was implementing studies and assessments to improve the discourse and increase learnings on women's migration.

While the program also operated in India—focusing on internal migration and India as a destination country for migrants from Nepal—the ROAD migration project focused on migration from Bangladesh and Nepal to Jordan and Lebanon.

The ROAD migration project responded to specific needs and suggestions identified by DFID/FCDO and ILO. These include:

- a. Focus on the entire migration pathway (given the focus of previous evaluations on assessing activities at country of origin);
- b. Focus on collection of quantitative data where such data have not yet been collected in the past;
- c. Support to the ToC, including monitoring for need of change/revision to the ToC; and
- d. Identification of indicators of the enabling environment of migration pathways that can be monitored by selected migration stakeholders.

As quantitative data had been collected in India and Nepal under WiF-1, this evaluation focused quantitative data collection on Bangladesh. Since WiF-1 and WiF-2 are largely similar—the main change is a shift of activities toward destination countries—some results will likely be due to the full WiF timeframe.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

COVID-19 related delays and setbacks affected not only our ability to conduct fieldwork on time, but also ILO's ability to implement its program as intensively, and at the scale they had intended. Both these setbacks made our evaluation challenging. Moreover, as ILO notes, the pandemic has also adversely affected employment conditions of migrant workers who during the pandemic operated under less favourable conditions compared to pre-pandemic levels in both domestic and garment work. The South Asia region was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, while the West Asian countries, where WiF-2 was implemented, were affected by a combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated impacts. In Jordan the pandemic affected the garment industry (i.e. lower demand for clothes as people worked from home), while Lebanon was already affected by a severe economic crisis and later on by the Beirut harbour explosion. During the early phases of the pandemic, ILO aimed at reducing adverse impacts on women migrants subject to reverse migration as a result of the pandemic, and to lobby for access to health services, including vaccines. In countries of origin, to which migrants who had lost their jobs returned to, ILO supported efforts for reintegration and relief access. An example from Bangladesh is included here *"During the COVID-19 lockdown period, partners continued to mobilize social workers to support local Governments in enlisting beneficiaries, organizing relief distributions and other humanitarian response activities. During the reporting period, returnee migrants were given basic health and hygiene counselling and social workers facilitated access to relief food distribution supporting 6,057 households. Assistance included food packages (rice, wheat flour, pulses, vegetables, cooking oil), emergency cash assistance, health and hygiene materials, and COVID-19 testing. In addition,*

the implementing partners continued to provide referral support to the targeted communities in connecting them with government's livelihood schemes, social protection and various other welfare schemes/services including legal support. A total of 4,804 persons (4417 women and 387 men) benefitted from these initiatives" (ILO 2022, p.10).

The Impact Pathway of our evaluation had a series of workstreams that were all, in one way or other, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first workstream relates to a re-assessment of the Theory of Change (ToC) of the Work in Freedom 2 (WIF-2) project. This re-assessment was going to be used to support workstreams 2-7. The mechanism for this assessment was a combination of a ROAD and a Net-map workshops in two countries of origin and two destination countries. Both tools are highly interactive and require group work. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we first postponed the workshops several times and then held all but one of the two-day workshops as virtual events. In the absence of face-to-face meetings, it was challenging to get the desired level or quality of outputs. To move the project ahead despite the pandemic, we moreover implemented in-depth phone interviews with individual key informants on various interventions linked to the WIF-2 ToC, as well as an in-depth literature review, adding a third strand of activities to the first workstream.

Given COVID-19 related constraints, there were also considerable delays in the face-to-face fieldwork in all four countries and this affected all remaining workstreams. Moreover, it led to a reconceptualization of workstream 5, given the changes in the migrant domestic worker populations in Lebanon. However, with help from local partners, consultants, and collaborators, we were able to complete all the scheduled qualitative and quantitative data collection activities in a very short/compressed time. As most fieldwork activities could only be undertaken in 2022, most research papers developed under this project remain under review or are being finalized.

COVID-19 gravely affected female migrants in the target migration routes (South Asia to West Asia), intersecting with a series of other factors that had already affected the region and were further magnified following the pandemic. These included severely reduced oil revenues in some Arab countries and the pre-existing economic collapse in Lebanon, where the severe devaluation of the local currency and the disappearance of US dollars had already led to a severe reduction in salaries of migrant domestic workers. Embassies in host countries were slow in organizing return flights and many undocumented migrants were left without employment and income in destination countries. For migrants who did return, there were additional stigmas and taboos as migrants returning from abroad were considered to be potential carriers of the disease. From a gender perspective, migrant women were worse affected. For those in the garment industry, social distancing was difficult to achieve, and it is doubtful if all factories complied with global health standards. Domestic workers often had to cope with additional workloads. In addition, there were also reports of rise in domestic violence, even as other domestic workers risked being dismissed by their employer without due notice. Migrant women who were not eligible for government relief in the host country, were unable to send remittances, unable to return and to support themselves under immense economic, social and psychological pressure. In order to understand these challenges, on request from FCDO, we implemented a new research activity under WS2, to examine the impact of Covid-19 on female returnee migrants in Bangladesh, using phone surveys. Results

from that survey are included in this report and indicate larger shocks for women who returned after the pandemic, versus those who returned before.

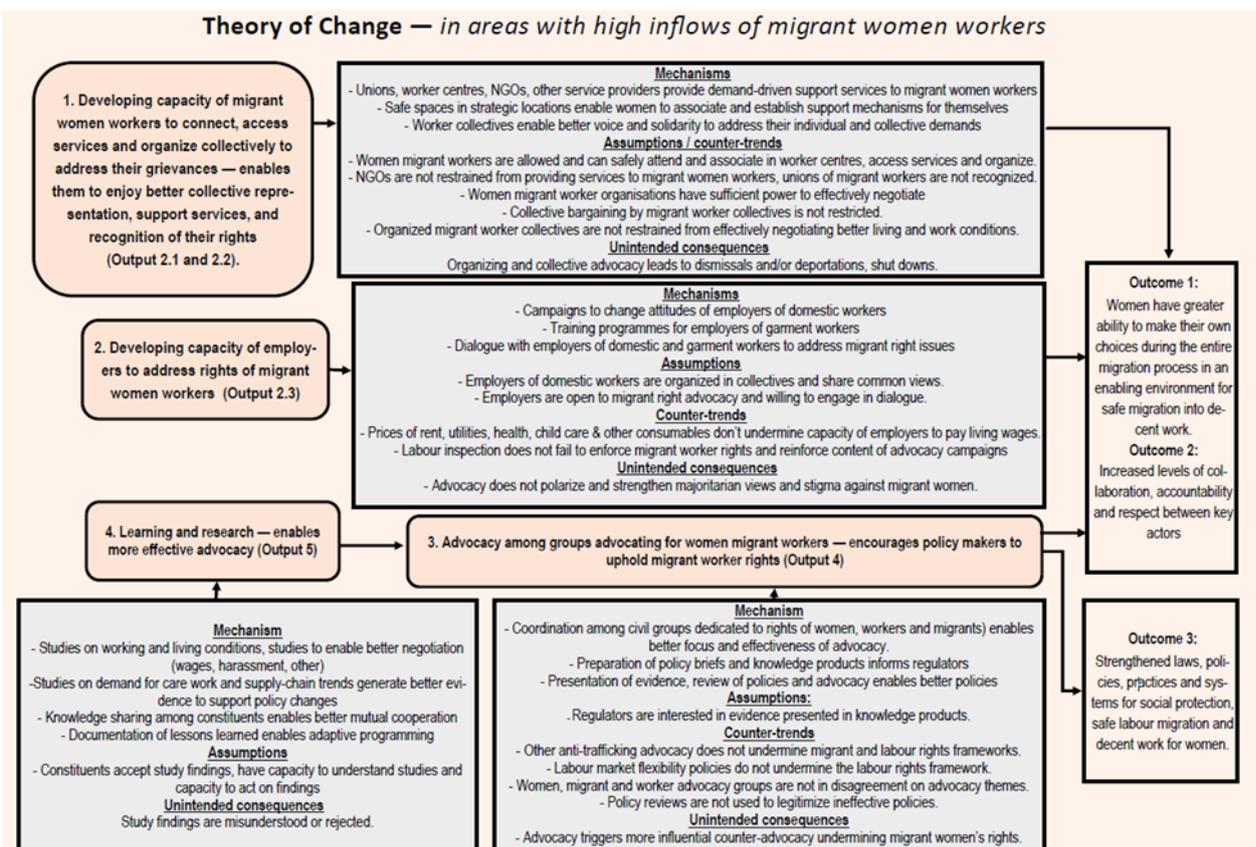
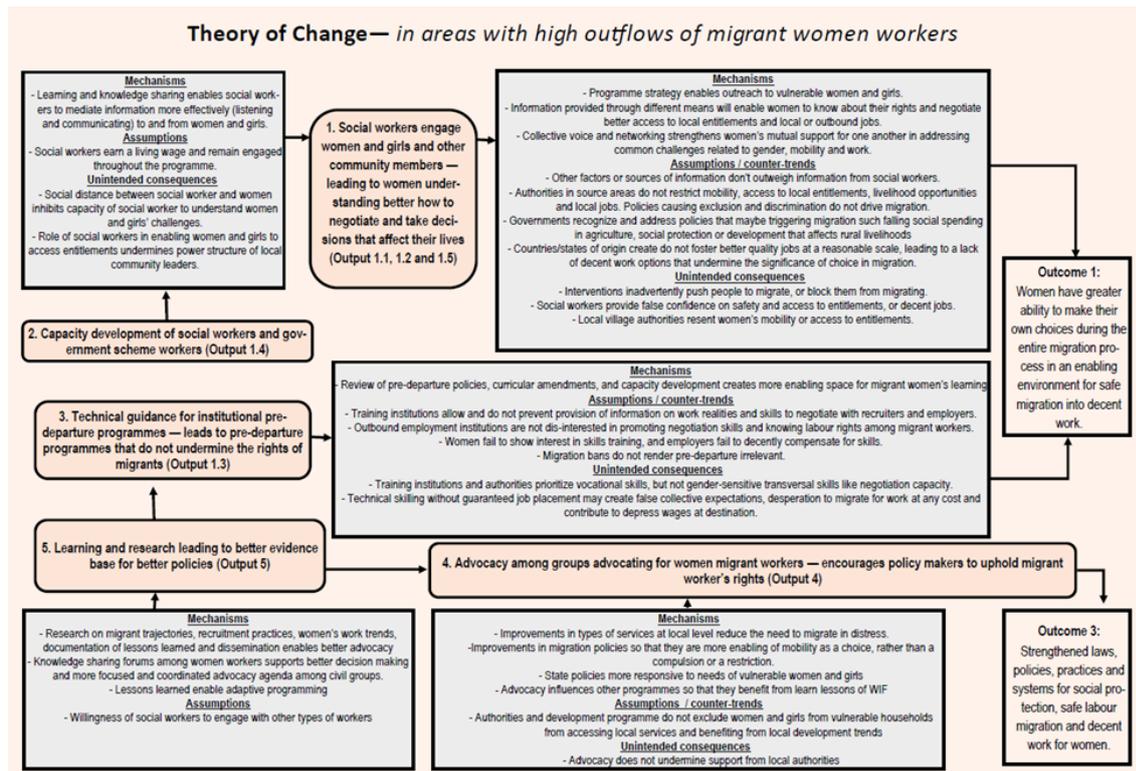
In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the WiF-2 project also suffered from fundings cuts that led to a reduction of its activities, with early termination of activities in Nepal and reduced activities elsewhere.

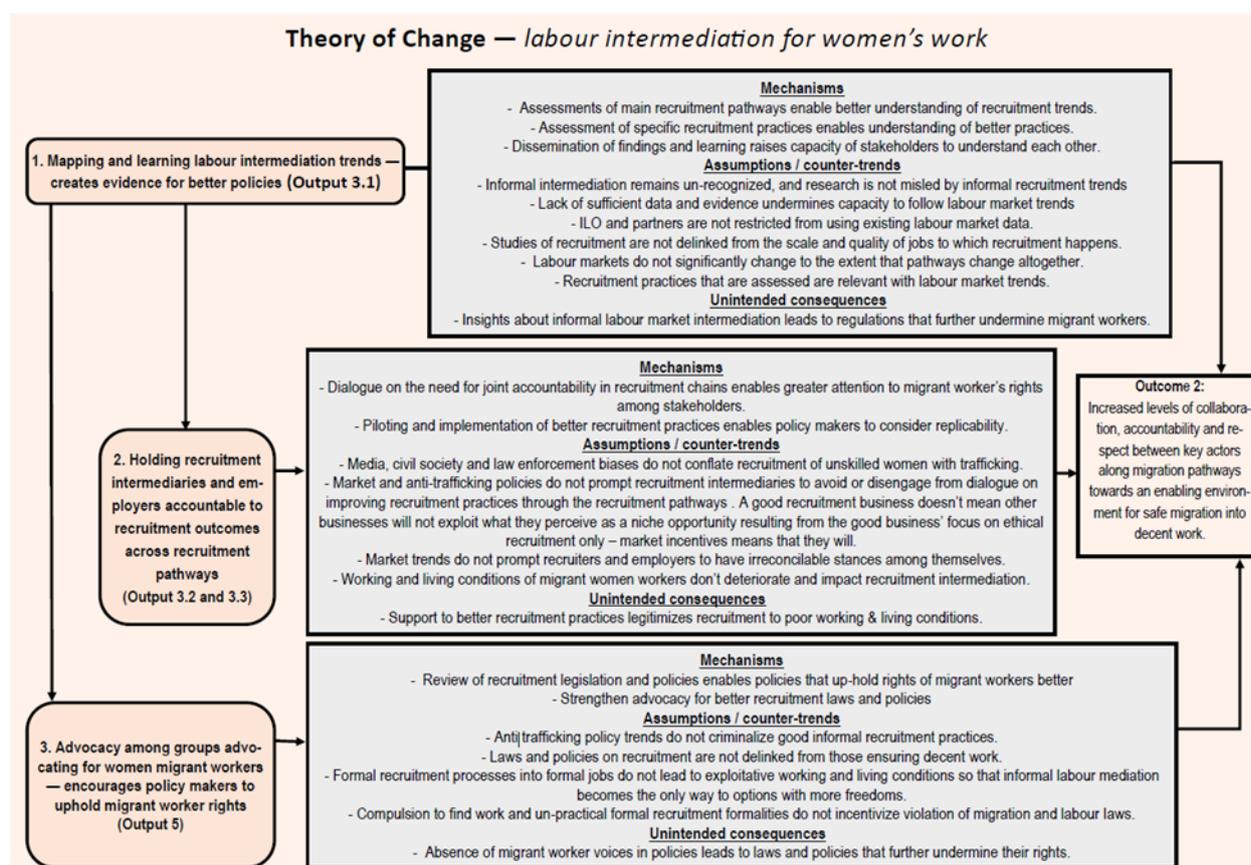
Theory of change or model

The Theory of Change of WiF2 is shown in Figure 0.2 (based on ILO 2019). It is split across three areas of interventions: 1) areas with high outflows of women workers, 2) areas with high inflows of women workers and 3) labour intermediation for women's work to achieve the three outcomes listed in Figure 0.3. Within the ToC, ILO aimed to make improvements in five objectives:

- Women understand how to negotiate and take decisions that affect their lives especially in relation to accessing protections and entitlements, mobility and local or outbound employment
- Migrant women, men and children in targeted sectors enjoy better collective representation, support services, and recognition of their rights along the pathways of their migration
- Employers and labour recruiters adopt more accountable recruitment practices along migration pathways and are subject to better monitoring and enforcement
- Advocacy work ensures that policy makers have improved knowledge and commitment to reform laws and policies to protect migrant worker rights
- Improved analytical understanding of risks and vulnerabilities in the migration process leads to improved intervention measures and evidence bases

Figure 0.2 Theory of Change of WiF-2





Mechanisms

The key mechanisms of the intervention are shown in Table 01. Most of the activities and mechanisms do not lend themselves to quantitative analyses or are relatively small (for example, theatre play seen by approximately 1,000 people with a focus on youth education). The evaluation therefore undertook mostly qualitative studies.

Table 01 Key mechanisms derived from the WiF-2 ToC and evaluation activities

<i>WIF-2 ToC mechanisms</i>	<i>Evaluation activities / findings</i>
<u><i>Country of origin</i></u>	
<p>Social workers engage women and girls and other community members — leading to women understanding better how to negotiate and take decisions that affect their lives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to vulnerable women and girls. • Information provision enables women to know about their rights and negotiate better access to local entitlements and jobs. • Collective voice and networking strengthens women’s mutual support for one another in addressing common challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WS2 & WS3: qualitative (Bangladesh and Nepal) and quantitative fieldwork (Bangladesh) to assess impact of interactions between social workers and women and their families in areas of high outmigration: <p>Training was useful, and led to a more realistic risk assessment, but limited reach, focus should be on more remote areas and/or improved national programs</p>

<i>WiF-2 ToC mechanisms</i>	<i>Evaluation activities / findings</i>
<p>Capacity development of social workers and government scheme workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and knowledge sharing enables social workers to mediate information more effectively to and from women and girls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WS1 literature review [suggests to engage returnee migrants as trainers rather than social workers]
<p>Technical guidance for institutional pre-departure programmes — leads to pre-departure programmes that do not undermine the rights of migrants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of pre-departure policies, curricular amendments, and capacity development creates more enabling space for migrant women’s learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable– no activities/results from WiF-2 on this mechanism in the four evaluation countries in phase 2
<p>Advocacy among groups advocating for women migrant workers — encourages policy makers to uphold migrant worker’s rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in types of services at local level reduce the need to migrate in distress. • Improvements in migration policies so that they are more enabling of mobility as a choice, rather than a compulsion or a restriction. State policies more responsive to needs of vulnerable women and girls. Advocacy influences other programmes to benefit from lessons learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several advocacy activities linked to the COVID-19 pandemic were implemented
<p>Learning and research leading to better evidence base for better policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on migrant trajectories, recruitment practices, women’s work trends, documentation of lessons learned and dissemination enables better advocacy. • Knowledge sharing forums among women workers supports better decision making and more focused and coordinated advocacy agenda among civil groups. • Lessons learned enable adaptive programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial series of learning activities including lessons learned documents (grey literature) • No assessment by evaluation
<i>Destination countries</i>	
<p>Developing capacity of migrant women workers to connect, access services and organize collectively to address their grievances — enables them to enjoy better collective representation, support services, and recognition of their rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unions, worker centres, NGOs, other service providers provide demand-driven support services to migrant women workers. • Safe spaces in strategic locations enable women to associate and establish support mechanisms for themselves. • Worker collectives enable better voice and solidarity to address their individual and collective demands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrant Community Centre in Lebanon and The Al-Hassan Workers’ Centre in Jordan provided various services • WS 5 & 6 focus on freedom of association interventions that relate to the workers’ centers but also identify other opportunities
<p>Developing capacity of employers to address rights of migrant women workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigns to change attitudes of employers of domestic workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WiF-2 and partners aimed to adapt the Lebanon standard contract (but the adapted contract was not adopted); WiF-2 developed one video on domestic workers in Lebanon

<i>WiF-2 ToC mechanisms</i>	<i>Evaluation activities / findings</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training programmes for employers of garment workers. • Dialogue with employers of domestic and garment workers to address migrant right issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WiF-2 launched “Domestic Work is Work” campaign in Lebanon in June 2021, positive social media comments • WiF-2 launched a theatre play in 2021 on Migrant domestic worker before Lebanon’s courts • WS 4 identifies a broader set of potential interventions in the employer space (raising awareness about Kafala, recruit directly, i.e. without involving the recruitment agencies, and adapting the standard contract in Lebanon)
<p>Advocacy among groups advocating for women migrant workers — encourages policy makers to uphold migrant worker rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination among civil groups dedicated to rights of women, workers and migrants) enables better focus and effectiveness of advocacy. • Preparation of policy briefs and knowledge products informs regulators. • Presentation of evidence, review of policies and advocacy enables better policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker’s Center in Lebanon and Al Hassan Worker Center in Jordan provided various services • WS 5 & 6 focus on freedom of association interventions that relate to the workers’ centres but also identify other opportunities
<p>Learning and research — enables more effective advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies on working and living conditions, studies to enable better negotiation (wages, harassment, other). • Studies on demand for care work and supply-chain trends generate better evidence to support policy changes. • Knowledge sharing among constituents enables better mutual cooperation. • Documentation of lessons learned enables adaptive programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial series of learning activities including lessons learned documents (grey literature) • No assessment by evaluation
<i>Labour intermediation</i>	
<p>Mapping and learning labour intermediation trends — creates evidence for better policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments of main recruitment pathways enable better understanding of recruitment trends. • Assessment of specific recruitment practices enables understanding of better practices. • Dissemination of findings and learning raises capacity of stakeholders to understand each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WiF-2 document developed learning documents on recruitment practices
<p>Holding recruitment intermediaries and employers accountable to recruitment outcomes across recruitment pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue on the need for joint accountability in recruitment chains enables greater attention to migrant worker’s rights among stakeholders. Piloting and implementation of better recruitment practices enables policy makers to consider replicability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under WiF-2, the Workers Centre assisted in regularizing some migrants in Jordan • WS 6 on freedom of association in Jordan and Lebanon

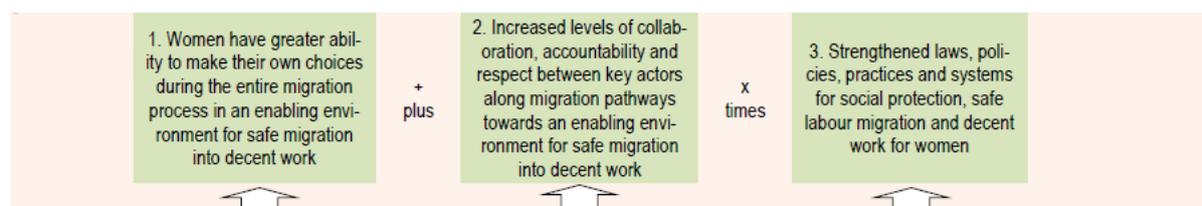
<i>WiF-2 ToC mechanisms</i>	<i>Evaluation activities / findings</i>
<p>Advocacy among groups advocating for women migrant workers — encourages policy makers to uphold migrant worker rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of recruitment legislation and policies enables policies that up-hold rights of migrant workers better. Strengthen advocacy for better recruitment laws and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WiF-2 implemented events, training and advocacy activities; amendment of standard contract in Lebanon (not adopted by the government) No specific activity by the evaluation beyond WS 4 that included a focus on the standard contract in use in Lebanon

Source: Authors.

Outcomes

The three key outcomes supporting WiF-2’s overall goal are shown in Figure 0.3. The evaluation focuses on outcomes 1 and 2. However, where evaluation findings relate to changes in policies and laws that WiF-2 is seeking, that is, outcome 3, linkages were made. Activities under outcome 3 also link directly to Workstream 1 on the enabling environment of migration.

Figure 0.3 Outcomes that WiF-2 aims to achieve



While the progress reports of WiF-2 did not focus on outcomes per se, but rather achievements of selected indicators, such as number of women reached, it did publish three summaries of lessons learnt over the two program phases.

- ILO. 2021. Lessons Learned Part 1. Outreach to migrant women in areas of origin. https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_829467/lang--en/index.htm
- ILO. 2021. Lessons Learned Part 2. Recruitment. https://www.ilo.org/beirut/publications/WCMS_829468/lang--en/index.htm
- ILO. 2022. Lessons learned: Work in Freedom Programme. Lessons learned on policy and programme responses to unfree labour in destination countries for migrant women workers. https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_849825/lang--en/index.htm

Moreover, a key summary statement is worth mentioning: “Vulnerability to forced labour actually increased throughout the programme and was further compounded by the Covid pandemic. While the programme provided direct support to 450,000 women, supported organizing of over 180,000 migrant women and successfully advocated for important policy measures, these interventions only prevented the situation from getting significantly worse (e.g. regulations on domestic work, trafficking, removal of mobility bans and other).” (ILO 2022e). The mid-term evaluation of the WiF-2 evaluation (October 2022) notes that “By March 2023, WiF-2 aims to reach at least 350,000 women and girls directly at source and destination areas in designated countries, but this target has been affected by 50% budget cuts in years 4 and 5” (Drinkwater et al. 2022).

3. Technical design

The ROAD migration project implemented seven evaluative workstreams (WS) that tie in directly to the three steps of the ROAD process. As part of the research design paper, research questions were linked to each of the workstreams.

- WS1: Application of the Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) process to a) “stress-test” the ToC of WiF-2; and b) identify changing conditions in the enabling environment that affect the likelihood of forced labour/trafficking, with the following research questions:
 1. What are the short-term, medium-term, and long-term risks linked to trafficking and forced labour by female migrants along the migration pathway?
 2. What are the enabling environmental conditions affecting changes in migration and, in particular, changes in trafficking and forced labour of women and girls?
 3. What changes in the WiF-2 ToC can further strengthen achievement of the WiF-2 goal?
- WS2: Quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of WiF-2 interventions along the migration pathway in Bangladesh, as feasible, and identification of where additional interventions might be most beneficial:
 1. How and to what extent do WiF-2 interventions influence Bangladeshi women’s decision-making processes (to stay/leave exploitative work conditions) and agency?
 2. How were women migrants supported by their immediate family members? What additional interventions could WiF-2 introduce in the focus countries?
- WS3: Qualitative evaluation of the role of women’s empowerment (WE) in forced labour and trafficking situations and of WiF-2’s role in Bangladesh and Nepal:
 1. What is the role of women’s empowerment (and the potential of gender sensitization) in the migration process?
- WS4: Identification of additional WiF-2 interventions in the employer space in Lebanon based on employers’ interactions within the migration pathway:
 1. What are the different ways employers interact with private recruitment agencies and government institutions? How do existing processes and practices contribute to increased risk of trafficking/forced labour of migrant workers?
- WS5: Qualitative assessment of role of social networks in informing and supporting women in country of work (Lebanon):
 1. How and to what extent can a migrant’s social networks in the destination country impact conditions of forced labour and improve work quality?

- WS6: Qualitative evaluation of the WiF-2 freedom of association intervention in Jordan and Lebanon:
 1. What is the impact of WiF-2's activities on freedom of association in Jordan and Lebanon?
- WS7: Recap and reassessment of findings for final update of WiF-2 ToC and summary recommendations:
 1. Based on workstreams 1-6, what are final learnings for WiF-2 and other programs focused on reducing forced labor and trafficking
 2. What are final recommendations for the WiF-2 ToC?

While each workstream operates separately, they are closely interrelated and are aimed at various potential entry points in the migration process and at different audiences. They all form part of the three steps of the gendered ROAD process. They also respond to CEDIL's call for testing innovative methods of impact evaluation (Masset and White 2019).

To provide easier access to the evaluation results, we structure the following sections by workstream and country.

4. Results

Workstream 1: ROAD process, KIIs and literature reviews

WS1 applies Step 1 of the Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making (ROAD) process to a) “stress-test” the ToC of WiF-2; and b) identify changing conditions in the enabling environment that affect the likelihood of forced labour/trafficking.

Step 1.1 identifies key actors linked to the scope of analysis. For this the Net-Map method was employed through four facilitated workshops held in the two countries of origin and two destination countries. This was followed by Step 1.2, the ROAD causal risk model, which was also developed through facilitated participatory workshops.

As a result of COVID-19-related delays in fieldwork, we first implemented a series of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) as well as a literature review under WS1. Finally, we also implemented a systematic review focused on women migrants’ challenges in the health space, a particularly critical area that emerged in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These four studies *jointly* helped us address research questions on risks linked to trafficking and forced labour by female migrants along the migration pathway and helped us identify enabling environmental conditions affecting changes in migration and, in particular, changes in trafficking and forced labour of women and girls. These insights led to suggested changes in the WiF-2 ToC that can further strengthen achievement of the WiF-2 goal. The following sections describe the data and methodology and results of the three methodologies: Literature review and KIIs; the ROAD process step 1, including the Net-Map analysis, and the systematic review. The section draws on the following papers:

- Abdulrahim, S., K.N. AlDeen, N. Awad and M. Adra. *The health of women migrant domestic workers in the Arab region: A systematic review and narrative synthesis*. Under review.
- Choudhury, Z.A. Authority, and Influence in Emigration Policy Domains: Evidence from Bangladesh and Nepal. *International Migration Review*. Under review.
- Choudhury, Z.A. et al. Inside the West Asian Receiving States: Understanding Stakeholder Networks in Labor Migration in Lebanon and Jordan (Working title)
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Workstream 1.1: KIIs and literature review to inform the WiF-2 theory of change

Data and Methodology

To assess risks and vulnerabilities linked to women's migration in the South Asia to West Asia corridor as well as interventions defined in the WiF-2 ToC and to identify potential additional interventions, we carried out a study based on a literature review and discussions with key informants in the field, including academics, development partners, NGO workers, and policymakers. This served to highlight what are considered the most important or effective (as well as least effective) mechanisms for reducing forced labour and trafficking. Results of 18 virtual Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted during 2020 and 2021 were analysed for the paper. Twelve of the interviews that contributed to the paper and were conducted by IFPRI assured anonymity and an option of linking statements to names was not provided. A further 6 KIIs were conducted by collaborator ANU. The ANU IRB included the opportunity for attribution of statements to the names of KIs. For this paper, all KIIs were anonymized for consistency.

For this exercise, 12 of the KIIs included the following research questions and strands:

- How the KI's expertise relates to trafficking and forced labour of migrating women.
- Which mechanisms/activities that can reduce forced labour and trafficking of women migrants in general are the most effective and why.
- Which mechanisms/activities have not been effective/ have not worked and why.
- What additional issues or changes in the situation of women migrant workers have come up as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The remaining 6 KIIs were conducted focusing on women's precarity in migration with informants drawn from mid-level to senior people in agencies linked to migration.

The interviews were semi-structured, and covered questions such as:

- the extent of migration to the Jordan and Lebanon compared to other countries;
- strengths of women's migration to these countries;
- what are the issues that you know have arisen;
- support that women migrants receive before departure and on their return;
- working conditions and how they can be improved;
- how women respond to poor working conditions (i.e. what are the help seeking and resources available or known to women);
- stakeholders linked to women's working conditions, barriers to improvement
- awareness of WiF-2 intervention
- regional differences to the above questions as to the source of migrants

KIIs were identified based on the literature and knowledge of the study team of key migration actors. We also asked KIIs if they could recommend additional experts who should be consulted on migration in the South Asia to West Asia corridor.

Results

Introduction

The focus of this study is on the Asia-Pacific to Middle East corridor of migration that sends approximately 10 million migrants a year, about half of which are women, mostly for work and usually in the younger and middle-age range (25-64 years old); and specifically on the South Asia to Middle East corridor. Key destination countries are the countries of the Arab States, where in 2017, 41 percent of all male workers and 40 percent of all female workers were migrants (ILO, 2018). The paper moreover focuses on low-skilled workers who account for the bulk of migrants from the South Asia to Middle East corridor. Key sectors for low-skilled male workers include construction and for women work in the domestic care and garment sectors. Finally, the paper focuses on female migrant workers who experience different challenges during the migration process than men do (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo and Cranford, 2006).

There is evidence that women migrants in the South Asia to West Asia corridor are vulnerable to forced labour and trafficking; both processes that can last throughout the entire migration pathway and can improve or worsen over multiple migration cycles. It remains unclear; however, how many people are affected by forced labour and trafficking (Feingold, 2005). Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 aims to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking by 2030 and monitoring efforts toward eradication are being put in place.

In addition to the vulnerabilities that migrants in the South Asia to Middle East corridor are facing, the recent global health pandemic has led to often sudden and severe income and job losses; exposure to infection due to cramped living conditions, particularly for those sharing factory dormitories or other cramped sleeping spaces to safe funds; the inability to get access to health services in host countries; the lack of support by countries of origin for safe return; and the stigmatizing upon return as potential carriers of disease and signs of failure due to loss of remittances (f. ex. Kilby and Wu, 2020). This heightened vulnerability makes it yet more urgent to identify promising interventions that successfully reduce the vulnerability of women migrants in domestic and factory work conditions.

However, very little research has been implemented to assess what works and what does not in the field of preventing forced labour and trafficking in migration (i.e., Bryant and Landman, 2020; Davy, 2015, 2016). In particular, quantitative assessments of interventions are lacking. Bryant and Landman (2020) conducted a review of 90 anti-trafficking program evaluations (produced between 2000 and 2015) to assess lessons learned about what mechanisms work to combat various types of modern slavery, including forced labour and trafficking. They find that evaluations of anti-trafficking programming primarily focus on assessing to what extent project outputs were achieved rather than impacts and outcomes (i.e. the reduction of trafficking for example). Only one out of the 90 evaluations was conducted in Arab countries, and only 17 focused on domestic work and 3 on the textile and garment sectors. Many evaluations were never published. Given the paucity of data and lack of quantitative studies, they note that awareness campaigns had mixed results, changes in legislation were generally not

achieved during programs lifetime and support to migrants who faced challenges was most effective if it was case specific.

Moreover, much of the literature on the vulnerability of migrants has been focused on working conditions in receiving countries, in addition to deceptive recruitment practices in countries of origin (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; SWiFT, 2017). Migrants' experiences of forced labour and trafficking transcend these two points in time and a more comprehensive assessment is needed to generate a more realistic portrait of migrant women's experiences as they prepare for migration, during the migration process, in the destination country, and following their return.

In this paper, we draw lessons from the literature as well as key informants in the field, inclusive of academics, development partners, NGO workers, and policymakers, to highlight what are considered the most important or effective (as well as least effective) mechanisms for reducing forced labour and trafficking.

Following an overview on the migration route from South Asia to the Middle East for work, we examine key best practices along this migration route with a focus on women migrants. We then assess these findings, considering a sample intervention program, specifically the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Work in Freedom phase II Theory of Change as a case study to highlight project mechanisms and practical considerations visa-a-vis the theory of change.

Background on the South Asia to the Middle East Migration Corridor

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2020), South Asia features large intra-regional migration, for example, from Bangladesh and Nepal to India, but also large migration to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for higher wages and accessible employment opportunities. For the sending households in South Asia, remittances are an important source of income for children's education, to cover costs of housing, and to repay loans (Sapkota 2013, 2020). High natural disaster risks in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are also contributing to mobility, displacement and migration (IDMC 2019) as do pull factors from GCC countries and other Middle Eastern countries, often facilitated by bilateral agreements. As a result of substantial migration of men and women, South Asia is one of the regions receiving large remittance flows. As an example, in 2018/19, remittances accounted for an estimated 26 percent of national GDP in Nepal and averaged a similar 27 percent over the five prior years. In 2016, Nepal had the third highest share of remittances in GDP globally (World Bank 2020). Approximately half of the remittances value is not factored into national accounts due to informal systems associated with migration pathways (Kilby and Wu 2020). At the same time, the region is home to large irregular migration, smuggling or trafficking (IOM 2020). According to UNODC (2018), in the South Asia region trafficking of women was of particular concern in Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan.

In terms of receiving countries, most male migrants from South Asia are employed in the construction sector and most female migrants in the care sectors of the Middle East, including the GCC countries. In some countries, women also work in the garment sector. Migration pathways for women working in the domestic or care sector in Middle Eastern countries are particularly concerning due to governments' limited support for such workers. A peculiarity of the migrant employment system in the Middle East and GCC

countries is the Kafala sponsorship system. Sponsorship, otherwise known as Kafala in Arabic, is not a specific policy but a collection of normative practices that bind a migrant worker with one employer in the destination country. Sponsors, (often the employer) are legally responsible for the workers during their stay (Frantz, 2013). Under this system a worker cannot leave or change his/her employer once they arrive without permission from their employer. This system is implemented differently in various countries. For example, in Lebanon, employers can have up to three sponsored workers. The Kafala system often includes other practices, such as the sponsor keeping the migrants' passports, particularly for first time migrants (Mansour-Ille and Hindow, 2018). Migrants often work in other houses or have jobs such as tailoring or work in the small-scale garment sector under that sponsorship (Blanchett 2019; KI 12, 2020). Although hiring a migrant domestic worker does not necessarily require recruitment through an agency, the Kafala system has normalized channelling the process through recruitment agencies, leading to the proliferation of these agencies under limited if any monitoring by government institutions. Migrant workers who leave their employer but remain in the country are considered illegal aliens subject to detention and deportation. However, it is very common for returnee migrants to work as freelancers or with 'free visas', (Blanchet 2019, KI 2, 2020, KI 5, 2020). Moreover, there are differences in women migrants' experiences in the Middle East between working in the more conservative societies in the GCC, including Saudi Arabia versus Jordan and Lebanon, regarding freedom of mobility and time agency (KIs 2 and 12, 2020).

Work conditions in the textile, garment, and clothing industries (TGCI) in the Middle East are also restrictive for migrants as factories are often situated in sparsely populated areas reducing the possibility of migrants to lead private lives.

The body of literature on migrant workers in Middle Eastern countries is limited (e.g., Fernandez, 2020). Articles published on this group have primarily focused on the Kafala system in destination countries (Khattab et al., 2020; Pande, 2013; Fernandez, 2020) and women's experiences with abuse and exploitation (Pande, 2013). As an example, Oishi (2002) describes sexual harassment, rape, non-payment or underpayment of wages, and verbal and physical abuse as abuses reported by migrant workers. Oishi (2002) links this behaviour to the devaluation of home-based care work which is seen as a low-skill occupation.

Although the focus on Kafala and the abuse experienced is vital for international (and local) organizations that advocate on behalf of migrant workers and strive to provide them with better protections, there is great need as well to expand knowledge on gender and migration through a global political economy framework (Briggs 2014).

Focusing on deriving insights for female migration along the entire migration pathway is particularly challenging as there are generally limited linkages between countries of origin and destination beyond bilateral interactions at the government level. One avenue of increased linkages is the network of '*dalals*' or informal migration agents in both source and sending countries that can act as a valuable network that migrants can tap into (KI 12, 2020).

Reducing women's forced labour and trafficking along migration pathways

Much of the literature on reducing vulnerabilities to trafficking and forced labour has focused on point events, often at the location of employment and sometimes on recruitment or pre-departure training in the country of origin of migrants. An expanded focus is needed to generate a more realistic portrait of migrant women's experiences as they consider international migration as an option, as they prepare for migration, during the migration process, in the destination country, and following the return home. As noted by KI 1 (2021), trafficking can happen at the start of the migration process, upon arrival in destination country (ex. change of contracts, not finding the job women were recruited for) and at later stages (ex. losing a job due to an economic downturn). The following sections describes key interventions that have worked and that are considered to have failed based on Key Informant Interviews and the literature with a focus on the women's short-term migration of low-skilled workers from South Asia to the domestic care and garment sectors in the Middle East.

- Push and pull factors increasing vulnerability to migration

Some countries send more migrants to work abroad than others and some countries send more women and others more men. Poverty, inequality, a multitude of shocks and disasters without appropriate support systems to aid recovery and a lack of appropriate employment options are characteristics of countries who send more migrants.

The large difference in incomes between countries in the Middle East and South Asia is the key factor stimulating the international migration of women and men in this corridor. Lack of income generation opportunities, natural disasters can push potential migrants toward taking the step to migrate internationally, but there are also pull factors provided by early migrants who returned after sending large remittances. KI 11 (2020) notes for India that "the most important issue is poverty. Not necessarily targeting trafficking but additional social reform in the country of origin (beyond trafficking)." A key investment to reduce all forms of vulnerabilities that women face is education. KI 11 (2020) notes for parts of India that the change in marriage age of young girls from 11-12 years in rural areas to 15-16 years nowadays has opened a time gap as many girls finish school after class 8 at the age of 13 without any clear socially prescribed path for the age group of 13-16 years. Work, socializing and marriage are socially not supported; this can lead to girls being seduced to move away from rural areas and entering into vulnerable work environments. KI 11 (2020) suggests that "more attention has to be paid for the education of girls this age, the state has to invest in that," and suggests the need of free, quality-education for girls up to 18 years of age and "activities to bind them to communities that make them run away."

Women might also migrate if job opportunities and income generation programmes leave women out, or are structured so that only men are qualified or eligible, or if local norms and traditions are not favourable for women's employment close to home. On the other hand, if there are viable jobs or income generation schemes which are attractive for women to work and stay within their home country, then the possibilities of migration for work due to lack of options will be reduced. While improving job opportunities for women in sending country can reduce vulnerabilities to forced labour and trafficking of women, remittances are an important income source for many sending households and

contribute to national GDPs. Moreover, some women migrants seek work abroad to escape a bad family situation, seek more personal freedom and because of an adventurous spirit.

In addition to push factors there are also pull factors. As an example, in several GCC countries, migrants account for the majority of the domestic labour force. With the exceptions of Oman and Saudi Arabia, migrants make up the majority of the populations in GCC countries (IOM 2020). To ensure a steady supply of low-skilled female labour from Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia aimed to link male low-skilled migration from Bangladesh to a steady supply of female low-skilled workers, requesting that 10,000 women be sent every month and promising funds of US\$ 2000-2500 per woman. Negotiations between the Government of Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia ultimately failed (KI 16, 2021), but migration costs have remained lower for women migrants. Blanchet and Biswas (2020) reported based on a survey of migrants in five districts of Bangladesh that one third of female migrants to Saudi Arabia reported not paying any fees and 14% overall, while only 0.1% of men reported not paying any fees.

However, rich countries are not immune to income shocks. Instead, such shocks can directly increase vulnerability of migrants when employers lose jobs or see their incomes reduced. This can translate into non-payment of wages and other forms of forced labour and abuse. The global health pandemic, as well as declines in oil prices in the Middle East, as well as the economic crisis in Lebanon and the Beirut harbour explosion of August, 2020, have dramatically increased the vulnerabilities of all migrants and particularly of women migrants employed in the domestic care and garment sectors.

Countries of origin, pre-departure

- *Migration bans, age limits and restrictive regulations in countries of origin*

As a protective measure against exploitation and trafficking, some South Asian governments such as Sri Lanka and Nepal have instituted well-intentioned migration bans for prospective women migrant domestic workers headed to some Middle Eastern countries. As an example, the Sri Lanka Family Background Report (FBR), introduced in 2013, restricted mothers of children under five years of age to work abroad in the domestic care sector. Moreover, a minimum age limit for women was imposed, specifically 25 years for Saudi Arabia, 23 years for other Middle Eastern countries, and 21 years for all other countries, while the maximum age was capped at 55. In 2015, the policy was extended to cover all female employment abroad. Moreover, in 2017, the 45–49 years age group was exempted from the ban. In November 2020, the policy was revised to enable faster processing of females without children by introducing separate forms for females with and without children (Weeraratne, 2021). Similarly, Bangladesh repeatedly banned or restricted migration of ‘low-skilled’ women workers from 1981 to 1998. Nepal has also used a series of migration bans directed at women. Before 2010, low-skilled women’s migration to the GCC was restricted. In 2012, a ban on women migrating to Arab States for domestic work below 30 years was issued. And in 2014, all women were banned from migrating for low-skilled work regardless of the destination country. In 2015, women aged 24 or older were allowed to migrate again to certain destination countries (ILO, 2015). In 2017, Nepal issued a new ban for migration to the GCC for domestic work. As such, women who continue to migrate to the GCC countries, unlike men, were not entitled

to repatriation or support if they became ill and consular services were similarly more restricted for illegal migrants. A recently proposed law would take things even further, banning women under the age of 40 from travelling for the first time to Africa and the Middle East without permission from their families and local government officials (Budhathoki, 2021). While well-intentioned, such policies often lead to women taking more expensive and potentially more perilous routes to migrate, foregoing formal and registered migration in favour of undocumented and illegal migration that leaves them more vulnerable to exploitation (ILO 2015). Many other countries instituted age restrictions, consent requirements or outside bans on female migration (Napier-Moore, 2017).

Banning migration to protect citizens from abuse has not been effective. For example, many Nepali women prohibited from travelling under either the age or the full travel ban, still do so through India, which suggests that the bans increased irregular migration (KI 3, 2020; ILO 2015). Migration bans can thus result in illegal migration, increased migration costs and vulnerability, and, at times, to trafficking (Napier-Moore 2017). Given the choice, potential migrants expressed a preference for travelling as regular migrants for reasons of legitimacy and safety. Irregular migration was strongly associated with more dangerous and circuitous routes, lack of information, lack of choice regarding the destination country, and in some cases trafficking. Making migration illegal creates a black market that can fuel labour exploitation (KI 5, 2020). Migrants who travel through informal channels also face heightened challenges during repatriation, for example, during the recent health pandemic.

- *Pre-departure training, networks, and rights awareness*

Pre-departure orientation training has been one of the important interventions for protecting migrant domestic workers abroad by supplying them with needed information regarding expectations and rights and to improve their transition (Asis and Agunias, 2012). Pre-departure training has become mandatory for formal migrants from South Asia to Middle Eastern countries, including Nepal and Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESEL) provides orientation sessions with information for migrant workers (Rashid and Watson, 2017). Government provided training in Bangladesh was initially 14 days, and was then increased to 21 days and most recently to 45 days (KI 13, 2020). The training takes the women away from other important activities, and are often in urban centres, far away from the women's homes, increasing costs, leading, at times, to pay offs to the *dalals* to ensure that attendance is ticked off or purchase of attendance certificates on the black market (KIs 2 and 14, 2020). In Sri Lanka, the mandatory training takes 21 days to complete (MFA 2019). Despite this, in practice few migrants have any pre-departure training, and certainly not those who migrate through irregular channels. A survey of 522 migrant domestic workers in Jordan and Lebanon finds that only 38% of all survey respondents, and only 14% of Nepalese respondents, reported having completed a formal pre-departure training course (Frantz 2014).

There is evidence of inconsistent or poor implementation of these trainings (Asis and Agunias 2012) and there are cases of abuse of female migrants at the training locations. Curricula have been criticized for being very general and not sector-, country- or gender-

specific and for not providing enough information on support channels and migrants' legal rights (Frantz 2014). Rashid and Watson (2017) also suggest interactive sessions as well as systematizing BOESL's information sessions to better address experiences, concerns and rights of migrant workers. Improved curricula and accessibility will improve interest in and ability to participate. Language training, especially destination country dialect, was suggested by migrant domestic workers as an important topic to focus on in pre-departure training to improve communication with employers and reduce grievances. Regmi et al. (2019) also call for inclusion of mental health awareness as part of pre-departure training, particularly to aid with issues like isolation, work stress and potential employer abuse without support from the family.

Raising awareness amongst migrant women workers of their rights and conditions of their employment contracts in the destination country is key, ideally as part of pre-departure orientation programs as well as through other mechanisms or NGO interventions. For example, 68% of Nepalese domestic workers surveyed in Lebanon were not aware that they had a legal right to hold on to their passports. Only 26% of all respondents had their passports in their possession, and only 8% of Nepalese migrants held their passports (Frantz, 2014).

The Center for the Prevention of Trafficking of Women (CPTW) in Moldova provides an example of a comprehensive intervention to prevent trafficking. The CPTW distributes monthly bulletins including the type of information someone should verify before agreeing to work aboard, information about the dangers of emigrating, contact numbers for anyone who finds themselves in forced labour, and information on the rights of migrant workers (Beydoun, 2006). CPTW also offers support in obtaining documents a migrant worker may need as well as representation in court.

Barsbai (2018) reports on two randomized experiments by Beam et al. (2016) and Beam (2016) that find that reduction of information barriers, job search barriers and documentation barriers, such as passport application and payments of potential migrants in the Philippines, did not change likelihood to migrate.

Barsbai (2018) similarly reports on the Doi (2014) financial education randomized experiment that finds that training on financial planning and management, savings and remittances provided to Indonesian migrants and a family member prior to their departure had a substantial effect on household savings, beyond training of the migrant alone.

Shrestha and Yang (2020) in a randomized experiment of an information intervention among Filipino maids in Singapore found improvements in knowledge of legal rights related to changing jobs as well as to job conditions among those treated. Moreover, workers with poor job conditions became more likely to change employers in response to treatment.

Shrestha (2020) in a randomized field experiment on wage information and mortality incidence with potential migrants from Nepal to Malaysia and the GCC finds that potential migrants without previous migration expertise change expectations of earnings and mortality risks abroad as well as migration decisions. The author estimates an elasticity of migration with respect to mortality rate of 0.8, and the elasticity of migration with respect to earnings expectation as 1.1.

Government training sessions in Indonesia and the Philippines for migrant domestic workers pre-departure are clear on clarifying expectations regarding likelihood of long work hours, sexual abuse, violence, lack of rest, and denial of use of phones (Silvey and Parreñas, 2019). However, women determined to migrate to the Middle East for work often choose optimism rather than heeding warnings, believing their experience will be different. Once they are decided to go, even “horror stories” of prevalent exploitation of domestic workers do little to change these migrants’ minds (KI 5, 2020).

To improve pre-departure training, Rashid and Watson (2017) argue that orientation materials need to include perspectives from ‘migrant-centered’ support networks, inclusive of trade unions and civil society organizations, and returnee migrant workers in both origin and destination countries.

While pre-departure training plays an important role in providing information for prospective first-time migrants and can help them develop networks that can transcend to the country of work, such training on its own is unlikely to prevent forced labour and trafficking for those who migrate out of compulsion and it will not reach women who travel informally or cannot attend the trainings.

- *Pre-departure networks*

Frantz (2014) collected stories of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon and Jordan that illustrate the importance of communication among migrants, as well as the establishment of connections, and access to media, especially under the Kafala sponsorship system where the employer controls their legal presence. One useful mechanism for reducing vulnerability would be for women migrant workers to establish their own networks, prearranged and pre-departure – among themselves without relying on the government and embassies. This is especially important for domestic workers who live in the premises of their employer with few outside contacts (Barsbai, 2018). Knowing detailed information of the employer is, including address, telephone number, and GPS location and sharing this information with fellow migrant women before departure can help migrant women stay in touch with one another (KI 5, 2020). These pre-departure measures should take into consideration the controlled environment that domestic workers are placed into and that abuse might occur, including having their cell phones confiscated and belongings searched.

While restricted mobility outside the house, locking care workers in the house, and forbidding them from talking to any outsiders is not always the case, it is a widespread behaviour among employers in Lebanon, Jordan, and other Middle Eastern countries (Frantz, 2014). This reduces domestic workers' chance of building networks and linking to other entities that can provide support. Further, isolation and reduced opportunities to form friendships can make domestic care workers susceptible to psychological abuse. Frantz (2014) notes that domestic care workers tend to rely on their social networks for information rather than official channels (Frantz 2014). Therefore, initiation of social networks pre-departure could be an excellent channel to utilize for conveying information to migrant women throughout the migration process.

Of note, Barsbai et al. (2020) find that information training of Philippine migrants prior to their departure to the United States reduced their social network interactions upon

arrival. As such, information and social network links appear to be substitutes as better-informed immigrants invest less in expanding their social networks upon arrival.

- *Improving regulations on intermediation in countries of origin*

Migration brokers and recruitment agencies fill a huge information and knowledge gap for migrants in South Asia, especially in rural areas. This suggests that governments are not involved in the early stages of the migration process, beyond requiring pre-departure training. Better regulation of these many private-sector actors as well as inspection of their practices may help reduce the exploitative costs incurred by migrant women (knowingly and unknowingly) as well as malpractice and fraud, while elevating agencies that are better managed (Kern and Böker, 2015; Tamkeen, 2015).

Deception is the basis of many recruitment agencies' work. Recruitment agencies in countries of origin have been found to replace contracts approved by the destination country with different contracts that state different terms and conditions, a practice that may also happen in destination countries (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). A survey of migrant workers in Jordan found that 70% of domestic workers signed a contract but did not receive a copy, 42% received a lower salary than that stated in their contract, and many others did not have contracts (Tamkeen, 2015).

The proliferation of dummy agencies operating under other firms and the mobility of agents and informality of the practice in some cases make it difficult to regulate the system and indicates the intertwined nature that makes it possible to both support and exploit migrant workers on various fronts. Recruitment agencies can range from formal, highly professional and certified enterprises to informal or un-registered one-person agents, such as *dalals* in Bangladesh (Siddique and Abrar, 2019). However, Kern and Böker (2015) and KI 12 (2020) suggest that generalizing fraudulent behaviour of recruitment agencies and brokers is reductionist and inaccurate, as they perform a positive role for women from rural and remote areas who do not have access to the formal urban based agents.

The Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment implemented a 'Zero Chargeable Recruitment Fees' policy for female migrant domestic workers to protect them from agents charging arbitrary fees, by banning recruitment agents from charging any fees (MFA, 2019). Other governments such as Nepal have mandated a maximum cap on fees that migrant workers can get charged (in this case \$700). However, migrants continue to be charged higher fees (Paoletti et al., 2014).

In Bangladesh, BOESL is in charge of upholding fair recruitment in Bangladesh with a focus on poor people and women. Rashid and Watson (2017) in a study on the Government of Bangladesh involvement in the recruitment chain find that BOESL has contributed to reducing fraudulent recruitment practices through billboards and social media, among others and has improved fair hiring of migrant workers for factory work in the Middle East. BOESL also disseminates information through social networks of migrant workers in Jordan. However, BOESL is dominated and driven by employer needs and not those of migrants; BOESL is not involved in the pre-selection phases of potential migrants and does not offer any services in the post-migration phase. As such, BOESL does not empower migrant workers and misses important learning opportunities by not engaging with returnee migrants. The authors suggest that BOESL considers collaboration with

other sending countries from South Asia and to consider a broader set of destination countries.

- *Indebtedness*

Migrant workers are often charged fees to apply for, getting accepted to, and travel to jobs before their departure. Migrant workers or their family members borrow money (either formally or informally) and become indebted in the process, forcing them to continue working even if there is abuse or contract violation when they get to the destination country. In most cases migrants have entered a vicious circle of indebtedness before they start to earn money for themselves and their families (KI 5, 2020).

Migrant workers may be indebted to a bank or an informal lender that might charge exorbitant interest, or to recruitment agents, relatives, or their employers or placement agencies in destination countries. It is a norm and cultural expectation in the country of origin that workers expect to pay. Some people falsely believe that the more they pay the better the job abroad. Although migrants generally should not bear the burden of recruitment or travel costs, they are still often charged substantial fees, regardless of what the employer pays. As an example, the employer may or may not pay all or part of the actual recruitment costs. If they do not, then the recruitment agents charge workers a fee. But even if the employer covers all costs, some agents in the country of origin still charge migrant workers, especially as the worker expects to pay (KI 5, 2020). Workers pay for part or all of actual recruitment costs plus commissions, plus fees required for any bribes.

The lack of information on fees and the non-transparency of charges puts migrant workers in a position of vulnerability and traps them into being unable to refuse a job pre-departure, ask for higher salaries or demand their rights and can subject them to coercion in jobs (Paoletti et al., 2014). Indebtedness coupled with the Kafala system leads to vulnerability and provides the perfect conditions for trafficking (KI 5, 2020). It also leads to debt bondage or labour indebtedness. For example, a domestic worker from Nepal can owe recruitment agents up to \$20,000 in placement, travel and accommodation costs (Kilby and Wu, 2020). Under these conditions, female migrants are restricted from leaving due to the Kafala system as well as due to debt bondage resulting in a captured labour force.

Although recruitment fees are a key challenge in countries of origin, there are linkages to destination countries. Fees paid by migrant workers also fund kick-back bribes to employment agencies in destination countries. The employment agency often links giving labour supply contracts to recruitment agencies in countries of origin to the receipt of “presents”. “It’s a very lucrative market these kick-back bribes, which I estimate just for the GCC for about US\$ 10 billion” (KI 5, 2020). On the macro level, through this recruitment process, millions of dollars are exiting labour sending countries to pay for these bribes.

Departure

Obtaining papers to support departure and the departure itself can be precarious spaces for women. Public spaces of visa offices, training sites, borders, and even airport departure, can be sources of extortion and sexual exploitation – female migrants have

complained about sexual harassment by migration agents during pre-departure training, as well as financial extortion from airport staff during the security checks (Khadka 2021).

In destination countries

- *Tackling economic exploitation in destination countries*

Many workers face economic exploitation through delayed, docked, or entirely withheld wages. This “wage theft” has been named as such by the Migrant Forum in Asia to emphasize the criminal nature of docking, withholding or non-payment of wages (KI 5, 2020). Outstanding wages are often used against workers as coercion, to prevent workers from reporting abuse or leaving their employer (KI 7, 2020). Various strategies have been adopted by countries in an attempt to tackle the economic exploitation of workers. For example, some countries have recently increased the penalty of non-payment of wages. In Qatar non-payment of wages is punishable by one year in prison and 10,000 Qatari Rial (approximately US\$ 2,500). Experts are concerned that this fine remains too low to effectively prevent this crime (KI 5, 2020).

Another approach recently taken by the UAE and Qatar was the introduction of a law whereby the employer must pay wages directly into a bank account (KI 1, 2020). The aim of this policy is to remove economic exploitation by monitoring wage payments and thereby improving enforcement (KIs 1 and 10, 2020). The policy also has the benefit of identifying wage theft without the need for it to be reported by the worker (KI 10, 2020).

Some countries, such as Jordan, have introduced standardized contracts. Standard contracts aid the setting of standards of work and wages, improve workers’ bargaining power, allow workers to bring complaints to a judicial authority, provide for fairer and more efficient judicial proceedings, and encourage domestic and international monitoring of the enforcement of judgments (KI 1, 2020; Manseau, 2007). The contract also allows migrant workers to terminate their contracts and change employers, two important elements in reducing the vulnerability of workers (KI 7, 2020). However, difficulty in monitoring working conditions and payment results in weak enforcement of contracts (KI 10, 2020). This highlights the need for inspections, including private interviews with migrant workers (KIs 1 and 10, 2020).

Sending countries can advocate against discrimination and exclusion from labour law through their embassies (Rashid and Watson, 2017). Moreover, migrant workers are also required to pay union dues in some countries, such as Jordan, even though the union does not represent migrant workers.

The consequences to the worker must be considered when convicting an employer of wage theft. Provisions should be made to allow the workers of those convicted of wage theft to remain in the destination country and seek alternative employment if they wish to do so.

- *Racism*

Workers are subjected to not only gender violence and abuse but also racial violence and abuse (KI 5, 2020). Understanding how these different forms of discrimination compound to result in a third and unique pattern of discrimination is important to effectively tackle forced labour and trafficking.

In many contexts, salaries are nationality-based wages (KI 6, 2020). Migrant workers are paid different salaries from those of local workers and different salaries based on their country of origin. To eliminate this discrimination, and to allow for better access to support services, migrant workers should be recognized under labour law (KIs 1, 7 and 10, 2020).

- *Improving migrant worker awareness of support services*

Many efforts have been made to increase support services to workers but research shows that very few workers know how to access support services (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). Frantz (2014) found that of their sample of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon 29% knew how to access a hotline while only 1% knew how to access any legal services. Knowledge of how to contact support services was found to be higher in Jordan with 42% of workers aware of how to access a hotline and 28% aware of how to access legal services (Frantz, 2014). A multipronged approach to make workers aware of support services and how to access them is important to the success of such services in aiding workers (KI 10, 2020). Information on accessing such services is likely correlated with the migrant workers having some mobility to leave the house and having established a network with other migrants. Thus, interventions focused on support services need to be linked with other interventions.

- *Supporting existing safe spaces*

While many projects aim to create safe spaces in strategic locations in most contexts there are existing places where migrants meet or make short visits to buy goods from home, remit money, or make phone calls. Also, individuals, migrant associations and embassies organize concerts and cultural activities (Frantz, 2014). Programs should aim to support already existing safe spaces and cultural events rather than creating new spaces. These spaces could also be used for the dissemination of information. Projects should work closely with migrants, migrant associations, and shop and café owners to identify appropriate channels to provide support. Some examples of the kind of support that could be offered include indoor communal spaces where migrants can meet, subsidized phone calls, providing radios or TVs along with audio or video information on support services and rights, providing pamphlets on support services and rights, practical assistance for passport and other applications and financial support for existing cultural events (Rashid and Watson, 2017). Government agencies such as BOESL could also play a role in supporting existing safe spaces and providing information services and practical assistance to migrants through them.

- *Virtual safe spaces*

Physical safe spaces are only accessible to women who are not imprisoned by their employers (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; KIs 5 and 6, 2020). Even the standardized contracts introduced in Jordan allow employers to determine whether live-in domestic workers can leave the household during their time off (KI 5, 2020). In Jordan, 28% of live-in domestic workers reported they did not have a set day off from work. The rate was similar Lebanon at 29%. In addition, 24% of live-in domestic workers said that they were not allowed to leave their employers' homes even if they had a set day off (Frantz, 2014). Freelancers who are loosely tied to an employer might have more freedom and account for 70-80 of migrants in Lebanon (KIs 2 and 12, 2020).

Studies have found that mobile phones serve as the most important communication channel for migrant domestic workers (Frantz, 2014). Eighty-two percent of migrant domestic workers in Jordan and Lebanon reported owning a mobile phone. Radio access was lower; in Jordan 62% of women reported owning or having access to a radio, and 85% listened regularly. In Lebanon 45% of women reported owning or having access to a radio, and 83% listened regularly. Interest in radio shows in native language is large; 85% and 98% of migrant domestic workers in Jordan and Lebanon, respectively, expressed interest in radio in their native language (Frantz, 2014).

To reach women with almost no freedom of movement, arguably the most vulnerable women, programs need to incorporate strategies that reach women within their employers' homes and create spaces accessible to migrants without leaving their place of work. The existing access to radio and mobile phones presents an opportunity to reach these women. For example, radio programs by migrant workers telling their stories could help create support networks. Other possible activities could include information dissemination over the radio, access to legal advice, and mental health services over the phone. Programs could also create means for workers with limited mobility to organize (KI 10, 2020), such as introducing women to group messaging services or organizing group calls with other migrants. Even workers who have a regular day off and substantial mobility can benefit from accessing support services via mobile phone. Instead of waiting for their day off to access services or support from their networks, mobile phones allow workers to reach support daily and in a timely manner.

One risk a program must be aware of is that there have been reported cases of domestic workers who are allowed to own mobile phones but whose employers closely monitor their usage (Esim and Smith, 2004). There is no recent study that has quantified how prevalent this behaviour is. Programs should get insights from migrant workers in their focus area before planning a mobile phone-based intervention. Consideration must also be given to ensuring resources accessed through mobile phones are accessible to migrants who are not literate.

- *Employment agencies*

In addition to bribery systems that operate between some sending and receiving countries, employment agencies have a vested interest in having both employers and migrants depending on them and extracting fees from both as feasible. According to KI 5 (2020), "trafficking starts with deception when the work conditions and wages a domestic worker receives are not what she was promised. She has to consent. If she refuses, she is sent back to the recruitment agency...Even if the employer refuses to continue employment, the recruitment agent will send a migrant domestic worker to another employer. The employer may not have the intent but ends up a participant in trafficking."

According to KI 9 (2020), there are approximately 500 licensed recruitment agencies in Lebanon that are working outside the governmental office for recruitment. Rather than focusing on legalizing the paperwork of women migrants who are already in Lebanon, their financial interest is in bringing in new migrants from abroad.

If sending countries were to maintain a database of all applications and their status, pre-departure, in-destination, returned or repeat, then resources could be targeted better to more vulnerable migrants. Increased information, transparency and accountability could

help crowd out labour brokers at lower levels of the chain (Rashid and Watson, 2017). However, such a system would need to respect the privacy of workers, prevent any surveillance of workers and other misuse of their data.

Rashid and Watson (2017) also suggest that sending countries, through their embassies, should monitor recruitment practices into companies in receiving countries, particularly if recruitment agencies are not on approved lists, such as the “Golden List” list in Jordan monitored by the Better Work Programme.”

- *Employer attitudes*

Many projects include educational campaigns to change the attitudes of employers (and the public) as part of their intervention. In their review of anti-trafficking program evaluations, Bryant and Landman (2020) find that many projects with public campaigns on human trafficking reported mixed results. Evaluation findings conclude that campaigns need to be targeted, adapted to local contexts and contain clear messages to be effective in achieving behavioural change.

Given the importance of having rest days and freedom of movement as well as access to mobile phones for well-being and to enable women to access support networks and services, these are also key topics that should be included in behavioural change communication with employers. Accessing support services via a mobile phone allows workers to reach support consistently and on time. Interventions that encourage employers to allow workers to own a mobile phone and to give workers complete privacy in their usage of their phone would be valuable. Better access to mobile phones, rest days, and mobility to access networks can substantially improve women’s wellbeing as well as their ability to access support.

Projects should aim to get at the heart of what it means to be in forced labour. This would include addressing include wage theft, passport confiscation, dehumanization and racism, with employers. The means by which these issues are addressed with employers is very important as some strategies could cause backlash, worsening the situation for migrant workers (KI 5, 2020). Key Informant Interviews described an unsuccessful sensitization campaign in Lebanon. The campaign depicted Lebanese women dressed in domestic worker uniforms. The dehumanization of migrant workers is so severe that instead of identifying with migrant women Lebanese women felt dehumanized themselves by these depictions. This campaign was unsuccessful and caused backlash from Lebanese people (KI 5, 2020).

Carefully considered campaigns have showed to be effective. In one such intervention randomly selected Filipino domestic workers were given a pack of dried mangoes and were encouraged to give it as a gift to their employer upon their arrival. They were also encouraged to show their employer a photograph of themselves with their family. The aim was to humanize the domestic worker in the eyes on their employer and create goodwill through the gift. This intervention was successful in decreasing verbal, physical and sexual violence by the employer. Workers who participated in the intervention were also more likely to renew their contracts and their family members had a more positive view of the migration experience (Barsbai, 2018). This simple but well thought out intervention proved to have a lasting effect in humanizing migrant domestic workers in the eyes of their employers.

- *Strengthen embassy support*

Outflow countries do not always have embassies and accessible safe houses in inflow countries (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). For example, Nepal only has embassies in four of the six GCC countries while many women have expressed that strengthened government presence through embassies would offer more protection to migrants (ILO, 2015). During the Covid-19 pandemic the need for embassy presence has become even more important. Governments can also better advocate for eliminating wage theft, abuse and discriminatory practices through greater in-country presence (Rashid and Watson, 2017).

Through their embassy countries can monitor recruitment practices, for example through its embassy in Jordan the Government of Bangladesh can improve its monitoring of recruitment practices into companies that are not monitored by the Better Work Programme and are not on Jordan's Golden List (Rashid and Watson, 2017). As KI 15 (2020) notes, the Embassy of the Philippines is very responsive to concerns raised by their citizens abroad with reports and responses published on Facebook for transparent monitoring. Other embassies, on the other hand, are considered to value existing bilateral trade relationships over the welfare of low-skilled migrant citizens in domestic and garment sectors.

- *Unionization*

The balance of power between a migrant domestic worker and her employer is extremely skewed in favour of the employer. Unions are an important tool for increasing the power that workers hold to improve the balance of power (KIs 1 and 5, 2020). Historically unions for migrant domestic workers have been illegal and for this reason, among others, have had low membership (KIs 1 and 5, 2020). Given this history, considerable effort must be made to develop widespread unionization of migrant domestic workers. In Lebanon the unionization of migrant workers is now legal and unions for workers exist (KI 1, 2020). Jordan has not ratified the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise; while migrants can join existing unions, they cannot be elected to union positions and unions generally only represent national workers. Moreover, organizing workers is still very restrictive and some unions struggle to get the legal status (KI 6, 2020). Unions have difficulties reaching workers, especially live-in domestic workers whose ability to organize remains largely dependent on their freedom of movement (KI 10, 2020). The ILO is beginning to develop a system whereby the paperwork for migrants is centrally stored, helping to prevent contract substitution. This system presents an opportunity for unions to easily access the information needed to aid their members (KI 5, 2020).

Projects could make workers aware of unions and associated rights after signing up to unions and paying dues. This is important as unions are generally not migrant run or migrant centred and some lack democratic practices (KI 9, 2020). In addition, unions, such as those in Jordan, have discriminatory practices whereby only Jordanians can vote on matters and be considered for president (KI 6, 2020).

Reintegration

○ *Reintegration assistance*

Economic, social, and cultural reintegration back into countries of origin is one of the least researched phases of the migration pathway. One reason for this is the lack of data on returning workers and their reintegration patterns (Wickramasekara, 2019). Several reintegration challenges have been reported, including inadequate employment services, and lack of skill certification and recognition especially for unskilled migrant workers, lack of social protection and pension coverage for returning migrants, resource constraints and stigmatization --especially of women migrants--by families and society. Beydoun (2006) argues that a key element of preventing forced labour and trafficking is through supporting returning workers. Workers returning to their home country are at a high risk of emigrating through unofficial channels or being trafficked if they are unable to find work and integrate back into society. Further, longer-term support for reintegration, especially for such as assisting returnees with finding education and employment, and long-term assistance with trauma, in particular cases of victims of trafficking (Bryant and Landman, 2020).

Return migration includes, (i) voluntary return or those who choose to return home out of free will and where forced labour or trafficking was not a reason for return, and (ii) forced return which includes those coerced to return to the country of origin against their will. Cycles of migration have also been classified into complete, incomplete, and interrupted migration cycles. Better return preparedness is more likely for those who return out of free will and who have a complete migration cycle (Wickramasekara, 2019). Complete cycles are those where workers have been well informed, migrated under regular migration channels with low-cost and fair recruitment, completed and terminated their job contracts, achieved their migration objectives such as accumulated savings and return to an improved situation in countries of origin. Incomplete cycles are those where migrants incurred high debts, faced racism and low wages abroad and did not achieve migration objectives. Interrupted migration cycles are situations where a crisis, loss of a job, health issues or deportation leads to migrant returns.

Key mechanisms for effective reintegration include registering migrant workers upon their return and facilitating access to services and employment at home, and collaboration of origin and destination countries in ensuring the migrant's safe return. Some South Asian countries such as Indonesia and Philippines have established reintegration programs for returning migrant workers that include enhancing their skills, providing social services such as information, counselling, and employment assistance (Wickramasekara, 2019). The Nepalese government started thinking of ways to support and integrate returning migrants through grants to start small enterprises (Kilby and Wu, 2020). However, informal or illegal migrants such as migrant women travelling indirectly through India are likely to be ineligible for the proposed reintegration program. Wickramasekara (2019) recommends that countries of origin develop comprehensive reintegration programs and policies, and that designing these reintegration programs should be inclusive of all migrants regardless of age, gender, skills or migratory status (regular or irregular channels).

Reintegration of female migrants seems particularly challenge in South Asia. As an example, female returnee migrants in India often had to move to shelters or government houses instead of their homes, as they would not be accepted back into the family due to strong societal norms against independent living. Norms for women's families have changed, however, because of the large demand for garment workers. A further complication is that rural landholdings are very small, making claimants by returnees on rural assets unwelcome. Due to this rehabilitation family dynamic, returning women and girls often want to marry to gain a place in the family as a wife rather than as a sister. However, there is a need to create jobs for women and girls, such as through vocational schooling for returnees, to provide them with good livelihood and reintegration options especially if they do not wish to marry (KI 11).

Interventions in the institutional and policy framework

Policies and laws governing migration operate at various levels. First, there are national laws in the countries of origin and destination that determine migration destination, pathways, and resources available to migrants and employers. Second, there are bilateral agreements that determine the rules and conventions governing the flow of migrants from one country to another. There are also limited regional agreements. Finally, there are international agreements related to migration, signed and agreed upon by multiple countries, that function predominantly as non-binding regulations that countries sign up to (or not) agreeing to uphold with no real penalty for non-implementation. This includes international agreements by organizations such as the United Nations, its specialized organizations, like the ILO, and other regional bodies. National laws likely have the most power to influence the migration and employment experiences of migrants.

While in principle most laws and policies aim to make the migration experience fair and equitable, and free from discrimination, guarantee safe working conditions, and recourse to redressal, policies need to be especially cognizant of the special needs of women migrants. Despite this, female migrants face systemic and structural disadvantages in both origin and destination countries, especially due to segregated labour markets that leave women in low-paying female-dominated jobs and sectors. Low pay can potentially trap women in a cycle of perpetual disadvantage, as women continue to remain in such jobs, often to pay off the expensive process of migration that indebts women and their families back home. Migrant women are also more likely to experience physical and sexual violence and exploitation. Migrant women from certain regions, like South Asia, are also much less likely to have access to a circle or network of fellow migrants because women still make up a relatively small proportion of total migrants from such regions. Migration related policies and legislation thus need to be responsive to the particular vulnerabilities of women.

- *Laws in the country of origin*

Over the years many countries have instituted laws governing or controlling the flow of migration out of their countries more broadly, or to certain areas or countries, often as a way of rationing and monitoring the movement of human resources out of the country. In case of female migrants, such laws often take the form of banning migration totally or restricting migration to certain regions or countries where the threat of unsafe migration

or work-conditions is considered high. The key national legislation in this area in South Asia are frequent bans of female migration, as described above.

Other laws aim to regulate the actors involved in the migration process. For example, countries may require all migrants to register pre-departure as a condition to migrate. The government may also require recruitment firms and agents to be licenced by the government to ensure compliance with existing policies and laws. In most countries, recruitment agents in countries of origin are banned from charging migrants for any part of the recruitment and migration process. However, this rule is rarely followed, and migrants often pay large amounts as a “commission” to agents in the home country and sometimes even on arrival in destination. A survey of 582 migrant domestic workers in Lebanon showed that 37% of the women paid placement agents after arrival (Jureidini, 2010). Perhaps one of the reasons migrant workers are considered cheap abroad is because the cost of migration is borne by the worker (KI 11, 2021). This practice has been normalized over the years, even becoming a cultural expectation in the country of origin where those who wish to migrate expect to pay. “Some people falsely believe that the more they pay the better job they can get.” The often exorbitant charges migrant workers pay essentially leads to debt, as they borrow money formally or informally in order to get the job, capturing them in the job itself until they can earn enough to pay off the debt before starting to earn money for themselves and their families. This is a major issue to reform because it is the condition of debt that leads to increased vulnerability and enables exploitation. Employers, who are responsible for these costs, may not pay all or part of the costs, and recruitment agents pass these costs on to workers. On the other hand, employers may pay for all recruitment costs, in which case the agent in the country of origin often still charges the migrant worker, especially as the worker expects to pay. Increasingly, destination countries like Qatar and UAE have made it illegal to charge workers for any recruitment costs, including in the country of origin. Elimination of recruitment charges and providing information on this is essential for ensuring safe migration.

Thus, apart from laws, there is a need for sending countries to put in place institutional structures that aim to improve migrant women's access to information, legal assistance, and that provide pre-departure training that is gender-sensitive. This will require, first and foremost, provisions for sanctions against agents and recruiters who do not follow the rules and stricter prosecution of traffickers. Programming efforts often focus on the protection of the victims of trafficking rather than the prosecution of traffickers. Relatively few traffickers get prosecuted, and penalties are not drastic or serious. For example, recruitment agencies might be stopped from operating, but because they know the business and individuals are not prosecuted, they are able to change their name, address and set up a new company “within weeks” (KI 5, 2021).

Finally, there is a need to invest in institutions that can support women in the process of reintegration upon their return to home countries, including improving access to training and education, institutional credit and where necessary legal and health assistance. This remains an area with the least amount of direct policies and interventions and is perhaps the reason why many women choose to re-migrate, often to the same exploitative conditions they returned from, rather than remain in their country upon their return.

o *Laws in receiving countries*

Almost all countries have rules governing migrants or guest workers in their countries—rules that dictate who will be allowed to enter as a worker, the duration of their stay, the public assistance and services they can and cannot access while in the country, as well as the documentation needed to sustain their stay in country. Such regulatory frameworks often contribute to migrant workers' vulnerability by giving employers disproportionate control over workers (Abimourched, 2011).

This is reflected in the Kafala system, a series of regulations that tie the worker with the employer in an unequal relationship, that is active in most Arab countries. Kafala requires migrants to not only have sponsorship from an employer for permission to work in the country but also approval from the employer before leaving or switching jobs (KI 10, 2020). The system has thus become a potential tool for exploitation and harassment of migrant workers by their employers, that not only binds migrants in unequal contracts but also criminalizes non-compliance by workers. There is an urgent need to overhaul the current system, including decriminalizing migrants that leave their employers. The elimination of the Kafala system, some argue, would reduce migrant domestic women's vulnerability as well as create competition between employers, establishing a local market for migrant labour that is not yet present (KI 5, 2020). Increased competition might, furthermore, compel employers to improve work conditions to attract and keep workers.

Abimourched (2011) recommends that workers who file complaints against their employers should be granted temporary residence to enable them to find other work instead of being obligated to return to their home country.

Laws that limit access to social protection and benefits of migrants further enhance their vulnerability. To address this, migrant workers, especially domestic workers, should be included in the receiving country's labour law (Abimourched, 2011).

Like in sending countries, there is also a need for increased oversight of recruitment agencies in receiving countries; including the need for training of labour inspectors. Jureidini (2010) suggests that because there is business collaboration between the recruitment agencies in the sending and receiving country placement agencies, both agencies should be held liable when violations are perpetrated against the migrant worker by their employer or by either agency. There is also a need for stringent licensing and vetting of recruitment and placement agencies and the introduction of a blacklist for exploitative employers.

Finally, there is a need for the justice system to address migrant worker issues. Migrants should be able to access the justice system in the receiving countries, with reasonable confidence of receiving a fair and unbiased hearing. Currently, migrants are unable to access legal resources, both due to mistrust in the system and due to language barriers, physical confinement, and lack of information about legal recourse.

Many Arab countries have begun reforming their local labour laws and Kafala systems, in part due to international pressure. For example, in the past decade Jordan and Lebanon have made efforts to include domestic workers in labour laws; however much of this is not yet in effect (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Tal, 2015). Qatar may be passing a law to

abolish Kafala (KIs 1 and 5, 2020) and Lebanon had plans to implement a unified contract that would codify the rights available to the worker. However, like many well-intentioned policies, proper implementation and oversight would be essential in determining its success in materially improving the condition and rights of migrants in these countries.

Ultimately, interventions will be flawed if migrant workers themselves are not involved in the design and implementation of interventions. It is recommended that migrants are directly involved in anti-trafficking programming as well as evaluations, giving them a voice regarding what is most effective and what should be counted (Bryant and Landman 2020). When new challenges for migrant workers arise, it takes time for NGOs and researchers to take note; involving migrant workers helps to shorten this. However, currently migrant workers themselves have limited “voice” to advocate for their needs. Regulations that prohibit migrant workers from joining a trade union as well as a lack of recognition of informal migrant associations contribute to this problem. Abimourched (2011) finds that while NGOs have started to advocate on behalf of migrant workers their poor representation in such NGOs has resulted in reforms not adequately addressing their needs. Beydoun (2006, p 1036) argues that in an environment where the political will to change the circumstances of migrant workers is absent “grassroots and civil society campaigns must be the catalyst for building a truly full-scale, multi-sector movement”.

- *Bilateral Agreements*

Bilateral agreements are another important source of legislation and policy that govern the flow and condition of migrants from one signatory country to another. These could take the form of general trade agreements that include clauses about migrant labour rights or could be specific agreements focussed exclusively on migration. Bajracharya and Sijapati (2012) and ILO (2015) propose to directly support and strengthen bilateral agreements and their implementation to protect migrants’ rights.

For example, since 2010, the recruitment of Bangladeshis to Jordan’s ready-made garment sector has been facilitated by Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL), which has not only enabled Bangladesh to maintain the flow of workers but also helped improve factory compliance with Jordanian and international labour standards. Bilateral agreements, can be effective bargaining tools for sending countries to negotiate better working conditions for their citizens in other countries, and to ensure that systems that are set up to address the needs of migrants in receiving countries function as intended (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012).

For such changes to take effect, destination countries need to cooperate with sending countries and vice versa. For example, Nepal’s Women Domestic Workers Guideline endorsed in 2015 aims to hold employers and local recruitment agencies in the destination country accountable for the welfare of migrant domestic workers. This can only work, however, if the bilateral agreement is respected between the countries and when migration follows official channels (MFA, 2019). Once the migrant leaves the home county, they are under the destination country’s policy realm, which might not provide them rights equal to those of citizens, making it difficult for countries of origin to prevent exploitation (Barsbai, 2018). As long as practices in destination countries, such as the kafala system clash with bilateral agreements, they will remain ineffective (KC and Hennebry 2019).

- *Regional agreements*

According to Henderson et al. (2020), regional processes, such as the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue strengthen collaboration across countries of origin and destination, harmonizing positions, and generally working together toward upholding the rights of migrant workers and preventing harmful recruitment practices. The Colombo Process, for example, an informal, non-binding forum to facilitate dialogue and cooperation relating to labour mobility was started in 2003. It focuses on overseas employment of an estimated 2.5 million migrants from Asia who work in the GCC, North America, Europe and elsewhere in Asia. The Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) is a similar informal, non-binding process that was established in 2008 focuses on Asian migration with active participation of six destination countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as Malaysia.

- *Limitations of laws and policies*

Ultimately, laws and policies are only effective if they are implemented, enforced and penalties for non-compliance are issued and followed through. Laws and legal frameworks are not a solution on their own, unless they are implemented and enforced (KI 1, 2020). Even large international organizations are sometimes unable to affect change in the face of political resistance. For example, ILO efforts to work on changing policies in Lebanon have not been successful. As such, ILO has shifted its focus to support and promote self-organizing efforts among the migrating domestic workers rather than grand policy change (KI 8, 2020).

Similarly, laws are likely to function better in some countries than others, and for migrants in some sectors more than others. KI 10 (2020) notes that there is a difference between Lebanon and Jordan in terms of implementation of policies for migrants with Jordan exerting more control. Moreover, KI 10 (2020) notes that for migrant domestic workers and migrant workers in general, the system is co-opted by vested interests and regulations are irrelevant because they are not enforced. Enforcement and compliance are particularly challenging for migrant domestic workers. An example of lack of enforcement of legislation for domestic workers can be seen in their continued payment of fees both to recruitment agents at home and sometimes also to placement agents once they arrive to destination countries as discussed above (K 11, 2020).

- *Key legal options*

While laws and regulations that are not implemented have little benefits for women migrants, the recognition of domestic work under labour law is important according to KI 7 (2020). This would help normalize the employment situation of migrant domestic workers, providing a platform to terminate contracts without having to leave the country, as well as to change employers.

Another key legal option is the integration of migrant domestic workers in the minimum wage policy, as has been proposed for Jordan (KI 6, 2020) as well as reforming the Kafala system, through increasing its flexibility of application, such as through more flexible work permits.

Anti-trafficking laws are a further tool that can reduce exploitation of female migrants in the Middle East. Jordan, for example, has been spending years on a draft law focused on

anti-trafficking while Lebanon's anti-trafficking law is considered to be of little use (KI 4, 2020). Anti-trafficking legislation needs to be linked to penalties for trafficking with credible enforcement (KIs 1 and 5, 2020). When laws have been developed, their interpretation by the judicial system is key. As KI 6 (2020) noted, several ministries are linked to trafficking of migrants, including the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labour; if these two agencies do not cooperate well or use different terminology (such as labour rights violation instead of trafficking), real enforcement cannot be achieved. As such awareness raising and capacity building on rights violations remain important.

- *The role of NGOs and civil society*

As legal efforts have not led to substantial improvement of migrant workers outcomes, many organizations are instead supporting NGOs and other organizations and institutions. As KI 4 (2020) notes, Kafa, an NGO in Lebanon, invested efforts to join migrant women from Bangladesh and elsewhere to share experiences and mobilize them. But the NGO did not include sufficient experience of migrants in its group. Other links with civil society include trade unions and the engagement of returnee migrants in supporting potential migrants (Rashid and Watson, 2017). Beydoun (2006) notes that grass roots and indigenous civil society organizations have led the movement against the trafficking of women to Lebanon in Ethiopia, while the government and transnational NGO's have had a limited role.

Additional considerations due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic

The outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic has in many ways exacerbated vulnerabilities of migrant domestic workers. This includes domestic workers losing employment and networks, working even more hours and being on call 24 hours a day without extra pay, racist attitudes against migrant workers, health vulnerabilities, repatriation issues for those wishing to return home, wage payment delays and cuts and stigmatization upon return. Many of these issues are expected to last for years. COVID-19 impacts thus need to feature in any programming targeting migrant workers and aiming to reduce forced labour and trafficking going forward.

Important mechanisms to consider include providing migrants with social protection both at origin and destination countries, as well as local support systems that will enable migrants to reintegrate into the economy and find work (KI 11, 2020; Kilby and Wu, 2020). Alahmad et al. (2020) notes for Kuwait that COVID-19 risk management requires migrant-specific disease containment, mitigation and prevention; improved healthcare access; better temporary housing; access to information in native languages; worker protection; community support; and continuous monitoring and adjustment as conditions change.

Increased challenges and support needs around migration as a result of the pandemic could lead to increased recruitment costs for future migrants (KI 1, 2020). Such costs would fall on recruitment agencies and employers to address additional migrant-related restrictions. The likely increase in cost of migration, some of which will need to be borne by migrant workers themselves, might lead to increased trafficking and smuggling. This needs to be assessed in future studies.

- *Exclusion from support programs and information*

Woertz (2020) notes that migrant workers in the GCC states had challenges accessing nutritious food. COVID-19 relief programs were almost exclusively geared toward citizens. Saudi Arabia, for example, offered to pay 60% of private sector wages of Saudi nationals for up to three months as part of its Unemployment Insurance scheme. But exclusion from COVID-19 relief was also common in sending countries. This again affected poorer returnee migrants who did not always have the needed paperwork, like up-to-date registration cards, to access relief in countries of origin. Moreover, in garment factories, all information on COVID-19 was provided in Arabic only, even information targeting migrant workers.

- *Loss of employment, shelter, and networks*

Loss of wages, employment, networks and in many cases shelter or a place to live has affected millions of migrant workers, particularly domestic workers, during the pandemic. COVID-19's impact was considered to be somewhat lower for live-in migrant domestic workers, many of whom live with wealthy families, compared to those who live separately (KI 10, 2020). While live-in domestic workers might have lost wages, they still generally have housing, while freelancers face homelessness (KI 1, 2020). Nevertheless, some live-in domestic workers in Lebanon have been abandoned by employers (Kilby and Wu, 2020). Live-out migrant domestic workers have expanded in Jordan in recent years and suffered more because of the extreme lockdown in Jordan, which prevented them from going to work, get paid and pay for their living expenses (KI 10, 2020). There was an effort by the Jordanian government to help repatriate some migrants (mostly from Egypt) particularly in light of nationalizing jobs that they held. No similar effort was attempted for migrant domestic workers. Moreover, loss of the already limited support networks due to the lockdown have made migrant workers more vulnerable (Kilby and Wu, 2020).

- *Repatriation and financial assistance*

Many migrants who lost employment remained stranded in countries of destination, often without income or shelter, and without a chance to return home due to travel restrictions, poverty and the lockdown. Challenges are heightened for illegal migrants. As an example, many Nepalese women arrived in the Middle East through India, by crossing the open India-Nepal border, as women's migration to these countries is considered illegal in Nepal. These migrants are not recognized by the Nepalese government and lack supporting documents (Kilby and Wu, 2020). This complicates and hinders their repatriation process in general and more so during the pandemic, because they never technically left according to the government. They are also ineligible for the pension fund provided by the Nepali government.

The pandemic has led to economic crises in many countries, leading to job losses among migrant employees (KI 5, 2020). Many workers opted to return to their home countries without getting paid for past work. Governments in both sending and receiving countries also neglected their responsibility to support migrants in getting paid prior to returning home (KI 1, 2020). Moreover, in some cases, consulates did not support migrants to return, and some returnee migrants were prevented from entering their own countries (KI 4 and KI 5, 2020). Some governments feared that migrant returnees may carry the

virus, and were already overwhelmed with the situation in their own countries, and did not want migrants to not return.

Among Arab countries, the pandemic effects were particularly severe for migrant workers in Lebanon, since the country has been in economic and political turmoil before the pandemic hit; the situation worsened further after the Beirut port explosion of August of 2020 (KI 5, 2020; Kilby and Wu, 2020). In Lebanon, stranded migrants have camped on streets and in front of embassies. In the context of the pandemic, it is not a matter of only fixing laws, but it is necessary to provide immediate protection for migrants, such as providing housing or hosting centers until the situation improves or migrants can be repatriated back to origin countries (KI 1, 2020). The Migrant Forum in Asia started a campaign to recoup workers' wages particularly for those migrants who went back home without pay that they were supposed to receive (KI 5, 2020).

There is an urgent need for financial assistance for stranded migrant women who wish to leave but the system does not allow them to leave easily (KI 4, 2020). Some NGOs have tried to pressure IOM, whose mandate is to repatriate, to work faster. For example, Kafa requested the IOM to speed up the repatriation process for Kenyan migrants. Donor organizations could support safe repatriation through the purchase of tickets for vulnerable migrants via local NGOs (KI 4, 2020).

- *Racist attitudes in the pandemic*

Key Informants noted that racist attitudes were prominent during the pandemic and that measures were needed to change racist attitudes towards migrant workers during the pandemic. A combination of racist and xenophobic attitudes and fears have resulted in nationals and employers thinking that migrant workers are the carriers of the virus and that they represent a danger to them, their children and society (KI 5, 2020). This situation was not helped by the precarious housing and hygiene situation that many migrants find themselves in the garment sector, but is also reflected in the cramped housing in the

- *Healthcare*

Experts predict that as a result of the pandemic migrants might require access to additional services for migration to function in the future (KI 11, 2020). When the pandemic started, many migrants in Middle Eastern countries, especially low-skilled labour such as domestic workers were not covered by healthcare. Providing migrant workers with health services that they lack is a crucial issue that has surfaced during the pandemic. Creating health systems that can be extended to migrants, rather than integrating migrants into health services is key to reduce their vulnerability and provide them with a more decent and safer experience. According to Woertz (2020), the Saudi government decided to open its healthcare system to everybody for COVID-19 treatment, regardless of their legal residency status, acknowledging indirectly that the public health risk the pandemic poses could otherwise not be addressed.

- *Program activity disruption*

COVID-19 and the associated lockdown also disrupted activities of programs that aimed to reduce trafficking and forced labour in various ways. This includes the cancellation of awareness raising and training activities and the limitations to share information. Moreover, the closure of workers' centres hindered meetings with migrant women and

civil society groups to discuss collective action and needed advocacy. Some activities were moved to digital platforms, but participation was limited to those migrants who had better digital access. Face-to-face interactions to understand impacts on migrants were limited or non-existent.

On a more general level, the pandemic has affected the capacity of workers to associate as a result of social distancing affecting their ability to discuss common grievances and remedial action. Thus, there is a risk that the “new normal” results in more lasting restrictions on freedom of association and collective bargaining. The capacity of regulators, project staff and social workers to understand daily realities of migrant women and develop responsive strategies has also been affected. This is embedded in an environment of limited empathy and discrimination on the part of regulators, where in some countries (e.g. Jordan, Lebanon) authorities are arguing that the welfare of their own citizens comes before that of migrants; e.g. welfare measures being reserved for nationals. For example, garment workers in Jordan are excluded from 3 out of 5 social protection programs (KI 6, 2020). Further, there is currently a lack of reliable qualitative data about how the pandemic is specifically affecting migrant women workers, in order to inform program interventions.

- *Exposure of violations in the sponsorship system*

COVID has brought the weaknesses of Kafala to the forefront, exposing violations in facilitating trafficking, in trapping domestic workers and in exacerbating poor working conditions (KIs 6 and 7, 2020). For example, in Jordan, worker centres have revealed 16 cases in the garment sector, where workers were denied wages and forced to work. Trust between the worker centres and migrant workers played a role in highlighting these violations. Further, workers were more willing to speak out because of lockdown and travel restrictions. Some were forced to pay for their plane tickets to be able to leave. Fewer information has become available on domestic workers as they are located in private homes without inspection and lockdowns reduced their mobility further (KI 7, 2020).

Effective mechanisms and implementation through a sample project: The Work In Freedom phase II program

ILO's Work in Freedom⁵ program focuses on reducing migrant women's vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour by focusing on creating a safe migration environment, providing women with information that empowers them to make informed choices. The program aims to achieve three main outcomes according to its Theory of Change (ToC):

1. Women have greater ability to make their own choices during the entire migration process in an enabling environment for safe migration into decent work.
2. Increased levels of collaboration, accountability, and respect between key actors.

⁵ Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East (Work in Freedom) is an inter-regional technical cooperation programme implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) with its partners and financed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of Government of the Government of the United Kingdom. The program is currently in Phase II. We refer to the Theory of Change of the latter phase of the program.

3. Strengthened laws, policies, practices and systems for social protection, safe labor migration and decent work for women.

The program has developed several mechanisms and activities to achieve these outcomes. The ToC also describes assumptions and possible counter trends related to the proposed program mechanisms and activities that could reduce the effectiveness of the interventions. They include the project context, political environment and socioeconomic situation and stakeholder attitudes. We find that many of the mechanisms in the ToC are well supported by the recent literature and Key Informant Interviews, while others seem less effective or may require additional mechanisms in place. Some of the least effective mechanisms (such as advocating for migration bans to protect women) are excluded from WIF ToC and ILO's mandate in general.

o *Outflow countries*

In origin countries with high outflows of migrants (in this case Nepal and Bangladesh), WIF-2's program interventions focus on various mechanisms to develop migrant women's capacities and provide them with information through various means (including utilizing social workers and improving their capacity for knowledge sharing) to enable women to know about their rights, negotiate better access to local entitlements and local or outbound jobs and take decisions that affect their lives.

This is an important mechanism with documented benefits, but only if directed at women who already decided to migrate (Beam, 2016; Beam et al. 2016). Beydoun (2006) finds that many migrants state that they would not have emigrated if they had accurate information about the working conditions before departing.

Another mechanism is to review pre-departure policies and amend pre-departure training curriculums, to create a more enabling space for migrant women's learning. Networks are also considered important for a more empowered migration process. A further intervention is to strengthen potential migrant women's collective voice and mutual support for one another in addressing common challenges related to gender, mobility and work through networking.

To aid policy and policy makers in outflow countries to better protect and uphold migrant women's rights, WIF-2 activities include advocacy mechanisms among groups advocating for women migrant workers (with the secondary aim of influencing other programs that benefit from the program's lessons learned), improving migration policies so that they are more enabling of mobility as a choice, rather than a compulsion or a restriction, and efforts to make state policies more responsive to needs of vulnerable women and girls. This includes improvements of services at local level to reduce the need to migrate in distress, and improvements in migration policies so that they are more enabling mobility as a choice, rather than a compulsion or a restriction.

o *Inflow countries*

In inflow countries, particularly Jordan and Lebanon, the program interventions focus on raising the capacity of migrant women workers to connect (with each other and with support groups and organizations), access services and organize collectively to address their grievances, in order for them to enjoy better collective representation, support services, and recognition of their rights.

The mechanisms for this include creating safe spaces in strategic locations to enable women to associate and establish support mechanisms for themselves, provide demand-driven support services to migrant women workers through unions, worker centers, NGOs, other service providers, as well as organize them in worker collectives to increase their voice and solidarity to address their individual and collective demands.

The program also attempts to develop the capacity of employers to address rights of migrant women domestic workers through campaigns to change employer attitudes, dialogue with employers to address migrant right issues and trainings for employers of garment workers.

Another area of focus in migrant receiving countries is encouraging policy makers to uphold rights of migrant workers through increasing advocacy and coordination among civil groups dedicated to rights of women, workers and migrants, as well as presenting evidence and preparing knowledge products and policy briefs to inform regulators.

- *Labour intermediation*

Holding recruitment intermediaries and employers accountable to recruitment outcomes across recruitment pathways is another focus in the WIF program in both origin and destination countries. This is an important pathway yet difficult to achieve, as deception is often the basis of many recruitment agencies' work. For example, Tamkeen (2015) noted that 70% of domestic workers in Jordan understood and signed the contract but did not receive a copy. Many work without contracts. Forty-two percent of migrants received a lower salary than that stated in their contract. Further, Bajracharya and Sijapati (2012) find that recruitment agencies at home (and at times destination) countries are involved in malpractices such as substituting contracts drawn at the destination countries with others that have different terms and conditions.

WIF interventions include gathering evidence through mapping and following labour intermediation trends, as well as through assessment of the main recruitment pathways and specific recruitment practices to understand recruitment trends and disseminate findings among stakeholders. Mechanisms further include piloting and implementation of better recruitment practices and holding dialogues on the need for joint accountability in recruitment chains among stakeholders. This is also supported by strengthening advocacy for better recruitment laws and policies.

Tables 1.1 to 1.13 synthesize the above evidence from the literature and KIs regarding which mechanisms present in the WIF theory of change are supported (or seen as ineffective) in reducing migrant women's vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour.

Table 1.1 Mechanisms for outflow countries (countries of origin)

<i>WiF-2 ToC mechanisms</i>	<i>Evidence from the literature and KIs</i>
<p>Social workers engage women and girls and other community members — leading to women understanding better how to negotiate and take decisions that affect their lives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to vulnerable women and girls. • Information provision enables women to know about their rights and negotiate better access to local entitlements and jobs. • Collective voice and networking strengthen women’s mutual support for one another in addressing common challenges. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: Providing migrant workers with information on their labor rights and the job market in destination countries significantly improved their knowledge and working conditions (Barsbai 2018). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: A focus on women’s empowerment alone regardless of women’s plans to migrate or not might not be cost-effective if the focus is to prevent trafficking and forced labour ○ CAVEAT: Positive impacts from information provision are only reported for migrants prior to departure and not for potential migrants. ○ CAVEAT: Training on negotiation is insufficient to fully address deception practices and non-honouring of contracts. Without having the legal papers, even with knowledge of their rights, migrant workers cannot negotiate. • SUPPORTED: Initiation of social networks pre-departure is an important channel to utilize for conveying information to migrant women throughout the migration process. (Frantz, 2014; KI 5, 2020). Domestic care workers tend to rely on their social networks for information rather than official channels. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: These pre-departure measures should take into consideration the controlled environment that domestic workers are placed into, and that abuse might occur, including having their cell phones confiscated and belongings searched.
<p>Capacity development of social workers and government scheme workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and knowledge sharing enables social workers to mediate information more effectively to and from women and girls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNCLEAR: Developing of capacity of migrants is widely seen as important; supporting social workers interacting with migrants can also be helpful, but it is not clear how these social workers liaise with the migration process; Key Informants and other references strongly suggest to involve former migrants in any capacity building of migrants.
<p>Technical guidance for institutional pre-departure programmes — leads to pre-departure programmes that do not undermine the rights of migrants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of pre-departure policies, curricular 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: Many curricula have been criticized for being very general and not sector-, country- or gender-specific and for not providing enough information on support channels and migrants’ legal rights, or sufficiently equipping women with what they need to know predeparture; language skill development is lacking (Frantz 2014; Rashid and Watson 2017; Regmi et al. 2019).

WiF-2 ToC mechanisms	Evidence from the literature and KIs
<p>amendments, and capacity development creates more enabling space for migrant women's learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: Provide mechanisms to ensure those who travel irregularly are also provided with training. Need to add extra mechanisms in place to encourage and incentivize migrant women to attend trainings; including providing trainings in local villages where they are more accessible to migrant women; and paying for attendance.
<p>Advocacy among groups advocating for women migrant workers — encourages policy makers to uphold migrant worker's rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in types of services at local level reduce the need to migrate in distress. • Improvements in migration policies so that they are more enabling of mobility as a choice, rather than a compulsion or a restriction. State policies more responsive to needs of vulnerable women and girls. Advocacy influences other programmes to benefit from lessons learned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: Migration bans increase irregular migration, which is strongly associated with more dangerous and circuitous routes, lack of information, lack of choices, and in some cases trafficking in persons (ILO, 2015; Napier-Moore, 2017; KI 5, 2020). Potential migrants expressed a preference for travelling as regular migrants for reasons of legitimacy and safety. ○ CAVEAT: It is not clear how advocacy for women migrant workers would improve services at local level that would in turn reduce the need to migrate in distress
<p>Learning and research leading to better evidence base for better policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research on migrant trajectories, recruitment practices, women's work trends, documentation of lessons learned, and dissemination enables better advocacy. • Knowledge sharing forums among women workers supports better decision making and more focused and coordinated advocacy agenda among civil groups. • Lessons learned enable adaptive programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: Very little research has been implemented to assess what works and what does not in the field of preventing forced labour and trafficking in migration (i.e., Bryant and Landman, 2020; Davy, 2015, 2016). In particular, quantitative assessments of interventions are lacking. Moreover, learning from returnee migrants was suggested by various sources. • CAVEAT: It is important to learn from disseminating research results and learnings. A Knowledge, Attitude and Practices assessment could be implemented with intended audiences that received and those who did not receive the information.

Table 1.2 Mechanisms for inflow countries (countries of destination)

<i>WiF-2 ToC mechanisms</i>	<i>Evidence from the literature and KIs</i>
<p>Developing capacity of migrant women workers to connect, access services and organize collectively to address their grievances — enables them to enjoy better collective representation, support services, and recognition of their rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unions, worker centres, NGOs, other service providers provide demand-driven support services to migrant women workers. • Safe spaces in strategic locations enable women to associate and establish support mechanisms for themselves. • Worker collectives enable better voice and solidarity to address their individual and collective demands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: Unions are important tool for increasing workers' power (KIs 1 and 5, 2020). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: As unionization for migrant workers in the middle east has been illegal previously, considerable effort must be made to develop widespread unionization of migrant domestic workers, especially domestic workers who are unable to leave the house (KIs 1 and 5, 2020). • SUPPORTED. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: very few workers know how to access support services (Frantz, 2014). Mechanisms to make workers aware of support services and how to access them is important to the success of such services (K 12, 2020). • SUPPORTED: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: Physical safe spaces are only accessible to women who are not imprisoned by their employers and are very limited in mobility (Esim and Smith, 2004; Frantz, 2014). A need to create spaces accessible from within their employers' home in order to reach the most vulnerable women (ex. radio, group messaging services, NGO organized group calls with migrants).
<p>Developing capacity of employers to address rights of migrant women workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigns to change attitudes of employers of domestic workers. • Training programmes for employers of garment workers. • Dialogue with employers of domestic and garment workers to address migrant right issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: Employer awareness campaigns and strategies have been utilized by some projects with some success. Target topics for changing employers' attitudes could include Rest days, Freedom of movement, Mobile phone access, Minimum wages, Passport confiscation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: The means by which these issues are addressed with employers is very sensitive, some strategies were found to cause backlash, worsening the situation for migrant workers (KI 5, 2020). Further, campaigns need to be targeted, adapted to local contexts and contain clear messages to be effective in achieving behavioural change (Bryant and Landman, 2020).
<p>Advocacy among groups advocating for women migrant workers — encourages policy makers to uphold migrant worker rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination among civil groups dedicated to rights of women, workers and migrants) enables better focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: Advocacy among groups/NGOs is needed, but in addition to direct lobbying for policy makers to uphold migrant workers' rights; directly support and strengthen bilateral agreements and their implementation (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012). ○ CAVEAT: Some outflow countries do not have embassies in countries of

WiF-2 ToC mechanisms	Evidence from the literature and KIs
<p>and effectiveness of advocacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of policy briefs and knowledge products informs regulators. • Presentation of evidence, review of policies and advocacy enables better policies. 	<p>destination. Strengthened government presence through embassies would offer more protection to migrants.to better advocate for eliminating abuse and discriminatory practices (ILO, 2015; Rashid and Watson, 2017).</p>
<p>Learning and research — enables more effective advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies on working and living conditions, studies to enable better negotiation (wages, harassment, other). • Studies on demand for care work and supply-chain trends generate better evidence to support policy changes. • Knowledge sharing among constituents enables better mutual cooperation. • Documentation of lessons learned enables adaptive programming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: This is important as some Arab countries embark on reforming their labour laws, introducing standard contracts, and reassessing the application of the Kafala system in practice. Advocacy for proper implementation will be key (KIs 1, 7 and 10, 2020; Manseau, 2007).

Table 1.3 Mechanisms for labour intermediation

WiF II ToC mechanisms	Evidence from the literature and KIs
<p>Mapping and learning labor intermediation trends — creates evidence for better policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments of main recruitment pathways enable better understanding of recruitment trends. • Assessment of specific recruitment practices enables understanding of better practices. • Dissemination of findings and learning raises capacity of stakeholders to understand each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED
<p>Holding recruitment intermediaries and employers accountable to recruitment outcomes across recruitment pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED: Recruitment intermediaries fill an important role for potential migrants, but can use deceptive measures that trap the migrant into forced labour and in some cases debt bondage (Paoletti et al., 2014; Kilby and Wu, 2020;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue on the need for joint accountability in recruitment chains enables greater attention to migrant worker’s rights among stakeholders. Piloting and implementation of better recruitment practices enables policy makers to consider replicability. 	<p>KI 5, 2020).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: Despite policies to cap fees and curb exploitation, migrants continue to pay high fees in many cases due to lack of information and manipulation. Stronger monitoring of recruitment networks is needed, along with awareness raising among potential migrants to break the misconception of the need to pay higher fees for better job opportunities.
<p>Advocacy among groups advocating for women migrant workers — encourages policy makers to uphold migrant worker rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of recruitment legislation and policies enables policies that up-hold rights of migrant workers better. • Strengthen advocacy for better recruitment laws and policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAVEAT: In order to uphold migrants' rights, there is a clear need to lobby for implementation of policies that are recently starting to recognize migrant workers under destination countries' labour laws (Bajracharya and Sijapati, 2012; Tal, 2015).

Assessment of the WiF-2 ToC

As discussed above, many of the issues that put migrant workers at risk are structural or require binding agreements and national laws to be more strictly monitored and implemented. Beyond advocacy, which is in itself crucial, other measures to realize the ratification of agreements and changes in laws and regulations are often outside the scope of WIF and other similar programs. While advocacy among pressure groups and NGOs is needed, core ILO activities of direct lobbying for policy makers in origin and destination countries to pass and implement bilateral agreements and legislations for upholding migrant workers' rights are needed.

Bryan and Landman (2020) find that many programs highlighted the importance of embedding anti-trafficking interventions and stronger legislations in national laws and structures and include them in their Theory of Change. But while some of these programs were indeed effective in helping countries draft legislations, no legislations passed during the time of the evaluated programs. The lengthy timeframe needed for such work to see completion is one factor for why this is not very feasible. Another factor is the lack of national ownership to see such policy changes to completion and implementation.

The WIF-2 program could strengthen focus on improving linkages between migrant women in their home countries (predeparture) with advocacy groups in destination countries given that it operates in a unique migration channel (South Asia to the Middle East) with specific sub-channels, such as the migration of women migrants from Bangladesh to the garment sector in Jordan, for example. Having such contact information and open channels at the beginning of the journey can increase the sense of safety for migrant women before they are put in precarious situations.

Involvement of migrant workers in the design and implementation of interventions can ensure that challenges migrants face, whether reflected or not reflected in the literature, are addressed. When new challenge to migrant workers arise it takes time for NGOs and researchers to become aware of them – involving migrant workers helps to shorten this process as they are given a voice to bring new developments to light immediately. Further, while the WIF-2 ToC is fairly comprehensive in several areas of the migration pathway for women migrant workers, reintegration-specific mechanisms are lacking. Several Key Informants point to the fact that the lack of reintegration programs can lead to a cycle of continued distress migration.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to new pressing challenges, which is both a threat and an opportunity for adaptive programming to support migrant workers in different ways. Key areas for WIF-2 based on the literature and Key Informants include advocacy for information provision on COVID-19 in local languages, particularly in the garment sector; stronger support to advocacy on access to health services to support public health in sending and destination countries in addition to migrants' health; advocacy with sending countries on treatment of migrants who want to return, including illegal migrants; and direct support to homeless and income-less migrants abroad.

Conclusions

Migration is on the rise, as people seek higher incomes abroad. The trend is important for national incomes of many countries, and for both sending and receiving countries. However, many migrants, and particularly migrant women migrating along the South-Asia – West Asia corridor, face increasingly precarious situations that put them at risk of forced labour and trafficking at various moments along the migration pathway. This includes first interactions with recruiters in the country of origin, incurring debt to pay questionable fees, pre-departure formalities, including training, the departure itself, as well as the risk of deception in West Asian countries, together with forced labour conditions, such as low wages, mobility restrictions, and passport removal.

The Kafala system prevailing in Arab countries of West Asia, an institution or set of processes that effectively makes employers responsible for migrants, contributes to the abuse experienced by female migrants, and particularly those working in the domestic care sector.

COVID-19 has heightened vulnerabilities of female migrants in the South Asia to Middle East corridor, reflecting some of the weaknesses of the Kafala system. Shocks like the combined economic and health shock of COVID-19 required flexible and adaptable solutions for employers and migrant workers alike. The employer responsibility system instead left many migrants stranded, without wages and sometimes homeless. Further vulnerabilities related to migrants' lack of access to information on COVID-19 policies, as well as to healthcare services, and other protection measures, such as improved housing that would support social distancing in the garment sector. Neither sending nor receiving countries acted quickly or adequately with some sending countries requesting that migrants do not return home to already over-burdened health systems, even if they lost their employment; while receiving countries largely failed to integrate migrants in key protective measures and services, sometimes with adverse impacts for their own citizens.

Many programs have been working on reducing the risk of trafficking and forced labour migrant women are exposed to through various mechanisms, with varying degrees of success. Importantly, the impact of interventions is seldom evaluated due to the complexity of the migration process and due to challenges to reach migrants in Middle Eastern countries. One such program is the WiF-2 project that aims to strengthen women's empowerment in home countries to reduce distress migration, improve pre-departure programs as well as develop safe spaces and collective agency of migrants in countries of work. Finally, the program also aims to improve recruitment practices through dialogue and dialogues and to generate awareness and enhanced capacity of employers.

Workstream 1.2: ROAD process: Key actors in the migration pathway

Data and Methodology

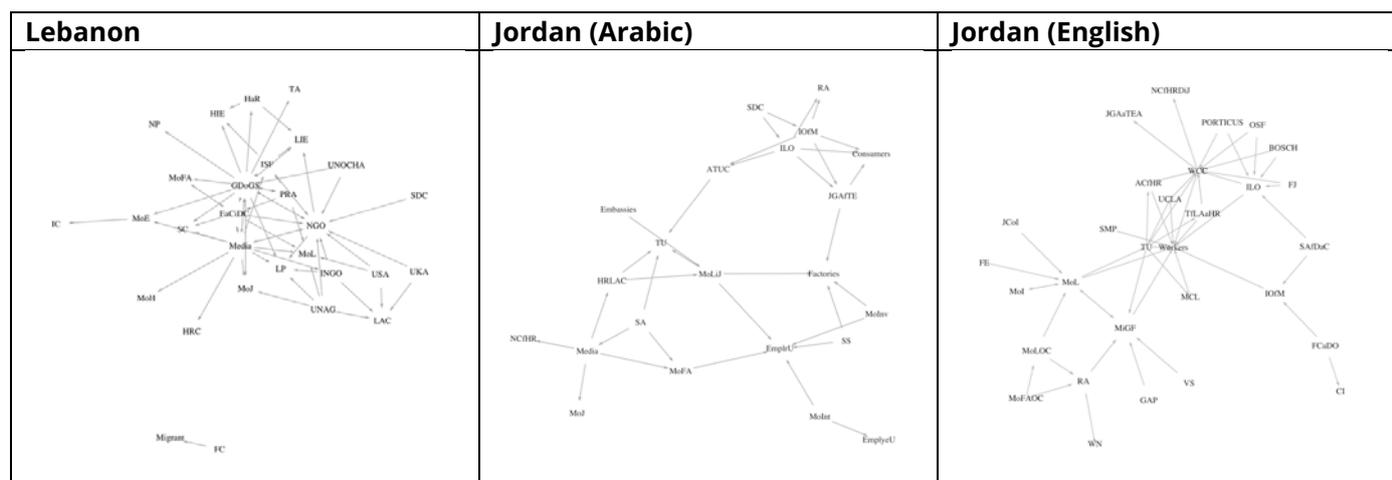
To understand the roles and relationships of stakeholders involved in migration pathways in the four study countries, relevant actors from government, civil society, embassies, private sector, academia, and donors were invited to take part in a facilitated network-mapping participatory process, known as the Net-Map process.⁶ The focus of the Net-Map workshops were used to identify key actors, and their interlinkages, involved in the migration of women workers from South Asia to the domestic care sectors in Lebanon and Jordan. The workshops considered the entire migration pathway and also the vulnerabilities of migrants who have returned to their countries of origin. Net-Map is a facilitation-based tool that combines network analysis with stakeholder mapping to help visualize how actors, interconnected formally and informally, can influence outcomes (Schiffer and Hauck 2010). We conducted five Net-Map workshops—one each in Bangladesh and Nepal as sending countries, and one in Lebanon and two in Jordan as destination countries.

In all these workshops, participants were invited from the government, civil society, international organizations, embassies, universities, and think tanks. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, we organized the Bangladesh and Nepal workshops online via Zoom. The Jordan event had been conceptualized as a face-to-face event but faced challenges of government approval, partially linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, and was therefore moved to a quasi-online setting, with facilitators in Jordan engaging online with participants. All workshops were conducted in English except for Jordan, where one workshop was organized in Arabic and the other in English. In Lebanon, translation services from Arabic to English (and vice-versa) were used to generate a single Net-Map. Conducting two workshops in Jordan helped overcome the language barriers of some participants who expressed difficulties understanding either of the languages. An English/Arabic interpreter accompanied one group, and the other was accompanied by a Bengali/Hindi/English interpreter.

The guiding question that framed these workshops was, “Who influences the migration of women from Bangladesh/Nepal to the domestic care and garment sectors in Lebanon and Jordan?” Participants in each workshop answered this question in multiple sessions. During the first session, participants identified actors involved in women workers’ migration journey. Participants then drew connections between these actors and described the nature of their linkages, mapping which actors had authority or could exert informal pressure over others, who provided whom with finance and information, and who played an advocacy role. Finally, the third session focused on the most influential of these actors in terms of impact on the migratory process. Participants built an “influence tower” (Schiffer and Hauck 2010) by rating each actor’s influence from 0 to 5. Participants further discussed ways to improve women’s safe migration and reduce women’s

⁶ Our project timeline had envisioned implementing these workshops in early 2020; however, due to the late final project approval and COVID-19 onset, workshops were implemented with substantial delays. Moreover, three of the workshops were implemented virtually, applying, to our knowledge, Net-Map and ROAD for the first time in a virtual setting.

Figure 1.2 Observed Net-Maps from Bangladesh and Nepal



Source: Authors.

Countries of Origin: Bangladesh and Nepal

According to the 2022 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) ranking, Bangladesh and Nepal have made a significant institutional effort to eliminate trafficking in persons but have not yet achieved all minimum standards (U.S. Department of State 2022). Despite noticeable similarities at a global scale, these countries differ in terms of how their migration sectors are organized. Key actors, their relative ability to influence the sector, and the linkages among them that maintain the sector's current state are context-specific. Our analyses of Net-Maps capture this contextually dependent actor-level dynamic in each country.

As shown in Table 1.4, government agencies play a dominant role in Nepal, whereas private actors were as influential as the government in Bangladesh. Considering how these actors were linked, formal authority-type links (38%) dominated the Bangladesh migration sector, and advocacy or lobbying-type links (37%) dominated the Nepal migration sector. Information/advice-type links (24%) in Bangladesh were significantly higher (Chi-squared, p-value = .001) than in Nepal (18%). Formal authority with high information flow may indicate an authoritative system. Authority in Nepal is also a common linkage type (34%) after advocacy (37%), indicative of an advocacy network where various interests—including those representing female migrants—negotiate with the government.

Table 1.4 Actors and Linkages

Actor Types	Bangladesh	Nepal
<i>Government</i>	13 (43%)	24 (50%)
<i>NGO</i>	2 (07%)	9 (19%)
<i>Private</i>	13 (43%)	7 (14%)
<i>Other</i>	2 (07%)	8 (17%)
Types of linkage		
<i>Formal Authority</i>	24 (38%)	34 (34%)
<i>Information/Advice</i>	15 (24%)	18 (18%)
<i>Lobby/Advocacy</i>	10 (16%)	37 (27%)
<i>Money/Finance</i>	14 (22%)	10 (10%)

Source: Authors.

The workshop participants were asked to rank (on a 0–5 scale) the actors' abilities to influence the migration system in their country. Table 1.5 shows the top actors scoring in the 90th percentile or above on the 0–5 scale. In Bangladesh, actors from the government sector are the most influential. In contrast, governmental and nongovernmental entities were ranked equally influential in Nepal.

The workshop participants in Bangladesh perceived women migrants as having only average influence (scored 3 out of 5) in the network. In contrast, the Nepal workshop considered women migrants among the most influential actors. One participant in the Nepal workshop explained that the migrant is an important influencer because the migration process, including exposure to the risk of trafficking and forced labour, begins with her decision. Although the workshop participants rated the migrants as having a low capacity to influence the migration system, they placed them (the migrants) at the centre of the networks in both countries. The migrants receive (network authority) and send more arrows than most other actors. For example, the migrants were more central than government ministries in Bangladesh, including the Ministry of Expatriate's Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). In Nepal, along with the migrant and the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) and Foreign Employment Board (FrEB), actors such as the migrant's network (FFaC), ILO, and CSOs also have central places in the network.

Structurally, both countries' networks are sparsely connected on network density measures, with only 4 percent of the Nepali and 7 percent of the Bangladeshi actors connected pairwise (Table 1.6). These networks also score similarly on the average degree score.⁷ This sparsity in Nepal may reflect its decentralized and federal governance structure instituted under the country's new constitution. However, the measures of average network path and triangles (that is three actors connected, suggesting a specific network structure) indicate that only a few actors (through whom others are connected) hold the network together, thus possessing a disproportional controlling power over the network. This "network oligarchy" is also apparent in Bangladesh, although with slightly lesser intensity than in Nepal.

One can interpret the network oligarchy in terms of efficiency (Krebs, 2002). Nepal's network is perhaps more efficient than Bangladesh's, since it takes fewer paths for critical information and resources to flow from one point to another compared to the Bangladesh network. The measures of network modularity⁸ further attest to the efficiency argument. The Bangladesh network is more modular, thus fragmented, and less efficient than the Nepal network.

⁷ A degree score indicates the number of edges (arrows) a node or an actor has. The higher the degree, the more central the actor.

⁸ High modularity indicates clean, non-overlapping clusters.

Table 1.5 Top Influential Actors

Network	Actor	Perceived Influence Score [0,5]	Network Degree Centrality	Network Authority Score	Actor Type
Bangladesh	Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET);	5*	3	.00	Government
	Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL)	5*	2	.00	Government
	Ministry of Expatriate's Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) **	5*	10*	.68*	Government
	Recruiting Agency in a Country of Destination (RA-CoD)	5*	6	.07	Private
	Women Migrant**	3	19*	1.00*	Private
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)**	4	8*	.48*	Government
Nepal	Destination Countries Employers (DsCE)	4.5*	2	.01	Private
	Women Migrant**	4.4*	16*	1.00*	Other
	Parliamentary Committee on Labor (PCoL)	4.4*	5	.17	Government
	Local Intermediaries (LcI)	4.1*	9	.18	Government
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Destination Countries (MoFADC); Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MoLEaSS)**	4.1*	12*	.73*	Government
	Returnee Women Migrant (RtrW)	4.1*	5	.14	Other
	Civil Society Organizations (CSO)**	3.5	22*	.60*	NGO
	Foreign Employment Board (FrEB)	3.9	19*	.44	Government
	International Labour Organization (ILO)	3.5	12*	.00	Donor
	Family, Friends, and Community (FFaC)	3.9	5	.45*	Other
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Destination Countries (MoFADC)	3.7	8	.52		

Note: * indicates 90th percentile or above. ** indicates actors scoring 90th percentile or above on at least two measures.

Source: Authors.

Table 1.6 Descriptive Network Features

Network Attributes	Bangladesh	Nepal
Density (directed)	0.072	0.042
Average Degree	4.29	4.12
Average Path Length (geodesic)	2.79	2.16
Clustering Modularity	58%	39%
Total Number of Triangles	13	37

Source: Authors.

Destination Countries: Jordan and Lebanon

We also wanted to understand the institutional dynamics that shape the inflow of migrant workers to the West Asian countries that recruit women workers from South Asia, especially for the domestic care industry in Lebanon and the garment industry in Jordan. With this goal, we conducted one Net-Map workshop in Lebanon and two in Jordan. The Lebanon workshop was conducted in English. In Jordan, we ran one workshop in local Arabic and the other in English.

The Lebanon workshop participants provided a list of 29 stakeholders in the country's temporary labour immigration sector. About 45 percent of actors, as shown in Table 1.7, are from the government, and about 31 percent are from the private sector. The workshop participants used 69 in-and-out arrows (Table 1.8) to link these actors. About 41 percent and 36 percent of these linkages are authority and advocacy types, respectively. The heavy presence of both public sector and authority linkages indicate that the network is hierarchical in nature.

Table 1.7 Distribution of Actor Types

	N	Donors (%)	GO (%)	NGO (%)	Private (%)
Lebanon	29	0.17	0.45	0.07	0.31
Jordan (English)	30	0.20	0.20	0.23	0.37
Jordan (Arabic)	22	0.05	0.36	0.31	0.27

Source: Authors.

Table 1.8 Distribution of Edges

	N	Advocacy (%)	Authority (%)	Finance (%)	Information (%)
Lebanon	69	0.36	0.41	0.10	0.13
Jordan (English)	58	0.16	0.29	0.28	0.28
Jordan (Arabic)*	36	0.08	0.36	0.08	0.43

* others = 0.06

Source: Authors.

Unlike in Lebanon, the participants in Jordans' two workshops put relatively little emphasis on the public sector. Although the Arabic-language workshop emphasized government actors more than its English counterpart, generally, both workshops highlighted the private sector and NGOs as key stakeholders. The Arabic-language workshop connected the actors authoritatively and, in most cases, by information

linkages. The English-language workshop, however, found its network balanced regarding types of linkages.

In Lebanon, the Net-Map indicates that a few heavyweight actors play a pivotal role in managing the network. This is evidenced by the distribution of the perceived influence score, which is skewed slightly positive, with a large standard deviation, and the distribution of the degree score (see Table 1.9). The average degree is distinctly higher than its median, with a large dispersion. Inequality in the network is high, as the most influential actor has as many as 20 linkages, while some actors are connected by only one link.

Table 1.9 Distribution of Participant Assigned Influence Score

	Min.	Median	Mean	SD	Max
Lebanon	1	3	3.14	1.46	5
Jordan (English)	1	4	3.13	1.54	5
Jordan (Arabic)	1	3	3	1.35	5

Source: Authors.

Table 1.10 Distribution of Degree Score

	Min.	Median	Mean	SD	Max
Lebanon	1	3	4.75	4.96	20
Jordan (English)	1	2	3.86	3.91	18
Jordan (Arabic)	1	3	3.27	4	6

Source: Authors.

In Lebanon, the influence score and degree statistic both identified the General Directorate of General Security (GDoGS) and Ministry of Labour (MoL) as having a high level of influence, as the only public sector actors with scores in the 90th percentile or above (Table 1.11). All the other actors in these categories are from the private sector, like the private recruiting agencies (PRA) and NGOs. Interestingly, the NGOs scored highest in authority,⁹ even higher than the Lebanese Parliament (LP), which came in second with about half the score. The other actors scoring high in authority are the GDoGS and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The Hub score parallels the authority score.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, the media scored high because they provide news and information and remain the only public source of information on abuse and malpractices, requiring the immediate attention of the local and international authorities. Donors and NGOs provide funding, advocate for best practices, provide expert opinion, and, in many cases, provide grassroots-level support.

⁹ Authority score measures network centrality based on the number of arrows each actor receives from others. It evaluates the importance of a node or an actor on a 0–1 scale, where 0 indicates no influence and 1 full authority.

¹⁰ While the authority measures how many arrows a node receives, the Hub score measures how it directs to the authorities.

Table 1.11 Most Important Actors and Coalitions

Criteria	Lebanon	Jordan (English)	Jordan (Arabic)
Participant Assigned	GDoGS _(GO)	GAP _(Private)	Consumers _(Private)
Influence Score ($\geq 90^{\text{th}}$ percentile)	PRA _(Private) HaR _(Private) HIE _(Private) TA _(Private) MoL _(GO)	JCoI _(Private) MiGF _(Private) MoLOC _(Foreign GO) VS _(Private)	ILO _(Donor) MoInt _(GO) MoLij _(GO)
Degree Statistics ($\geq 90^{\text{th}}$ percentile)	GDoGS _(GO) Media _(Private) NGO _(NGO)	MoL _(GO) Workers _(Private) WCC _(Private)	ILO _(Donor) IOM _(Donor) Media _(Private)
Authority Score (Rank)	NGO _(NGO) (1.00) LP _(GO) (.55) GDoGS _(GO) (.52) MoJ _(GO) (.39)	WCC _(Private) (1.00) Workers _(Private) (0.46) ILO _(Donor) (0.119)	Consumers _(Private) (1.00) EmplrU _(Private) (0.96) Factories _(Private) (0.96)
Hub Score (Rank)	GDoGS _(GO) (1.00) Media _(Private) (.80) INGO _(NGO) (.70) UNAG _(Donor) (.54)	ACfHR _(Private) (1.00) TfLAaHR _(Private) (1.00) UCLA _(Private) (1.00)	ILO _(Donor) (1.00) IOM _(Donor) (1.00) MoLij _(GO) (0.72) JGATE _(Private) (0.59)

Source: Authors.

In Jordan, when asked to weigh the actors' relative influence on the immigration sector, the Arabic-language workshop provided a balanced view (Table 1.6). The most influential actor in the network has only six linkages. However, the English-language network is quite different and more comparable to the Lebanon network. The English workshop indicated that most stakeholders are influential, with a median stakeholder scoring 4 out of 5, and just a few actors in the network having very low influence. The most influential actor in the network has as many as 18 linkages, indicating high inequality in the system.

The Arabic-language workshop perceived Jordan's Ministry of Interior (MoInt) and Ministry of Labor (MoLij) as influential, along with the ILO and private consumers. However, the English workshop called attention to the role of the private sector and the Ministries of Labor in the countries of origin. Overall, the structural measures of centrality in both networks indicate that the private actors and donors are the controlling authorities of labour immigration in Jordan.

In the Lebanon network, the modularity of the actor coalition is only about 30 percent, less than one would expect given the sectarian nature of its social and political system (Acemoglu & Robinson 2020). One coalition stands out as large and significant. As reported in Table 1.12, the GDoGS is in a structural coalition with such private entities as private recruiting agencies, high-income employers, hotels and restaurants, and travel agencies. This analysis confirms that the GDoGS is the central authority in Lebanon's labour immigration sector. However, it seems to manage the system with a group of private entities, as the actor coalition analysis reveals.

Table 1.12 Actors Coalitions

Criteria	Lebanon	Jordan (English)	Jordan (Arabic)
Modularity	0.30%	0.46%	0.52%
Largest Structural Coalition (Community Score)	GDoGS _(GO) , PRA _(Private) , HIE _(Private) , HaR _(Private) , and TA _(Private) .	Mol _(GO) , MoLOC _(foreign GO) , MiGF _(Private) , JCol _(Private) , GAP _(Private) , VS _(Private) .	IOM _(Donor) , ILO _(Donor) , Consumers _(Private) .

Source: Authors.

Compared with the Lebanon network, the networks in Jordan have higher modularity and, thus, clearer boundaries of network coalitions. Consistent with the previous findings, the largest coalition should be expected in the Arabic-language network among donors and consumers. The English network emphasizes the close ties among the private actors. It is noteworthy that Jordan’s Ministry of Labour is in the same network cluster as the labour ministries of the countries of origin, including high levels of communication between them.

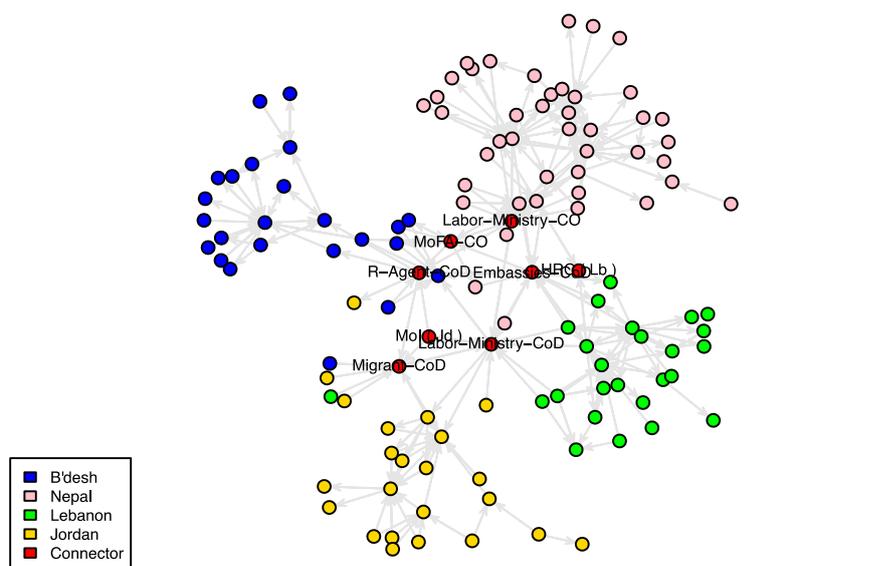
The Migration System in the South Asia to West Asia Corridor

We identified eight actors that were mentioned in more than one workshop. In Figure 3, we treat these actors as network connectors in order to combine four Net-Maps to create an actor-level labour migration system map involving Bangladesh, Nepal, Lebanon, and Jordan (we dropped the Arabic version of the Jordan network for better visualization and analytic purposes). Two of these actors were from the country of origin—the labour ministries and the foreign ministries—and six were from the destination countries—recruiting agents, Human Rights Commissions, interior ministries, labour ministries, and migrant workers.

All Net-Map workshops discussed above highlighted that the labour ministries, in both the countries of origin and destination, were critical players in the migration pathways between the South Asian and West Asian countries. Thus, labour ministries and their respective country’s foreign and interior ministries can play a vital role in changing the current state of migration in the pathways that have been marked by incidents of forced labour and trafficking in women.

The discussion in the previous sections shows that migrant women were also key actors, especially in their home countries. Their vulnerabilities begin at home, shaped not only by their immediate environment, where the informal recruiting agents dominate. Their problems were aggravated by the national policies that remain inadequate in providing a sufficient safety net against these vulnerabilities (Choudhury 2022). Our qualitative investigation in Lebanon shows that women migrants, when organized and tied to a social network, can also be critical actors in shaping the status of forced labour in a country of destination (Adra and Abdulrahim 2023).

Figure 1.3 Migration System in the South Asia to West Asia Pathway



Connectors: Labor Ministry (CO); Foreign Ministry (CO), Embassies in CoD; Recruiting Agent (CoD); Human Rights Commission in CoD; Ministry of Interior in CoD; Ministry of Labor in CoD; Migrant living in CoD

ZAC

Workstream 1.3: ROAD process: Causal risk maps

Data and Methodology

The Net-Map workshops were followed, on the next day, by the development of causal risk graphics to complete Step 1 of the ROAD process. These graphs were developed through one face-to-face and three online workshops using a facilitated structured setting. The ROAD process guidance can be found in Annex B.3. ROAD causal risk diagrams can be found in Annex B.4.

Results

Introduction

Women migrants face unique risks along the migration pathway, associated with forced labour and trafficking. Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, which aims to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking by 2030, has galvanized efforts to improve migrants' outcomes. However, despite the efforts and significant policy changes, the vulnerability of low-skilled workers has remained high or (according to the ILO) even worsened, due to various global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The nature of migrants' work, particularly in the domestic care sector, and the sponsorship system prevalent in Arab countries are linked to exploitative behaviour, as are the recruitment systems in countries of origin. The incidence of forced labour is higher for economic migrants in low-paying jobs and can have more severe consequences for the women and their households, who are more likely to experience economic vulnerability.

Many decision-making frameworks have built-in mechanisms to reduce uncertainty and risk. The majority of these frameworks use a frequentist approach¹¹ in defining risk, and thereby restrict decision-makers in addressing interdependencies among risks and the dynamic nature of systemic risks. Wyrwoll et al. (2018) argue that a risk-event-based causal approach can work better for assessing systematic risks as conventional approaches do not provide the framework for considering multiple consequences or uncertainties of costs and benefits of risk management options. We therefore applied the Risk and Options Assessment for Decision-making (ROAD) process, which helps to identify systemic risks in migration and provides in-depth analyses of consequences and strategies to mitigate risk and thus reduce vulnerabilities for women economic migrants in the South Asia to West Asia corridor.

ROAD is a systems-based approach to risk management that uses an interdisciplinary lens and incorporates different tools and knowledge to seek solutions for the identified systematic risks. The ROAD process follows a 'mixed methods' approach for evaluation that encompasses complementary quantitative and qualitative phases, each integrating multidisciplinary strengths in a three-step process¹² described in Figure 0.1:

1. Defining the scope/ Workstream 1
2. Assessing risks and options/Workstream 2
3. Implementing decisions based on Steps 1 & 2

While the ROAD framework was originally developed as a tool to understand risks and trade-offs and identify intervention areas associated with food, energy, and water security and environmental sustainability, we decided to adapt ROAD to the migration process, given the similar complexity of systemic risks and interlinkages across the migration system. In contrast, most previous studies centred analysis in the country of origin. Given our focus on women migrants, we combined ROAD with a feminist political economy (FPE) analysis framework to better understand the interrelationships between gender, class, race, ethnicity, migration, and globalization and how their interactions produce understandings about migrant women workers from different stakeholder perspectives and influence the way services are provided and policies around labour and migration are shaped (Mohanty, 2003, Safri and Graham, 2010). The benefit of combining this analysis with ROAD is that FPE is able to uncover the gendered responses, assumptions, and presumptions that stakeholders may have.

The key research question for Step 1 of the ROAD process is, "What are the short-term, medium-term, and long-term risks of trafficking and forced labour for women migrant workers (WMW) along the migration pathway?"

¹¹ Nnaji et.al. (2022) identify two broad approaches for defining risk: the subjectivist approach and the frequentist approach. In the frequentist approach, risk is described as imperfect knowledge of an event with a known likelihood of occurring. the subjectivist approach, on the other hand, "allows for differences in risk assessment of otherwise identical events."

¹² See the FE2W Network website (www.fe2wnetwork.org) to access the current version of the Guide to the ROAD Process, which can be adapted by facilitators to different types of risks and decision-making contexts.

Data and Methodology

To address the research question, we adopted two participatory approaches for two sub-steps:

Step 1.1: Identify stakeholders in the migration system via Net-Map workshop (Workstream 1.1)

Step 1.2: Develop a Causal Risk Model via the ROAD workshop (Workstream 1.2)

In this section, we provide the analysis of Step 1.2 across all four countries considered in our evaluation, and divide the discussion section into (i) countries of origin: Bangladesh and Nepal; and (ii) destination countries: Jordan and Lebanon.

The ROAD Process

The ROAD process was conceptualized to incorporate the voices of all stakeholders irrespective of their socioeconomic status. However, we were unable to have migrants in the room along with recruitment agencies. In some locations, (for example, Jordan), it was also challenging to engage policymakers. Acknowledging that stakeholders' objectives and functions often overlap in the migration system, for the countries of origin we derived separate causal models by dividing the stakeholders into various groups, depending on the availability of the participants. Following the ROAD guidelines (Annex B.3), the ROAD workshop was divided into three steps:

Step 1: Identify drivers of triggers causing the risk event

Step 2: Co-develop causal risk systems

Step 3: Develop priority options by (i) identifying a set of controls and mitigants to limit the likelihood of risk events and consequences, respectively; and (ii) conduct initial evaluation of priority options with participants according to collectively defined criteria.

The Bangladesh virtual ROAD workshop took place on March 11, 2021, with almost 30 participants, encompassing three stakeholder groups:

1. Group 1: Policymaking, Advocacy, and Multilateral Organizations
2. Group 2: NGOs/INGOs and Civil Society
3. Group 3: Local Experts/Researchers on Migration and Gender

The risk event suggested for the workshops was *“Trafficking and/or forced labour of low-skilled female labour workers migrating from Bangladesh/Nepal to the Middle East/West Asia”*. Although Wyrwoll et al. (2019) indicate that the risks are defined by the participants themselves in the workshop, we decided to define this risk event to align with the WiF-2 ToC. In Lebanon and Jordan, participants of some groups changed the risk event. A virtual ROAD workshop with participants from various actor groups in Nepal took place virtually on June 10, 2021.

Results from ROAD workshops in countries of origin

In this section, we first discuss the casual risk models developed by the three groups . The summary of discussion on drivers and triggers of all groups are presented in Table 1.13.

○ *Step 1: Identifying the drivers and triggers*

Grafton et al. (2016) note that a “trigger is an event that is the immediate cause of a risk”, and Wyrwoll et al. (2018) define a driver “as a threat, trend or other risk source causing a trigger to occur”. Based on these definitions, for our study, we interpreted drivers as determinants of risk event or as the *deep determinants* or *structural determinants*; and triggers as immediate causes or *proximate determinants* of the risk event, which are likely to happen at the household level.

Differentiating between drivers and triggers was not always easy, and sometimes drivers were considered triggers and vice versa across groups. For example, in Bangladesh, violence against women (VAW) or gender-based violence (GBV) was identified as a trigger by Group 1, but as a driver by Groups 2 and 3. We conclude that women and girls, especially unmarried or single women, see migration as a way to escape domestic violence, which can be interpreted as a trigger. However, it can also be identified as a driver, as one of the deep determinants of VAW is rooted in patriarchy, gender norms, and women’s unequal position in society. In the Bangladesh workshop, Group 3 (local researchers) identified an additional risk event defined as unsuccessful/failed WMWs. This risk event was likely linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, when some migrants could not reach their destination, lost their jobs, or did not receive their wages as a result of the pandemic. Failed migrants experience led to large financial losses and can become victims of social stigma.

Table 1.13 Triggers and Drivers: Bangladesh ROAD Workshop

	Economic	Social
Triggers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortcut to build wealth • Poverty/ Economic vulnerability/Escape from debt • Lack of decent jobs • Materialistic enticements • Unpaid agricultural work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escaping gender-based violence • Influence of intermediaries • Social pressure: Social stigma for single/divorced women • Good experience of previous undocumented migrants (friends and relatives)
Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change • Patriarchy, gender violence, and sociocultural values • Lack of economic opportunities • Lack of participatory governance • Migration policies 	

For Bangladesh, we identify five major drivers of migration: climate variability, patriarchy and social stigma, lack of economic opportunities, unfair recruitment practices, and migration policies. Not surprisingly, in Bangladesh, all stakeholder groups identified climate change and climate variability as the dominant driver. Extreme climatic events like flood or drought can lead to debts, and gender-based violence is linked to climate extremes because economic and financial stress can increase tension within the household and the community. Group 2 (NGOs, INGOs, civil society) identified climate-induced displacement as a major cause for many rural women to first move to Dhaka for work and later migrate abroad. Group 1 (policymaking, advocacy and multilateral organizations) also reported that poor families tend to send their younger female adolescents/girls abroad to protect them from local gender violence or harassment, sexual or otherwise, which is the push factor. Similarly, Group 3 (local experts and researchers) also identified that patriarchy and gender norms drive women into unsafe migration and trafficking. For instance, most of the women in the country of origin are willing to go abroad, even if there is a high possibility of them experiencing trafficking and forced labour, because they are already suffering from stigmatization, domestic violence, and dowry pressures at home. Group 2 identified patriarchy and social stigma as triggers. The participants commented that most women who are widowed and especially those who are divorced are not well accepted in the community, and thus most of them opt to leave the country.

With regard to driving role of the lack of economic opportunities, each group focused on different sets of WMWs across the migrant pathway. For example, Group 1 focused on the lack of integration of returnee migrants. Female migrants sometimes want to return because of the extreme consequences faced in the host countries and end up being trafficked. Reverse migration happens when migrants who were initially triggered to migrate find after going abroad that their expectations were not in line with the actual situation. A lack of decent jobs/paid work opportunities in the host countries could have a great impact on migrants, who may take the regular path to migration but end up being trafficked upon reaching the destinations. Group 2 focused on potential migrants and argued that economic vulnerability is the main reason most women workers migrate. Furthermore, while lack of social recognition for domestic workers in Bangladesh works as a push factor, the comparatively high salary for such work in the Middle East works simultaneously as a pull factor. Group 3 highlighted the economic vulnerability of women in Bangladesh's agricultural sector, where agrarian stress limits opportunities and thus increases women's domestic and international migration. Issues such as poor agricultural systems, unsupportive government policies that consistently overlook women farmers, underdeveloped agricultural value chains, and uncertain weather discourage women in rural areas from participating in the agriculture sector.

All groups also identified the lack of participatory governance and deceptive recruitment practices, predominantly facilitated by middlemen/women or "dalals", as one of the key drivers of unsafe migration of WMWs. The recruitment landscape has become increasingly complex and involves a wide range of actors, both regulated and unregulated. There is growing concern about exploitative recruitment practices and unscrupulous employment agencies, informal labour intermediaries, and other actors operating outside of the legal framework. Recruitment agents often do not comply with

their obligation to provide a copy, and read aloud, employment contracts for recruited workers. As a consequence, Bangladeshi migrants pay some of the highest recruitment fees in the region. This leads many migrants to sell all their assets or become indebted in order to pay these fees, rendering them particularly vulnerable to trafficking and/or forced labour. Group 1 also noted asymmetric information regarding proper migration processes as a driver, which exacerbates the influence of middlemen/women. The participants identified lack of formal education and poor access to information among the potential WMWs as a reason for their economic exploitation.

Although migration policies were identified by Group 1 and Group 2 as a trigger, Group 3 identified migration policies as a driver, which is consistent with our interpretation of drivers as the deep determinants of migration risk. The discussants in Group 1 provided examples from Nepal, where prohibition of female migration has increased the risk trafficking because the economic and social triggers faced by women can encourage them to migrate anyway, opting for informal channels and potentially ending up in trafficking situations. In contrast, Group 2 focused on migration policies in the destination countries. For example, Group 2 reported that migration policies in some of the West Asian countries require WMWs to pay nominal fees, which can intensify the economic triggers, like shortcut to build wealth, escape from debt identified above (Table 1.13). Many family members find it profitable to send women abroad, and so encourage them to take up work in other countries. The middlemen/women also take advantage of this situation by providing false information to extort money from potential female migrant workers. Group 3 added that sudden changes in migration policies of destination and origin countries can increase the costs of formal safe migration and potentially trigger unsafe migration.

In Table 1.13, we identify two sets of triggers: economic and social. All groups identified aspiration for a better life or “shortcut to build wealth quickly” as one of the primary economic triggers, as is reflected in the academic literature as a pull factor. This is linked with drivers, particularly lack of economic opportunities, and is also overlaps with other triggers like poverty. Group 1 reported that successful migration of relatives and neighbours (women within a social network), when individuals were able to send remittances from the destination countries and accumulate wealth back home, sometimes inspires others to migrate. Middlemen/women will often use such examples from a potential migrants’ social networks to motivate women to migrate. This experience can act as a social trigger and was named “Migration Network” by Group 3. Migration networks were also analysed as part of the Net-Map analyses in Workstream 1.2. Group 3 also concluded similarly that the presence of community-level informal recruitment—which remains prevalent in Bangladesh, despite being legally banned—can work as a trigger.

Group 2 (NGOs/INGOs and Civil Society) noted that many women with husbands who are disabled opt to migrate for better economic opportunities. Although lack of economic opportunities has been identified as a driver, Group 3 (local researchers) identified that socioeconomic vulnerability and familial shocks often act as a trigger, especially for women who belong to vulnerable groups, such as widowed or divorced women, women who have been abandoned, or who experience death of the main family earner. We

conclude that economic and social triggers often overlap, and consequently can exacerbate negative consequences.

We can thus conclude that migration pathways are complex and dynamic in nature, characterized by conflicting preferences and objectives of different stakeholders.

- *Step 2: Develop causal risk systems in participatory workshops with stakeholders*

After identifying the drivers and triggers, each group was asked to identify the consequences of the defined risk event. Most of the participants, irrespective of their group, identified severe negative consequences¹³ for WMWs, leading to their disempowerment and physical and sexual harm. Women who are trafficked suffer unspeakable acts of abuse, exploitation, and degradation. The damage to women’s health and well-being is often profound and enduring. Trafficked women have very different experiences while in the trafficking setting. Some are held captive, unremittingly assaulted, and horribly violated. Others are less abused physically but are psychologically tormented and live in fear of harm to themselves and their family members. In addition, Group 2 highlighted that many of the WMWs are forced to work long hours and are often physically tortured by their employers. The workers are not provided with proper medical attention, nor are they provided appropriate food or resources.

Table 1.14: Consequences identified in the Bangladesh workshop

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Irregular migration/ migrants in harmful situations	Bonded labour /forced labour	Sexual exploitation, abduction, or extortion.
Labour exploitations	Sexual abuse	Reactionary policy response
Physical and psychological torment	Suicide and work-related death	Stigmatization of migrant women
Slavery-type practices	Knowledge gain and improvement in technical skills	Physical and mental harm
Reduced income and remittances	Food deprivation & lack of medical treatment	Human rights violations and impunity of human rights violators

Group 2 participants commented that many women migrants in the Middle East have to work long hours and they don’t get paid fairly, with women domestic workers especially likely to be treated like bonded labour. Many WMWs do not have access to mobile phones, and so cannot communicate with their families back home. Often this physical and social isolation and harassment can lead to suicide. Group 1 discussants added that in most countries legal “ownership” of a person is no longer possible. Therefore, the key element of slavery-like practices is treating the victim as if they were owned (e.g., being

¹³ Only Group 2 participants identified knowledge gain and improvement in technical skill as a consequence.

bought, sold, locked up, required to work without pay) in a way that deprives them of their freedom.

Group 3 added the impunity of human rights violators as a consequence, which can act as a driver in the destination countries. The vulnerability experienced by women also affects their household and may even affect the community. Human rights violations are not committed only by employers in the destination countries, but also to some extent by families and community when women return to countries of origin, due to stigma associated with women migrants. The workshop participants found that conflation of WMW's experience of sexual violence and modern-day slavery as well as lack of agency contributes to human rights violation of returnee migrants; their voices need to be heard and legal remedies provided to support them. Although the participants in Group 2 did not highlight human rights abuse, they concur with the comment on the stigmatization of migrant women, who continue to struggle for social acceptance even among family members.

Facilitators in each group were then invited to review and discuss the causal risk model. Prompting questions included:

- Is there anything important missing?
- Are all objectives represented in consequences?
- Are all of the major aspects of unsafe migration covered in the triggers, drivers, and consequences?

After careful deliberation, each facilitator led a discussion of the identification of the key triggers (4–5 max) and consequences (4–5 max); and then finalized the casual risk models shown in Figure Appendix B.4.1, B.4.2, and B.4.3 for Group 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

- *Step 3 Identification of controls, mitigants, and priorities*

Step 3 involved two activities to develop priority options:

- 1) Identifying a set of controls and mitigants to limit the likelihood of risk events and consequences respectively; and
- 2) Conducting initial evaluation of priority options with participants according to collectively defined criteria

Wyrwoll et al. (2018) define "*Control* as an action that modifies the likelihood or the consequences of a driver or trigger causing a risk; and *Mitigant* an action that alleviates the after-the-event consequences of a risk". As the casual risk models indicate, each of the groups identified a similar number of controls and mitigants on average.

Given the overlaps between triggers and drivers, and social and economic triggers and consequences, in this section we focus on the priority controls (both for triggers and consequences) and mitigants (for consequences only)¹⁴. After the completion of Step 3.1, the complete list, combining all controls and mitigants by each of the group was made available to all participants to identify a set of essential/priority policy interventions that

¹⁴ Please see the facilitation sheet for ROAD workshops in Appendix B.3.

can reduce the likelihood of trafficking and forced labour for WMWs. The summary results are presented in Table 1.15, where the controls and mitigants with highest numbers of votes are listed with different colours representing different groups.

Table 1.15: Priority controls and mitigants for ensuring safe migration of WMWs from Bangladesh

Step 1.2	Bangladesh
Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement with destination locations beyond contracts to ensure better working conditions • Skill development of women including soft and life skills • Collaborative effort of Government and NGOs for ethical / informed migration • Improved wage structure at home and destination country • Social policies and protection • Follow-up with destination country authority and create opportunities (better active collaboration and create spaces)
Mitigants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hotline and resource centres in home country • Certification of skills gained in the host country • Ensure savings through local bank accounts for migrants • Reintegration at home with family, psychosocial integration, economic integration (micro-business collaboration with Government and NGOs), availability of loans and information • Regular monitoring of human rights situation at destination • Media interventions and media role in portraying migrant women

Note: Red = Group 1; Green = Group 2; Purple = Group 3.

Source: Authors.

It is important to note that as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions during March 2021, the ROAD workshop was held via Zoom. Ideally in Step 3.2, the participants were to collectively indicate which controls can be applied effectively to each causal pathway¹⁵ (i.e., drivers->triggers, triggers-> risk event). The same steps were required for indicating which mitigants can be applied effectively to which causal pathways (i.e., risk event-> consequences). Participants were encouraged to allocate up to five stars to their preferred controls and mitigants, which were collated across all three causal risk diagrams.

Given the online mode and time constraints, participants were not able to identify effective causal pathways for each of the controls and mitigants after they had prioritized them. Hence, the following analysis that goes beyond prioritization of intervention areas reflects the authors' own assessment.

Among the controls, two were selected from the causal risk model developed by Group 1; namely Control C4 and Control C7 (Appendix B4.1). Control C4 is defined as agreement with destination locations beyond contracts to include better working conditions; this agreement is crucial as it can improve labour standards at destination. Although controls are defined to influence the likelihood of triggers and risk events, we conclude that some

¹⁵ If numerous causal pathways have no controls, facilitator asks group to identify additional controls.

of the controls can work to influence the likelihood of consequences. For example, Control C4 can help to reduce the likelihood of the influence of recruiters or *dalal*, as well as various consequences (Table 1.14) directly, specifically, irregular migration, labour exploitation, slavery-type practices, and bonded/forced labour.

Control C7 is identified as skill development of women, including soft/ life skills and marketable skills (e.g., skills that are formally recognized and certified), which can strengthen a worker's ability to negotiate higher wages and access better jobs. We find that Control C8 will reduce the likelihood of economic vulnerability, despite deep determinants like patriarchy and the tendency for women's skills to be undervalued or not formally recognized. To address these challenges, participants concluded that NGOs, recruitment agents, or public services could expand their role in providing pre-departure and ongoing skills training and certification as part of the formal migration system. In addition to marketable skills, soft skills like language training or cultural awareness training can help women cope with communicating and bargaining and at the same time to have better access to the job market and a career pathway.

Among the controls identified by Group 2, Control C1, Control C3, and Control C4 (Appendix B 4.2) can be considered priorities. C3 is identified as improved wage structure at the country of origin, which can reduce vulnerabilities through reduced migration. Group 3 participants identified Control C4 (Appendix B 4.3) as "follow-up with destination country authorities and create better opportunities", emphasizing the role of collaborative dialogue between stakeholders in both countries. Participants in Group 3 proposed creating more spaces for civil society organizations in the destination country.

All three mitigants identified by Group 1 participants were deemed essential by all participants. For example, mitigant M1 (Appendix B4.1), hotline and resource centres in home country, can work as a major source of information and contribute significantly to migrants' decision-making power. In recent years, governments, NGOs, CSOs and international organizations have established Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and other similar facilities in countries of origin. MRCs are one-stop information and referral hubs with multiple roles and functions in promoting safe, regular, orderly, and responsible migration for the welfare and protection of the migrants and their families. The importance of providing information, protection, and assistance for migrants is firmly embedded in international human rights norms. Globally, MRCs are recognized as having a key role to play in the empowerment and protection of migrants, the importance of which was highlighted at the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2007 and 2008. Hotline and resource centres could aid WMWs who are in distress after the occurrence of a risk event.

Mitigant M4 (Appendix B4.1) identified as "ensure savings through local bank accounts for migrants", which focuses on the need for financial inclusion of WMWs. Bank accounts offer migrants more control over their earnings and savings. Bangladesh has been working to develop a smooth and quick remittance system with greater availability of financial tools and options, innovative saving schemes, and investment opportunities, so that migrant workers primarily use formal channels to send their money and make better use of the remittances, save better, and invest for the future.

The participants also highlight the need for inclusive reintegration policies in the countries of origin. Mitigant M4, described as psychosocial and economic integration of returnee migrants, can reduce their social stigma and sense of abandonment.

Mitigant M2 (Appendix B4.2), identified by Group 2 participants, is described as regular monitoring of the human rights situation in the destination country, and is perhaps the most difficult one to implement in the destination countries. The participants commented that upholding the UN and ILO Conventions No. 189 on domestic workers and No. 190 on domestic violence against women is crucial for empowerment of WMWs. in Bangladesh certain arrangements for women’s migration can be aligned with the international standard set by those conventions. This is an area that WiF-2 has also worked on.

ROAD Workshop: Nepal

In Nepal, as in Bangladesh, the ROAD workshop was conducted virtually in collaboration with the Institute of Integrated Development Studies. Workshop participants included representatives from CSOs, government, academia, and multilateral organizations. Many of the controls and mitigants identified in Nepal were similar to those identified in Bangladesh. Some common controls included on-the-job skills training, sustainable livelihood options, and better and more effective governance. There were also some notable differences. An important control mechanism that resonated among the Nepal groups was the need for decentralized governance at the local and provincial level, which reflects Nepal’s relatively recent pivot toward a more decentralized system of governance. Similarly, the participants identified free education for women and affirmative action to end discrimination against women as an important control. A recurring control across the groups was the need to use media platforms for gender sensitization. The need for provincial-level interventions came up even when discussing mitigants, with participants highlighting the need for interventions at the local level, including in reintegration policies. All the groups highlighted the importance of strengthening the resources and capacity of Nepal’s embassies and foreign missions to address issues affecting female migrant laborers in destination countries. Most participants agreed that legalizing women’s migration to Middle East will be critical for ensuring better outcomes for migrant women.

Results from the ROAD process in destination countries

The Lebanon workshop was held face-to-face on February 24, 2022. Table 1.16 presents drivers and triggers, and Table 1.17 presents consequences identified in Lebanon.

Table 1.16: Triggers and drivers identified in Lebanon workshop

	Economic	Social
Triggers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declining capacity of employers to afford domestic workers • Financial crisis • Failing state and corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social norms • Lack of awareness • Cultural legacies • Gender-based violence

Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kafala system • Weak role of the Ministry of Labour in proposing legislation • Multiple contracts with different terms • Absence of translated contracts • Power of recruitment agencies • COVID-19 and travel restrictions • Poverty and debt • War and conflict • Lack of dignified jobs in country of origin • Patriarchal abuses in South Asia • Difference in income • Neoliberal government
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Table 1.17: Consequences identified in the Lebanon workshop

Group 1	Group 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic workers in restaurants, hotels, street vendors, cleaning agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender discrimination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prostitution and sex trafficking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased unpaid work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unpaid work • Prohibition of holidays • Long working hours • Physical fatigue
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stranded migrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detention of papers • Lack of autonomy and ability to go out • Absence of the right to organize • Prevent contact with family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative coping mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal violence • Physical and psychological harm • Psychological abuse • Verbal violence

Prioritizing decent working conditions and the psychological well-being of WMWs, both groups of participants agreed on the need for policy controls targeting (i) effective implementation of labour laws, and (ii) control over the influence of recruitment agencies. Participants in Jordan reiterated the need for a unified system that controls emigration to Jordan. Furthermore, they argued for strengthening bilateral and multilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries to include higher level of protection for workers and more punitive measures against exploiters and traffickers.

While participants in the Lebanon workshop identified the need for the community of WMWs to be able to strengthen their voice, the stakeholders in Jordan argued for allowing the workers to establish their own unions and run for leadership positions, which would improve their representation in formal institutions. In terms of mitigants, the major difference was that the participants in Lebanon focused on dismantling the Kafala system (also identified as a control) and legalization of freelance workers, while in Jordan, participants focused on workers' empowerment and argued that their awareness about

their rights must be improved, either through their social networks, pre-departure training, or media.

Table 1.18 provides a comparison of priority controls and mitigants for Bangladesh and Lebanon. Based on the review of the most preferred controls and mitigants identified by the participants, we conclude:

1. Dismantling the Kafala system and inclusion of domestic workers under the Labour Law is identified both as a control and a mitigant in the Lebanon workshop.
2. In Bangladesh, skill development of WMWs is identified both as control and mitigant.
3. Improved wages, as well as better working condition through bilateral cooperation for women workers both in country of origin and destination country, have been identified as a control in both workshops.
4. Legalizing freelance work is seen as a mitigant.

Table 1.18: A comparison of controls and mitigants across Bangladesh and Nepal

	Bangladesh	Lebanon
Controls	<p>Agreement with destination locations beyond contracts to ensure better working conditions</p> <p>Skill development for women including soft and life skills</p> <p>Collaborative effort of government and NGOs for ethical / informed migration</p> <p>Improved wage structure at the countries of origin and destination countries</p> <p>Social policies and protection</p> <p>Follow-up with destination country authority and create opportunities (better active collaboration and create spaces)</p>	<p>Dismantle Kafala system</p> <p>Include migrants in labour laws</p> <p>Adopt a unified labour contract in line with international standards</p> <p>Strengthening and activating the role of the Ministry of Labor in legislation and oversight</p>
Mitigants	<p>Hotline and resource centres in home country</p> <p>Certification of skills gained in the host country</p> <p>Ensure savings through local bank accounts for migrants</p>	<p>Legalizing freelance Work</p> <p>Strengthening the community of migrant workers</p> <p>Dismantle kafala system</p> <p>Inclusion of domestic work in the labour law</p>

	<p>Reintegration at home with family</p> <p>Psychosocial integration</p> <p>Economic integration (micro-business collaboration with government and NGOs, availability of loan and information)</p> <p>Regular monitoring of human rights situation at destination</p> <p>Media interventions and media role in portraying migrant women</p>	
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Workstream 1.4: Systematic review: Health of women domestic migrant workers

Data and Methodology

The systematic review and narrative synthesis of health studies is part of a comprehensive review designed to collate, describe, and synthesize the published literature on WMDWs in the Arab region. The search strategy for the review was developed in consultation with an expert librarian following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (reference study protocol published in Prospero, 2021). Following the systematic review, meta-analysis was not conducted given the nature of the social scientific literature on the topic. Instead, a narrative synthesis was carried out to summarize and describe the findings in the literature while at the same time incorporating a critical theoretical and contextual analysis (Popay et al., 2006).

The population of focus in the review were women from origin countries in Asia and Africa who work/have worked in domestic service in an Arab country. Thus, the review included articles published in academic journals that fulfilled all three inclusion criteria: 1) the article is on migrant domestic workers; 2) who come from any of the following migrant origin countries in Africa or Asia: Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sierra-Leon, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Uganda; and 3) who reside/work, are preparing to migrate to work, or who used to work in any of the following Arab countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The review also included articles that did not specify a country but referred to the Arab region, the Middle East and North Africa, or the Gulf Cooperative Council.

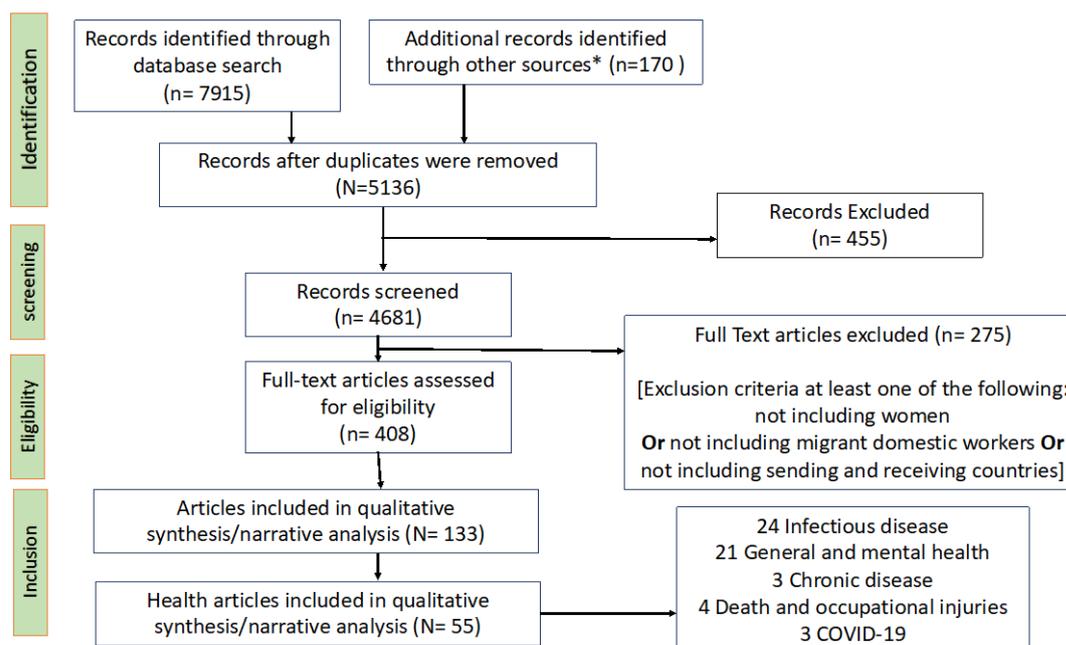
Four electronic bibliographic databases were searched: Ovid MEDLINE, EBSCO CINAHL, Scopus, and APA PsycINFO. Specific MeSH terms were selected and mapped on MEDLINE first; the strategy was later adapted and translated to the three other databases. Using proximity search tools, different combinations of the key terms were designed to fit the databases operation. The first full database search took place in October 2020 and was later followed by a refresher search in September 2021. In addition to database search, we did backward and forward referencing of articles that were potentially eligible for inclusion by screening all titles in the reference list of each reviewed full-text article.

Only journal articles that report on empirical studies, irrespective of study design, and think pieces were included; reports, books, and book chapters were not. Articles on WMDWs' before departure, in destination countries, and after return were included. Articles about both male and female migrant workers that presented findings separately for WMDWs were included; however, those on male migrant workers only or women migrants who did not work in domestic service were not. The review included articles in English, French, and Arabic (albeit the majority were in English) and there were no restrictions on publication date.

The search yielded 5136 records after removing duplicates. Titles and abstracts for all records were transferred to an excel sheet for screening against inclusion/exclusion

criteria. First, a validation check was conducted to assess agreement between four reviewers on the inclusion/exclusion of a random sample of 200 titles/abstracts, which resulted in good agreement (Fleiss Kappa = 0.75; $p = 0.01$) (McHugh, 2012). Following, the first phase of screening of titles/abstracts was carried out against clear inclusion/exclusion criteria and each record was classified as Yes (include), No (exclude), or “maybe.” Abstracts in the “maybe” category were assessed by a second reviewer and, if a decision could not be reached based on the content of the abstract, the record was retained for review in the second phase. Full text articles for all records retained in the first phase (N=408) were obtained for review in the second phase of screening against the same inclusion/exclusion criteria. This step was carried out by two independent reviewers who classified each article as Yes (include) or No (exclude). If two reviewers did not agree on the classification of an article, a third reviewer made the final decision. Finally, a total of 133 articles met the inclusion criteria. Each article was categorized into one or more themes; for example, a few articles were categorized into both the human rights, gender, and health themes. Of the 133 articles, 55 were categorized into the health theme (Figure 1.6, Flow Diagram).

Figure 1.6: Flow diagram



An abstraction sheet was created and tested by the lead author on three full text articles. It was discussed among the four reviewers and revised based on their feedback before it was used to abstract data from all 55 health articles. For each article, the following information was abstracted: 1) bibliographic such as the first author’s name and institution, title, journal, and year of publication; 2) methodological such as study design, recruitment strategy, and sample size; 3) geographic distribution such as where the study was carried (origin, destination, among returnees); 4) the health outcome; 5) summary of the study findings; 6) ethical considerations; and 7) recommendations for future research and practice (if mentioned). Moreover, to address the overall objectives of the systematic

review, information pertaining to WMDWs' exploitation, forced labour, or other human rights violations, in addition to references to women's agency, were abstracted; when these issues were not brought up in an article, it was noted in the abstraction sheet. The four reviewers met on a regular basis to discuss the abstraction process and to ensure consistency of information abstracted across articles.

The narrative synthesis was conducted primarily based on the information in the abstraction sheet, although full text articles were consulted in some cases. Articles were grouped by health outcome and the narrative synthesis proceeded by presenting the results of each group of studies and describing patterns across them. No study quality appraisal was carried out as the purpose was to describe the body of the literature rather than to evaluate the robustness of methods or validity of results.

Results

The articles identified through the systematic review were grouped into seven broad categories based on the health outcome addressed: infectious disease (N=19); mental health including suicide (N=12); general health and wellbeing (N=9); sexually transmitted infections (N=5); chronic disease (N=3); death (N=3); and occupational injuries (N=1). In addition, three articles on COVID-19 were identified through the refresher search conducted in September 2021. Table 1.15 lists the articles with basic information on country of origin of participants, country of destination, study location, and study design and sampling. We present below a narrative synthesis of articles in the general health and mental health categories.

Table 1.15: Literature

	First Author (year)	First Author's Country	Origin Country	Destination Country	Study Location Country	Study Design	Sample/recruitment of participants
Infectious Disease							
Intestinal parasitic infections	Abu-Madi et al. (2008) ^x	Qatar	Philippines, Indonesia, Indian Subcontinent, Africa	Qatar	Qatar	Quantitative Cross-sectional survey	
Intestinal parasitic infections	Abu-Madi et al. (2011)	Qatar	Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, Nepal	Qatar	Qatar	Quantitative Cross-sectional survey	
	Abu-Madi et al. (2016)	Qatar	Western Asia, Eastern Asia, Northern & Saharan Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa	Qatar	Qatar	Cross-sectional survey	
Pulmonary tuberculosis	Akhtar and Mohammad (2008)	Kuwait	India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Indonesia, Philippines, Pakistan,	Kuwait	Kuwait	Quantitative; Time series analysis	

			Tanzania, Mali, Gambia, Sudan			
Al Hosani and Yahia (2013)	UAE		African, Region of Americas, Southeast Asia, European, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Pacific	UAE	UAE	Quantitative; Hospital-based data.
Al-Madani et al. (1995)	Saudi Arabia		Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, India, Thailand	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative? Clinical study using stool samples collected during routine health examinations
Alzohairy (2011)	Saudi Arabia		Indonesia, India, Nepal, Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sudan, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, Jordan, Morocco, Sri Lanka	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative; hospital-based data
Chattu and Mohammad (2013)	Oman		Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Sudan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, India,	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative; Cross sectional study

			Morocco, Yemen, Syria, Jordan, Egypt			
Haouas et al. (2021)	Tunisia	Bangladesh, Uganda, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Ethiopia, India	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative; Cross-sectional study	
Iqbal et al. (2003)	Kuwait	India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Philippines, Nigeria	Kuwait	Kuwait	Quantitative; Data analysis from hospital and Ministry of health records	
Iqbal and Sher (2006)	Kuwait	India, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Mali, Gambia, Sudan	Kuwait	Kuwait	Quantitative; hospital-based	
Jamain et al. (2013)	Jordan	Eritrea, Côte d'Ivoire, India, Sudan, Liberia, Pakistan, Yemen, Haiti, 'Others'	Jordan	Jordan	Quantitative; hospital-based data	
Janahi (2014)	Bahrain	India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Indonesia, Ethiopia	Bahrain	Bahrain	Quantitative; health-center based	
Khan et al (2009)	Qatar	Pakistan, India, Sudan, Nepal,	Qatar	Qatar	Quantitative; Observational hospital-based	

		Sri Lanka, Bangladesh				
Lohiniva et al (2015)	Egypt	Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti	Egypt	Egypt		Mixed methods; A structured questionnaire to obtain demographic information, and an open-ended in depth interview guide to elicit narratives about the experiences
Omar (1996)	Saudi Arabia	India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia		Quantitative, hospital-based data.
Ramia (1986)	Saudi Arabia	Sweden, UK, Yemen, Egypt, Philippines	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia		Quantitative; hospital-based
Taha et al. (2013)	Saudi Arabia	Mostly from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, India, Bangladesh (and from Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan, Kenya, 'Others')	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia		Quantitative; hospital-based data.
Wickramage et al. (2013)	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt,	N/A		N/A; Strategy document for labor sending country

Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Yemen					
Sexually Transmitted Infections					
Alzahrani et al. (2009)	Saudi Arabia	India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Sudan, Philippines, Egypt	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative, hospital-based
Christie-de Jong and Reilly (2020)	United Kingdom	Philippines	Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, and Hong Kong	N/A; (It seems Interviews were conducted using Skype or Viber, phone, or desktop applications)	Mixed-methods study, an exploratory qualitative study conducted with Web-based and in-depth interviews. A socio-ecological conceptual framework was used to explore barriers to uptake of pap-testing.
Hamdi and Ibrahim (1997)	Saudi Arabia	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sri	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative, hospital-based data. Retrospective study collecting data from (1987-1994)

			Lanka, Sudan, Thailand			
Joshi et al. (2014)	Australia	Nepal		Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE	Nepal	Quantitative; Cross- sectional survey based on a questionnaire interview
Urmi et al. (2015)	Bangladesh	Bangladesh		Middle East	Bangladesh (origin and returnees)	Quantitative; cross sectional study
Chronic Disease						
Mishra et al. (2019)	Nepal	Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, India		Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Bahrain	N/A- this is a literature review	N/A- A 4-phase qualitative review using the framework for scoping review by authors Arksey and O'Malley, which was previously used for non- communicable diseases.
Shah et al. (2017)	UAE	Philippines, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan		UAE	UAE	Quantitative; Cross- sectional design
Sulaiman et. al (2018)	UAE	Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, and Sudan, India		UAE	UAE	Quantitative; Cross- sectional design

		and Pakistan, Europeans, Africans				
Death						
Aryal et al. (2016)	New Zealand	Nepal	N/A	N/A	N/A	NA; this is a one-page advocacy paper.
Jayasuriya-Illesinghe et al. (2012)	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Lebanon, Oman, Jordan, Bahrain	Sri Lanka (origin and returnees)		N/A; desk review conducted, and data extracted to obtain age-sex distribution of deaths for year 2009
Vidua et al. (2018)	India	India	Middle East (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Yemen); North America; Africa (East, Middle, Northern, Southern/South, Western); South America; Asia; Europe; European Union; Oceania; Unknown	India (origin and returnees)		N/A- Analysis of data from medical death certificates
Occupational Injuries						

Al-Thani and El-Menyar (2015)	Qatar	Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Philippines, Syria, North Korea, Indonesia, Qatari, and others	Qatar	Qatar	Quantitative, Retrospective analysis of population data
Mental Health and Suicide					
Anbesse et al. (2009)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen	Ethiopia (returnees)	Qualitative; focus group discussions with returnee migrant workers.
Dervic et al. (2011)	UAE	India	UAE	UAE	Quantitative; Registered suicides in Dubai from aggregated socio-demographic data of suicide victims were analysed.
El-Hilu et al. (1990)	Kuwait	India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh	Kuwait	Kuwait	N/A; preliminary case notes study
Getnet et al. (2016)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Middle East	Ethiopia (returnees)	Qualitative; Interviews with returnees from ME
Habtamu et al. (2017)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Middle East (including, but	Ethiopia (returnees)	Quantitative; a cross sectional

			not limited to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain, and Kuwait) or South Africa)		survey using non-probability sampling (availability, purposive and snowball sampling), was conducted
Kronfol et al. (2014)	Qatar	N/A	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE	N/A	N/A; This is a systematic review for literature review in the GCC. The clinical vignettes are based in a psychiatric hospital in Qatar.
Madni et al. (2010)	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Yemen, Sudan, Iraq Egypt, Britain, Turkey, Afghanistan, Qatar Indians (66 persons, 41.25%), followed by Saudi nationals (20.625%), Indonesians (6.875%), Bangladeshi (6.25%), Filipino (5.625%), Sri-	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative; suicidal cases were autopsied at Forensic Medicine Center in Dammam

				Lankans (4.375%), Nepali (3.75%)		
Reber (2021)	USA	Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda), South Asia (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) and from the Philippines	UAE	UAE	Qualitative; phenomenological study, and data draws on extensive fieldwork and interviews	
Tilahun et al. (2020)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, other countries)	Ethiopia (returnees)	Mixed methods; Cross sectional survey and a phenomenological study, and qualitative interviews with key informant interviews and observations	
Zahid et al. (2003)	Kuwait	Sri Lanka, India, Philippines	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE	Kuwait	Qualitative; in-depth interviews	
Zahreddine et al. (2014)	Lebanon	Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Philippines,	Lebanon	Lebanon	Mixed methods: The study implemented Brief Psychotic	

			Tonga, Nepal, Sri Lanka			Rating Scale (BPRS) and Clinical Global Impression (CGI) rating scales in the context of FDW as well as qualitative phenomenological observation
Zelege et al. (2015)	USA	Ethiopia	Middle East and South Africa	Ethiopia		Quantitative; they used the SRQ- 20, PHQ 15 data, and the demographic information from the survey.
General Health						
Busza et al. (2017)	UK	Ethiopia	Gulf States and Middle East (Qatar, Dubai, Saudi Arabia)	Ethiopia (returnees)		Qualitative; focus group discussions and in-depth interviews
Fernandez (2018)	Australia	Ethiopia	Lebanon	Lebanon		Qualitative; semi- structured interviews with MDWs and key informants, and snowball sample. Narrative vignettes from in-depth interviews with MDWs

Mahdavi (2010)	USA	Ethiopia	UAE	UAE	Qualitative; in-depth interviews with MDWs, participant observation and long-term correspondence with many of the women written about.
Minaye (2012)	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Lebanon	Ethiopia (returnees)	Qualitative; Interviews and interpretive phenomenology, a qualitative approach, is used to analyze the data.
Nisrane et al (2020)	Ethiopia and Netherlands	Ethiopia	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE	Ethiopia (returnees)	Qualitative; data collection started with focus group discussions and followed by individual interviews
Shlala and Jayaweera (2016)	USA	Sri Lanka	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE	Sri Lanka (returnees)	Qualitative; Semi-structured interviews
Simkhada et al. (2018)	UK	Nepal	Malaysia and the Middle East (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon, other)	Nepal (returnees)	Quantitative; Secondary data analysis. Analysis includes descriptive statistics, chi-square tests and multiple

						logistic regression analyses.
Sönmez et al. (2011)	USA	N/A- literature review including domestic workers across the region	UAE	UAE		N/A- Review of literature. non-empirical (Through a review of available literature, including official reports, scientific papers, and media reports)
Wickramage et al. (2017)	Switzerland and Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Yemen	Sri Lanka (returnees)		Mixed methods; Cross sectional study, interviews, questionnaires, comprehensive medical examination
COVID-19						
Al-Ali (2020)	USA	N/A	Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE	Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE		N/A- Mostly a think piece relying on reports, tweets, think pieces/opinions of other stakeholders from published material
Foley and Piper (2021)	UK	They kept referring to countries of origin more generally focusing mainly	Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Lebanon	main focus on destination with some mentions of return as		?; Analytical and empirical (uses qualitative methods for abstraction of information and recurring themes)

		on Asia as a region. (ex; mentions of Nepal)		well. (not applicable here; more focused on the overall Asia-Gulf migration as a region)	
Jamil and Dutta (2021)	Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Malaysia, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar	Malaysia and UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar	Observational, descriptive through Facebook posts and comments analysed using constructivist grounded theory and grouped into meaningful theoretical framework

General Health

The articles in this category discussed the health of WMDWs through a broad lens, without explicit mention of a particular outcome, and framed their health as an outcome of social inequities, lack of policy protections under the Kafala system, and human rights violations and trafficking. In five of the six articles, the focus was on WMDWs from Ethiopia (Fernandez, 2018; Mahdavi, 2010), Nepal (Aryal et al, 2016; Simkhada et al, 2018), and Sri Lanka (Shlala and Jayaweerna, 2016); the sixth article by Sonmez and colleagues (2011) was a general literature review of the health of WMDWs from Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Philippines, and Sri Lanka) living in the GCC. Other than this review and the short advocacy note by Aryal and colleagues (2016), two of the four remaining articles were based on studies conducted on Ethiopian WMDWs in the destination country (Lebanon (Fernandez, 2018) or the UAE (Mahdavi, 2010)), one was based on a study conducted in Nepal among returnee WMDWs (Simkhada et al, 2018), and one was based on a study on Sri Lankan returnee WMDWs and first time migrating workers pre-departure (Shlala and Jayaweera, 2016). All article first authors were located at institutions in a Western country – Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

The four empirical studies utilized qualitative in-depth interviews with WMDWs and key informants with a mix of participant observation in some cases (Fernandez, 2018; Mahdavi, 2010; Shlala and Jayaweera, 2016) and quantitative secondary data (Simkhada and colleagues (2018). Participants were recruited primarily through purposive sampling in the qualitative studies whilst the quantitative secondary data in Simkhada and colleagues' (2018) study came from the registration records of an emergency shelter and an NGO in Nepal.

The literature review and policy note described the ramifications of the human and labor rights violations that WMDWs experience at destination (mostly focusing on GCC countries) on their health, highlighting the responsibility of governments and the community [in the destination countries?], and called for the responsibility of governments in providing workplace safety and healthcare services (Sonmez and colleagues, 2011; Aryal and colleagues, 2016). Utilizing narrative vignettes that highlighted the consequences of WMDWs' lack of healthcare access in Lebanon, whether for minor or serious illnesses, pregnancies, or health emergencies, Fernandez (2018) situated her study findings within a framework that links systemic inequities and discrimination with health. Mahdavi (2010) also highlighted the connections between the labor rights violations faced by Ethiopian WMDWs in the UAE and health inequities, through the discourse of sex work, racialization, and protection. References to how human rights violations lack of protections under the Kafala system impact the health and healthcare access of WMDWs in destination countries were also highlighted in the articles. Themes regarding the lack of health access faced tied into the kafala system and a lack of human rights was once again discussed in the Shlala and Jayaweera (2016) article.

Various authors approached the topic with a feminist perspective, mentioning the migrant workers' agency as women rather than solely as victims (Fernandez, 2018; Mahdavi, 2010; Sonmez et al, 2011). Mahdavi recommended targeting the racialization of

the sex industry and this idea that only some women deserve assistance, since this encourages a common solidarity and goal between all migrant workers in Dubai no matter the background or industry (2010). Several papers blamed challenges in health care on discrimination, be it racism or their “migrant status as a non-citizen foreigner” (Fernandez, 2018). Simkhada and authors accused the Government of Nepal to being “more concerned with remittances earned from workers abroad, than with their health and well-being in the destination countries” (2018). They suggested the early detection and treatment of health issues through increased access and affordability in health care in both in the destination and origin countries, and more studies into the health and lifestyles of migrant workers (Simkhada et al, 2018). Another approach was advocating for the inclusion of migrant workers in national health insurance schemes (Shlala and Jayaweerna, 2016). The writers argue that health insurance and being able to carry their own insurance card would allow workers access to health care in the region with the support of the employer/sponsor (). Calls on the host and origin countries’ governments as well as NGOs were made to set policies and international treaties (Aryal et al, 2016), as well as apply recommendations UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Sonmez et al, 2011).

The recommendations of all 6 articles, in one shape or form, were driven by a social justice lens advocating for improved health and human rights access to migrant domestic workers. General health articles extracted had a more intersectional approach to the lack of health care while also discussing the kafala system and human rights violations as central themes, unlike more quantitative publications that focused on infectious diseases, STIs, chronic diseases, and death.

Chronic Disease

Three articles focusing on chronic disease among ex-patriate workers in general and FMDW in specific in Arab countries were detected in this review (Mishra et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017). Two articles were published by a first author from an institution in a country of destination, United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017), and one was published by a first author from an institution in a country of origin (Nepal) (Mishra et al., 2019). Only one of the three detected studies was mainly focused on FMDWs, the rest were about migrant workers including FMDWs.

The two studies conducted in UAE employed a cross-sectional design. Both articles aimed to determine the prevalence of, and risk factors associated with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) among ex-pats workers in UAE (Sulaiman et al., 2018), and female migrant women specifically (Shah et al., 2017).

Modes of data collection in both qualitative studies detected were during regular legal requirement screening for visa renewal in designated departments/ centers (Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017). Assessments included anthropometric measures, and blood pressure and blood samples were collected; face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect additional personal and demographic information (Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017). Both studies found high rates of undiagnosed obesity among migrant workers (Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017). FMDW in UAE have high levels of overweight, obesity, and central obesity; the prevalence of T2DM was triple among FMDWs after a decade spent in UAE, compared to recent arrivals (Shah et al., 2017). Sulaiman et al. (2018)

found that Asian labor workers in UAE have a high prevalence of diabetes (16.4%), higher than that of the country of origin but lower than the host population. Further research is needed to understand the complex determinants of health and wellbeing among FMDWs, particularly on the changes experienced during their course of service and the impact these changes have on their cardio-metabolic health, to plan informed interventions.

The article from Nepal offers a scoping review and policy analysis focused on South Asian labour migrants in the Middle East, particularly mapping cardio-metabolic disease (CMD) risk factors (Mishra et al., 2019). Mishra et al.'s review found that migrant workers are often excluded when it comes to NCDs prevention and treatment in countries of origin and host countries and that most countries lack specific policies and strategies for screening, preventing, and treating NCDs among migrant workers (Mishra et al., 2019). Undetected and untreated CMD could lead to catastrophic events on FMDWs and place a burden on countries of origin's healthcare systems upon return. Mishra et al. present a systems map of the social determinants of CMDs impacting the health of MDWs, including working conditions and environmental factors. They urge advocacy for promoting international labor standards and dignified conditions that protect the health and wellbeing of migrant workers, and implementation of holistic health screening and care, beyond the narrow focus on communicable diseases.

The three articles highlight the following risk factors for chronic diseases among FMDWs:

- a) Acculturation: shown as a higher prevalence of T2DM for example, after a longer duration of stay, which could be attributed to the adoption of a western-style diet and more sedentary habits.
- b) Lack of access to screening: shown as consistent late detection and high rates of undiagnosed illnesses such as T2DM (more than 60% of people with diabetes were not diagnosed prior to the study (Sulaiman et al., 2018)).
- c) Lack of access to holistic healthcare: a pattern of missed opportunities for preventative care and measures throughout the different phases of migration

Overall, detected articles commonly discuss the poorly described burden of chronic diseases and inclusive health status data aggregated by migratory status, especially for health status information among the young immigrant workforce (Mishra et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017).. The lack of data can often lead to the health needs of migrant workers in the UAE being neglected.

In general, the articles elude the need for more thorough research on the health status of migrant workers and addressing factors impacting their wellbeing (Mishra et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the three articles share common policy and intervention recommendations, by highlighting the need for early screening for early detection and mitigation, within Primary Healthcare settings (Mishra et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2018), and interventions that aim to address the risk factors affecting the cardio-metabolic wellbeing of migrant workers (Mishra et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017). The benefits of enhancing prevention, screening, early intervention, and equitable access to care resources are described as spanning beyond the individual level, to relieving home and host country healthcare system (Mishra et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2017). Mishra et al., call for collaborations between migrant labor-

sending and receiving countries, by engaging local stakeholders and international actors on health and migration to generate protective, policies, environments, and strategies to address migrants' cardio-metabolic health needs (Mishra et al., 2019).

Death

Three articles about migrant workers' death in host countries were detected in the review- the three not specific to female migrant domestic workers, but include FMDWs (Vidua et al., 2016; 2018 ; Aryal et al., 2016; Jayasuriya, Wijewardena & Pathirana, 2012). Two articles were written by a first author from an institute in a country of origin/return (India and Sri Lanka) (Vidua et al., 2016; 2018 ; Jayasuriya, Wijewardena & Pathirana, 2012), and one from an institute in New Zealand, focused on migrant workers from Nepal (Aryal et al., 2016).

Information gaps are discussed in these articles, highlighting the lack of availability and accuracy of data as a challenge in identifying the causes of death of migrant workers. All three articles note the incompleteness of migrant workers' death certificates, specifically in Arab countries. Data collected from records about 711 deceased migrant workers who returned to India from abroad had a maximum number of cases (269) with unspecified etiology (Vidua et al., 2016; 2018). And main causes of deaths occurring among Indian migrant workers in the Middle East and Africa were accidents, suicides, and homicides (Vidua et al., 2016; 2018). Lack of accuracy in death certificates was commonly discussed in the 3 papers. For instance, the cause of death is often recorded as "natural causes", without any details about risks associated with their working environment such as injury or heat stroke (Aryal et al., 2016). Jayasuriya-Illesinghe et al. (2012) conducted a desk review on the death of Sri Lankan migrant workers and analyzed the age-sex distribution of deaths in 2009 to compare the risk of death to being a migrant domestic worker vs. staying in Sri Lanka. Their analyses found that the risk is not more than it would have been if they were in Sri Lanka, except for FMDWs aged 25-29 (Jayasuriya, Wijewardena & Pathirana, 2012). A major possible unidentified mortality risk among female domestic workers from Sri Lanka (age 25-29) serving in Arab countries is the harassment and abuse experienced at work (Jayasuriya, Wijewardena & Pathirana, 2012). Though, data remains limited due to the incompleteness of death records, the three papers mention the plight and vulnerability of migrant workers, linked to their challenging work conditions, and neglected health and safety needs (Vidua et al., 2016; 2018 ; Aryal et al., 2016; Jayasuriya, Wijewardena & Pathirana, 2012).

In their advocacy paper, Aryal et al., urge host countries to systematically collect accurate data on the morbidity of migrant workers, including causes of death to identify possible interventions (Aryal et al., 2016). They call on the need to enforce protective and dignified universal labor laws to advocate for the human rights of South-Asian migrant workers working in the GCC to protect their health and well-being.

Mental Health

The review identified 12 research articles on the mental health of women migrant domestic workers (WMDWs) in Arab countries. Of those, seven were published by a first author at an institution in the country of origin (six in Ethiopia and one in Bangladesh) and four by authors in a country of destination Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, UAE). In addition, four articles were published by first authors at institutions in Europe and the United

States; two of those were based on studies conducted in an origin country (Ethiopia and Sri Lanka) and two in a destination country (Kuwait and UAE).

The studies carried out in Sri Lanka (one) and Ethiopia (six carried out at Ethiopian institutions and one by researchers in the UK) relied on survey (Hebtamu, 2017), qualitative (Anbesse, 2009; Busza, 2017; Getnet, 2016; Minaye, 2012; Nisrane, 2020), or mixed survey, qualitative in-depth interview, and medical record data (Tilahun, 2020; Wickramage, 2017); all these studies were conducted with return WMDWs. The findings highlight the impact of working as a migrant domestic worker in the Arab region on women's mental wellbeing. The surveys by Habtamu (2017) and Tilahun (2020) revealed that the prevalence of common mental disorders among WMDW returnees is higher than the general Ethiopian population; although depression and anxiety disorders are the most prevalent, other severe mental disorders like schizophrenia and suicide ideation are of concern. Poor mental health manifested among returnees through psychosomatic symptoms like headaches and stomach-aches, as well as pessimism, sadness, and nightmares, which are characteristics of post-traumatic stress disorder and which women did not seek medical treatment for upon return given their limited financial resources (Getnet, 2016; Habtamu, 2017). Through first-hand narratives, qualitative studies described the range of negative experiences that WMDWs endured and that compromised their mental wellbeing. These experiences were not limited to the exploitative and physical nature of the work and its low pay but, in many cases, included reports of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse (Minaye, 2012). Relatedly, the study among Sri Lankan WMDW returnees, which triangulated data from in-depth interviews and medical examination records, found that more than a third of the workers experienced systematic abuse and that the female employer was most often the perpetrator (Wickramage, 2017). Qualitative studies with Ethiopian WMDWs' also brought up the impact of feelings of disappointment, isolation, and humiliation that women experienced as a result of the systematic undermining of their culture by employers (Anbesse, 2009; Minaye, 2012). The study by Nisrane and colleagues (2020) identified spirituality and maintaining friendship networks as two of the main coping strategies that WMDWs utilized to confront the threats that undermined their wellbeing abroad. These coping strategies, and others, are disseminated among networks of prospective migrants to avoid abuse and mitigate its impact on their mental wellbeing (Busza, 2017).

A recent study on Bangladeshi workers, including domestic workers, drew upon testimonies posted on social media websites by migrant workers who reported that they continued to work under high-risk conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic [impact on mental health] (Jamil & Dutta, 2021).

The mental health studies carried out in destination countries differed from those in origin countries in two main ways: they were based on samples of migrant workers, including WMDWs of mixed national backgrounds and they relied on data gathered on patients in psychiatric institutions rather than community settings. The studies in Kuwait and Lebanon, for example, utilized quantitative, in-depth interview, and hospital case notes data, all of which were gathered from or on WMDWs who were admitted to a psychiatric hospital in the destination country (Ajmal Zahid, 2003; El-Hilu, 1990; Zahreddine, 2014). In Kuwait, psychiatric morbidity among WMDWs was found to be higher compared to native-born women and the highest number of those admitted to

psychiatric hospitals are young women from Sri Lanka, the majority of whom had their first breakdown within one month following their arrival (Ajmal Zahid, 2003; El-Hilu, 1990). In Lebanon, Zahreddine and colleagues (2014) triangulated data [on both Lebanese and WMDWs] from the hospital's psychiatric assessment, the admitted patient, and the party in charge of the patient (i.e., an NGO or embassy in the case of a WMDW patient or the family in the case of a Lebanese patient). They found that WMDWs were more likely to be diagnosed with psychotic than affective disorders and are discharged earlier in order to limit cost and speed deportation procedures. Two studies conducted in the UAE examined suicide. The first relied on police records and other statistical data on cause of death to compare total and gender-specific suicide rates between UAE nationals and expatriates, including WMDWs, from 2003 to 2009 (Devic, 2011). They found that expatriates had seven times higher suicide rates compared to nationals but that WMDWs displayed a low rate. The second study recruited through psychiatrists 44 migrant workers, including 17 women, and interviewed them about suicide ideation (Reber, 2021). Similar to the finding by Ajmal Zahid (2003) on psychiatric breakdown among WMDWs in Kuwait, Rebel (2021) found that most participants experienced their first suicide ideation shortly after their arrival to the UAE. The author argued that exploitative working conditions, not cultural background, are behind activating suicide ideation.

Workstream 2: Quantitative survey to measure impact of WiF-2 interventions in districts with high migration and WEMI pilot, Bangladesh

WS2 used quantitative approaches to assess the effectiveness of WiF-2 interventions along the migration pathway with a focus of Bangladesh as the country of origin. The workstream also aimed to identify additional interventions for actors in the migration space to consider. WS2 answered the following research questions: How and to what extent do WiF-2 interventions influence Bangladeshi women's decision-making processes (to stay/leave exploitative work conditions) and agency? How were women migrants supported by their immediate family members? and What additional interventions could WiF-2 introduce in the focus countries?

To answer these questions, we collected primary intrahousehold data from potential migrants, returnee migrants, and non-migrant women in Bangladesh to (1) assess the impact of the training activities being implemented by the WiF-2 intervention in migration-prone districts, and (2) develop and pilot the Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI) to explore the decision-making and agency of returnee migrants. Through the WEMI, we aimed to develop a metric that can be used to assess the effectiveness of programs intended to enhance outcomes for migrant women and to identify potential entry points for increasing migrant women's empowerment. The WEMI includes information on respect among household members and attitudes toward violence and gendered decision-making to reflect the role of immediate family members in making migration decisions, as well as the role played by employers and other stakeholders with whom women interact in the migration process, to better understand woman migrants' vulnerabilities.

In addition to these research questions, CEDIL advised us to either adjust existing or add additional research to pro-actively consider the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this suggestion, we implemented a phone survey with Bangladeshi returnee migrants to assess how COVID-19 had shaped vulnerabilities in migration. In this section, we present summary results from three papers.

1. Choudhury, Z., Sufian, S., Alvi, M., Hasan, A., Ratna, N. & C. Ringler. Inequitable or Partial Diffusion? An Assessment of Intervention to Reduce Bangladesh Women Migrants' Trafficking and Forced Labor
2. Sufian, F., Alvi, M., Ratna, N. & C. Ringler. *COVID-19 and vulnerability of low-skilled female migrants: Findings from phone survey with Bangladeshi returnee migrants from West Asia*
3. Sufian, F., Alvi, M., Ratna, N., Choudhury, Z. & C. Ringler. *Development and Validation of a Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI): Evidence from Bangladeshi Returnee Migrants* (working title)

WS2.1 Impact of WiF-2 activities in Bangladesh

Data and Methodology

The study evaluating the impact of WiF-2 activities in Bangladesh is based on primary data collection implemented from May to July 2022 in the country's district with the most migration. The survey collected information about women villagers, in a program intervention area and in a control area, on various empowerment and migration-related issues.¹⁶ The control area resembles the intervention area in most respects, except for the intervention.

In the absence of a randomized experimental design, a standard recourse to establish causal claims is to utilize a matching technique, where each treatment case is matched with one or more control subjects. Such a procedure removes biases introduced by confounding factors common in observational data and approximates an experimental condition (Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983; Agresti, 2007, p.105), which enhances the validity of the causal claim about the program's impact (Bai and Clark, 2019, pp. 5-6).

In an experimental setup, the treatment and control groups would be balanced on average by random assignment of subjects. However, observational surveys cannot always guarantee such balancing. Variables like, as in our case, age, migration status, area of living (urban, semi-urban, rural), and district of the respondents may have confounded the program–outcome relationship. Standard matching designs, such as propensity score matching (PSM), allow us to account for these confounding variables by calculating the predicted probability of treatment-vs.-control group memberships by regressing these variables using a logistic link function on the binary response variable identifying the treatment group.¹⁷

However, due to its focus on balancing the distribution of the confounding variables, PSM discards non-matched pairs, sometimes losing a substantial proportion of the data. As a result of the reduced sample size, the matched data may no longer represent the population and so lose sufficient statistical power in estimating the treatment effect (Bai and Clark, 2018, p. 91). In our case, the nearest neighbour (Mahalanobis distance) matching reduced the sample size by about 20 percent, losing valuable information.

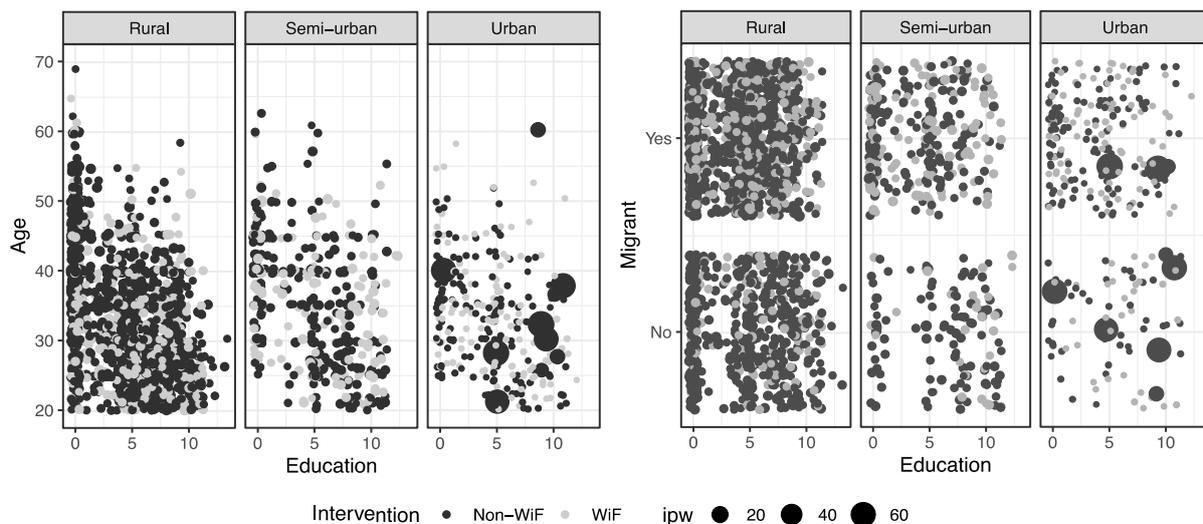
Therefore, we used inverse propensity weighting (IPW) in our multivariate analyses. IPW takes the inverses of the predicted probability to balance the global distribution of propensity scores (without truncating the data) so that subjects with low propensity receive higher weights and vice versa (Hernán and Robins, 2010; Heiss, 2021).¹⁸ Figure 2.1 shows that most IPW adjustment happens in our sample in the urban category, indicating that urban women were starkly dissimilar before the adjustment. This way we did not lose any information despite having a more balanced dataset.

¹⁶ The survey used purposive, non-probability samples targeting experienced, potential and non-migrants.

¹⁷ For an excellent interpretation of why 'logit' link is better over 'probit' link, consult Agresti (2007, 105).

¹⁸ We used the following formula: $ipw = (treatment/probability) + ((1 - treatment)/(1-probability))$, where treatment indicates if the subject is in the treatment group and propensity is the predicted probability calculated by regressing confounders on the treatment using logistic link function $\log[p/(1-p)]$ (Heiss, 2021, p. 26).

Figure 2.1 Inverse Probability Weighted Distribution of the Confounding Variables



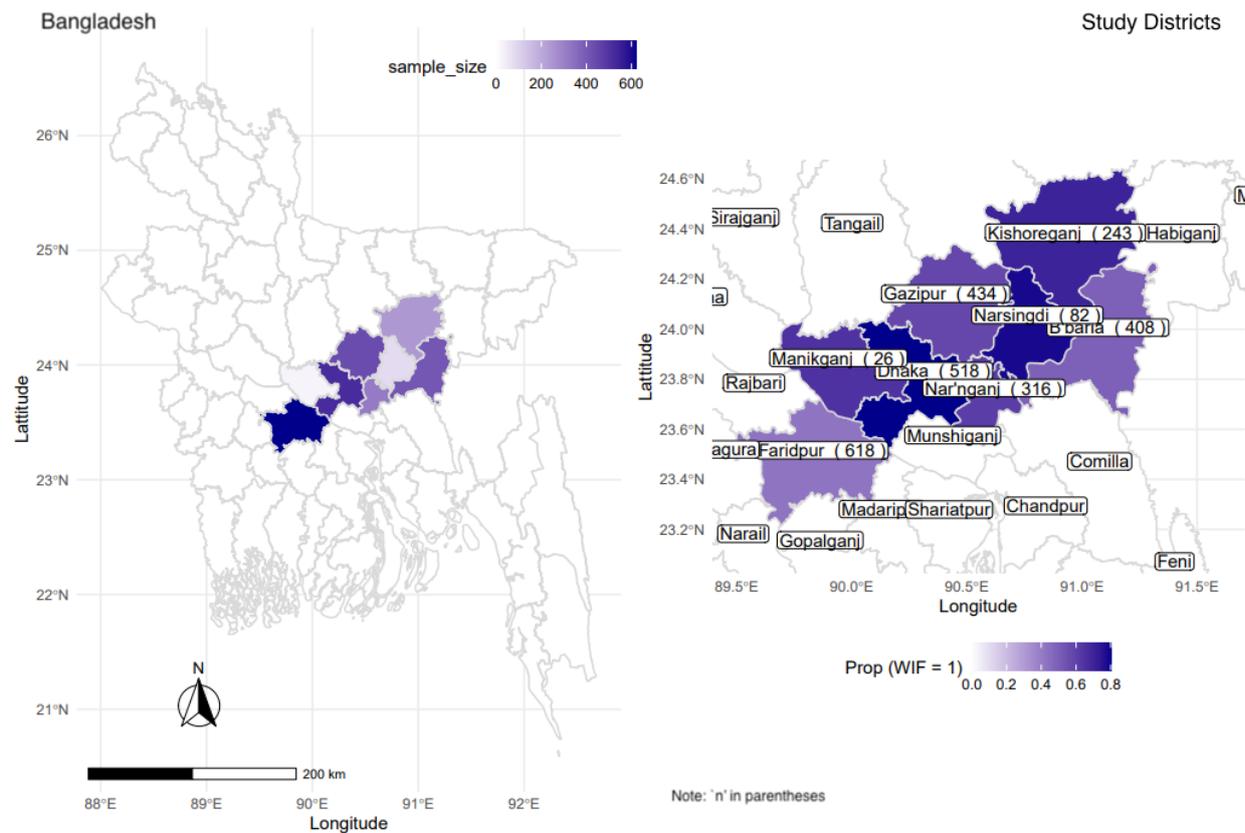
Sampling

We began by making a list of villages reached by the WiF-2 implementing NGOs in the eight most-migration-prone districts in the country.¹⁹ As shown in Figure 2.2, these districts are in the center-eastern part of the country and geographically proximate to each other. These districts can be treated equally (e.g., due their migration proneness) except for Dhaka, which is the capital of Bangladesh and one of South Asia’s megacities, and Brahmanbaria, which borders with India.

“Non-WiF-2” or control villages came from within the Unions (the lowest administrative tier above the villages) under these districts where these NGOs operated but did not implement the WiF-2 program. Bangladesh’s population and housing census of 2011 was used to identify and create the list of control villages. Finally, 186 villages were randomly selected from each list, creating an overall list of 336 villages.

¹⁹ The districts were Faridpur, Dhaka, Narayanganj, Manikganj, Gazipur, Narshingdi, Brahmanbaria, and Kishoreganj.

Figure 1.2 Intervention and Study Area (at the district level)



Note: The left panel shows sample size distribution in the project areas demarcated at the district level. The darker the district, the higher the proportion it contributed to the sample. The right panel shows the distribution of the overall sample across the districts. Darker shades indicate a higher proportion of WiF-2 or intervention area.

In each of the listed villages, three types of women were targeted: non-migrant (women with no prior international migration experience), returnee migrant (women with their latest international migration experience in the last five years), and potential migrants (women with no prior international migration experience *and* planning to migrate in the next 12 months). Identifying households with women meeting the criteria turned out to be challenging, even in areas with highest migration.²⁰ Therefore, we adopted two strategies to maximize our chances of reaching women meeting the above criteria. First, we took assistance from the community social workers employed by the implementing NGOs, and second, utilized snowball sampling. Moreover, given the social stigma around migration decisions, sometimes we took assistance from the villagers who had better knowledge about potential migrants.

²⁰ The nature of the information campaign and empowerment training used by the WiF-2 implementing NGOs limited the scope of measuring whether a respondent was touched by the specific messages of the program for three reasons. First, the community diffusion model adopted by the implementers thrived on the open-for-all nature of the trainings, without targeting specific individuals. Second, the NGOs had similar training programs in place prior to collaborating with the WiF-2 program in the target areas. The WiF-2 training materials were not branded as a separate initiative. Third, the presence of other NGOs working in the target areas on similar topics, commissioned and funded by other international and government projects, also made it difficult to rely on self-reported beneficiaries of the WiF-2 program.

A list of WiF-2's community social workers was created with the help of the NGOs. Since the NGOs made the pool of social workers from the intervention areas, they had native knowledge about the villages chosen for the survey. These social workers played a crucial role in identifying survey respondents. At the end of each interview, the respondents were asked if they knew someone like them and if they could provide the enumerator with the acquaintances' addresses, including phone numbers. Enumerators used these addresses and phone numbers to reach the new respondents, although they kept the snowballing process within the lists of sample villages already prepared. In addition to the assistance of social workers, the simple random method for non-migrants and the snowballing process for other categories further helped to reach the overall sample target, which was set to be at least 2,500.

The final sample size was 2,645 women villagers, where each woman represented a household. About 60 percent (1,584) of the sample resided in the intervention area. The sample included 1,019 returnees, 814 potential migrants, and 812 non-migrants.²¹ The proportion of snowballed samples became relatively high, about 58 percent. About 73 percent was from rural, 16 percent semi-urban, and 11 percent from urban areas.

Measurement

In the general models, migration-related attitudes and behaviours are a function of eight covariates, including intervention or treatment, age, education, unemployment, ownership of assets, satisfaction with monthly income, residential area (urban/semi-urban/rural), and a binary measure of the respondent's migration network. The outcome variables are exposure, migration-related deliberations, and perceived migration risks. Table 1 provides each measure's definition and descriptive statistics, including the control, treatment, and outcome variables. More details on the questions used for calculating the treatment and outcome variables are in Table B.1-B.5 at the end of this section.

The treatment variable, *intervention*, identifies if the respondent lived in the villages where the WiF-2 program was implemented. A related variable, *exposure*, is a summary of four survey items measuring if the respondents or their husbands knew about, were contacted by, or were involved in any ILO-run NGOs or their activities. We treated exposure as an outcome variable in the causal models, although one could use the variable as a proxy for treatment. Thus, we used exposure as a predictor of other outcomes in the subsequent models.

²¹ The survey was conducted by trained local female enumerators in local language. They received training on ethical research practices and requested informed consent. Respondents were compensated for their time with an in-kind gift of household items.

Table 2.1 Descriptive Statistics of Relevant Variable

Variables	Descriptive Statistics (N = 2645)				Description
	Range	Median	Mean	SD	
Control Variables					
Education	0 - 13	5	4.32	3.5	The level of education is measured in terms of the number of years in school.
Own Large Asset	0 – 5	0	0.40	0.73	The number of large assets owned by the respondent, a proxy for wealth.
Income Satisfaction	1-3	1	1.52	.80	Level of satisfaction with the overall household income, and ordinal variable with “Satisfied” = 1, “Neutral” = 2, “Dissatisfied” = 3.
Unemployed	0 - 1	1	0.69	0.45	Indicator of unemployment status (yes/no).
Migrant	0 - 1	1	0.69	0.46	An indicator of whether the respondent was a migrant (potential or returnee).
Area	1-3	1	1.384	.67	Nature of the residential area: Rural = 1, Semi Urban =2, Urban = 3
Treatment variables					
Intervention	1 - 2	2	1.59	0.49	An indicator of whether the respondent lived in the WiF-2 villages or not.
Outcome variables					
Exposure (Binary Index)	0 - 1	1	0.55	0.45	A composite measure of five binary questions asking respondents' exposure to programs by NGOs under the ILO's WiF-2 project.
Deliberation (Binary Index)	0 - 1	1	.58	0.49	A binary version of the migration-related deliberation index where: deliberation = 1 if index <= median, & 0 otherwise.
Perceived Migration Risk (Ordered Index: Likert Scale: “Very Unlikely” ... “Very Likely”)	1 - 5	2.75	2.79	0.78	A composite Likert-like measure of 8 risky situations that the respondents perceived might happen to women as migrant workers in a foreign country.

Notes: We created two alternative binary deliberation indexes, one using the mean as the cut-off point and a second, raw deliberation index, which can be treated as a continuous variable and be fitted in an ordinary least square (OLS) regression. Results from the logit models were almost the same.

Models

We have three regression models, one for each outcome variable. Logistic regression models with IPW weights (Agresti, 2007, Heiss, 2021) were used for the binary outcomes,

‘exposure’ and ‘deliberation.’ The outcome variable ‘perceived migration risk’ is a Likert-like index where respondents’ perception of migration risk is rated in an ordered sequence of five elements: “Very Unlikely”, “Unlikely”, “Neutral”, “Likely”, and “Very Likely”. Thus, for the migration risk outcome, we utilized an ordered logistic regression of the form $\text{logit}(P(Y(\leq j))) = B_{j0} + B_1X_1 + \dots + B_pX_p$, where B_{j0} and $B_1X_1 + \dots + B_pX_p$ are model parameters with P predictors for $j=1, \dots, j-1$ categories. In this specification, the intercepts will differ for each category, but the slopes are constant across categories because of the parallel line assumptions.²² Thus, the single regression coefficient applies to all categories (Bilder and Loughlin 2014).

Results

Table 2.2 Major Finding: Logit Estimates (log-odds) with Inverse Probability Weights

	Exposure	Deliberation	Perceived Mig. Risk
Intervention (WIF =1)	1.347*** (0.083)	-0.056 (0.064)	-0.291*** (0.055)
Age	0.006 (0.005)	-0.018*** (0.004)	0.016*** (0.003)
Education	0.070*** (0.012)	-0.056*** (0.009)	0.038*** (0.008)
Employment (Unemployed =1)	0.371*** (0.082)	-0.300*** (0.067)	-0.221*** (0.058)
Own Large Asset	0.192*** (0.053)	-0.010 (0.043)	-0.157*** (0.037)
Level of Income Satisfaction (Neutral Unsatisfied)	-0.179 (0.135)	-0.297** (0.105)	-0.040 (0.091)
Level of Income Satisfaction (Satisfied Unsatisfied)	-0.289** (0.093)	-0.494*** (0.076)	-0.368*** (0.066)
Area (Semi-urban Rural)	0.381*** (0.099)	0.146+ (0.084)	0.098 (0.071)
Area (Urban Rural)	-0.193 (0.128)	-0.650*** (0.097)	0.510*** (0.079)
Migration Network (Yes =1)	1.971*** (0.079)	-0.701*** (0.068)	-0.004 (0.061)
Exposure		0.888*** (0.078)	0.024 (0.068)
Intercept	1.148*** (0.227)	1.473*** (0.183)	# #
AIC	4279.1	6597.4	13598.5

²² See Agresti (2007) and Bilder and Loughlin (2014) for the general frameworks of binary logistic and ordered logistic regression models. For the implementation of IPW weights within the logistic regression framework, see Heiss (2021)

RMSE	0.38	0.48	2.67
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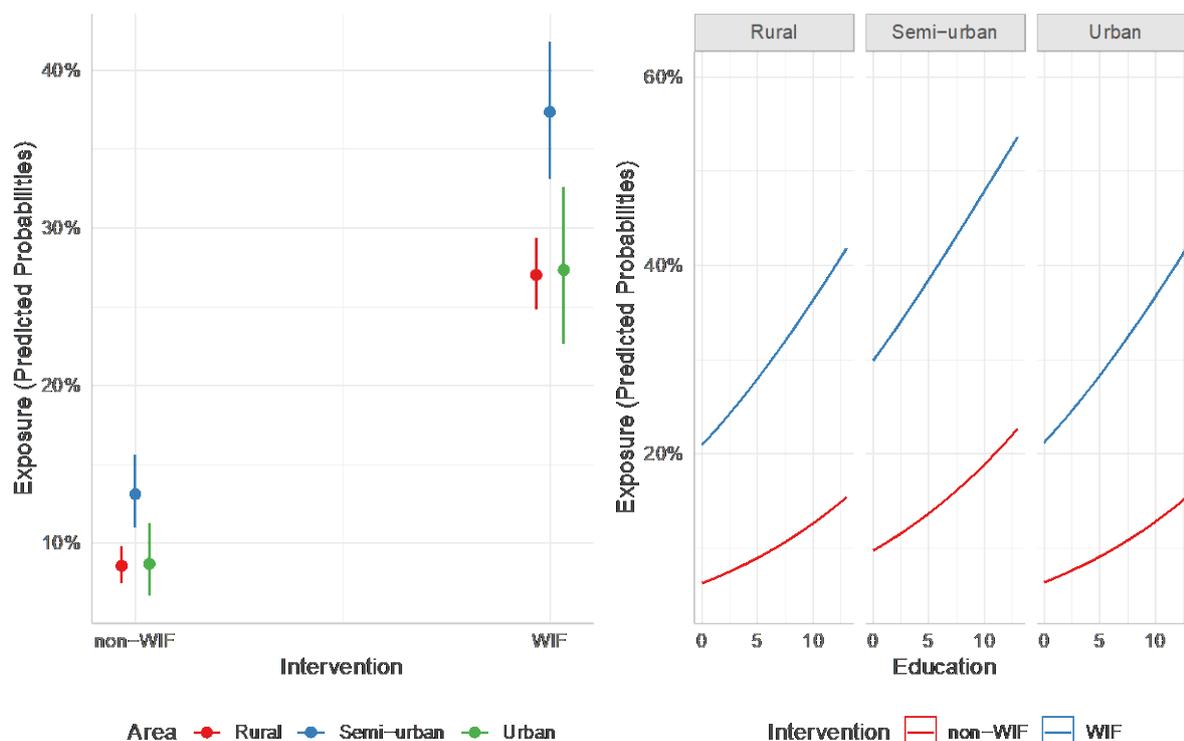
Significance: + $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. Note: Standard Errors are in parentheses. # The intercepts or cut points of the ordered logit model were statistically significant.

To assess the impacts of WiF-2 activities in Bangladesh, we first assessed exposure to the program. Table 2.2, with “exposure” as the dependent variable, shows a significant positive coefficient for intervention. Women in the intervention area were 1.35 times more likely to be exposed than those in the non-intervention areas, all things being equal. In the odds ratio interpretation, the estimated odds that a woman in the intervention area was exposed were $\exp(1.35)$ or 3.86 times the odds (about 286 percent more) for a woman living in the control area.

Women living in semi-urban areas were about 46 percent ($\exp(.38) = 1.46$) more likely to be exposed. Moreover, the program intervention increased the probability of exposure significantly (Figure 2.3). Furthermore, the likelihood of exposure is systematically higher in the semi-urban areas across intervention and non-intervention areas.

The exposure model shows that an increase in one academic year of schooling multiplies exposure by $\exp(0.07)$ or 1.07 (a 7 percent increase). The probability of exposure significantly increases as the level of education increases (right panel of Figure 2.3). The relationship is more pronounced for the treated (intervention) women in semi-urban areas than others in the sample.

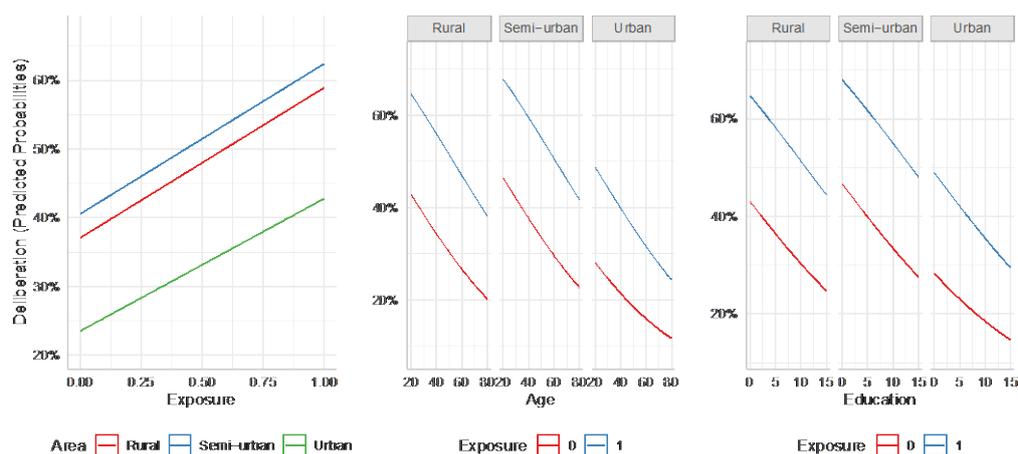
Figure 2.2 Marginal Effects of Intervention on Exposure and its Relationships with Area and Education



Deliberation

We defined deliberation as a binary index measuring women’s initiatives to consult and discuss migration topics with others like family, neighbours, friends, and local intermediaries. This increases the information available to them, including understanding of migration risks, and should help them to take more informed migration decisions. As a result of the WiF-2 intervention, we expected that treated women deliberated more than their counterparts in the non-intervention area. Similarly, women exposed to ILO’s and their partners’ activities (exposure) should be more knowledgeable about migration topics than those not exposed.

Figure 2.3 Marginal Effects of Exposure on Migration-Related Deliberation and its Relationships with Age and Education



The impact of the intervention was not straightforward. The coefficient for “intervention” in the deliberation model (Table 2.2) is not statistically significant; its size and sign are also contrary to our expectations. However, as discussed before, the “exposure” variable can be considered a proxy of intervention, and its coefficient is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) and indicates a positive relationship with deliberation. Exposed women were 143 percent more likely to deliberate about migration-related topics than non-exposed women, *ceteris paribus*. Digging further into the exposure–deliberation relationship in Figure 2.4, we found that the probability of deliberation for semi-urban women increases with exposure more than for those in the urban and rural areas. Furthermore, older, and more educated women were significantly less likely to deliberate.

Perceived Risk of Migration

Respondents were asked to rate on a five-point Likert scale (from “Very unlikely” to “Very likely”) a battery of eight risky situations that can occur to women migrants, like losing money, getting beaten, trapped in slavery, being deprived of food and water, being

deported, or imprisoned, becoming extremely ill, or death. Forty-three percent of surveyed women remained neutral, while about 34 percent thought such situations were “Unlikely”. We find that “risk perceptions” were linked to the WiF-2 intervention (Table 2.3). The coefficient for intervention in Table 2.2 shows that the relationship is negative. In causal terms, for the treated women, the odds of their rating the risky situations as less likely to occur (i.e., “Very unlikely”, “Unlikely”, and “Neutral”) is 1.34 times that of the untreated women, ceteris paribus. In other words, treated women had about 34 percent higher odds of being less likely to think that risky events would occur to a migrant.²³

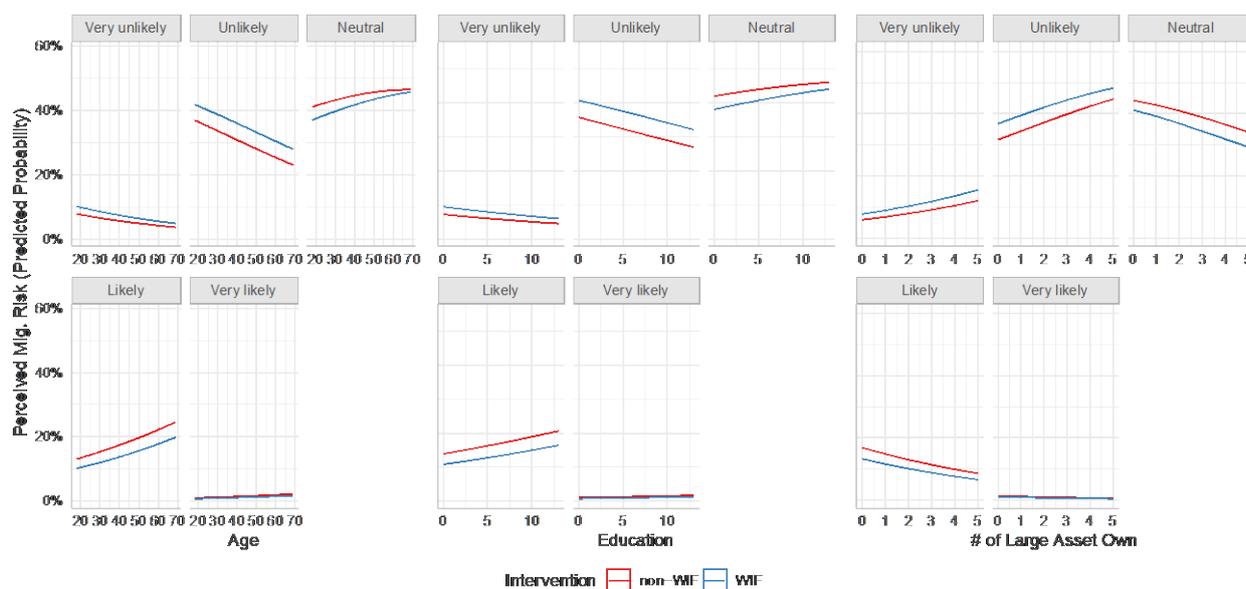
Table 2.3 Distribution of Risk-Perception Categories by Intervention

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very Likely
Non-Intervention	0.024	0.126	0.172	0.066	0.013
Intervention	0.035	0.216	0.260	0.086	0.002
Total	0.059	0.342	0.432	0.152	0.015

X-squared = 39.577, df = 4, p-value = 5.295e-08

We further probed how the above relationship held for various levels of the respondent’s age, education, and the number of large assets she owned—some of the statistically significant variables in the risk model.

Figure 2.4 Marginal Effects of Intervention on Perceived Migration Risk and Their Relationships with Age, Education, and the Number of Assets Owned



²³ We tested for the proportional odd assumptions for this model, and the results were reasonable.

As shown in the left panel of Figure 2.5, older respondents in the intervention area were less likely to select the “Unlikely” and more likely to select the “Likely” category than their younger counterparts. In the latter case, such thoughts were more pronounced in the non-intervention area than in the intervention area. The pattern repeats for the level of education. The second panel shows that the higher the level of education, the lower the probability of choosing “Unlikely”. In other words, less-educated respondents were more likely to select “Unlikely” than more-educated respondents. The right-most panel shows that the more affluent (in terms of owning assets) the respondents in the intervention area, the higher the probability that they chose the “Unlikely” category. In other words, relatively poorer respondents in the intervention area were less likely to choose the “Unlikely” category and more likely to select the “Likely” category than their wealthier counterparts.

Robustness Check

These results remain robust across stepwise model specifications. All dependent variables were regressed on the treatment variables in the bivariate specification before other variables were introduced as controls in the equations. Models with IPW weights did better than weights such as the finite population corrections (FPC). The ordered logit regression for the perceived migration risk analysis had reasonable tolerance to the proportional odds assumption that the relationship between each pair of outcome groups is the same (Agresti 2007, 180-182). Since we chose IPW weighting, we decided not to control for intra-class correlation (ICC)—which was not more than 19 percent in this dataset—and, for that matter, random intercepts for study districts.

A limitation of the study stems from the assumption used for the sampling strategy that suggests living in the intervention area means a minimum exposure to the program. Since direct exposure cannot be measured due to the nature of the intervention, true identification of the causal effect of the WiF-2 programs on women was not feasible.

Conclusion

The study assessed the impact of WiF-2 in Bangladesh on key migration-related outcomes, including women’s *exposure* to the program-related organizations and activities, their initiatives to *deliberate* on migration topics, and their perception of *risk* in migration. Although we did not directly measure the issues of trafficking and forced labour, the analyses presented in this paper shed light on these issues by implication, that is exposure to information reduces the likelihood of risky migration, including trafficking and forced labour.

The survey was observational and retrospective. However, its scope included women and their households in the intervention and control villages in the country’s districts with highest levels of migration, where ILO implemented the WiF-2 program. Households in the control villages were like those in the intervention villages in most respects, except for the intervention.

Overall, we found positive impacts of the WiF-2 program on all three outcomes. Women in the intervention area had more exposure to information and knowledge about migration risks than those in the non-intervention areas. This also means WiF-2 was able to engage women (or male members of their households) in the target area. If considered

a proxy of intervention, such exposure significantly increased women's deliberative initiatives to know more about migration from family, friends, neighbours, local NGOs, and others directly involved in migration, like the local intermediaries or government offices. Women in the intervention area also appeared to be less apprehensive about migration risks. When queried about certain risky situations that can occur to women migrants—like losing money, getting beaten, trapped in slavery, deprived of food and water, being deported, or imprisoned, becoming extremely ill, or facing death—the respondents in the intervention area were less likely to worry about such risks than their counterparts in non-intervention areas. Of note, the exposure indicator may underestimate the program's impact as there might have been spill-over effects.

While we acknowledge the overall contribution of the WiF-2 program, our investigation also identified potential biases in the program outcomes. For example, women living in semi-urban areas were more likely to know about the programs. More-educated (especially being in school beyond grade 5) women were more likely to be exposed than lower or uneducated women

The deliberation model also captured the nature of partial information diffusion. Exposure significantly increased the probability of deliberation for semi-urban women, and higher education similarly increased the likelihood of deliberation. Furthermore, we found that older women were significantly less likely to deliberate than younger women.

The program's impact on risk perception is similar. Younger and less-educated respondents were less apprehensive about migration risks. Finally, more affluent respondents, measured in terms of owning assets, were also found to be less concerned about migration risk than relatively poorer women.

A balanced approach is needed where the most vulnerable section of the population receives the highest priority, both at the policy and micro levels. Approaches that particularly support more vulnerable, poorer citizens with information on migration is critical in curbing forced labour and trafficking, especially because the government's intervention in the migration sector is more top-down and procedurally heavy and is thus unlikely to reach the most vulnerable migrants in the country.

Importantly, COVID-19 substantially curtailed the potential of the WiF-2 program. The pandemic barred ILO partners in Bangladesh from face-to-face operations for more than two years (especially during 2020–2021), substantially hampering their training programs, courtyard meetings, and door-to-door campaigns. According to our interviews with NGO personnel and social workers, the program had to finish hurriedly—due to the termination (or reallocation) of funding triggered by the pandemic and project-end deadlines and overall funding constraints at UKaid—leaving many project-related activities unfinished. Thus, we acknowledge that the results of the intervention and the study results presented in this paper must be interpreted cautiously without overestimating the program's impact.

On balance, WiF-2, which builds on an earlier phase of training and information activities, made an important contribution by introducing elements of positive social change in some parts of rural Bangladesh where malpractices reduce women's ability to make independent decisions and increase their risk of falling prey to forced labour and trafficking.

WS2.2 Understanding women's agency in migration

While a lot of attention is paid to understanding the generalized notion of empowerment, it is also important to distinguish empowerment in specific realms, including the economic realm, agriculture, health and nutrition, and migration (Saha and Narayanan, 2022). This study discusses the development of an index to evaluate empowerment of women migrant workers, titled Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI), and then validates the index by analysing primary data from returnee migrants in Bangladesh. We argue that through better understanding of the experiences of migrant women, we can identify multiple sources of vulnerability that exist along the migration pathway, which could potentially lead to an increase in trafficking and forced labour. Our data show that an overwhelming majority of women in our sample did not achieve empowerment during their last migration experience, and this was driven largely by lack of mobility, low asset ownership in home and destination country, and lack of collective agency. Defining empowerment is complex as it can take on multiple forms and meanings in different contexts. In fact, there is no one universal definition, but researchers have congruent conceptualizations of empowerment as encompassing various multi-dimensional aspects, including autonomy, agency, self-determination, access to resources, and liberation (Saha and Narayanan, 2022).

According to Kabeer (1999), empowerment occurs for those who have previously been "denied the ability to make strategic life choices [and] acquire such an ability". Importantly, this definition is underpinned by a recognition that change is brought about by one's own doing; those who are able to make choices for themselves may be powerful, but they are not empowered. Rather, empowerment refers to the process of shifting from being denied the ability to make one's own choices toward acquiring this ability. Therefore, empowerment requires a "process of change", which is underpinned by three important dimensions: 'resources' and 'agency', which eventually lead to 'achievements'.

Data and Methodology

This study, focusing on migrant women's decision-making processes, including how they are influenced by other household members, developed an innovative Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI). Although the domains of empowerment reflect those of the project-level Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) (Malapit et al., 2019), the selected list of final indicators under each domain of WEMI differs from that of pro-WEAI for several reasons. First, pro-WEAI was developed to assess the agency of women in agriculture, and thus includes scenarios and activities pertaining to that sector, whereas WEMI focuses on migration, and thus reflects activities and decisions imperative for migration. Second, the pilot study of WEMI was conducted with returnee migrants in Bangladesh, who have experienced migration in the past. This required that the WEMI survey instrument be designed in a way that could secure retrospective answers from the respondents to assess the extent of their empowerment at the time of their last migration.

Table 2.4 presents the list of indicators and their adequacy definitions used in the construction of the WEMI. As the focus of WEMI is on the migration process, it is important to understand attitudes toward violence and respect in both the country of origin and destination country. "Intrinsic agency" in WEMI includes indicators of attitudes toward

intimate partner violence (IPV) and respect among household members, reflecting indicators used in pro-WEAI, together with two new indicators devised to reflect the migrant's power within her migration process. First, we use an indicator to evaluate the respondent's attitudes toward violence from an employer or supervisor by presenting common scenarios that might subject a migrant woman to verbal or physical abuse from their employer in the place of employment. Next, we use an indicator to evaluate harmony at the workplace by assessing the respect between the respondent and her main supervisor in the destination country.

Table 2.4 WEMI Indicators and their Definitions of Adequacy

Domain	Indicator	Definition of adequacy	Weight	Comparison with pro-WEAI
<i>Intrinsic Agency</i>	Attitudes toward violence from husband	Believes husband is NOT justified in hitting or beating his wife in all 5 scenarios: 1) She goes out without telling him 2) She neglects the children 3) She argues with him 4) She refuses to have sex with him 5) She burns the food	1/18	Same as pro-WEAI
	Attitudes toward violence from employer	Believes employer/supervisor is NOT justified in abusing (verbally or physically) in all 6 scenarios: 1) If she goes out without telling him? 2) If she argues with him? 3) If she leaves or changes her job before the contract is over? 4) If she asks for more money, time off or higher salary? 5) Misses or skips work 6) Does not complete work on time or doesn't work properly	1/18	Not included in pro-WEAI
	Respect among household members	Meets ALL of the following conditions related to the primary male: 1) Respondent respects relation (MOST of the time) AND 2) Relation respects respondent (MOST of the time) AND 3) Respondent trusts relation (MOST of the time) AND 4) Respondent is comfortable disagreeing with relation (MOST of the time)	1/18	Same as pro-WEAI
	Respect between employee and supervisor	Meets ALL of the following conditions related to the employer/supervisor: 1) Respondent respects supervisor (MOST of the time) AND	1/18	Not included in pro-WEAI

		<p>2) Employer respects respondent (MOST of the time) AND</p> <p>3) Respondent trusts supervisor (MOST of the time) AND</p> <p>4) Respondent is comfortable disagreeing with supervisor (MOST of the time)</p>		
	Input in migration decision	<p>Meets at least ONE of the following conditions for ALL of the migration decisions that applies to them:</p> <p>1) Makes related decision solely,</p> <p>2) Makes the decision jointly and has at least some input into the decisions</p> <p>3) Feels could make decision if wanted to (to at least a MEDIUM extent)</p>	1/9	Updated with scenarios pertaining to migration
	Ownership of land and other assets	<p>Owns, either solely or jointly, at least ONE of the following:</p> <p>1) At least three assets</p> <p>2) Land</p>	1/9	Same as pro-WEAI
<i>Instrumental Agency</i>	Access to financial services	<p>An individual meets at least ONE of the following conditions:</p> <p>1. Belongs to a household that used a source of credit in the past year AND participated in at least ONE sole or joint decision about it</p> <p>2. Belongs to a household that did not use credit in the past year but could have if wanted to from at least ONE source</p> <p>3. Has access, solely or jointly, to a financial account</p>	1/9	Same as pro-WEAI
	Control over use of income or remittance	<p>Meets at least ONE of the following conditions for "Spending/sending income/remittance":</p> <p>1) Makes related decision solely,</p> <p>2) Makes the decision jointly and has at least some input into the decisions</p> <p>3) Feels could make decision if wanted to (to at least a MEDIUM extent)</p>	1/9	Revised definition and adequacy
	Freedom of mobility	Adequate if respondent could freely visit at least 2 places OR the embassy in the destination country if she wanted to	1/9	Revised definition and adequacy
	Access to training	Adequate if respondent received at least ONE training or information session in either home or destination country	1/9	Not included in pro-WEAI
<i>Collective agency</i>	Group membership	Active member of at least ONE group before or during migration	1/9	Revised definition and adequacy

WEMI uses six indicators to evaluate the instrumental agency of migrant women: (1) Input to migration decision, (2) Ownership of land and other assets, (3) Access to financial services, (4) Control over use of income or remittances, (5) Freedom of mobility, and (6) Access to training. The indicator definition for ownership of land and other assets and access to financial services used for WEMI remains unchanged from the pro-WEAI. The agricultural and non-farm activities used in the productive decision module in pro-WEAI are replaced with key migration decisions facing migrants before and during their employment in the destination country to derive the “input in migration decision” indicator. The assessment of control over income in WEMI differs structurally from pro-WEAI, and the cut-off to determine adequacy was adjusted accordingly. Additionally, while pro-WEAI uses frequency of visits to important locations in the community to assess if women face any restriction to their mobility, WEMI relies on the respondents’ self-reported freedom to visit either the embassy and/or at least two of the other listed places in the destination country. Finally, we added a new indicator to measure instrumental agency that accounts for the access to training, either in the home country before migration or in the destination country. Finally, to assess respondents’ collective agency, we ask if they have had active participation in a group before or during migration.

To ensure comparability of results across projects and in the interest of simplicity, all indicators used for WEMI receive a weight of 1/9 (Table 2.4), except for the indicators of intrinsic agency, which are each assigned half the weight (1/18). Because acceptability of violence from husband and employer can potentially be correlated, we use lower weights (1/18) for these two indicators. Similarly, indicators assessing respect among household members and respect between the migrant and her employer/supervisor are both assigned lower weights (1/18) to account for the possible correlation between them, which if not considered can put more implicit weight on intrinsic agency than intended. Intuitively, equal weighting by domain could also be explored if we can justify the equality of importance of the three types of agencies. However, given that the number of indicators is not balanced across the three domains, such a weighting scheme would mean a heavier weight would be attributed to domains with fewer indicators, i.e., the collective agency indicators, compared to the intrinsic and instrumental agency indicators. We further explore the sensitivity of WEMI results to different weighting schemes later in this paper.

We rely on the pro-WEAI methodology to calculate an individual’s empowerment score. Binary variables of adequacy for 11 WEMI indicators are created based on the thresholds outlined in Table 2.4. Next, a weighted sum of all indicator variables is computed to generate the individual empowerment scores of the respondents, which range from 0 to 1, higher values indicating more empowerment. We use an empowerment cut-off point of 0.75, such that a migrant is classified as empowered if her weighted empowerment score is equal to or above 0.75. Although the cut-off score we use is the same as that used by pro-WEAI, we also assess the robustness of our results to different cut-off points, discussed later in the paper. The individual empowerment scores are then aggregated to construct the Three Domains of Empowerment Index (3DE). The 3DE considers both the

number of women who are disempowered and the intensity of their disempowerment²⁴. Details on how the individual indicators are combined to form the 3DE score can be accessed in the appendix section of the paper on the “Development of the project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI)” (Malapit et. al. 2019).

Data collection

To examine and validate the WEMI, primary survey data were collected from migration-prone districts in Bangladesh between May and June 2022. The final sample was created by first listing villages that were reached by ILO’s partner NGOs using ILO-mandated training materials in the project period. Next, a list of villages within the same unions, but where WiF-2 was not implemented, was created using the 2011 population and housing census for Bangladesh. Together these two lists covered all the villages in the selected unions, representing the universe of villages in the selected area. Subsequently, 336 villages were randomly selected with an equal number of WiF-2 and non-WiF-2 villages, from which 2,645 women were interviewed. This included 1,019 returnee migrants, 814 potential migrants, and 812 non-migrants. The distribution of respondents among these three categories was purposive, using non-probability sampling targeting: (1) Experienced migrants: women with their latest international migration experience within the last 5 years; (2) Potential migrants: women planning to migrate in the next 12 months, with no prior migration experience; and (3) Non-migrants: women with no prior international migration experience. The desired sample was identified by liaising with community social workers in the sampled villages, employed by the WiF-2 implementing NGOs. The specific modules assessing women’s empowerment in migration were only conducted with the 1,019 experienced migrants, who had returned to Bangladesh no more than five years before the survey. The survey was conducted by local enumerators who had received training on gender dynamics, ethical research practices, and requesting informed consent. Respondents were compensated for their time with a gift of household items. Ethical approval for the survey was taken by IFPRI’s Institutional Review Board (vide application number EPTD-22-0318).

Table 2.5 shows key demographic characteristics of the WEMI sample. On average, surveyed respondents were 35 years old, and more than 70 percent were between the ages of 26 and 45. Sixty-one percent of respondents reported that they could read and write, while close to 40 percent never attended school. One-quarter of returnee migrants were employed outside their household at the time of the survey. Four percent of the surveyed women were never married, while nearly 70 percent reported being married.

²⁴ Pro-WEAI uses two sub-indices to compute the final index: (1) the Three Domains of Empowerment Index (3DE) and (2) the Gender Parity Index (GPI). The composite index is then computed by the weighted sum of these two indices, where 3DE receives a weight of 90% and GPI 10%, placing greater emphasis on the 3DE while still recognizing the importance of gender equality as an aspect of empowerment. The GPI, as used by measures of empowerment, such as the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (Alkire et al., 2013), compares the empowerment scores of men and women in agriculture in the same household. Such an index cannot be determined for migrant women, because to acquire a comparable empowerment score for their respective spouse or primary male decision maker would require them to also have migration experiences, which is not often the case. Thus, for our purposes, the WEMI score and 3DE score are the same, and can be used interchangeably.

The average size of the household in the sample was 4.3 with a dependency ratio of 0.57. Most of the respondents (83 percent) in the survey belonged to dual-adult households.

Table 2.5 Sample Characteristics of WEMI Respondents

Variable	Mean
Number of observations	1,019
<i>Age group</i>	
16-25	16%
26-45	72%
>45	12%
<i>Education</i>	
Never attended school	42%
Below primary	20%
Primary	18%
Secondary	20%
Can read and write	61%
Currently employed	29%
<i>Marital Status</i>	
Never married	4%
Married	69%
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	27%
Dual-adult household	83%
Household size	4.28
Dependency ratio	0.57

Results

Following the conceptual framework applied for pro-WEAI (Malapit et al., 2019), the WEMI seeks to measure changes in the three domains of empowerment: intrinsic agency (power within); instrumental agency (power to); and collective agency (power with). WEMI builds upon the validated WEAI and pro-WEAI instruments, but unlike earlier empowerment indicators that focused on women’s versus men’s empowerment, WEMI measures women’s agency only. We claim that although some of the dimensions for WEMI overlap with pro-WEAI (Table 2.4), the added dimensions for agency enable us to provide new insights on how resources, agency, and achievements interact in labour market outcomes for women migrant workers.

Table 2.6 summarizes the key high-level indices of women’s empowerment in migration. The aggregate WEMI score of the sampled women is 0.60, with only 14 percent of all migrant women found to achieve empowerment during their last migration, that is, having a weighted score of 0.75 and above out of a possible 1. Of the 86 percent of women who were classified as disempowered according to WEMI, the average adequacy score was 0.53. The 3DE score represents the achievements of women in the sample across the 11 indicators of empowerment in WEMI. It considers the number of women who are disempowered and the intensity of their disempowerment, following pro-WEAI (Malapit et al., 2019).

Table 2.6 Summary of High-Level Indices from WEMI Methodology

Indicator	
Number of observations	1018
3DE score	0.60
% Achieving empowerment	14%
Mean 3DE score for not yet empowered	0.53
WEMI score (3DE Score)	0.60

Nearly 80 percent of the migrant women in our sample worked in the domestic care sector, of whom 90 percent resided at the employer’s house and only 10 percent lived on their own. Comparing the empowerment results of women in different professions in the destination country, we find that 32 percent of the garment factory workers achieved empowerment compared to only 17 percent and 10 percent of the women who worked as live-out and live-in caretakers, respectively.

Table 2.7 WEMI Results by Type of Work in the Destination Country

Indicator	Live-in caretaker	Live-out caretaker	Garment factory worker
Number of observations	742	84	134
3DE score/WEMI score	0.57	0.62	0.70
% Achieving empowerment	10%	17%	32%
Mean 3DE score for not yet empowered	0.52	0.55	0.55

Sources of disempowerment

One of the key attributes of the WEMI and pro-WEAI methodology is the decomposability of the composite index into its domains and subdomains of disempowerment, allowing diagnosis of the prominent sources of disempowerment for women in a sample. This is achieved by first looking at the headcount of inadequacy in each of the 11 indicators of WEMI and then exploring the percentage contribution to the overall disempowerment of those not yet empowered.

Table 2.8 presents the uncensored and censored headcount ratios of inadequacy for all indicators that compose the WEMI score. As discussed earlier, inadequacy is defined by a respondent failing to meet the adequacy criterion set for each indicator in Table 2.4. Censored headcount of inadequacy for an indicator shows the share of sampled migrant women who are found inadequate in that indicator and are classified as disempowered overall, i.e., with an overall score below 0.75; whereas, uncensored headcount exhibits the percent of respondents who are inadequate in an indicator, regardless of their empowerment status. Because most of the sampled migrant women (86 percent) are classified as disempowered in our sample, the censored and uncensored headcounts are very similar across all indicators.

Table 2.8 Headcount Ratios of Inadequacy in WEMI Indicators

	Headcount ratio (%)	
	Uncensored	Censored
<i>Intrinsic agency</i>		
Attitudes toward domestic violence	47%	43%
Attitudes toward violence from employer	40%	37%
Respect among household members	52%	49%
Respect between employee and supervisor	70%	65%
<i>Instrumental agency</i>		
Input in migration decisions	8%	8%
Control over use of income/remittance	16%	16%
Ownership of land and other assets	56%	53%
Access to and decisions on credit	26%	26%
Access to training	32%	30%
Freedom of mobility	68%	64%
<i>Collective agency</i>		
Group membership	72%	67%

Nearly 70 percent of the migrant women reported not having or receiving adequate respect from their employer/supervisor in the destination country. Women also fared poorly in their ownership of assets, as we find that more than half of the respondents do not report owning land or any three of the listed assets before or during their migration. Sixty-eight percent of women reported that they could not freely visit any two of the listed places if they wished to, suggesting significant challenges to their freedom of mobility in the destination country. Migrants also achieved very low adequacy in securing collective agency, with only 28 percent reporting active membership in at least one group before or during the migration. Results in Figure 2.6 help us understand the main obstacles to women's agency and empowerment prior to and during their migration experience. Lack of group membership (18.6 percent), restricted mobility (17.8 percent), and lack of asset ownership (14.7 percent) are the largest contributors to women's disempowerment.

Figure 2.6: Contribution of Subdomains to the Disempowerment Score

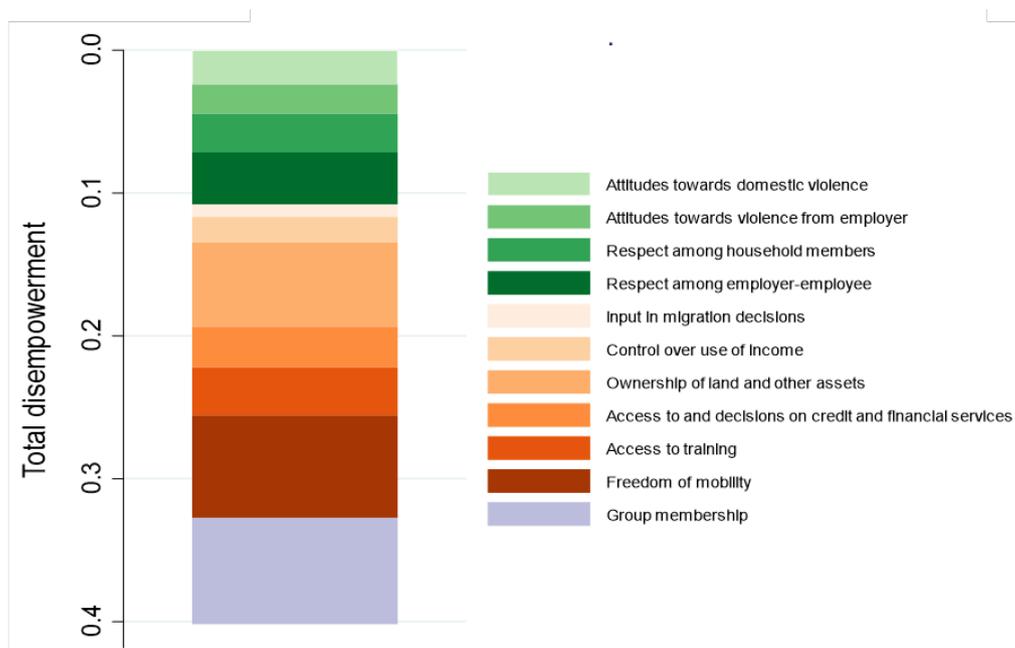


Fig. 1: Contribution of each sub-domains to the disempowerment score.

Validation

To validate the WEMI, we examine for associations between the WEMI and other measures of wellbeing to test how well the index correlates with, and is predictive of, contemporaneous measures of subjective expectations and wellbeing, namely indicators of mental health ([PHQ-9](#) and [WHO-5](#)), perceived migration risk, generalized self-efficacy, and overall life-satisfaction during migration.

We estimate a series of regression equations to evaluate the extent to which WEMI can explain the variation in the achievement levels of these indicators of wellbeing. We estimate the following linear model, using ordinary least squares for continuous outcome variables and linear probability models for the binary outcome variables:

$$Y_j = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 EMP_j + \alpha_2 H_j + \mu_j \quad (1)$$

where Y_j are the outcome variables of interest discussed above, EMP_j is the empowerment score, and H_j is a set of control variables, including household and respondent characteristics.

Table 2.9 presents the results of the estimated regression model specified in Equation 1. We find that WEMI is a significant predictor of almost all measures of wellbeing. We find that women who classified as empowered during their last migration are less likely to be depressed, indicated by a negative statistically significant regression coefficient in column (1). The relationship between empowerment and the state of mental health is similar

[column (2)], suggesting that women with higher empowerment scores possess higher wellbeing, indicated by WHO-5.

We find a statistically significant negative coefficient of association between women's empowerment and perceived risks of migration [column (3)]. This suggests that more empowered respondents associated fewer risks with women's migration to a foreign country for work. Women who secured higher scores in WEMI were also more likely to display greater efficacy, as shown in column (4). Finally, we observe a positive and significant relationship in column (6) suggesting that women who were more empowered during their migration were more likely to be in the possession of their passport in the foreign country of employment.

Table 2.9 Relationship between Empowerment Score and Selected Wellbeing Indicators

Variables	PHQ-9 Level	WHO5 score	Perceived migration risk	Efficacy	Life satisfaction	Respondent holds own passport
Empowerment score	-0.539** (0.23)	34.27*** (5.41)	-0.0976** (0.04)	0.429*** (0.10)	0.578*** (0.10)	0.437*** (0.07)
N	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018	1018
R-squared	0.015	0.059	0.020	0.032	0.044	0.083
Mean outcome variable	1.99	53.27	0.12	0.54	0.55	0.16

* Significant at 10%, ** significant at 5%, *** significant at 1%. We control for women's age, age squared, whether they could read or write, the size of their household, dependency ratio, number of literate male and female members in the household and if the respondent belonged to a female headed household (FHH) in the regression estimation.

Robustness checks

In this section, we take a deeper look at the sensitivity of WEMI to the choice of weights and the cut-off score used in construction of the composite index.

- *Association (Cramer's V) between WEMI indicators*

Before performing the sensitivity analysis, it is useful to first observe the pairwise correlation between the selected indicators. This is because a high correlation between two indicators can imply a higher weight assigned to the paired indicator than the proposed weight in the methodology. Table 2.10 presents the Cramer's V correlation coefficients for each pair of indicators. We observe a weak correlation, i.e., Cramer's $V < 0.3$, among most pairs with the exception of two pairs of indicators. First, attitudes toward domestic violence and attitude toward violence from employer are observed to

be correlated with a coefficient of 0.53. This association is anticipated as both indicators evaluate the respondent's acceptance of violence toward women.

Table 2.10 Association (Cramer's V) between WEMI Indicators

	Attitude toward domestic violence	Attitude toward violence from employer	Respect among household members	Respect between employee and supervisor	Input in migration decisions		
Attitudes towards domestic violence	1.00						
Attitudes towards violence from employer	0.53	1.00					
Respect among household members	-0.01	0.04	1.00				
Respect between employee and supervisor	0.09	0.07	0.32	1.00			
Input in migration decisions	-0.03	-0.10	0.07	0.02	1.00		
Control over use of income/remittance	-0.03	-0.01	0.08	0.06	0.08		
Ownership of land and other assets	-0.01	-0.03	0.00	0.10	0.06		
Access to and decisions on credit	-0.01	0.01	0.05	0.10	-0.03		
Access to training	-0.02	-0.03	-0.10	-0.02	0.03		
Freedom of mobility	-0.01	0.05	0.07	0.19	0.00		
Group membership	0.07	0.08	0.07	0.14	-0.04		
	Control over use of income/remittance	Ownership of land and other assets	Access to and decisions on credit	Access to training	Freedom of mobility	Group membership	
Control over use of income/remittance	1.00						
Ownership of land and other assets	0.07	1.00					
Access to and decisions on credit	0.00	0.13	1.00				
Access to training	0.00	-0.04	0.03	1.00			
Freedom of mobility	0.08	0.11	-0.01	-0.08	1.00		
Group membership	-0.06	0.07	0.19	0.00	0.08	1.00	

We account for it in the construction of WEMI by assigning 1/18 weight to both indicators, which is half of that assigned to other indicators in the instrumental and collective agency. Second, a correlation of 0.32 is found between the indicators assessing adequacy in respect among household members and respect between migrant and employer. These indicators too are expected to be correlated as they fundamentally assess if the respondent feels valued and herself values the relationship she has with her family member, usually husband, and her employer. These too receive a weight of 1/18 to account for the connection between these sub-indicators.

- o *Rank robustness for different weighting schemes*

Table 2.11 presents a sensitivity analysis for different weighting schemes in the WEMI. Such an exercise helps to identify if the chosen weighting scheme can be justified or needs reconsideration and revision. We observe WEMI results separately for each of the six districts included in the survey and rank the districts by 3DE scores using different indicator weighting schemes, following the rank robustness analysis performed in Alkire et al. (2015). We consider three weighting schemes for this analysis: column (1) exhibits results using the indicator weights discussed in section 3.2; column (2) ranks 3DE scores for all districts considering equal weight of 1/11 for all indicators; and column (3) ranks 3DE scores by districts, assigning equal weights to all domains, i.e., 1/3. This means, indicators in intrinsic agency receive a weight of 1/12 each, those in instrumental agency receive a weight of 1/18 each, while group membership receives a weight of 1/3 (being the only indicator under collective agency). For all schemes discussed, we use the same cut-off score of 0.75 out of a possible 1 to categorize an individual as empowered.

Table 2.11 Sensitivity to Different Weights

District	N	(1)			(2)			(3)		
		WEMI weight	Score	Headcount Rank	Equally weighted by indicator	Headcount	Score	Headcount Rank	Equally weighted by domain	
Narayanganj	94	0.72	37%	1	0.72	35%	1	0.72	35%	1
Kishoreganj	119	0.65	21%	2	0.62	18%	2	0.50	11%	2
Dhaka	203	0.60	14%	3	0.55	5%	4	0.48	7%	4
Brahmanbaria	172	0.59	12%	4	0.57	9%	3	0.48	13%	3
Gazipur	153	0.56	7%	5	0.52	5%	6	0.42	8%	6
Faridpur	238	0.55	8%	6	0.53	5%	5	0.46	11%	5

Ranking of districts remains unchanged for weights used in columns 2 and 3, while some difference exists in the ranking under the weights assigned for column 1. Such a difference, however, does not require revisiting the indicator weights used for the WEMI methodology as we find high concordance between the weighting schemes, as reflected by the very high and positive Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient in Table 2.12.

Table 2.12 Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient between Different Weighting Schemes

	Weighting scheme 1	Weighting scheme 2	Weighting scheme 3
Weighting scheme 1	1.000		
Weighting scheme 2	0.886	1.000	
Weighting scheme 3	0.886	1.000	1.000

o *Rank robustness for different empowerment cut-off scores*

Next, we run a sensitivity analysis for different empowerment cut-offs, keeping the indicator weights constant as described in the WEMI methodology. For each cut-off, we rank the 3DE scores by district and find that the ranking remains largely unchanged for medium to higher cut-offs, while noticeable changes in the ranking occur for the lower cut-offs, namely for 33 percent and 22 percent (Table 2.13). Thus, we find that changing the empowerment cut-off has little meaningful impact on comparison across districts, because setting too low a cut-off point to classify one as empowered poses the risk of overestimating women's empowerment and agency in the migration process.

Table 2.13 Rank of 3DE Scores by Districts for Different Empowerment Cut-Offs

District	Empowerment percent cut-off									
	100%	94%	89%	83%	75%	67%	56%	44%	33%	22%
Narayanganj	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	5
Kishoreganj	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	1
Dhaka	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
Brahmanbaria	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	6	2
Gazipur	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	5
Faridpur	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4

Conclusion

Evidence on how women's empowerment is linked to various phases of the migration process is limited, and we have very little rigorous quantitative evidence on linkages between migration, empowerment, and wellbeing. To better measure and understand these linkages, this paper develops a Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI), validated with data from returnee international migrants in Bangladesh. WEMI advances research over earlier assessments of women's experiences in the migration process beyond more seemingly objective indicators, such as income, health, and nutrition, to incorporate measures of subjective wellbeing and agency drawn from migration literature. While in policy discourse and development literature, migration is commonly seen as a tool for women's economic empowerment, we conceptualize the agency of women migrants, and the corresponding index, to go beyond economic empowerment and include other measures of wellbeing that have all separately been linked to improved outcomes for migrant women. We find that only 14 percent of all migrant women achieved empowerment during their last migration, and lack of group membership,

restricted mobility, and lack of asset ownership are the largest contributors to disempowerment of women migrant workers from Bangladesh.

While we present an initial application of the WEMI in the Bangladesh context, further validation in other settings is necessary to test the applicability of the index to other migration contexts, including domestic rural-to-urban migration. Future work should also focus on expanding the measurement of social capital beyond a focus on group membership. Informal, often one-on-one social networks in migration process are particularly vital as they provide migrants with information and social capital. These networks can be critical for providing migrants with information on job opportunities and choices that wouldn't otherwise be accessible. It therefore becomes a "resource that is accessible and embedded through social connections or social networks" (Kuschminder, 2016; Lin, 2001). Collective agency could better be captured through a measure that incorporates both formal group membership and access to informal migration networks.

Finally, questions in the WEMI module are framed to acquire retrospective responses on access to resources, perceived agency, and decision-making capabilities of the returnee migrants before and/or during their last migration. Although this allows room for potential recall bias, the alternative approach to surveying current migrants in the destination country would face larger challenges. This is because respondents who would be available for such a detailed survey in the destination country are likely to be systematically different (and possibly more empowered) than the wider vulnerable population of women migrants. Nevertheless, the WEMI modules are flexible and can be administered to current migrants, collecting information on their ongoing migration experience, rather than retrospective data.

WEMI can be an integral tool to monitoring progress towards SDG 8.7 on eradicating forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking, and an important policy tool, both to examine women's agency during the migration process and to provide a metric for measuring the impacts of policies and programs that target the welfare of migrant women.

WS2.3 Understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has created severe challenges for women migrants in both countries of origin and destination countries (Drinkwater et al., 2022) and shed new light on the fragility of SDG 8.8, which aims to reduce the vulnerability of women migrants in destination countries. For this paper, we analysed phone survey data gathered from experienced migrants to explore the vulnerabilities facing low-skilled women returnee migrants in Bangladesh. We further compared migrants who returned before and after the outbreak of COVID-19 to assess if the pandemic influenced the women migrants' experiences in the destination countries and/or subsequently exacerbated the challenges in their reintegration process in the country of origin. Specifically, we assess if the onset of the pandemic made low-skilled women migrants more vulnerable to unfavourable labour market outcomes in the destination country, and consequently created more barriers in reintegration to the home country on their return. Finally, we also study the associations between migrants' empowerment and their exposure to labour market changes driven by the pandemic and lockdowns to assess if more empowered women migrants cope better with global shocks, such as COVID-19, in the destination country.

Data and Methodology

We used data from a structured phone survey of women migrants, conducted in November 2021, from the central-eastern districts of Bangladesh, where ILO had been implementing the WiF-2 project. The survey collected information about migrant women's latest migration experience and their perception about how the spread of the coronavirus affected their present and future migration plans. The respondents were WiF-2 beneficiaries living in the project's 10 implementation districts: Brahmanbaria, Chattogram, Dhaka, Narsinghi, Faridpur, Gazipur, Habiganj, Kishoreganj, Manikganj, and Narayanganj. Nationally, these districts are more migration-prone than the rest of the country. With the help of the WiF-2 implementing NGOs, namely, Ovibashi Karmi Unnayan Program (OKUP), Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), and Karmajibi Nari (KN), women with previous international migration experiences and those with future plans to migrate in search of employment were contacted for the purpose of the survey. The final sample size of the survey was 868 women, of whom had 610 returned from international migration to Bangladesh after July 2019, 149 returned before July 2019, and rest were potential migrants with plans to migrate. For the purpose of this study, however, we restrict our sample to 655 respondents, composed of completed interviews of women with past migration experience. To address the study's research questions, we explore descriptive results from the survey to better understand the returnee's migration experiences. In particular, we observe the discriminatory attitudes and behaviours encountered by low-skilled women migrants in destination countries, and whether such unfair labour practices varied by country of migration and employment sector.

Results

Figure 2.7 exhibits the distribution of the final sample size of the women returnee migrants by the employment sector in which they worked in the destination country.

Nearly 70 percent of the sample were employed as live-in caretakers, while 20 percent worked in garment manufacturing factories. The remaining 10 percent of the women in the sample worked in other factories, restaurants, and as live-out caretakers.

Figure 2.7 Distribution of Sample by the Last Employment in Destination Country

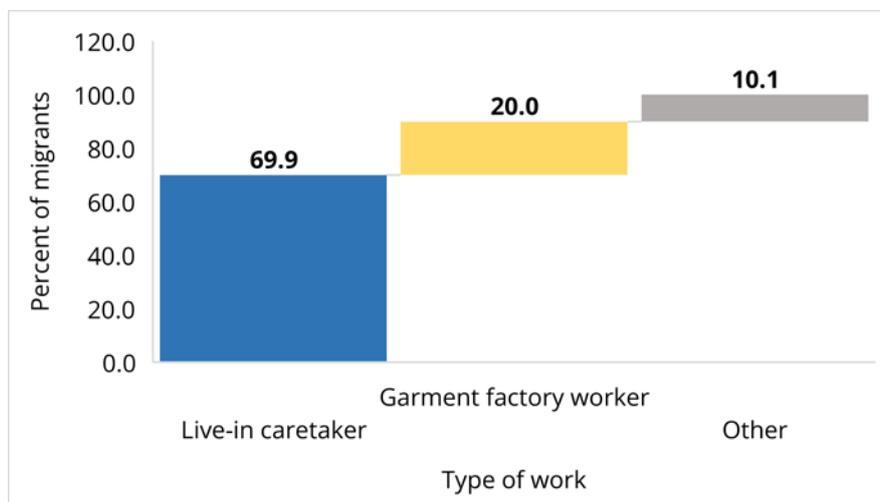


Table 2.14 presents the key demographic and household characteristics of the sampled migrants. Of all the women surveyed, 78 percent belonged to dual-adult households with an average household size of 4.6. We find that, across all types of employment reported, nearly three-quarters of the returnee migrants belonged to the age group of 26 to 45 years at the time of the survey. Noticeably, a sizeable portion of the women whose latest employment was in the garment manufacturing industry belonged to the youngest cohort (18 to 25 years). The distribution of marriage status among respondents is also very similar across different employment types. Over half of the sample reported being married at the time of the survey, while nearly 40 percent were separated, divorced, or widowed, and less than 10 percent were never married.

Most women in the sample had low levels of education, with 28 percent never attending any schools, and a further 29 percent had not completed primary school. Data across employment type reveals a difference in the educational attainment among the respondents, as we find that 61 percent of the women who worked in garment factories had at least completed primary school education compared to only 37 percent among those who worked as domestic help in peoples' houses. Finally, we observed the current employment status of the returnee migrants in our sample and find that nearly 47 percent reported being housewives at the time of the survey and 12 percent reported actively searching but unable to find work. Of the 41 percent who reported being employed after their return, 16 percent were engaged in agricultural production, 14 percent worked as salaried employees, and 9 percent were self-employed.

Table 2.14 Sample Characteristics

Variables	All	Last employment in destination country		
		Live-in caretaker	Garment factory worker	Other*
Observations	655	458	131	66
<i>Age group (years)</i>				
18-25	23%	22%	31%	15%
26-45	73%	74%	68%	76%
46-65	4%	4%	1%	9%
65+	0%	0%	0%	0%
<i>Marital status</i>				
Never married	8%	6%	13%	5%
Married	55%	54%	57%	55%
Separated/divorced/widowed	38%	40%	31%	41%
Household size	4.62	4.56	4.73	4.85
No. of school age children	1.09	1.11	0.99	1.09
No. of children 5 and under	0.36	0.34	0.40	0.41
Dual-adult household	78%	76%	85%	77%
<i>Type of household</i>				
Nuclear family (no in-laws)	51%	55%	41%	47%
Joint family (with in-laws)	12%	10%	13%	18%
Parental family	33%	29%	47%	33%
Other	4%	6%	0%	2%
<i>Education</i>				
Never attended school	28%	31%	15%	27%
Below primary	29%	32%	24%	21%
Completed primary	17%	15%	31%	11%
Below secondary	22%	19%	28%	30%
Completed secondary	2%	2%	2%	8%
Above secondary	1%	1%	1%	3%
<i>Current occupation</i>				
Wage labour	2%	2%	1%	5%
Salaried employee	14%	12%	27%	6%
Self-employed	9%	10%	12%	3%
Farming	16%	19%	5%	18%
Housewife	47%	46%	47%	55%
Unemployed	12%	12%	9%	14%

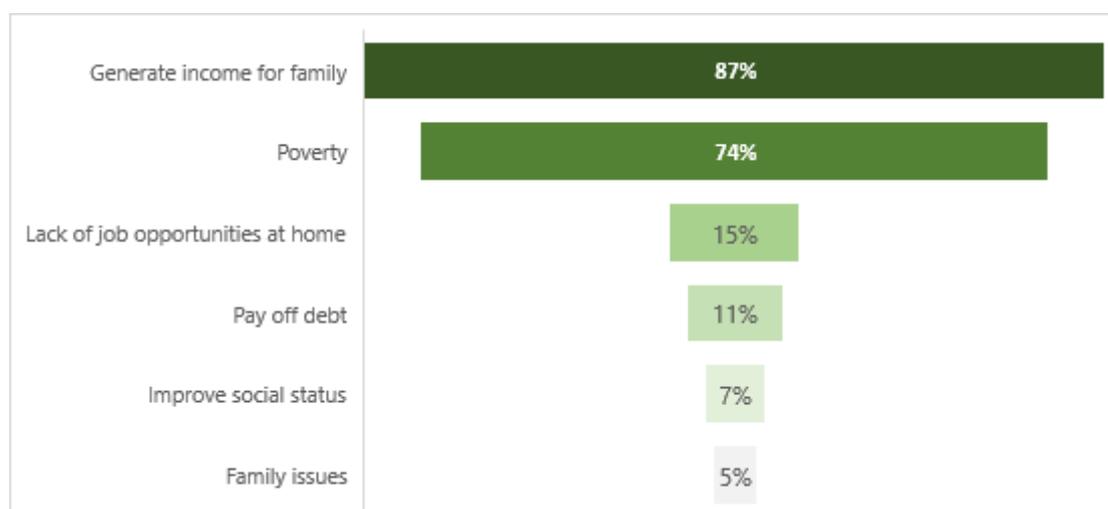
*Notes: Other employment include work in other factories, restaurants, cafes, and live-out caregiving.

Migration Experience

In this section, we explore why the women we sampled travelled abroad in search of employment and, consequently, how their overall experience in the destination country had been. When presented with a list of motives for migrating, most respondents reported that their main reasons were to generate income for their family (87 percent) and to move out of poverty (74 percent) (Figure 2.8). Only 15 percent of the respondents felt that they had resorted to migration because of the dearth of employment

opportunities in their local community, and even a smaller percentage moved countries to improve their social status (7%) or to escape family issues (5%).

Figure 2.8 Reasons for latest migration



Note: Respondents were allowed to choose as many reasons as applied to them.

Table 2.15 summarizes some of the key observations from the phone survey that represent the returnees' experience in the migration process from Bangladesh to the destination countries. Nearly three-quarters of the migrants in the sample had experienced only one migration cycle, that is, they had travelled to the destination country and back to the country of origin only once. On average, women in the sample spent nearly three years in their last migration destination.

Of all women with prior migration experiences, 43 percent had last worked in Saudi Arabia, while 23 percent had worked in Jordan and 11 percent in Lebanon. Intriguingly, the distribution of the latest country of migration varies noticeably by type of employment, as exhibited in Table 2.15. We find that while 58 percent of those who were employed as domestic help worked in Saudi Arabia, 82 percent of the migrants working in garment manufacturing factories worked in Jordan.

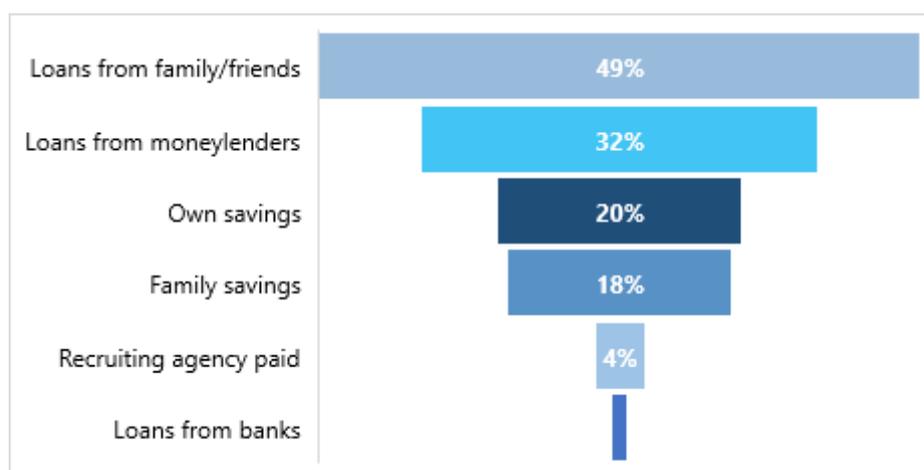
Table 2.15 Experience of Latest Migration by Type of Work

Variables	All	Live-in caretaker	Garment factory worker	Others
<i>Last country of migration</i>				
Saudi Arabia	43%	58%	1%	20%
Jordan	23%	8%	82%	6%
Lebanon	11%	9%	1%	47%
UAE	9%	10%	8%	8%
Oman	7%	10%	0%	2%
Qatar	3%	4%	0%	5%
Other	4%	1%	8%	14%
<i>Source of job</i>				
Through an agent/ <i>dalal</i>	60%	65%	46%	49%
Referral of friend or family	23%	25%	13%	30%
Own search	1%	0%	2%	3%
Government assistance/recruitment agency	11%	8%	26%	5%
Private recruitment agency	5%	2%	13%	9%
Other	1%	1%	0%	5%
Average years spent in last migration	2.91	2.59	3.55	3.83
Migrated more than once	26%	26%	24%	33%
Paid for migration	87%	83%	99%	98%
Average cost of migration (BDT)*	58,649	48,567	58,118	118,339
Average working hours per day	14.0	15.5	10.6	9.9
Access to health services	87%	83%	98%	94%
<i>Housing type</i>				
Own or shared self-rented	8%	2%	5%	56%
Own or shared employer provided	27%	7%	95%	26%
Living in employer's home	65%	92%	0%	11%
Experienced verbal abuse	19%	23%	6%	15%
Experienced physical abuse	16%	21%	1%	8%

*Note: 1 USD = 85.689 BDT (as of the closing rate on 14 November 2021).

Most women (60 percent) reported finding their last job in the destination country with the aid of an agent in the country of origin, widely known as *dalals* in Bangladesh, while 23 percent were helped by their friends or families who had prior international migration experience.

Figure 2.9 Sources Used to Fund Migration Expenses



Note: Respondents were allowed to select multiple sources if applicable.

Next, we observe the financial requirements and arrangements to which the women in our sample were subjected. Eighty-seven percent of the women returnee migrants reported having to pay for their migration, with the cost of the migration in the sample averaging US\$684. Figure 2.9 highlights the key sources that the women relied on to finance their migration expenses, if any were incurred. Of the women who reported paying for their international migration, loans from friends or family and from informal money lenders were the key sources. While some women reported using their own and family savings to finance their migration, only 1 percent reported using loans from financial institutions.

Finally, we observe some variations in the type of accommodations used by the respondents. Results from Table 2.15 suggest that 65 percent of the migrants surveyed lived in their employer's house whereas only 27 percent resided by themselves in employer provided houses. We observe such a variation because about two-thirds of the returnee migrants in the sample worked as domestic workers, which typically required them to stay at their employer's house. Furthermore, of the women who worked as garment factory workers, 95 percent lived on their own or in some cases in shared housing provided by the employer.

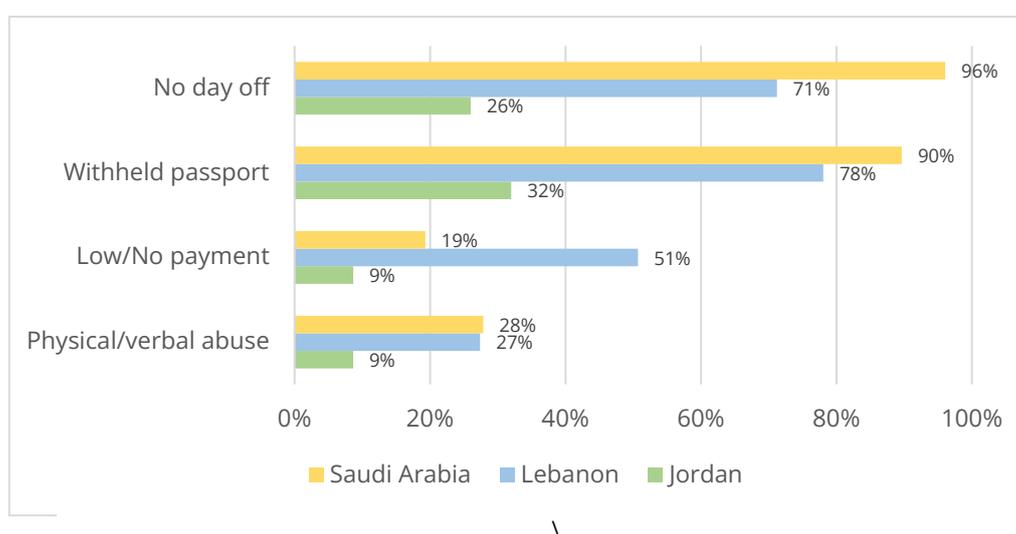
Experience of discriminatory attitudes

In this section we explore whether the migrants in our sample were exposed to discriminatory attitudes from their employer/supervisor related to common labour practices. We identify the following variables as indicators of discriminatory experiences for migrants working abroad:

- a. *Physical or verbal abuse*: Respondents were asked to identify if they had been subjected to any form of physical, psychological, and or verbal abuse in their last migration by their employer/supervisor.

- b. *No weekly day off*: We further identify an individual as facing discriminatory attitudes if she was not allowed at least one day off from work in a week from her employer during her last migration experience.
- c. *Withheld passport*: When questioned on possession of passport during their employment in the foreign country, migrants' responses ranged from being always able to hold on to their passport, to occasionally possessing it, while some reported never having access to it. We therefore identify "never having one's own passport" in the destination country as being subjected to discriminatory attitude.
- d. *Not getting paid as promised*: Finally, we categorized migrants as being subjected to discrimination if they reported not getting paid at all or getting paid less than agreed as a reason for their return to Bangladesh from their last migration.

Figure 2.10 Exposure to Discriminatory Attitudes, by Last Country of Migration



We first look at migrant's experience of unlawful labour practices from the employer across different destination countries. We restrict this analysis to migrants from three countries that make up more than three-quarters of our sample, namely, Saudi Arabia (43 percent), Jordan (23 percent), and Lebanon (11 percent). Figure 2.10 shows the share of respondents who experienced unethical labour practices in these countries. The women who worked in Saudi Arabia reported the highest incidence of discriminatory experiences in three of the four indicators compared with migrants to the other two countries. Nearly all women who were employed in Saudi Arabia (96 percent) reported that they worked all seven days in a week, with no days off, compared to 71 percent in Lebanon and 26 percent in Jordan. A similar pattern is also observed for the incidence of migrants losing possession of their passport during their employment abroad. Nearly 90 of the sampled women who worked in Saudi Arabia and 78 percent who worked in Lebanon reported never having their passport in their possession compared with 32 percent of the women who worked in Jordan. Although lower in absolute number, 51 percent of the women who worked in Lebanon reported choosing to return to country of

origin because they had not received the agreed salary amount. The incidence of low or no payment was relatively lower for Saudi Arabia (19 percent) and Jordan (9 percent). Finally, 28 percent of respondents who worked in Saudi Arabia and 27 percent who worked in Lebanon reported experiences of physical and or verbal abuse from their employer.

Next, we assess if exposure to discriminatory attitudes from the employer varied with the women migrants' type of employment.

Figure 2.11 Exposure to Discriminatory Attitudes by Employment Type

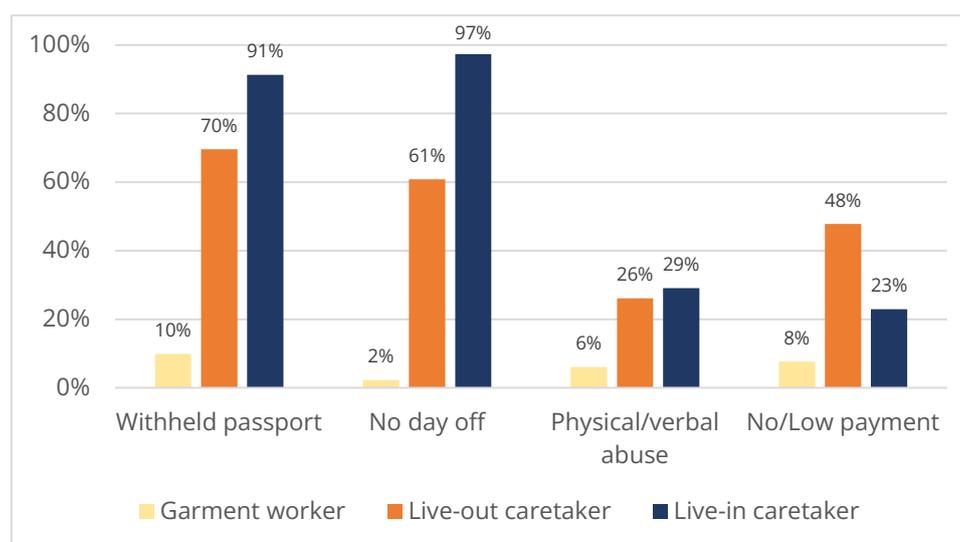


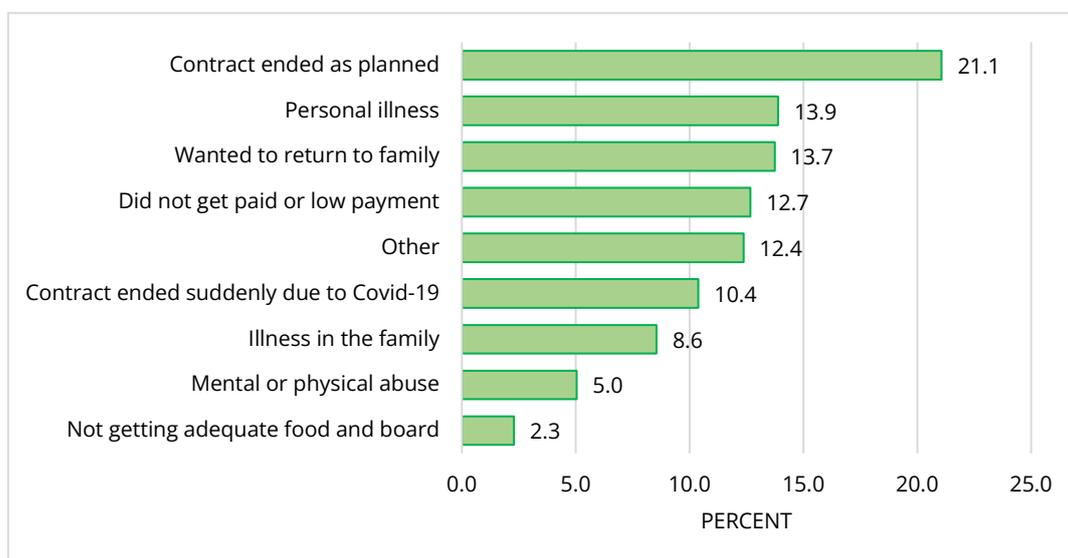
Figure 2.11 summarizes these results by three sectors of employment in which 94 percent of the sample reported working, namely, live-in caretakers (70 percent), live-out caretakers (4 percent), and garment factory workers (20 percent). Intriguingly, domestic workers who lived with their employers reported the highest incidence of discrimination, with more than 90 percent reported never having their own passport while in the destination country and never having a day off from work in the week. Additionally, 29 percent of the live-in domestic workers reported experiences of physical and or verbal abuse. Although exposure to unfair labour practices was also high for live-out caretakers, this finding should be interpreted with caution as only 4 percent of the sampled women worked as domestic helpers who did not live with their employer. Interestingly, women who worked in the garment factories reported noticeably lower incidence of discrimination; 98 percent reported having at least one day off in the week and 90 percent had access to their passports during their employment abroad.

Return from migration

Next, we observe the key factors influencing migrants to return to their country of origin and the obstacles they faced in their reintegration process. Figure 2.12 presents the primary reason for the return to home country, as identified by the migrant women in our sample. Although 21 percent of the sample reported returning due to the end of their planned contract period, other key reasons include personal illness (14 percent), missing

family (14 percent), not receiving agreed payment (13 percent), and end of contract due to the COVID-19 outbreak (10 percent).

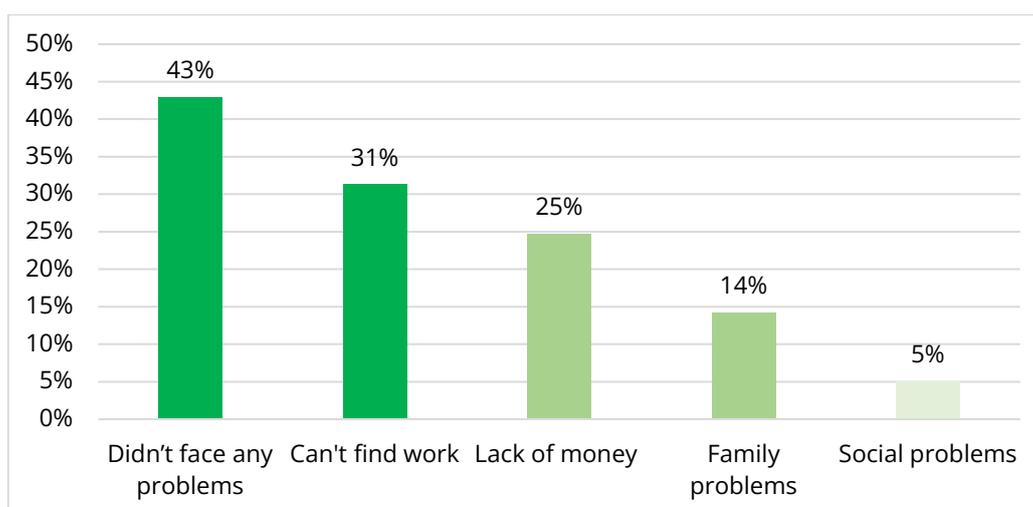
Figure 2.12 Main Reason for Migrant's Return to Country of Origin



Source: Authors.

In terms of the obstacles women migrants faced after their return from their latest migration, 43 percent of all returnee migrants reported not facing any problems on return. However, 31 percent reported not finding employment in their community, about 25 percent reported financial problems; 14 percent reported family problems; and 5 percent reported facing other social problems since their return from migration.

Figure 2.13 Obstacles Facing Returnees in their Reintegration Process in the Home Country



Note: Respondents were allowed to choose multiple scenarios

Source: Authors.

Impact of COVID-19

In this section, we explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 on international women migrants from Bangladesh. We examine the impacts of the pandemic and lockdown on the resilience and coping strategies of those who returned after the onset of COVID-19. Additionally, we assess whether women who arrived after the outbreak faced greater challenges in their reintegration process than those who returned before the pandemic. To achieve this, we categorize returnee migrants into two groups based on the timing of their return to Bangladesh from their last migration—that is, returned before or after the COVID-19 outbreak. Because it is difficult to identify a strict cut-off date for the beginning of the outbreak, our analysis excludes respondents who returned between February and March of 2020. Our final sample included 195 women migrants who returned before and 389 who returned after the pandemic began.

We categorize the variables of interest for these analyses into three main groups: (1) indicators of impact on work abroad, (2) indicators of impact on funding requirements to return, and (3) indicators of impact on reintegration of the migrants in home country. Table 2.16 summarizes the outcome variables we used to test for associations with timing of the migrants' return to Bangladesh.

For the first category, we use six indicators to indicate loss of employment opportunities due to the pandemic and the lockdown worldwide. Table 2.16 presents the summary statistics of these indicators only for migrants who returned after the COVID-19 outbreak, as they are not relevant for respondents who returned earlier. Of those who returned since April 2020, 16 percent reported facing ending of employment contract as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and nearly 31 percent experienced reduced income in the destination country due to the pandemic, while 52 percent reported facing no consequences.

Next, we use two indicators to determine whether migrants used their own funds for return or were supported by their employer. Of those who returned before February 2020, 74 percent received support from their employer compared to 65 percent of those who returned after. Nearly 20 percent of those who returned to Bangladesh after the onset of the pandemic had to fund their own return, while only 8 percent of those who returned before needed to self-fund their journey back. Furthermore, we find the differences in the means of these two variables for both groups statistically significant (Table 2.16).

Finally, we use four variables to indicate challenges migrants faced in reintegrating after their return to Bangladesh. Statistics in Table 2.16 show that only 17 percent of those who returned post-COVID-19 outbreak found employment in Bangladesh after return, compared to 33 percent of those who returned earlier. This difference between the two groups of migrants is also found to be statistically significant. Interestingly, we also find a statistically significant difference in the means between women facing social problems on their return before and after the pandemic began. However, the share of women who

were forced to borrow money after their return did not vary based on the timing of their return. Similarly, of those women who found employment on return, nearly 60 percent earned less in Bangladesh than they did when working abroad. This also did not vary significantly based on timing of return.

Table 2.16 Test of Means of Outcome Variables by Time of Return to Bangladesh

Indicators	Returned before COVID-19 breakout		Returned after COVID-19 breakout		t-stat	p-val	Sig	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD				
<i>Observations</i>	195		389					
Impact on work abroad	1 Contract ended due to pandemic	--	--	0.16	0.37	--	--	--
	2 Lost job due to pandemic	--	--	0.16	0.37	--	--	--
	3 Experienced reduced hours in destination country due to pandemic	--	--	0.15	0.36	--	--	--
	4 Experienced increased hours due to pandemic	--	--	0.08	0.27	--	--	--
	5 Experienced reduced income due to pandemic	--	--	0.31	0.46	--	--	--
	6 Faced no consequences due to pandemic	--	--	0.52	0.50	--	--	--
Impact on return	1 Employer provided support for return	0.74	0.44	0.65	0.48	2.4	0.0161	*
	2 Self-funded return	0.08	0.27	0.20	0.40	-4.3	0.0000	***
Impact on reintegration	1 Found employment after return	0.33	0.47	0.17	0.37	4.2	0.0000	***
	2 Faced social problems after return	0.08	0.27	0.04	0.20	1.7	0.0989	*
	3 Forced to borrow after return	0.51	0.50	0.54	0.50	-0.7	0.5006	
	4 Current income is less than income abroad	0.64	0.48	0.62	0.49	0.3	0.7690	

Note: Return before COVID-19 outbreak refers to returns before February 2020 and after outbreak refers to returns made since April 2020.

Source: Authors.

Controlling for age and literacy of the respondent, we use linear probability modelling (LPM) to test for associations between timing of return and its impact on coping

strategies, indicated by variables of (1) impact on return and (2) impact on reintegration, by estimating the structural equation below:

$$Y_j = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Postcovid_j + \alpha_2 W_j + \mu_j$$

where *Postcovid* is a binary variable identifying if the migrant returned after the outbreak of COVID-19, Y_j are the six outcome variables of interest indicating various impacts on return and on reintegration in home country, and W_j is a set of control variables, including the women's age and literacy. Table 2.17 presents the results from the LPM regression analysis using "sources of fund for arranging return to Bangladesh" as the two outcome variables of interest. Intriguingly, we find that those who returned after COVID-19 were 9 percent less likely to be funded by their employer, while 12 percent more likely to arrange for own funds, compared to those who returned earlier. This is suggestive of an increase in vulnerability for low-skilled women migrants, as many did not receive financial support from their employers as might have been the case without the pandemic.

Table 2.17 Impact of COVID-19 on Return to Country of Origin

Variable	Employer funded (1)	Self-funded (2)
Post-COVID-19 return	-0.0926** (0.04)	0.122*** (0.03)
Observations	584	584
R-squared	0.011	0.026

Note: All regressions control for age and literacy of respondent; Returns to country of origin since April 2020 is considered post-covid return.

Source: Authors.

Table 2.18 shows the next set of regression results, where we test for associations between timing of return to home country with indicators of reintegration. Our findings suggest that those who returned since April 2020 were 16 percent less likely to find work in Bangladesh than those who arrived earlier. Intriguingly, women who returned post-COVID-19 were 4 percent less likely to face social problems in attempting to reintegrate in their community compared to those who arrived earlier. However, we observe no statistically significant associations for columns 3 and 4 in Table 2.18.

Table 2.18 Impact of COVID-19 on the Reintegration Process of Returnee Migrants

Variable	Found work (1)	Faced social problems (2)	Forced to borrow (3)	Current income less than abroad (4)
Post-COVID-19 return	-0.158*** (0.04)	-0.0385* (0.02)	0.0259 (0.04)	-0.021 (0.09)
Observations	584	584	584	129
R-squared	0.043	0.009	0.004	0.011

Note: All regressions control for age and literacy of respondent; return to country of origin since April 2020 is considered post-COVID-19 return.

Source: Authors.

Role of Empowerment

Finally, we assess whether women’s empowerment matters in coping with global shocks to employment outcomes abroad. We use six indicators of women’s empowerment, representing women’s agency in decision-making and their access to resources, and create an empowerment score from these indicators using principal component analysis (PCA). We use six binary variables, where 1 indicates adequacy.

Table 2.19 presents the selected indicators of empowerment for migrant women from the data available in the phone survey. We use two variables to denote *decision-making capabilities* of the migrant, classifying them as adequate if they decided on their return by themselves and mostly decided by themselves how to spend their earnings from work abroad. Next, we use *access to training* as an indicator of agency, where women who participated in any form of migration or employment related training, at home or abroad were categorized as adequate. Next, we included *access to financial services* as an indicator of empowerment, classifying migrants who had their own bank account as adequate. Women who reported having friends in the destination country were deemed to have *social capital*, which we also use an indicator of empowerment. Finally, we use membership of migrants in a microfinance group as indicating adequacy in *group membership*.

The distribution of the selected indicators of empowerment for all migrants and by type of employment is shown in Table 2.19. Our findings suggest that although 74 percent of all migrants decided on their return by themselves, only 44 percent took their own decisions about how to spend remittances they sent home. Additionally, less than half the respondents had their own bank accounts and only 30 percent were members of a microfinance group. Furthermore, 47 percent participated in some type of migration training. Finally, we find that nearly 61 percent of the women had some friend or social network in the destination country. It is interesting to observe the difference in means for this variable between garment factory workers and live-in caretakers, with a significantly higher percentage of garment factory workers having social capital.

Table 2.19 Percent of Respondents Adequate in Indicators of Agency by Employment Sector

Indicators	All	Live-in caretaker	Garment factory worker	Others
Decision to return was taken by self	0.74	0.75	0.72	0.73
Decision to spend remittance was taken mostly by self	0.44	0.43	0.47	0.45
Participated in training for migrants	0.47	0.55	0.24	0.36
Has own bank account	0.47	0.48	0.42	0.48
Had female friends/network in the destination country	0.61	0.50	0.91	0.77
Member of a microfinance group	0.30	0.34	0.21	0.26

Source: Authors.

To understand whether women who were more empowered coped better with shocks, such as the global pandemic, we use linear probability modelling to test for associations between the migrants' empowerment score and the probability of them facing an undesirable employment outcome arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. To test this relationship, we restrict the analysis to those migrants who returned to Bangladesh after the pandemic's onset (n=389), as only they were exposed to this shock in the destination country and, hence, were likely to be exposed to unfavourable employment outcomes abroad. We examine this association by estimating the following structural equation, depicted in Equation 2:

$$Z_j = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Empower_j + \alpha_2 W_j + \mu_j \quad (2)$$

Where *Empower* is a continuous variable created from binary indicators of empowerment using principal component analysis (PCA), Z_j are the outcome variables of interest, and W_j is a set of control variables, including the women's age and literacy.

Table 2.20 shows the results from the estimation of the structural Equation (2). We find statistically significant associations between empowerment and the likelihood of unfavourable outcomes in employment due to the pandemic and lockdown. Our results suggest that more empowered women were 3 percent less likely to lose their jobs in the destination country due to the pandemic. Similarly, more empowered women were also 3 percent less likely to suffer reduced working hours and were also nearly 5 percent less likely to experience reduced income as a result of the pandemic. Finally, women with higher empowerment scores were 4 percent more likely to face no employment consequences resulting from the pandemic compared to those with lower scores.

Table 2.20 Associations of Empowerment with COVID-19 Shocks to Employment Abroad

Variable	Contract ended (1)	Lost job (2)	Reduced hours (3)	Reduced income (5)	No consequences (6)
Empowerment	-0.025 (0.02)	-0.0313* (0.02)	-0.0307* (0.02)	-0.0456** (0.02)	0.0417* (0.02)
Observations	389	389	389	389	389
R-squared	0.005	0.008	0.012	0.011	0.008

Note: All regressions control for age and literacy of respondent.

Workstream 3: Qualitative evaluation of the role of women's empowerment

WS3 conducted a qualitative evaluation of the role of women's empowerment in reducing forced labour and trafficking situations and WiF-2's role in Bangladesh and Nepal. WS3 qualitatively answered the question: What is the role of women's empowerment (and the potential of gender sensitization) in the migration process?

WS 3 originally envisioned two qualitative studies that included fieldwork (FGDs) in Bangladesh and Nepal as well as KIIs at local levels with planned output of two research papers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we implemented an additional set of KIIs in late 2020 and early 2021 that led to three papers that informed the fieldwork that eventually was able to proceed in 2022. All five papers qualitatively assess women's agency and empowerment. The three earlier additional papers have a stronger focus on vulnerabilities linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

KIIs implemented in 2020/early 2021: women's empowerment and the COVID-19 pandemic

The KIIs explored precarity of women's migration in the South Asia to West Asia migration corridor. It identified homes in countries of origin and destination as sources of high precarity, adversely affecting women's empowerment and identified a worsening of women's situations during and post COVID-19. The results of this study area found here:

- Wu, J., & P. Kilby (2022): [*The Precarity of Gender, Migration, and Locations: Case studies from Bangladesh and Nepal*](#), Development in Practice. DOI: [10.1080/09614524.2022.2057441](https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2022.2057441)
- Kilby, P., & J. Wu. (2021). "Migration and the Gender Impacts of COVID-19 on Nepalese Women," *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies*, special issue on gender and COVID-19 (December). [Migration-and-the-Gender-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-Nepalese-Women.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#)
- Kilby, P., & J. Wu (2020). "Migration and the Gender Impacts of COVID-19 on Nepalese Women," Global Development Working Paper 1. *Humanitarian And Development Research Initiative (Hadri) At Western Sydney University, 2020*. <https://doi.org/10.26183/59d6-7s16>

FGDs and KIIs in Bangladesh and Nepal: women's precarity and empowerment in migration

The two qualitative studies identified challenges that women faced and could be addressed by a WiF-2 type program, such as financial cost in terms of fees paid, persuading husbands and family members to allow them to migrate, the risk of having to return prematurely due to issues with placements and contracts, and finally social acceptance on return. The qualitative evaluation also confirmed positive experiences of women migrants with the WiF-2 provided training activities.

The results of the study are currently under review as:

- Wu, J., P. Kilby, J. Mathema and A. Bhattarai. "The Precarity of Women's Short-term Migration: A Case Study from Nepal." *Journal of Migration Studies*. Under review.

- Wu, J., P. Kilby, S. R. Rashid, N. M. Sarker. Patriarchal Bargains in Short term women's migration from Bangladesh. Under review. *International Migration*. Under review.

Data and Methodology

KIIs implemented in 2020/early 2021: women's empowerment and the COVID-19 pandemic

KIIs were implemented in Bangladesh, Lebanon, Nepal, and the United Kingdom with local organisations, academics, NGO leaders, and senior staff from international organisations, the ILO, and the International Organisation of Migration (IOM). All interviewees agreed to be named and were provided a Participant Information Sheet that explained the research questions and relation to the Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning (CEDIL), FCDO, and UK Aid.

FGDs and KIIs in Bangladesh and Nepal: women's precarity and empowerment in migration

A qualitative research methodology was adopted, using focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) in both Bangladesh and Nepal. Both IFPRI and the ANU ethics review boards approved the research.

In Bangladesh, a total of 22 KIIs and 16 FGDs were conducted in 8 areas of 5 female-migration-intensive districts, namely Dhaka, Naranganj, Manikganj, Gazipur, and Narsingdi, all located in the Dhaka Division. The 16 FGDs were conducted with a total of 112 women: returnee female labour migrants from West Asia; aspirant women labour migrants from Bangladesh to West Asia; and working women who had not finalized their decision to go abroad. The 22 KIIs included husbands of current women migrants; representatives of the local government; NGO workers; and informal migration intermediaries. There were separate questions for FGDs and KIIs, covering interviewees' personal and migration profiles, the impact of government and NGOs' interventions, the impact of COVID-19 on women migrants, and women's agency and empowerment, as well as policy recommendations on various issues.

The Bangladesh study faced some challenges. It was carried out at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic situation had not completely eased, so virtual interviews were adopted with some respondents. However, we were able to carry out all FGDs and most of the KIIs in person. ILO's partner NGOs, which were part of the ILO Work in Freedom (WiF) project, provided access to communities, both those that had received the WiF training and those that had not. There was an unavoidable inherent bias as the groups organised by the NGO were unlikely to be critical of it, but without them the research would not have been possible, given their access to these areas. These risks were considered acceptable as the NGOs were not present at the interviews and much of the interview discussion was not about the NGO work.

In Nepal, 10 FGDs and 12 KIIs were implemented in areas of high outmigration (Morang, Rupandhei, and Dolakha districts); access to women potential and returnee migrants was facilitated by ILO partner organizations. The research team (moderator, notetaker, and recruiter) visited the representatives of the rural and urban municipality administrative bodies, explained the objective of the study to the officials there, and gained their consent. Recruiters in each district reached out to the community leaders, local government representatives, teachers, health workers, and others and created a local

database, using snowball sampling, which was used to identify these participants. In the women's FGDs, 45 participants were aspirant migrants, and the other 46 participants were returnee migrant women.

The findings presented below are arranged by key themes that emerged from the data analysis and literature review and follow the links in the chain of migration. These are: reasons and motivation for migration, information sources, the process and cost of migration, the work conditions abroad, and problems migrants face on their return. We also discuss the effectiveness of training programs.

Results

The results presented here largely focus on the FGDs and KIIs in Bangladesh and Nepal: women's precarity and empowerment in migration.

Reasons for Migration

[Bangladesh](#)

In Bangladesh, the reasons for migration varied, but generally arose from pressures on the household, either financial problems or an oppressive home environment. Poverty, drug addiction, unemployment, extramarital affairs, polygamy, and domestic violence were identified as the key factors in the home environment that influenced women to migrate. Also, low levels of education meant that there were few opportunities for these women in Bangladesh. In addition, divorced women struggle when they have children to feed (FGD03), and family disputes can bring shame to women. "On at least 8 occasions out of 10, our opinion is not valued by the family members" (FGD03). Drug addiction among husbands, which limits their working capacity and drains income, came up in the FGD discussion in only one area and may be locality based.

The other reason for migration is the better salaries abroad compared to Bangladesh, as well as the ability to save earnings while living abroad and to avoid some types of family pressure. There is also an element of not wanting to miss out when they observe "the better lifestyle or financial improvement of the returnee migrants" (KII03).

Women generally take the decision to migrate in the first place, and then obtain their husband's or father's consent, but regardless of whether the men in the family support migration, there is still stigma attached to it. "However, women from our area still go abroad despite of having the presence of such stigma" (KII03) and "around 90 among 100 people talk badly of female migrants in foreign countries" (FGD04). Often the family is a major barrier to migration; as stated by a community worker, "not all the families would allow a woman to go abroad, especially the solvent ones. It is rare to find a woman from a financially secure family travelling abroad for work" (KII05).

[Nepal](#)

In Nepal, the main reasons given by the women in the FGDs and KIIs for seeking short-term domestic work overseas were poor employment opportunities at home and a sense of obligation to support their families. Gender inequality is another contributing factor. The state does not prioritize support for women and girls' education and development. Generally, there is little work available for uneducated women within Nepal, and domestic work is not respected. In some more religiously conservative areas, where there are

restrictions on women's mobility, young women may make their own decision to migrate, without consulting the family, as these women feel the burden of household responsibility including educating their children or siblings, but without any livelihood options locally. In some cases, migrant women hoped to go abroad and then return and pay for their own education. Many also go abroad to pay for medical procedures for family members, which can be very expensive.

Ongoing economic problems in Nepal add to the attraction of foreign employment. People think everything will get better after foreign employment, and when they see others going abroad, they wish to do the same. Some are also interested in seeing what other countries are like, and others simply want to make money. Generally, however, the women want to provide good healthcare, education, and even good food for their children and families.

In Nepal, most men do not support women's migration and are dismissive of the idea. Added to this constraint on women is the societal expectation of having many children. However, the prevalence of domestic violence and high levels of alcoholism among men can push women to overseas migration and work. In these cases, the children are placed in the care of a relative, which is not always satisfactory, and the women worry about their children's wellbeing and education.

Notably, in the hill area of Nepal, food insecurity is severe; agricultural production provides for only three months' subsistence per year, and any money earned also goes to feeding the family. However, women in the hill region have fewer educational opportunities as the men believe there is no benefit in educating daughters. This further restricts their opportunities for overseas employment.

Process and Costs of Migration

[Bangladesh](#)

In Bangladesh, the process of migration almost inevitably involves dalals (agents) who act as intermediaries in procuring documents and work (KII01, KII03). Even the simple matter of obtaining a passport requires an agent's intervention: "without those intermediaries, even the government officials do not accept the application of passport" (KII03), and agents can hold on to passports and use them to ask for more money if "more" expenses emerge or demand them on the migrant's return so they can charge again for subsequent migration (KII14). The suggestion is that the fee is shared with officials in these cases, and so the women are being exploited. In other areas, these agents facilitate the complex process of migration. As one key informant explained, contracts are prepared for two years initially, and if the woman performs her job well, she can return home for a short period and then migrate again (KII13). "There is someone I know who has been working abroad for 25 years now".

The cost for an agent's facilitation of migration in Bangladesh varies according to location, with higher costs in more remote areas where there are fewer agents to choose from. Women do not have easy access to official channels. In some places the cost for women migrants, however, is much lower than that for men. One FGD noted a cost of Tk. 30,000 (US\$330) for women to go abroad while a man must spend as much as Tk. 400,000 (US\$4,200) (FGD03). This may be due to supply and demand—men are in higher demand

and can get higher paying jobs. In other cases, the costs can be as high for women, and can be quite variable even in one location. Another FGD noted a cost range from Tk. 80,000 to Tk. 100,000 for some agents, while others who migrate using connections are able to do it for Tk. 20,000 to Tk. 40,000 (FGD12), and even that “one of the migrants had gone without the help of any broker and her migration cost was only Tk. 15,000, excluding her personal expenses” (FGD14).

With the costs come the need for loans. Many aspiring migrants in Bangladesh mortgage their gold and jewellery (FGD14), and the larger microfinance NGOs such as BRAC and the Grameen Bank offer specific loans for migrants. However, “The microcredit loans are so complex in nature that it would cost us an arm and a leg to repay the instalments” (FGD02). For some, the connection with regular work seems to suggest these are “safe” loans, but in practice some people cannot repay them, given to the high interest rates (FGD15), and the fear of failure of migration, that is they do not keep their job or remit enough money to repay loans. Thus, family members are the preferred source for loans (KII11, FGD13): “NGOs normally do not help us much ...[as] most of the time, people who need money become the victims of this debt trap” (KII11), or “We also needed to repay the loans [so]...we weren’t able to use the savings for anything productive” (FGD04). Others did manage to use the money after paying off their debts. Loans from family members, however, can involve a different form of debt trap.

In Bangladesh, in principle, there is no cost to migrants if they use official channels, but in practice this is not the case. According to some, going through India is cheaper; only Rs25,000 was charged, but this may have been the exception, as others paid as much as Rs120,000 to local manpower companies. The costs can range from Rs30,000 to over Rs150,000 (US\$230–US\$1,150) depending on which country they are going to, which is determined by demand. The agents charge for completing an application, and for speeding up the process. For example, while having a national identity card issued can take months, with payment to an agent this can be shortened to just days. The fact that people and organisations are more willing to loan money for migration than for local investments, as they think repayments will be more reliable, also makes it easier to use agents. However, the knowledge that funds are readily available can cause agents to raise their fees, for example, to pay for what is often a no-cost visa.

[Nepal](#)

Many of Nepalese women migrants, especially poorly educated women, take a precarious “irregular” pathway to destination countries, transiting through India to destination countries. This choice reflects the difficulty of official migration for women: women under the age of 30 cannot migrate and those over 30 require permission from ward-level local government. As a result, Nepalese women transit through India to reach their destination country. While migrating to India is legal due to the open border with Nepal, using India as a transit point is illegal; but Indian customs officials generally turn a blind eye to the migrant women and ignore their incomplete documentation.

Women’s vulnerability is thus increased, because there is no official protection on this route, and women feel that they have been ‘tricked’ in some way. One of the risks is being trafficked for sex work and forced to spend time working in a brothel as part of the migration chain. This was reported by a woman in one of the FGDs and supported by

anecdotal evidence from Indian activists. We did not pursue the topic of sexual slavery in India during the FGDs, given the sensitivity and the lack of ethics approval for such a line of questioning. However, this may explain the lower cost of Indian transit, and why some women spend up to a year in India. But even if all goes well in the transit through India, there are high levels of uncertainty along the whole pathway, and there is a stigma attached to this journey, as people may assume the women have migrated to India for sex work.

Many women who migrated through India complained about the problems and exploitation encountered. In one case, a woman left home without telling anyone, including her children, and spent 14 days in a Mumbai brothel, but eventually made it to Saudi Arabia, where she worked as a housemaid for some years to save enough to purchase land for her daughters. Such women are kept in Mumbai or another part of India for about a month before being moved to the destination country, and what happens in India is unclear. Because these arrangements are not known to the women in advance, it creates uncertainty and very exploitative situations.

Influencing women with the idea and attraction of labour migration is a very lucrative practice in Nepal, as the manpower agencies can charge high fees to facilitate the process. However, some of these agents cannot be trusted for accurate information. Rather, it is the reports and insights from friends and relatives, including those who have been abroad, as well as agents that lead women to local government information desks and NGO booths provided at the ward level through the District Development Committee. Word of mouth is a major source of information, but newspaper advertisements, as well as text messages through mobile phones, letting women know what jobs are available and where, are designed to generate interest.

While many women use relatives or manpower companies for migration information and to initiate the process, other migrants are more secretive, proceeding with migration alone or getting help from their families first, before reaching out to a migration agent. This is due to the gendered stigma of women travelling overseas, as well as an indication of poverty.

Women participants in Nepal stated that they do not bargain on most issues and so they are vulnerable to exploitation. The relationship between migrant women and agents is complex. The agents possess migration and work knowledge that migrant women depend upon. Most agents are from the same village and may even be related to the woman considering migration. These existing connections create a higher level of trust. At the same time, however, the agents are keen to profit from the transactions and may embellish stories of migration to convince the women to go. Sometimes agents do inform women about financial, physical, and other forms of abuse that they may experience abroad; however, for women who suffer from intimate partner and family violence already, this is not a deterrent to migration. Therefore, the challenge that confronts NGOs and other service providers is ensuring that women are fully aware of the risks involved in overseas migration.

Adding to the precarity of women's situations is that, while they are discussing migration prospects with agents, they are also being influenced or pressured by family members.

This means that any decisions made about migration may be coerced directly by family members and partners, or through indirect pressure because the women feel they have little other choice.

In many cases, there is a chain of agents involved, with very little transparency: because the registered manpower agencies are not located in every part of Nepal, women will contact the local agents who take a commission and then send the women to a manpower agency, although not necessarily an officially registered one. As a result, a woman may go through the migration process without knowing whether their travel authorisation was officially sanctioned by the Nepalese Government, and they may be trafficked through India (as the transit hub) without knowing that this is an illegal process, or about the high risks involved.

While in principle there is no cost to the migrant if they use official channels, in practice this is not the case, even to the point that some say going through India is in fact cheaper, where only Rs25,000 was asked for, but this may have been the exception, as others in the groups paid as much as Rs120,000 to local Manpower companies. The cost can range from Rs30,000 to over Rs150,000 (\$US230-\$US1,150) depending on the country they are going to which is determined by demand. The agents charge for the cost of an application to be written; and while having a national identity card issued can normally take months, with payment to an agent this can be shortened to days. The fact that people and organisations are more willing to loan money for migration than for local investments, as they think repayments will be more reliable, also makes it easier to use agents. As a result, the costs of migration can rise if agents know if funds are more readily available, for what is often a no-cost visa.

Single women cannot get loans from most local village cooperatives, so they are forced to higher cost loans sources such as from agents or relatives. Manpower companies charge more than local agents but invariably migrants have to pay both for their services. The costs vary and depend on the willingness of the migrant to pay and their prior knowledge of the costs. In many cases agents are taking money from the women migrants later, even if they don't ask for money right away. These arrangements for many women are not made clear in advance. Generally, there are fewer collateral items available for women such as land and houses. Many women use jewellery as security or they sell cows and buffalo.

Working Abroad

[Bangladesh](#)

For Bangladeshi migrants, work abroad in the domestic service sector is fraught with significant risks but offers the potential reward of higher incomes. This starts with the women's arrival in the new country, which for most is not only a cultural shock but also marked by unexpected work conditions: many find that the work was not what they expected or were told it would be; or the wages as high as they were told; or salary payments are delayed. Some migrants gave up and returned home, but they face pressure to return abroad so they can send more money to the family. For example, two migrants had bad experiences; their migration aspirations came to an early end, at a high cost in terms of the debt to repay the agents. On top of poor work conditions or being

cheated, there is always the risk of violence, both physical and emotional. Employers may keep women workers isolated for no reason, withhold, or destroy documents or phones, or feed the women poorly.

Although many Bangladeshi women felt trapped, their experiences were by no means universally bad. Some had very supportive employers. And the rewards for successful migration are high if women can remit their income back to themselves or their families.

[Nepal](#)

Nepali migrants abroad care for children and earn more if they can teach children (KII4). The biggest problem they face is the precarity of the migration process and the work itself. The work can be monotonous, and the initial four months are usually quite tough, in part because the women have no language skills, which take around six months to acquire, though for some it can be years (FGD 06, FGD 09). At the place of work in those early months, they a struggle to adopt to the local norms, and the work is often very different from what they are used to. However, after this initial period, most women feel more settled in their situation.

Nepalese respondents noted that there are many cases of violence and even beatings by employers, but sexual harassment is the main issue many women face. They are also watched and constrained in their movements, and may be kept in the house. Pay is always a vexing issue, and Nepalese women reported being underpaid or even defrauded of any pay. Within households, there are clear power hierarchies among employees. As an example, in Kuwait, Nepalese women were paid 50 dinar, workers of Indian origin received 60 dinar, citizens of Indonesia 70 dinar, and from the Philippines 80 dinar; these racialized inequities can be demoralising. There were also positive stories about employers, for example, one employer paid to bring the woman's child over so they could be with their mother.

In Nepal, women's remittances are used for a variety of purposes, but for many at least half and often more is used for household expenses depending on the household situation. The key expenditure is for children's schooling, and there are often medical and hospital expenses back home as well, which can be a motive for migration. For women, there is no real possibility to use the remittances for investment, as that is seen to be the domain of men, who often save their remittances.

Nepalese women tend to stay abroad for three to five years after their first contract, then return for three months and then travel again. Many women spend more than 10 years abroad through a series of contracts. During this time, they may lose touch with their children and the rest of the family. In all cases, the women were responsible for the family back home, from education to health and even day-to-day expenses, often for many years. For many women, the employer remits the funds (FGD 10) and they tend to use IME, a local transfer agency like Western Union. Some women use *hundi* or other informal systems, which is riskier (FGD 04). Some send the money to their husbands, although there is a risk that husbands may waste the money, others to children, parents, and even to their agents (FGD 09).

On Return

[Bangladesh](#)

When the migrant women return to Bangladesh, they face a new set of challenges. If their migration was successful and money was remitted, they were welcomed. Yet, whether successful or not, returnees are stigmatized. One positive change that has come out of the increased migration over the past decade or more, and better training, is in how money is remitted. In the past the money went to the husband or other men in the household, but recently increasing numbers of women have separate bank accounts and divide the remittances so there is some for the family and some that they can use themselves. But this is not always the case, as often the husband or family takes the money.

[Nepal](#)

Nepalese women migrants also face issues in reintegration. Nepal does not have a specific program to support reintegration, and the experience of these women was very mixed. If they return home emptyhanded, they may be subject to mental and physical abuse. The key factor for successful reintegration is the “success” of the migration: Women who earn money and are appreciated enjoy an improvement in their financial conditions, but in other cases, such as unwanted pregnancies or suspicion of other relationships, women are harassed and may be abandoned by their families, and more generally become victims of violence. On the other hand, some women have started their own businesses, others rear animals, engage in agricultural production, resume domestic work at home, or invest in their houses through renovation and improvements and are respected by their family and community.

Many if not most Nepalese women migrants transit through India and are not officially recognised. As a result, they are dependent on NGOs for support. However, NGO support is minimal for returnees, reaching only a small share of the returned migrant population, leaving women without support at home or when they remigrate in a cycle of precarity through much of their working lives. For example, the NGOs WOREC Nepal and Returned Migrant Women both keep booths in front of some district offices to support migrant women. WOREC offers some economic help for re-establishment, providing Rs10,000 (US\$77) per person (KII 07), as part of their safe migration program, but this is limited and only reaches the most vulnerable women who approach them for assistance.

In general, women reported that there is little reason to return or remain in Nepal because of limited employment options, so remigration for work is the only choice. Some women have returned due to concerns that their children are not being looked after properly, but the main reason for returning was to renew their visas and search for new overseas contracts. Official migrant workers, who are mainly men, have access to pension funds, health insurance, and other support from the government, while women who face severe migration restrictions resort to informal channels and are denied this social welfare.

Training

[Bangladesh](#)

Many of the women interviewed in Bangladesh had access to training from NGOs and the government programme. Data from ILO (2022) on the WiF-2 project indicate that in 2021, 30,000 women potential migrants were reached by outreach activities (door-to-door visits, community and courtyard meetings, etc.). As a guide, this corresponds with around one-third of the total women migrants from 2019 (as a guide), and a further 5,000 completed a one-and-a-half-day NGO training, which covered issues such as their rights and who to contact if they run into trouble, gender issues, and child marriage. In addition, the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) offers a one-month skills and language training programme, but this is time-consuming for poor women who can't afford to be away from home for so long, while it is relatively easy to obtain a fake training certificate through an agent for a fee.

Both the FGDs and KIs in Bangladesh emphasized the importance of local training through NGOs, including the door-to-door outreach, especially about their rights and the importance of opening two bank accounts and having their own savings. Even with training, however, it is difficult for women to avoid agents, but at least they are in a stronger bargaining position. On a broader social level, there are cases of migrant women who marry their daughters off at a young age to avoid their being harassed and subject to further stigma, but as result of the training, incidence of underage marriages has fallen.

However, the official training is not widely available; residents from remote areas have not received any training and do not have any other source of information; they still complete their migration processes through agents. Formal training, while useful, is impractical for poorer women who migrate for domestic work. As noted, it is costly in terms of occupying time when women could be earning money or providing for their family. The temptation to bypass it is strong and easily done. Door-to-door interactions and group meetings with NGO staff are seen to be more useful, as they inform women of the risks that are involved in migration, and how to mitigate them and reduce costs, as well as increasing their autonomy in terms of control over income. This work is important in reducing the risk of migration failure and the associated debt traps.

[Nepal](#)

In Nepal, NGOs offer vocational training skills development for returning migrants and training in domestic work for prospective migrants.

The existing training reaches very few migrants. ILO provided two-day orientation trainings prior to going abroad. The NGO Returned Migrant Women (RMW) provides advice/advocacy on foreign work. There are one-day orientations and a training program for aspiring migrants, and some are selected for a two-day orientation training. They are told about the opportunities in their own county and that going abroad is an alternate option. Most of the people who took the training have engaged in productive activities. They are taught some language skills, calculating incomes, and about machines used in households.

The Swiss government supported Safer Migration (SaMi) Program is a bilateral project through the Nepalese government that teaches skills for formal migrants, but does not reach irregular migrants. The NGO Pourakhi helps women with skills training after returning to Nepal and, in some cases, provides work to returned migrants to

compensate for the salary they were denied by overseas employers. Pourakhi also provides vegetable-growing and poultry-raising training when women come back, and some returnees have opened tailoring shops after sewing training. The central issue, however, is that the skills learnt abroad are not put to use in Nepal. Tailoring is the main training provided locally by the government, but it is not very applicable to work in the garment industry. Trainings are needed that better cater to women's particular needs, such as small business management, loans for starting up a business, and pathways into various industry sectors and employment. Because the government does not have a coherent policy for Nepalese women's employment, current measures are mostly delivered by NGOs, which are constrained in what they can do and whom they can reach.

Workstream 4

WS4 identifies additional WiF-2 interventions in the employer space in Lebanon based on employers' interactions within the migration pathway to address the following research question: What are the different ways employers interact with private recruitment agencies and government institutions? How do existing processes and practices contribute to increased risk of trafficking/forced labour of migrant workers? This section draws heavily on a research paper and policy note that are currently under review:

- Abdulrahim, S., Z. Cherri, M. Adra and F. Hassan. Beyond Kafala! Employers' discriminatory attitudes and violations of the rights and freedoms of women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Under review.
- Abdulrahim, S., Z. Cherri, M. Adra and F. Hassan. Beyond Kafala: Employer roles in growing vulnerabilities of women migrant domestic workers: Evidence from a mixed-methods study in Lebanon. Under review.

Data and Methodology

To address this question, we used a mixed methods approach with secondary quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were gathered through a survey of 1,200 Lebanese employers of live-in women migrant domestic workers (WMDWs) in 2015. The survey geography was three urban areas in Lebanon, including Greater Beirut. Areas were divided into clusters of 80 to 100 residential buildings. The main eligibility criterion was having hired a live-in WMDW at the time of the survey. To identify eligible households, a systematic walk-through and skip-pattern methodology was used to complete a minimum of 10 interviews in each cluster. Surveys were conducted with an adult member in the household with information on the live-in migrant worker; in most cases, this was a female member of the household. Employers were asked about the process of hiring the live-in migrant worker, knowledge of kafala and the Lebanese Standard Contract (LSC), and practices such as withholding the worker's passport. Employers were also asked about their agreement with a list of discriminatory attitudes toward WMDWs.

Univariate analyses were done to present frequencies and percentages, followed by bivariate analyses to assess associations between predictors and five employer practices; a $p \leq 0.5$ was considered statistically significant. A set of logistic regression models were specified to test multivariate associations between each employer practice and 1) kafala knowledge, 2) contract knowledge, 3) discriminatory attitudes, and 4) mode of recruitment. Models were adjusted for sex, age, education, and religion.

In addition to the survey, 20 employers of live-in WMDWs were recruited through purposive sampling to participate in a one-time qualitative interview. The interview guide was constructed to gather in-depth data from employers on their understanding of kafala and other legal obligations as well as their labour practices and their rationales for engaging in these practices. The guide also included open-ended questions on reasons for hiring a WMDW and the recruitment process. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Findings from this qualitative study informed the development of

quantitative survey instrument. For this evaluation, interview transcripts underwent a second full round of rigorous coding and generation of themes using Dedoose (<http://www.dedoose.com>). Qualitative findings were used to elaborate on the quantitative results.

Results

In Lebanon, as in other Arab countries, WMDWs are recruited through the sponsorship system, kafala. Under this system, a potential migrant worker can only obtain legal residency and a work permit in the country of destination if she is sponsored by a specific employer (ILO 2017). Once in the destination country, the worker cannot transfer to a new employer unless granted permission by the original sponsor. The system heightens the social, economic, and legal vulnerability of WMDWs and has been described as unfree or bound labour and a system of racialized servitude. Yet, kafala is not a written policy but rather a collection of administrative procedures, customary practices, and socially acceptable norms that are maintained by various players throughout the migration process (ILO 2016). In Lebanon, kafala is managed by state administrative entities such as the Ministry of Labour and the General Security apparatus; the procedures, practices, and norms, however, are sustained by intermediaries in origin and destination countries. Past research on kafala focused on the aspects of exploitation and abuse, linking migrant domestic work with trafficking and focusing on a victimhood narrative (Abu Habib 1998; Jureidini & Moukarbel 2006; Pande 2012; Parreñas 2022).

However, the role of intermediaries involved in the migration pathway has received insufficient attention. In Arab countries, intermediaries tend to be private recruitment agents with strong financial interests in maintaining the kafala system. They have been even known to inform employers that passport withholding and mobility restrictions form part of kafala (Frantz 2008; ILO 2016). Ghaddar et al. (2020), using qualitative data, find that recruitment agencies justify exploitative practices as necessary to protect their and the employers' financial investments in the recruitment process.

Finally, the employer–WMDW relationship is also governed by a standard contract developed in 2007, which accords limited labour rights (but falling short of ILO's Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers). While the contract does not mention the worker's passport, it requires full salary payment at the end of every month and a full day of rest per week.

The question then arises as to whether advocacy efforts that focus on abolishing Kafala as a legal term would mitigate employers' exploitative practices that violate the workers' rights and freedoms, particularly in a country like Lebanon. The WiF-2 project has worked with other partners toward revising the standard contract in Lebanon and aligning it with ILO convention 189 (Convention concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers). The revised contract was ultimately not adopted by the Lebanese government. ILO also developed a video on domestic workers that was shown on Lebanese television: [Domestic work is work! - YouTube](#).

Findings from both the survey and qualitative interviews revealed that participants have limited knowledge about the legal meaning of kafala in general and, in some cases, an

expressed lack of interest in knowing. On average, survey participants answered three out of five kafala knowledge questions correctly ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.37$) and only 18.8 percent answered all the kafala knowledge questions correctly.

Similarly, survey participants' knowledge of the stipulations in the Lebanese Standard Contract (LSC)—which they signed when they hired a WMDW—was limited; only 4.2 percent of the sample answered all contract knowledge questions correctly ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.75$).

Qualitative research similarly revealed that, apart from understanding that kafala places the worker under the responsibility and control of the employer, participants had little knowledge of legal aspects that define the employer–worker relationship. Several employers stated during in-depth interviews that they had not read the contract and either sought the advice of the recruitment agent, complied with prevalent norms, or set their own rules according to what rights they thought the worker deserves.

The analysis found that employers engaged in various practices that restrict the rights and freedoms of WMDWs, which are not part of kafala and not in accordance with the LSC. For example, even though neither kafala nor the LSC mention withholding the worker's passport, most of the employers surveyed reported doing so (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Employer practices in Lebanon

Practice	N (%)
Withholding the WMDW's passport	
Yes	94.3%
No	0.57%
Salary payment in full at end of month	
Yes	59.5%
No	40.5%
Giving the WMDW a full day off	
Yes	49.5%
No	50.5%
WMDW goes out on her day off	
Yes	47.9%
No	52.1%
Locking the WMDW inside the house	
Yes	22.6%
No	77.4%

Source: Authors.

Further, only three out of every five employers pay the worker's salary in full at the end of every month and only about half give her a full day of rest every week, two rights which are clearly stipulated in the LSC. Of those who give the worker a day of rest, less than half allow her to go out on her own. Almost a quarter of the employers reported that they sometimes or always lock the worker inside the house.

Qualitative findings suggest clear intent by the employers to restrict the worker from exercising agency on the one hand, and infantilizing her as uneducated, gullible, and

incapable of making decisions on the other hand. On their reasoning of withholding passports, employers expressed worry that if the worker possessed her own documents, it would be easier for her to “run-away” before the conclusion of her contract, thereby causing the employer financial loss. Kafala was often evoked to justify restricting the worker from going out to reduce the risk of her running away. Otherwise, rationales came in the form of statements about morality, sexuality, and fear that the worker, if not restricted, would fall prey to an illegal network.

Employers’ relatively high level of discriminatory attitudes toward WMDWs were also evident. On average, participants agreed with five out of the seven discriminatory statements about WMDWs shown in Table 4.2, and a quarter of the sample agreed with all seven discriminatory statements.

Table 4.2: Discriminatory attitudes of employers

Attitude	
1	DWs are never to be trusted
2	DWs are moody/difficult to please
3	DWs are not clean
4	DWs do not know how to raise children
5	DWs come to Lebanon having mental/psychological problems
6	DWs are lazy and always need to be prodded to work
7	DWs are not smart and cannot make the right decisions

Note: DWs = domestic workers.

Source: Authors.

Many employers rely on private recruitment agents, rather than official government institutions, for information about the recruitment and hiring process and to resolve disputes. We find that respecting worker’s right to freedom of movement is significantly associated with both gender and age, with a higher proportion of men and older participants indicating that the WMDW they hire goes out on her own on her day off; while one-third of younger participants reported locking the WMDW inside sometimes or all the time. Regarding education, respondents with a university degree or higher were significantly more likely to give the worker a day off, as stipulated in the contract, but education did not affect other practices. Participants who recruited a worker through personal contacts, rather than through a recruitment agency, were more likely to respect the worker’s right to receive a full day of rest and to go out on her own (Table 4.3).

We also find that knowledge of kafala was not associated with salary payment at the end of the month, time off, or freedom of movement, but respondents who do not respect the worker’s right to go out on their own during her day off exhibited more accurate knowledge of kafala than those who respect this right (mean = 3.47 versus 3.20; $p = 0.019$) (Table 4.4).

We find that the gap in knowledge about the contract shows a statistically significant difference between those who respect the worker’s right to a full day of rest and those who do not (mean = 5.62 versus mean = 4.90; $p = 0.000$). Employer practices not mentioned in the contract are not associated with the employer’s knowledge of what the

contract stipulates. Finally, employers' discriminatory attitudes are correlated with their labour practices (Table 4.4).

Multivariable results presented in Table 4.5 confirm bivariate ones. The dependent variables in models 1-3 reflect negative labor practices: 1) not paying the worker her salary at the end of every month; 2) not giving her a full day off once a week; and 3) not allowing her to go out on her day off. The dependent variable in model 4 is locking the worker inside sometimes or all of the time. Knowledge about the contract associated with employers abiding by two labor rights that are clearly stipulated in the contract; as a participant's level of knowledge about the contract increases, they are less likely to not pay the worker her salary at the end of every month and less likely to not give her a full day of rest once a week. Contract knowledge did not associate with the two employer practices that violate the worker's freedom of movement but that are left out and not mentioned in the contract. Results also confirm that the mode of recruitment is associated with practices that violate the freedom of the worker. Agency-hired workers are less likely to go out on their own during their day off. This is confirmed by qualitative data. Participants who had limited kafala knowledge and who had not read the contract noted they would rely on the recruitment agent for advice on practices. Some participants narrated stories of how the recruitment agent "resolved" a dispute they had with the worker through physical violence. Although recruitment agencies affect workers early on in their migration journey and later on, by affecting employer practices, employers are not passive participants; indeed, many actively violate workers' rights.

Table 4.3: Bivariate associations (Chi-square tests of significance) between socio-demographic factors and mode of recruitment of the WMDW, and four employer practices

	Salary		Day off		Day out		Locks WMDW	
	N (%)	Sig.						
Gender								
Women	594 (58.3)	0.043	496 (49.3)	0.646	224 (45.7)	0.013	238 (23.5)	0.063
Men	120 (66.3)		92 (51.1)		55 (59.8)		31 (17.2)	
Age								
21-40	234 (57.4)	0.388	206 (51.2)	0.053	85 (41.9)	0.024	136 (33.5)	0.000
41-60	303 (59.5)		261 (51.8)		125 (48.3)		103 (20.4)	
61 and above	171 (62.6)		117 (43.3)		67 (57.8)		28 (10.3)	
Education								
Less than university	366 (60.4)	0.512	246 (41.2)	0.000	124 (51.0)	0.205	122 (20.3)	0.065
University and above	343 (58.5)		340 (58.4)		154 (45.7)		144 (24.7)	
Religion								
Christian	328 (56.5)	0.138	322 (56.4)	0.000	173 (54.6)	0.001	123 (21.5)	0.268
Muslim	321 (62.6)		208 (40.8)		78 (37.7)		125 (24.5)	
Other	56 (58.9)		51 (54.8)		25 (49.0)		17 (17.9)	
Recruitment								
Agency	618 (58.9)	0.275	502 (48.2)	0.012	212 (42.6)	0.000	246 (23.6)	0.023
Personal networks	96 (63.6)		86 (59.3)		67 (79.8)		23 (15.3)	

Source: Authors.

Table 4.4: Bivariate associations (T-tests of significance) between knowledge of Kafala, knowledge of the contract, and discriminatory attitudes, and four employer practices

	Kafala knowledge		Contract knowledge		Discriminatory attitudes	
	Mean (SD)	Sig.	Mean (SD)	Sig.	Mean (SD)	Sig.
Salary						
Yes	3.29 (1.381)	0.432	5.35 (1.746)	0.021	4.88 (2.025)	0.621
No	3.23 (1.368)		5.12 (1.756)		4.94 (1.762)	
Day off						
Yes	3.35 (1.370)	0.058	5.62 (1.630)	0.000	4.77 (1.962)	0.017
No	3.20 (1.378)		4.90 (1.805)		5.04 (1.875)	
Day out						
Yes	3.20 (1.426)	0.019	5.65 (1.635)	0.616	4.45 (2.004)	0.000
No	3.47 (1.314)		5.58 (1.639)		5.06 (1.886)	
Locks WMDW						
Yes	3.40 (1.238)	0.076	5.29 (1.734)	0.731	5.39 (1.650)	0.000
No	3.23 (1.415)		5.25 (1.766)		4.76 (1.977)	

Source: Authors.

Table 4.5: Regression models to predict non-payment of salary, not giving a worker a day off, not giving her a day out, and locking her inside, adjusting for sex, age, education, and religion

		Salary		Day off		Day out		Locks WMDW	
		OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Model 1	Kafala knowledge	0.971	0.891-1.057	0.931	0.854-1.016	1.131	0.999-1.281	1.054	0.948-1.172
Model 2	Contract knowledge	0.913	0.853-0.976 ²	0.8	0.743-0.860 ³	0.968	0.873-1.073	0.979	0.903-1.061
Model 3	Discriminatory attitudes	1.029	0.967-1.095	1.019	0.957-1.085	1.151	1.052-1.259 ²	1.242	1.143-1.350 ³
Model 4	Recruitment agency	1.271	0.883-1.830	1.461	1.010-2.114 ¹	4.698	2.645-8.342 ³	1.691	1.043-2.744 ¹

1. Significant at p<0.05 2. Significant at p<0.01 3. Significant at p<0.001

Source: Authors.

Recommendations

For future advocacy efforts focused on ending the exploitation of WMDWs in Lebanon and improving their living and working conditions, it would be better to focus on concrete actions rather than abstract calls to abolish kafala. This would require dismantling the entitlements of the various players that maintain kafala and give it life through their practices. Employers are key players; their attitudes, values, and financial interests shape the rights and freedom of WMDWs. To reduce vulnerabilities of WMDWs, employers' knowledge about the LSC needs to be increased through awareness campaigns, and the contractual language needs to include explicit provisions about workers' right to free

movement and to passport possession. Curbing the political power of recruitment agencies in Lebanon, which contribute to shaping the living and working conditions, is second important measure to reduce WMDWs' vulnerabilities.

Although enhancing employers' knowledge of the local legal framework and adjusting the contract will be beneficial, one of the main findings of the study is that discriminatory attitudes rather than knowledge of kafala or the LSC distinguished employers who violate the worker's rights and free movement from those who do not. Thus, the potential of any awareness-raising approach in abating employer practices without addressing employers' discriminatory attitudes—that lead them to isolate WMDWs and curtail their ability to join social networks—will remain limited. ultimately, employers' practices and the social norms that these practices create are a key component shaping the kafala system. Thus, interventions that address discriminatory attitudes toward WMDWs are a third measure to reduce WMDWs' vulnerabilities. Mobilizing the morality of employers can create new social norms and fairer working conditions for WMDWs, even under kafala.

Workstream 5: Qualitative Study to Assess the Role of Social Networks for Elderly Care Workers and Care Recipients

WS5 was conceptualized as a qualitative assessment of the role of social networks in informing and supporting women in Lebanon, focused on the research question, How and to what extent do a migrant's social networks in the destination country impact conditions of forced labour and work quality? This activity had to be reconceptualized, however, due to the continued/growing precarity of women migrants in Lebanon, the cut-backs in live-in domestic workers, and the high share of undocumented/irregular/illegal "freelancing" women migrants in Lebanon. It had therefore become less useful to design an app or other platforms to grow migrant workers' social networks in Lebanon as planned in the initial proposal and the research design paper. Discussions about a potential the social network intervention had included a website where migrants could barter services, or a site or similar that would allow migrants to charge similar fees for similar services, such as care for elder people, for which there is a large demand. There were thus three key reasons for abandoning the exploratory interventions. First, largely illegal, freelancing migrants who work for several employers are not representative of domestic workers in West Asia. Lebanon is an exception borne out of the country's economic crisis and a less conservative society, and therefore, findings could not be directly used to support broader interventions. Second, as freelancers are largely illegal, any app or site that would link them could attract Security Forces and lead to jail time. Third, we learned of a platform for migrants that had been tried in Jordan and had led to adverse outcomes for the migrants.

Following discussions with CEDIL and with approval in August of 2022, we instead designed and implemented a qualitative assessment of the role of social networks and capital among migrants in relation to elderly employers in Lebanon, given the growing needs in the elderly employer sector for migrant workers and the availability of freelance migrants to support such employers. The goal of the reconceptualized study was to better understand perceptions of services provided by women migrants for elderly employers and how networks among women migrants could facilitate better welfare outcomes for both parties.

The full study is currently under review for publication as an IFPRI Discussion Paper:

- Nassif, G. & S. Dakkak. Elder Care in Lebanon: An Analysis of Care Workers and Care Recipients in the Face of Crisis. Under review. IFPRI Discussion Paper series.

Data and Methodology

This study is based on two months of qualitative data collection and research done in Beirut, Lebanon, between October and December 2022, with care workers, elderly care recipients, and the family members or friends who employed in-home care to support older persons.²⁵ Sampling was done using a snowball technique, beginning with key contact points in the field of care work (e.g., worker organizations and community

²⁵ It is critical to note that throughout this report, the terms "elderly care worker" and "migrant domestic worker" are used interchangeably, since, relative to our study sample, all of the migrant domestic workers we spoke with had provided or were currently providing elderly care as their primary task.

leaders) and elderly care (e.g., NGOs specialized in elderly care, researchers, activists, etc.). These primary contacts were asked to distribute flyers with information about the project, including information on upcoming focus group discussions. In this way, we managed to recruit participants for and conduct six focus group discussions, as well as five key informant interviews.

To recruit focus group discussion participants who were elderly care recipients or the employers of elderly care workers, we reached out to several organizations and key informants for support. The University of Seniors at the American University of Beirut was the most helpful in this regard; based on their distribution of our research flyers, we were able to recruit nine elderly care recipients and employers of elderly care workers to participate in focus group discussions. Two focus group discussions were conducted with Lebanese elderly care recipients and the employers of elderly care workers. To qualify, participants must have employed or currently employ a migrant domestic worker to provide care for an older person in their household or a separate household. As we started to recruit participants, we realized that older persons might not be able to travel to participate in an interview in-person, so we offered to conduct several one-on-one interviews over the phone or via Zoom, when possible, with older persons. We were therefore able to conduct three additional one-on-one interviews with older persons who currently employ a migrant domestic worker. In total, we interviewed 12 participants who identified as elderly care recipients or as employers of migrant domestic workers who were tasked with providing elderly care.

Four focus group discussions were conducted with elderly care providers, who all identified as migrant domestic workers. While several were currently working as part-time domestic workers, most workers were full-time, live-in employees in households with older persons. Most participants had up-to-date residency and work permits, while some were considered “freelance” workers.²⁶ These participants were identified with the help of migrant worker community organizations and leaders, specifically leaders from the Alliance for Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon. Participants represented the following nationalities: Filipina, Sri Lankan, Ethiopian, Cameroonian, Nepalese, Malagasy, Ghanaian, and Bangladeshi. The length of time that workers had been in Lebanon varied; the longest time a worker had been in Lebanon was reported as 30 years and the shortest time was several months. At the time of the interview, all workers had worked or were currently working primarily in support of an older person. Most workers had been recruited through a formal recruitment agency, and several reported coming to Lebanon through informal channels, often following a friend or a family member who had previously emigrated to work in the country. While we had originally planned small focus group discussions of 3–5 workers maximum, several participants brought friends with them because they also worked with older persons. In total, we were able to speak with 24 migrant domestic workers who perform elderly care work for their employers.

²⁶ The term “freelance” in Lebanon denotes several legal statuses for migrant domestic workers. The first usage denotes workers who have, “nominal sponsors [that] do not ask domestic workers to work for them under contract on an exclusive or full-time basis—although, this is what the law requires. Technically documented freelancers enjoy valid legal status in the country, but at the same time they are not captive to the full range of constraints inherent in the sponsorship system” (Hamill, 2011, p. 50). In its second usage, the term “freelance” is used to denote workers without a legal residency or work permit.

All interviews were held in a private room at a café in Hamra, Beirut. Given its centralized location and its quiet environment, the café was an excellent place to conduct these interviews. All participants were given a \$10 transportation stipend to compensate them for their time.²⁷ Participants were also offered a drink of their choice and small biscuits and other snacks, provided by the café.

Key informant interviews were conducted with five specialists in the field of elderly care. These informants were affiliated with the following organizations: the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2), the American University of Beirut and the Centre for the Study of Ageing in Lebanon (1), the UN Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (1), and St. George's Hospital (1). Unfortunately, our repeated attempts to contact other key informants were unsuccessful, given the tight research timeline and that many informants reported being very busy with end-of-the-year work commitments. All consented orally to being interviewed; and all but two interviewees chose not to be recorded. In cases where interviewees were not recorded, the interviewer took detailed notes by hand throughout the interview to support my later analysis.

All focus group discussants were orally consented before the interview, using consent forms in both Arabic and English that had been previously approved by IFPRI's IRB and reviewed by the local research team in Lebanon. Upon obtaining consent, interviews were recorded and later transcribed into English by the research team for analytical purposes only. All transcripts are kept on a password-protected hard drive in the main researcher's (Gabriella Nassif) possession. Transcripts were first manually coded by the primary researcher, and later underwent a second and third round of coding using NVIVO qualitative software. Following three rounds of coding, data was organized according to the four primary research questions summarized below:

1. What are perceptions of elderly employers and potential employers of women migrant employees working in the domestic care sector of Lebanon?
2. What are the challenges women migrants face in working with elder employees in the domestic care sector?
3. What could be the role of social networks in growing transparency and information between employers and employees?
4. What interventions could be considered to improve both women migrants' and elder employers' outcomes in the context of an economic crisis?

Results

Findings are organized according to thematic focus. The next section is analytical in nature and discusses critical takeaways that can be deduced from the findings. This analysis is organized around the larger themes of the research project and responds to

²⁷ This fee was decided in collaboration between the primary researcher, Gabriella Nassif, and Sawsan Abdulrahim, the overall project director, based on their past experiences as qualitative researchers working with high-risk populations. The \$10 fee is justified by the following: the cost of taxi travel from around Beirut to Hamra and the cost of several hours of work. This fee was particularly important for migrant domestic workers, many of whom chose to take time away from their paid jobs to participate in this study.

the research questions listed above. This paper concludes with a set of recommended interventions based on the findings and analysis that can support better outcomes for both elderly care recipients and employers, and the migrant domestic workers who provide most of the elderly care work in Lebanon.

By far, employers preferred recruiting a care worker using a formal recruitment agency. As one interviewee noted, recruitment through an agency was the “right way” to hire a domestic worker. Many employers felt more secure working through an agency because “[with] an agency, there’s more trust.” Here, trust can refer to several different things, including but not limited to the guarantee that workers will perform the exact tasks required of them; the trust formed when employers are allowed to choose which worker they would like to hire (Haddad, 2002)²⁸; or the trust that the agency cultivates by immediately addressing all employer concerns, which might mean replacing an employer’s current worker with a new worker if they are having problems. As one interviewee, who hired a migrant domestic worker to support his elderly father, reported: “With the agency it’s more of a guarantee that we can trust her [the worker].” In particular, employers felt that agencies, albeit expensive, provide a source of security in instances where there are issues with their workers. Several interviewees reported cases where they “returned” a migrant domestic worker to the agency, either because they did not get along with the worker or because the worker was deemed “not a good fit.” In each of these cases, the recruitment agency either provided the employer with another worker or acted as a facilitator between the employer and the worker.²⁹ As one employer, who had chosen to hire a migrant domestic worker to support her elderly parents, noted, “[An] agency is better, [because] you feel like you have someone to talk to if you faced a problem...and they’ll talk to her [the worker] and tell her what she is supposed to do.” Relatedly, employers reported that “[worker] responsibilities are clear” when recruitment is done through a recruitment agency. “We ask for what we need [and tell them] our requirements,” reported one interviewee, which the recruitment agency uses to provide them with a list of workers who fit their criteria.

In this regard, employers felt that they were very clear regarding the terms and conditions under which they were hiring live-in migrant domestic worker. For employers, it is understood that the responsibilities required of their employee are made clear vis-à-vis the recruitment agency. Workers, however, largely felt the exact opposite about recruitment agencies and the role that these organizations play in the employer-employee relationship. The workers interviewed identified recruitment agencies as “businesses who sell [workers],”; they “sell the girl [worker]” and “take the money [from employers] and give us [workers] barely anything.” As one community leader noted, “the agency doesn’t have transparency, they don’t let the woman [worker] know what her roles and responsibilities are.”

²⁸ When employers decide to recruit a domestic worker using a recruitment agency, they are often shown a catalogue that includes the profiles of several different migrant workers for them to choose from. These profiles include photographs and other demographic information, including height, and their socioeconomic backgrounds, such as their education status.

²⁹ Based on the researchers’ previous research with migrant domestic workers in Beirut, Lebanon, these “facilitations” frequently take the form of threats, removing their access to their phones and therefore, the ability to speak with family and friends, and in the worst cases, physical violence. See Amnesty International (2019) for more evidence of migrant domestic workers’ negative experiences with recruitment agencies.

These answers are not surprising. Studies have long demonstrated the highly uneven power relations between recruitment agencies and migrant workers in Lebanon (Amnesty International, 2019b; Hamill, 2011; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004; KAFA (Enough!) Violence & Exploitation, 2014). This uneven relationship makes recruitment agencies the most profitable component of the migrant labour sector. Annually, recruitment agency revenue “accounts for roughly 60 percent of the industry’s total revenues” (Dagher et al., 2020, p. 8). As of 2019, according to Amnesty International, there were approximately 569 formally authorized recruitment agencies in Lebanon. Under Decision No. 1/168 of 2015, recruitment agencies are held to certain regulations: “refrain from accepting fees from domestic workers; not to humiliate or physically abuse workers; to report disputes between workers and employees to the Ministry of Labor and to file a complaint when needed; and to pay workers to return to their home countries during the first six months under uncertain conditions” (Amnesty International, 2019b, pp. 9–10). However, recruitment agencies operate with relative impunity under Lebanese law. Workers frequently report being denied repatriation and being forcibly returned to work with another employer. In this way, recruitment agencies function like labour traffickers, moving workers from one employment situation to another without the consent of the worker (Amnesty International, 2020b). Recruitment agencies also encourage employers to confiscate the passports and cell phones of their workers, and workers commonly report experiencing physical violence at the hands of recruitment agency employees (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

Workers were also unhappy about the lack of a clear contract upon their arrival in Lebanon. While some workers reported signing a contract before leaving their home countries, most workers reported being forced to sign a completely new contract in Lebanon. This contract is written in Arabic, a language that many workers cannot understand. One worker even reported using her original contract, written in French, to fight back against her employer when they were making impossible demands on her. However, her employer would defer to the Arabic contract, the one signed in Lebanon, as “proof” of what the worker must do every day.

The struggle for a standard unified contract (SUC) has been ongoing in Lebanon since 2009, when the Ministry of Labor first approved a standard contract for migrant domestic workers (Amnesty International, 2019b).³⁰ However, this contract did little to secure the full rights of migrant domestic workers³¹, who continued, along with their Lebanese and international counterparts and advocates, to lobby for a new SUC with stronger protections for workers. In 2020, the then-caretaker Minister of Labor Lamia Yammine put forward a new SUC based on discussions with a national level working group that included migrant domestic worker representatives and advocates. Only one month later, in October 2020, the Lebanese State Shura Council, the country’s highest administrative

³⁰ The 2009 standard contract guaranteed the following items: a weekly 24-hour period of rest; eight continuous hours of rest per day; restricts the maximum number of workers hours per day to 10; guarantees paid sick leave and six days of annual leave; requires employers pay workers monthly; requires that employers provide healthcare access; and requires employers to provide a least one paid phone call for workers to reach their families.

³¹ Workers were not allowed to leave their employer’s home without the employer’s consent and employers were allowed to terminate a worker’s contract due to a “mistake or an act of negligence.” As Amnesty International (2019) notes, however, the contract does not clearly define what a “mistake or an act of negligence” actually means, leaving it open to flexible interpretation by employers and recruitment agencies, among others.

court, blocked the new contract under pressure from representatives of the Syndicate of the Owners of Recruitment Agencies (SORAL) (Amnesty International, 2020b). Worse, in 2022, the Lebanese NGO Legal Agenda obtained a leaked copy of a draft law for a new SUC, which they called an “absolute scandal that audaciously violates basic human rights in favor of the vested interests of a handful of ‘traders’ embodied by the recruitment agencies in Lebanon” (Kanaan, 2022; Legal Agenda, 2022). Legal Agenda’s analysis argued that this new contract would worsen the plight of migrant domestic workers and effectively repeal many of the preliminary human rights guaranteed in the 2009 contract. Worse, Legal Agenda noted the exclusion of migrant workers and their advocates from the entire drafting process.

Without a standard contract, workers like those interviewed for this report remain without access to legal recourse in dangerous situations. Instead, they find themselves effectively trapped in their employer’s homes, subjugated to the will of a contract that many of them cannot read nor understand. Worse, these contracts, as noted above, leave workers in the dark about their responsibilities within their employers’ households and the rights that they have as workers employed in a Lebanese household.

Specific to elderly care, workers reported that they were often unaware that their responsibilities would extend beyond what many understood to be “normal” domestic tasks, in other words, cooking, cleaning, and in some households caring for young children. As one Filipina domestic worker noted, “they [employers] also have to specify what my tasks will be from the beginning. If I am just going to clean or be a nanny or take care of an old woman, they must say it in the contract. You told me I am a domestic worker and that is all I’ll do.” “It’s important to know what our job is exactly,” another domestic worker reported, “because sometimes we cannot carry them [older person] if they need,” or perform certain specialized tasks that might be required when caring for an older person, such as dispensing certain medications or taking a blood pressure reading. Relatedly, several workers in the context of a focus group discussion emphatically noted that the term “domestic worker” is “not [big] enough” to encompass all the work that they are expected to do. As one domestic worker pointed out,

I do everything like cooking and cleaning. I do everything, I can’t say I don’t want to do this or that. But now I am with a *Madame*³² who keeps on asking for things [all the time]. They think a domestic worker is there to finish everything.

In some sending countries, specifically the Philippines, migrant domestic workers are trained on some of the tasks they might perform, “to use the iron [and the] vacuum,” as one worker noted, by state recruitment agencies. These agencies are common in the Philippines and in Sri Lanka, where the State takes an active role in preparing women citizens to work as domestic workers abroad (Ireland, 2018; Silvey & Parreñas, 2020). However, many workers pointed out that such trainings do not matter if they are required to perform other tasks when they arrive. “In the contract, it just says I am a household worker,” reported one worker, “but when I came, I did everything.” When asked to elucidate on what “everything” includes, she clarified: “I clean, cook, do the groceries, and take care of *Teta* [elderly woman]. It’s too much.” One community activist noted that this

³² The term *Madame* is frequently used by migrant domestic workers to reference their female employers or charges. Similarly, the term *Mister* is used to signify male employers or charges.

“heavy” workload was the reason that so many domestic workers frequently get sick; employers, she noted, “must bring two workers to help” with the work because it is far too much for one person to accomplish. “Like they [employers] have to understand that I can’t do everything, even if I get paid,” noted another worker. “We are not machines: Taking care of old people takes a lot of work,” she continued.

It makes it harder to work for old people because they are very demanding and require special treatment this is why I always say we have to understand more what is asked from us to do exactly. The hardest job is taking care of old people.

Prior to the crisis, live-in domestic workers were legally allowed one day off per week on Sundays. Monthly salaries were paid in dollars and varied according to the worker’s nationality and by employer, with Ethiopian and Sri Lankan women making the lowest amount (approximately \$150 per month) and Filipina women making the most (between \$400–\$600 a month) (Hamill, 2011; Mendis, 2014). Following the collapse of the Lebanese economy that started in earnest in 2019, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, workers have experienced severe salary cuts while being forced to continue working, often without time off as a result of government-enforced lockdowns (ILO, 2020a). Worse, many workers experienced virulent xenophobia as they were accused of spreading the virus and, in some cases, bringing it with them to Lebanon. These conditions worsened after the explosion at the Port of Beirut, which destroyed key areas of the city where migrant worker communities lived. Further, the Port’s destruction of Lebanese livelihoods meant that many migrant domestic workers were fired from their jobs, leaving them without shelter and without an income (Amnesty International, 2020a; ILO, 2020b). In the worst cases, workers were abandoned by their employers on the front steps of their embassies, in the hopes that the embassy would cover the worker’s repatriation costs (Qiblawi, 2020).

Workers who participated in this study were not immune to these crises. Almost every worker who participated reported having their salary cut, having a salary that was now paid partly in Lebanese pounds, or, in the worst cases, were not receiving a salary at all. The collapse of the Lebanese currency has made it impossible for workers to convert this liquid cash to dollars, which is the currency they would use to transfer money back home to support their families. As one worker noted, “the government accepts [that employers pay] \$350 for a worker, but then they give her three to four jobs. So, \$350 is not enough.” “Our salary today is not enough at all,” reported another worker, “it doesn’t make ends meet.” Many workers felt similarly and pointed out that their salaries were not an accurate reflection of the amount of work they were required to do each day. “But we can’t say no [to our employers],” one worker complained. “I can’t just leave him [employer] without any help.” Others reportedly felt similar obligations, especially in households with dependents, such as children and older persons.

In several cases, workers’ salaries were not augmented to reflect increasing responsibilities. For example, Mina³³, a young Sri Lankan worker, reported that she originally arrived in Lebanon to a household with only two employers in it. “But then, *Madame*, her father, he got very sick and came to live with us.” Mina then became responsible for providing specialized care to her employer’s sick father. “I would also go to the mountains sometimes to clean for *Madame*.” Here, Mina is referring to her

³³ All names used in this report are pseudonyms, to protect interviewees’ identities.

employers' second house in their family village outside of Beirut, a common occurrence in Lebanon. And yet, her employers did not consider raising her salary to compensate for the increasing amount of work. Instead, Mira told me,

They kept telling me that my contract said I had to do whatever they told me. So, I kept working. My salary after the crisis went from \$500 to \$300. The salary diminishes irrespective of one's work. Even if they have kids who work outside of Lebanon and are earning in dollars, they will still use the crisis as an excuse to lower your salary.

In Focus Group Discussions with employers, the topic of workers' salaries was treated with caution. Most employers responded according to social dictates, meaning, they reported a seemingly reasonable salary, somewhere between \$400 and \$600 for Filipina workers and salaries between \$150 and \$300 a month for other nationalities. However, it is important to highlight that employers might not be reporting truthfully; without access to actual bank statements or receipts, it is hard to prove whether employers are accurately reporting their worker's salary. One employer reported that the salary she pays is "enough to do the work. We have a small house, so the work isn't too demanding." She continued, noting that even though the worker was living with her family, the afternoons "do not involve [the worker having to] clean," so the worker is "able to relax." Joseph, another Lebanese employer, pointed out that there is "no specific schedule" that his domestic worker must follow. Even though "she [worker] is full-time [live-in] and sleeps here, the work isn't around the clock," he reported. It should be clear, however, that employers' reports about the working conditions of their employees might not be accurate. Instead, these descriptions risk being subjective; in fact, very few workers reported having leisure time while working or having spare time to spend on themselves.

Employers did make it clear, however, that workers were expected to do everything in the house that was asked of them. "Yes, all day she works," responded one employer. "She does everything in the house for us: she cleans, she takes care of us, and she cooks. With what we pay her, this is what is expected."

When asked about elderly care, most workers reported on care provided to older persons in need of specialized healthcare. This might include any range of activities, from providing medicines to cooking a specialized diet for a person with diabetes, to ensuring that a person is moved frequently enough to avoid pressure sores. Some workers provide physical therapy to their employers in the form of accompanied walks, guided movements and stretching, and in some cases, even verbal or other stimulatory exercises. Others were directly asked by their *kafeel* (sponsor) to be a "companion" to an older person. Some workers highlighted that the difficulties of these specialized tasks were why they were hired in the first place; rather than a direct family member performing the work, domestic workers are hired to support the family. As one worker noted, "The [family] sometimes don't like the smell, some don't like to [give] a bath...these things are the hardest [to do]. This is why they have us do it."

This specialized care was difficult for some workers, especially those who had little or no prior experience providing this type of care. Even migrant domestic workers who did have experience providing care to an older person noted certain difficulties. "Working with old people is very hard, even getting paid in [U.S.] dollars is not enough" to compensate, one

worker explained. In particularly difficult cases, workers were expected to work 24 hours a day, often without a break: "At night I wouldn't sleep until like 9AM. I change his diapers, give him medicine, and do many things during the night time."

While some workers are recruited directly to provide such care, others have older employers who, over time, experienced some type of health problem that caused a major increase in the domestic worker's workload. Malay, an Ethiopian worker, explains how the worsening condition of her employer made her domestic tasks more difficult; living with her employer and her employer's husband, she suddenly found herself responsible for two older people with quickly deteriorating health conditions.

I used to work for an old *Madame* who has diabetes and hypertension, and a *Mister* [employer's spouse] who had the same issues, as well as Alzheimer. The *Madame* was OK, but one time she fell in the bathroom and then her back really started to hurt...she even went to the hospital and slept there. When she came back, I started to help her with showers and [to] clean [her]. Shortly after, she passed away. Then, her husband started to forget a lot.

During this time, the workload became so intense that the adult children of Malay's employers hired another live-in worker to support Malay. However, this worker only made things more difficult to provide decent care to Malay's employers, as she was "aggressive" with them and "yelled all the time" at their employers. Ultimately, this second helper was dismissed after Malay's *Madame* passed away. Meanwhile, Malay's male employer's Alzheimer's was continuing to worsen. Without specialized assistance, Malay was forced to depend on her own strategies and tricks to soothe him. Malay remembers that to make him fall asleep, she would "tell him that he should sleep before the thieves break into the house"; she did this because she "knew that there was a civil war in Lebanon" and that her employer "could remember this." During her interview, Malay recalls these experiences calmly even though at the time, she remembers feeling overwhelmed with the work. "His condition was extreme," she notes; so extreme that at times, her employer would imagine that Malay was his wife and would consequently "try to touch [her]." "Other times, he would propose to me and ask me to marry him." One night, he called his adult children, who were living abroad in Canada at the time, to tell them that "I had started smoking, which they had forbidden me to do, even though I didn't smoke!"

Many of the workers recruited to participate in this study reported similar stories of feeling overwhelmed and overburdened by the specialized care required by their employers. Interestingly, while many workers reported difficulties learning how to provide this care, most of the employers that participated in this study claimed that they taught their employees how to provide this care. As one elderly Lebanese employer noted, "we taught her [the worker] what to do...to crush the pills and to put them into the food," as the employer's husband was unable to swallow whole pills. Several workers reported learning about the specialized care they had to give from the adult children of their employers. "At the beginning," one worker recalled, "we [she and her employer's adult daughter] would do it together, and then I learned on my own"; eventually, she would perform all these specialized tasks herself, including administering medicine several times a day and bathing her employer.

Broadly, both workers and employers confirmed that any “training” migrant domestic workers undertook to perform such specialized care was done informally in the household. In some cases, workers would learn directly from healthcare staff while they accompanied their employer to a doctor’s appointment. When asked about the importance of such specialized skillsets, employers were ambiguous. Employers expected that workers would be able to perform certain tasks like administering medications, cooking certain meals, and physically supporting a person to perform personal hygiene routines, such as showering. “We want someone who can do simple things,” noted one Lebanese employer; for this man and his wife, it was important that their in-home domestic worker could take a proper temperature reading and could measure a person’s blood pressure, given the declining health status of the man’s aging father. But tasks that employers identified as “simple,” like reading a blood pressure cuff, were in fact not simple tasks and required special training. Freddy, the Lebanese employer, continued, saying that he and his wife “did not mind” having to train their employees, and that this was a better arrangement than hiring someone who “knew everything” beforehand. “This way, we can train her [the worker] to do things the way we do them. She will know how to do the blood pressure [readings] and how often, as well as the medicines. We will show her.” One Lebanese employer from a second focus group made it clear that she, too, preferred to train her employer herself: “I don’t want them [the worker] to be too sophisticated and to have official training, someone can be good without a certificate, it depends.”

If there was a program and she has a certificate or more experience in taking care of elders, I would feel it’s safer to hire her. And yes, workers who have certificates or more experience should be getting paid a higher salary, especially if someone can afford it.

This sentiment, that workers with official training are not always better than workers without it, reveals a few key points. First, as one Lebanese employer noted, trainings are expensive and so, too, are skilled workers: “if we can afford it, why not” hire a better skilled worker, one employer pointed out, “but now [with the crisis] it’s too much.” Employers’ responses to probes about worker salaries also reflected tensions about the rising costs of quality care in Lebanon. When asked, most employers did agree that workers with professional training certificates, for example a CPR training certificate, could use these trainings to secure better salaries. These higher salaries, of course, would limit the number of households who could afford to hire these workers.

Second, the ambiguous response of Lebanese employers to trained workers reflects the ideological and material preference for “docile” and “cheap” workers. As feminists have noted in productive and reproductive economic sectors around the world, women have been routinely “cheaped” as laborers because of how they are constructed according to a set of “‘natural’ (read: gendered) attributes” that mark them as “unskilled, docile and secondary (and therefore disposable) labour,” in comparison to men, who perform valuable, formal labour (Kusakabe & Pearson, 2010, p. 19). These “natural” attributes are (re)produced vis-à-vis structural pressures that keep women siloed into informal, low-paid, and highly exploitative labour sectors; this reinforces women as docile and weak workers in the eyes of their employers. When in fact, women are not weak, but are

actively weakened and exploited by a labour system that actively seeks to make them a source of cheap labour.

The case of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon reflects these patterns. Migrant women workers are continuously funnelled into the extremely low-paid and highly exploitative sector of domestic work, where they are without legal recourse. Moreover, the dominant narratives of migrant domestic workers as trafficking victims in the Middle East exacerbates their subject positioning as “docile” or “weak” women in need of protection, rather than women whose agency has been forcibly removed by a legal and socioeconomic system that leaves them trapped within a violent and exploitative employer-employee relationship (de Regt, 2010). In Lebanon, the application of the kafala (visa) sponsorship system ensures that employers have nearly total “legal ownership” over their employees, as the worker is dependent on their employer for both their residency permit and their work permit (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Shahinian, 2012). Further, because of their exclusion from the Lebanese Labor Law, the only legal document that “protects” migrant domestic workers in Lebanon is the 2009 version of the Standard Unified Contract which, as discussed earlier, hardly affords migrant workers any real protections like access to social security, a minimum wage, or even maternity protections (Amnesty International, 2019b). To have skilled workers, therefore, would challenge this system and, relatedly, would challenge the hegemonic control that employers, emboldened by the kafala system, exert over migrant domestic workers. For Lebanese employers, the idea of working with a trained or highly skilled migrant domestic worker subconsciously challenges these underlying constructions of domestic workers as cheap, “docile,” and weak labour.

Unsurprisingly, workers expressed strong opinions in favour of skills trainings. Most workers noted that trainings are key for those workers who will be performing specialized care for older persons. “Learning to give medicine,” “how to handle emergency cases,” “how to call the ambulance,” and even a full “Red Cross training” were all mentioned as important skills that migrant domestic workers need if they are working with older persons. Many workers expressed interest in learning about diabetes and blood pressure, including how to measure these issues to better protect their employers. Others mentioned “first aid” more broadly, as a training that would be helpful given their work with elderly patients. Some workers were excited when asked about potential trainings for migrant domestic workers. As one worker, an Ethiopian community leader, told me, “we are young. We want to learn! Many of us stopped our education to come here. To have courses or trainings would be so helpful for the girls [workers], to give them something to look forward to.” When probed about the types of courses she and the members of her community might be interested in, she said,

Anything! Courses about computers, basic language skills, English, Arabic...start with small things and grow your knowledge. We need a special place for the migrant workers to go to, [where they can] have different courses like how to do this and that, to learn first aid or to read English.

Another community leader recalled a six-month long training course that she and several of her friends, who were also migrant domestic workers, took under the guidance of a

medical doctor at the American University of Beirut.³⁴ Every Sunday, which is the only guaranteed day off for migrant domestic workers each week, the workers would meet with this doctor at various hospitals in Beirut and outside of Beirut to learn special healthcare skills, including how to perform CPR and how to read a blood pressure cuff. While she and her friends were thrilled to have received this training, they had several complaints, most notably that the training was not internationally recognized, which meant that their efforts here in Lebanon would not translate to a better salary should they migrate to another country to perform in-home care. Second, workers were frustrated that they were forced to give up their only day off each week for a training; “this was a lot of work for six months,” noted this community leader, “and many girls couldn’t join us because they could not take off on Sundays.”

“I saw that she didn’t love old people that much.”

If employers were ambiguous about the specialized skills of in-home care workers, they were quite clear about what makes a “good” worker. Employers emphatically noted that in-home care workers need to function as “companions” for the older people they are working with; they needed to be “patient” and “caring.” Many employers stated that they expected their workers to “love working with older people” and to “enjoy” working with the elderly, “someone who likes older persons and who actually listens.” As one elderly Lebanese woman, who employed a domestic worker to support her to live independently, noted, “having a companion and trusting her to care for me is my main priority. Celia has become a friend, and that is what I want.” Another Lebanese woman, who employed a domestic worker to take care of her ailing elderly father, noted that “love,” and the relationship between the worker and the older person, was key to a successful employer-employee relationship. She describes this exact relationship regarding her father: “We loved her [the worker], and we knew my father loved her.” This “love,” in her opinion, is the key component often missing from the relationship between employers and migrant domestic workers. Without it, the situation can never work because, as she explains, “you leave your [ageing] parents at home, alone. You need to be able to trust the person who’s there, taking care of them.” In her opinion, it is “love” that defines this level of trust and comfort that is needed between not only the migrant domestic worker and the older person they are caring for, but also between the worker and their employer, to ensure that the older person is receiving the care that they need.

In contrast, Leila, a Lebanese woman who employed a live-in domestic worker to care for her elderly mother, knew that the first worker she had hired “wasn’t going to work” because, as she puts it, she “saw that she [the worker] didn’t love old people that much.” When pushed to explain this a bit more, she recalled:

She [the worker] was doing her job [at that time] with the nurse. But when I came [to check up on my mother] I saw that *al-bint*³⁵ wasn’t okay, I realized that she

³⁴ When asked to provide more information about this doctor, the worker unfortunately did not remember his last name. She pointed out that the training had taken place more than 10 years ago, after she had first arrived in Lebanon; she has no more contact with this doctor today.

³⁵ The term *bint* in Arabic translates to “daughter” or “girl” in English. In colloquial Arabic, the word *bint* is used as a term for a domestic worker. The term has a pejorative connotation, playing on the gendered constructions of daughters and girls as young and inexperienced, oftentimes silly. The term ideologically reinforces the dependent nature of the worker on the employer, and the employer’s role as the “adult” in the relationship, meant to discipline and teach the worker how to behave appropriately. See Jureidini, 2009, and Moukarbel, 2009, for more details.

didn't have the required criteria [to work with older persons] and that she didn't love old people that much. She never said this out loud but apparently, she would go to her friends' [houses] every week...She was the type of person who cares about how she dresses and stuff...I felt my mother was afraid [and] uncomfortable...This girl [worker] wasn't suitable for my mother at all.

Several things stand out in this case, notably that Leila is unable to clearly define how she knew that this worker "didn't love old people that much." Instead, Leila relies on broadly stereotypical depictions of domestic workers as "bad workers," which claim that workers are not really there to work but instead, are in Lebanon to "have fun" ("she would go to her friends' houses every week") and were superficial ("she was the type of person who cares about how she dresses and stuff"). Thus, it seems that Leila's definition of "love" is, more accurately, a definition that pertains to the amount of control she was able to exert over the domestic worker caring for her mother. More evidence of this slippage between "love" and control comes from employers' responses regarding what characteristics or issues would make them unequivocally fire a worker. Almost all the employers and older persons interviewed for this report mentioned the importance of personal hygiene and cleanliness; several employers mentioned that a worker who smokes is unacceptable. "Laziness" and "someone who is unkind" were both listed as responses by several of the employers. In one instance, Sami, a Lebanese man who had employed a domestic worker to care for his elderly parents, reported hiring a domestic worker who "used to sit all day long and watch TV and play on his mobile." He immediately fired the worker. Many employers also highlighted worker availability as a key issue: "If she [the worker] is difficult to reach, this is a no-no for me." In other words, employers expected workers to be available to them at all hours of the day, especially those who had at some point hired a part-time, live-out domestic worker. For this reason, among others, all the employers and elderly care recipients we spoke to preferred to hire a full-time, live-in worker, if they could afford it.

What such stories suggest is that employers are more concerned with certain intangible characteristics required of care workers, such as compassion, trust, empathy, and various other attributes, than they are with hard or specialized skills. In identifying these skills in particular, it becomes clear that employers' expectations regarding worker skillsets are inextricably linked to a worker's personal behaviour and, subsequently, the employer's ability to control how a worker behaves within their household. Further, employers' expectations mirrored global trends that recreate and reproduce women workers, and migrant women workers in particular, as docile and weak.

While employers frequently discussed certain skills as somehow innate to a worker's personality, workers took a more pragmatic approach to these skills, arguing that a person could learn to be patient with an older person. In effect, workers argued that through the skills trainings discussed in the previous section, workers could effectively learn appropriate strategies and techniques for dealing with difficult elderly charges or complicated care situations. In other words, workers did not see the qualities as somehow innate or "natural" to a worker; rather, they understood that these skills, just like the technical skills of CPR or reading a blood pressure test, could be honed, and further developed in the right environment.

Analysis

“I Do Everything”: The Impossible Conditions of Elderly Care in Lebanon

“No, I do everything. If she [employer] wants something from the supermarket, I go alone. If she needs medicine from the pharmacy, I go grab it for her.”

Limited State Support and a Damaged Welfare System

Without question, workers who participated in this study were overwhelmed with the amount of responsibility they had in relation to their elderly charges and the domestic chores of the household. The refrain “I do everything” was heard during every interview; workers stressed that their responsibilities extended far beyond the limits of what a “domestic worker” should be expected to do, in their view. Workers reported struggling to balance everyday tasks like cleaning and cooking, with the more demanding tasks of specialized elderly care, including providing medicines on-time, helping their charges with daily hygiene routines, and in some cases, providing care throughout the night. Particularly after the onset of the economic crisis, when families could no longer afford to hire specialized nursing or other healthcare services in the home, migrant domestic workers have taken on the brunt of this specialized work. As one worker noted, “So I do everything, my madam broke her hip and went to the hospital, so I even went with her and now I give her the medicine, the food, the shower...I do everything all around the clock.”

To provide this specialized care, workers learn from various people around them, including their employers, the adult children of their charges, doctors and other healthcare staff supporting their charges, and each other. As one Filipina community leader noted, “we are here for each other when we need. If she [another worker] has a question [about caring for someone] we try to tell her what we know and what she can do.” While a handful of workers were able to receive some type of specialized training, such as CPR or first aid training, many others were forced to rely on themselves and their own knowledge to provide specialized care. Without access to subsidized training courses and healthcare professionals, migrant domestic workers will have to continue learning about specialized care by themselves and through those around them.

What such findings ultimately suggest is that migrant domestic workers are filling a gap in older person care for middle- and upper-middle income households in the face of limited state services and a weakened welfare system. This is not a new trend but was evident before the 2019 economic crisis and later, following the onset COVID-19 and the explosion at the Port of Beirut. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the American University of Beirut (AUB) reported, out of 1,200 surveyed employers of migrant domestic workers, approximately one-fifth hired these workers to support an elderly household member (Abdulrahim, 2016). Migrant domestic workers have been a key buttress for elderly Lebanese that are living alone, which has become more frequent every year as large numbers of young Lebanese choose to emigrate (Abdulrahim et al., 2015; Doumit, 2015). The affordability of migrant domestic workers is especially important for elderly Lebanese living alone, considering the limited coverage of the country’s social security system (SOLIDAR, 2015). As Maya Abi Chahine, a professor at the

AUB and an advocate for elderly issues, noted during her interview, the NSSF is severely flawed and operates differently in different sectors. In the private sector, for example, the NSSF operates an end-of-service (EOS) one-time payment, which a retiree receives upon their immediate exit from the labor force. Abi Chahine also commented that this lack of social security makes it nearly impossible for many older persons in Lebanon to provide for themselves the necessary care that they need. Historically, family living abroad or even in Lebanon have been a source of financial support for older persons (Abdo, 2019); in light of the current economic crisis, however, these sources of support have run dry, and many older persons have been forced to diminish or altogether cut their domestic workers' salaries in order to survive.

For older persons who need more intensive support and care, Lebanon is unable to offer substantive or expansive options of institutionalized care in the form of nursing homes. According to the Centre for Studies on Ageing (CSA) in Lebanon, in 2015 there was a total of 49 nursing homes across Lebanon, each ranging between 50 and 100 residents, with a ratio of one bed per 85 older persons (Adra et al., 2015, p. 307). Most of these nursing homes are private, and very understaffed. Further, nursing home admission requirements often vary greatly, making it difficult for families to register their members for care at these institutions. Additionally, the Ministry of Public Health offers varied financial support to both nursing homes and to patients accessing their services (El-Hayeck et al., 2016), making it difficult to ensure that can afford to remain in a nursing home as long as they need.

For families and households, therefore, migrant domestic workers become a crucial alternative source of affordable and quality in-home elderly care labour. Although Lebanon has produced an official National Strategy for Older persons (2020–2030) that outlines important goals like strengthening the state's welfare system, Abi Chahine argues that the limited political will in Lebanon today as result of political stalemate, corruption, and the concurrent economic and social crises plaguing the country, make it difficult to envision that these goals will be achieved any time soon. What this means in practice is that migrant domestic workers will continue to serve as a cheap alternative to elderly care. They are an especially viable option for older persons who have family that live outside of Lebanon and can send remittances to support this type of in-home care work, as well as for those who prefer to support their elderly family members' independence vis-à-vis an in-home care worker.

The Unrecognized Dimensions of Elderly Care Work

Findings from discussions with older people and employers of migrant domestic workers suggest that Lebanese view paid elderly care work as “just work,” rather than as a specific type of work that requires certain skills and a specific temperament. This stands in contrast to the ways that employers and older people define the types of skills and characteristics that they expect from the migrant domestic worker hired to perform this work. Even though employers and older persons often belittled the amount of work that migrant domestic workers do—“she doesn't have much work in the afternoon because she only sits with me” or as another employer noted, “her only responsibility is to help me when I need, this is not too much”—they simultaneously demanded that their

employees were on-call around the clock, even on their guaranteed day off. Employers and older people overwhelmingly preferred full-time, live-in workers for this very reason: They preferred to have a worker who was available at all hours of the day for any number of tasks. They wanted workers to perform this labour without complaining, with “energy,” “compassion,” and “patience”; they wanted workers to “love” and “like” working with older persons. Meanwhile, employers and older people were reluctant to acknowledge these things as hard skills. Instead, they understood these things as innate qualities that a domestic worker either did or did not have. Worse, if the worker did not possess the qualities expected by their employer, employers would often return workers to the recruitment agency to receive a replacement worker.

These findings support global feminist research documenting the ironic positioning of care work as both critical to the livelihoods of human beings and simultaneously, one of the most underpaid and exploitative jobs in the labour market (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2004; Nadasen, 2021; Parreñas, 2001). The social value attached to productive labour has meant a devaluation of reproductive, or care, labour and consequently, a devaluation of those workers who perform this labour (Katz, 2001; Lan, 2008; Sassen, 2000). While women were historically responsible for performing reproductive labour within the household, the latter half of the 20th century saw a re-distribution of reproductive labour across racial and nation-state lines as well. Theorized as the global care chain, feminists have tracked the growing transfer of care work across nation-state boundaries, as migrant women primarily from the global South migrate to work as care workers in the global North (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2004; Hochschild, 2000). Driven by a care crisis in the global North caused by neoliberal austerity policies and the simultaneous movement of middle- and upper-class women into the workforce, global care chains “pull” immigrant women from the global South to fill this gap. Thus emerged what is known as an “international division of reproductive labour,” a framework that formulates the co-constitutive racial and gender dynamics that are affected by and affect care work globally (Parreñas, 2012, 2015). The experiences of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, specifically their devaluation as care workers, is partially explained by the global care chain and the care gap that exists in the country. Migrant domestic workers are being “pulled” to Lebanon to fill a critical gap left by the Lebanese state, which has been both unwilling and unable to support elderly and other care needs in the country. Further, gendered expectations of Lebanese women to make household and other domestic tasks their primary priority (Joseph, 1993, 2005) have facilitated this “transfer” of care work onto migrant women, who subsequently enter Lebanese homes to perform this gendered care labour.

Meanwhile, domestic workers are expected to work around the clock with limited breaks. They have no access to legal recourse in instances of workplace abuse, nor are they guaranteed a minimum wage or other workplace protections. Instead, gendered expectations that women are “naturally” disposed to perform care work are intertwined with racial discourses that position certain workers as “better suited” to certain types of work than others. Racialization also produces certain workers as “good” or “bad” workers, “docile” or “stubborn,” and, relatedly, influences which workers are seen to “enjoy” their work with older persons, versus those who do not. Thus, employer preferences for

workers are never neutral, but rather reflect these racialized and gendered expectations of docile care workers.

Under the broad umbrella of care work fall different tasks, many of which were highlighted in interviews done with employers and older persons for this report. Each of these tasks is coded by race and gender. Feminists in the U.S., for example, have shown how distinctions between “menial” and “non-menial work,” such as child rearing, were often racially explicit, with Black women historically affiliated with “menial work” such as cleaning, whereas white women domestic workers and servants were allowed to perform the “non-menial” work affiliated with childcare (Duffy, 2005; Glenn, 2010). Studies have reported similar findings among migrant domestic worker communities around the world (Anderson, 2015; Lan, 2003; Marchetti, 2014). In Lebanon, such distinctions are coded in meritocratic language that labels certain domestic workers as “skilled” and therefore, better suited to performing certain household tasks like childcare and elderly care. As one Lebanese employer noted, while Ethiopian workers “aren’t bad, Filipina workers speak English and are educated, and this is what we want.” These preferences have real consequences, with non-Black migrant domestic workers in Lebanon being paid nearly four-times more than Black workers from Sudan or Ethiopia (Amnesty International, 2019b). In this way, the seemingly harmless “personal” preferences of employers and care recipients has a real-time effect on the ways that race and gender take shape alongside domestic labour and elderly care work in Lebanon.

Social Networks: The Chance to Strengthen and Empower Marginalized Workers

Employer and Care Recipient Perceptions of Social Networks

When asked about the usefulness of social networks for finding elderly care workers, Lebanese employers and older people were not convinced that social networks would have a positive impact on them. However, when pushed further, some employers reported that having an “easy site that someone can go on, like my daughters or grandchildren, to find me a domestic worker in the future” would be “good.” Others thought that such a platform could be particularly helpful as a way for migrant domestic workers to find them: “If, say, I have an older person who needs to be taken care of in this specific city or location,” noted one employer, “I think that [a website] would be very helpful” in facilitating connections between workers and employers. As Sophia Kagan, a key informant from the ILO in Lebanon, noted, the ILO itself has taken steps to developing a platform that can help put workers and employers in direct contact with each other. “Skills matching,” Kagan notes, has played an important factor in the development process of the application, to help elderly employers and care recipients find workers who possess the specific skills that they need.

Although employers and care recipients were unsure of the benefits of social networks, the findings of this report clearly indicate that social networks can play an important role in empowering elderly care recipients to find care workers who can provide the exact types of specialized care that they need. Although employers and care recipients reported a preference for recruitment agencies, social networks can serve as an important “backup plan” for those in need of specialized care. Additionally, empowering employers and care recipients to negotiate directly with care workers can have positive effects on both

workers and employers. Specifically, direct negotiations will create a more transparent, and therefore more equitable, work environment for the workers. As well, it can give employers and care recipients the opportunity to clearly explain to workers what is expected of them, and the types of labour that they will need to perform. As Abi Chahine noted, putting elderly care recipients and care workers in “direct contact [can] help to build trust” between the two parties, which is a “key issue” in elderly care. Further, she highlighted that social networks could create a space for elderly care recipients to speak with each other, as well as with potential care workers. Facilitating this dialogue could have important benefits for older persons; they might learn from other people different strategies or even advice concerning hiring an in-home care worker.

Social Networks: The Foundations of Migrant Domestic Worker Organizing and Survival

In contrast, workers were emphatic about the important benefits of having social networks in place in Lebanon. Lebanon itself has a long history of migrant domestic worker organizing, beginning as early as the 1990s, with faith-based organizations (FBO) providing humanitarian aid to migrant women workers in need (Abu-Habib, 1998; Young, 1999). At the same time, migrant worker-led initiatives like the Sri Lankan Welfare Association were also developing; while these groups first met informally as support groups, many eventually became fully fledged organizations that attracted international and local donor support to provide services to high-risk migrant workers in the country (Tayah, 2012). Today, worker-led organizations, such as the Alliance for Migrant Domestic Workers, continue to provide both humanitarian aid to workers in need, as well as support to workers with legal issues pertaining to their residency or work permits (Issa, 2021). At the core of these organizations are the strong social networks cultivated by this long history of domestic worker organizing in Lebanon. As one worker put it:

If a friend doesn't have an employer, or the employer is away on travel, we negotiate, 'can you take this woman until I can take her to the embassy?' We pass this worker to whoever is available; we hide her out of sight from the employer [because] the employer will go to the police and report that she ran away. We also used boarding houses [that we rented by the day], and so we organized to let her stay there until we could take her to the embassy. (Issa, 2021, p. 17)

The workers interviewed for this study reported using similar strategies. They depended heavily on their social networks to leverage better socioeconomic and legal positions for workers in need. As one Sri Lankan community leader pointed out during her interview, “I am happy that we have a community. We help each other out.” “Together,” contributed another domestic worker during one focus group discussion, “we are more powerful. We can talk to each other and learn from each other. We don't need to feel scared and alone.” Members of the Alliance for Migrant Domestic Workers who participated in this study reflected on the eight years of work that the Alliance has done in support of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. Today, they have forged strong connections to various local organizations and even international ones, such as the International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF), which all help them to support the many workers financially and emotionally in need in Lebanon. Members of the Alliance also spoke about its utility for finding unemployed workers new jobs with “trusted” employers. As one member

noted, “we can help her [the worker] find a job with someone who is good, because we know them, or one of our friends knows them.” This aspect of workers’ social networks was particularly important, especially now, as the economic crisis continues to push Lebanon’s economy into even further demise. As another member of the Alliance noted during a focus group discussion, “It’s a pleasure for us to do this work...in six months [we] want to help 200 domestic workers who lost their jobs find jobs.” She says that while Lebanese employers and recruitment agencies have pushed unemployed domestic workers toward part-time work, something she calls “shameful” in the face of the current economic crisis, the Alliance is working hard to find unemployed workers jobs.

Workers social networks are also crucial for workers in remote or hard-to-reach areas of the country, such as North and South Lebanon, and for ensuring that migrant workers are aware of their rights. “We empower girls [workers], so now they know what they have,” notes one migrant worker community leader. As many workers expressed during their interviews, knowing each other is important to protecting themselves while they are in Lebanon. Even without a formal workers union³⁶, migrant domestic workers have continued to organize vis-à-vis these social networks, which sit at the core of various migrant worker organizations like the Alliance and Egna Legna, an Ethiopian domestic worker-led organization. In fact, these social networks have become the main route through which humanitarian aid and political support reach high-risk workers. Therefore, strengthening these networks, whether through funding or training campaigns, remains a crucial strategy for supporting migrant domestic workers in Lebanon.

Conclusions

- *Interventions to Improve both Women Migrants’ and Elder Employers’ Outcomes in the Context of an Economic Crisis*

Several recommendations can be made concerning possible interventions that can improve both migrant domestic workers’ and elderly care recipients’ and employers’ experiences of care in the context of Lebanon’s severe economic crisis.

1. **Invest in trainings for care workers.** As articulated by the workers interviewed for this research piece, trainings can play a key role in empowering women migrant domestic workers on issues ranging from their legal rights in Lebanon to supporting them to provide high-quality specialized health care, like administering a blood pressure test or managing a person’s diabetes.
2. **Promote policy research on strengthening and expanding the social welfare system in Lebanon.** As discussed earlier, there are certain structural barriers that

³⁶ In 2015, with the support of various United Nations organizations and with particular support from the ILO, the first migrant domestic workers union was created in Lebanon. However, this union was under the control of FENASOL, the National Federation of Workers and Employer Trade Unions; this contributed to high levels of opacity in administrative operations and often resulted in the marginalization of migrant workers themselves. The Alliance for Migrant Domestic Workers was created in part as a response to the difficulties many workers faced in their dealings with the migrant domestic workers union under FENASOL. For a more detailed history of the Migrant Domestic Workers Union in Lebanon, see Kobaissy, 2016.

negatively affect the ability of older persons in Lebanon to access high-quality care. Among these barriers are the country's weak and inefficient social welfare system and an uneven pension system (NSSF) that does not financially support older persons living independently. With the publication of the country's National Strategy for Older persons (2020–2030) report, new research should be commissioned that examines the specific aspects of social welfare that affect older persons in Lebanon. Such research should work to include migrant domestic workers and the critical role that these workers play in filling the care gap left by the state's weak and ineffective social welfare policies.

3. **Raise awareness about existing feminist frameworks about care work for better, more holistic analyses.** Feminist research on the dimensions of care work that make it both critical to human life and simultaneously one of the most exploitative and undervalued fields of labour should be at the center of initiatives aiming to support care workers and care recipients. In Lebanon, this means acknowledging the ways that elderly work, as well as other forms of reproductive labour and care work. has historically been relegated to the family and women therein. In the absence of these women—whether this is because they have chosen to enter the formal labour force or because they are unable to provide this labour for free anymore—migrant women have come to temporarily “replace” them. In so doing, care work is perpetuated as “women’s work” and is devalued as a result. Putting these insights at the center of future initiatives and research will create programming that is holistic in nature, and therefore better able to tackle the complicated issues of care work and elderly care in Lebanon.
4. **Support migrant domestic worker social networks.** Migrant domestic workers interviewed for this research piece stressed the critical role that their communities’ social networks play in supporting them emotionally and financially. Without these networks, many workers would remain unemployed and homeless, without any access to legal recourse. To ensure that workers can continue mobilizing vis-à-vis these social networks, it is important to invest directly in these networks and other worker-led initiatives. This will ensure not only that workers’ social networks remain intact, but that workers themselves can lead and direct where funding from donors is going. Further, international and local donor funding and support of migrant worker social networks can lend legitimacy to these networks and organizations; this can empower these organizations to participate directly and more frequently in state-level negotiations about workers’ rights. At the micro level, support for migrant domestic workers’ social networks might include providing technology, such as cell phones or cell phone data packages, to migrant workers to ensure that they can continue developing such social networks. As one member of the Alliance for Migrant Domestic Workers mentioned, such support could help them to extend their reach beyond the confines of Beirut into the more rural and remote areas of Lebanon, where they know migrant domestic workers are living in even harsher conditions and without support.
5. **Create spaces for migrant domestic workers who provide elderly care and elderly care recipients to speak directly with each other.** A key intervention to

support better outcomes for migrant care providers and elderly care recipients and employers includes creating space, either physical or digital, for care workers and care recipients to speak directly to each other. As various interviewees, both care workers and care recipients, noted, direct contact with each other would help to create a more equitable employer-employee relationship. Such direct contact would also create more transparency surrounding the worker's obligations and, further, would empower the care recipient as an active participant in the process of hiring and training a care worker.

- *Beyond a Siloed Approach*

The findings of this study support a collaborative approach to issues affiliated with elderly care in Lebanon. Overall, programmatic and research interventions on older people and on migrant domestic workers can no longer afford to remain siloed in their own sectors and areas of expertise. As this report demonstrates, the lives of migrant domestic workers and elderly persons in Lebanon, as well as the family members who employ domestic workers to support older people, are intimately related. While the experiences of these social groups vary, the structural issues contributing to their marginalization run parallel to each other. Broadly, the weak and uneven social welfare and pension system in Lebanon, coupled with limited political will to support care-focused policies and care workers, punish and harm the elderly people who need strong care policies and the migrant domestic workers that need better labour protections and access to human rights. Although such a macrolevel approach to research and programmatic work in Lebanon might be overwhelming, and in some cases impractical, it is key that this theoretical knowledge sits at the core of future work so that we do not lose sight of how these issues are interconnected. By remaining in separate siloes—one dedicated to older persons, the other to migrant domestic workers—advocates and supporters risks offering only piecemeal solutions, rather than addressing the larger system and challenging its undergirding logic.

Additionally, the findings of this report suggest that bottom-up, or grassroots, strategies and solutions beginning with migrant domestic workers and elderly care recipients are the key to future success. After speaking with migrant domestic workers for this report, it became clear that workers were already aware of the importance of social networks, and what social networks could help them achieve in such a hostile host country. Similarly, older people and employers equally appreciated the potential of social networks to help them find care workers and to speak with other older persons in need of care. Bringing these communities together to discuss the current situation and their experiences can produce stronger and more efficient programming and strategies for future mobilizations.

As concurrent economic, political, and health crises continue to plague Lebanon, we can expect that the situation facing migrant domestic workers and older persons will continue to deteriorate. With that in mind, it is integral to continue documenting the changing effects of these various crises on these two marginalized populations with the aim to strengthen and support their communities. Ideally, immediate support to social networks and migrant worker-led organizations can serve as a powerful first step in bettering the

livelihoods of migrant workers. Similarly, empowering local NGOs that are currently working in the elder care sector can help to provide immediate relief to older households in need of support. Over the long term, programmatic interventions must include policy research and lobbying efforts to raise awareness about the care crisis in Lebanon, with a particular emphasis on how it is affecting care workers and care recipients. Long-term goals should include strengthening Lebanon's social welfare system with the aim to shift from a pension system to a social pension system that supports all people, irrespective of their participation in the formal labor force. Finally, reforms should also focus on repealing and ultimately abolishing the exploitative *kafala* system that controls migrant workers in Lebanon, in hopes of establishing a legislative framework that foregrounds migrant workers' human rights. This report serves as an initial look into the current situation of migrant domestic workers and older persons, and the relationships between these two marginalized communities. Ultimately, much more research is necessary to produce more insight into how migrant domestic workers have come to represent one of the most vital sources of care work and support for older persons in Beirut and in Lebanon more broadly.

Workstream 6: Qualitative evaluation of the WiF-2 freedom of association intervention in Jordan and Lebanon

WS6 is a qualitative evaluation of the WiF-2 freedom of association intervention in Jordan and Lebanon. with the following research question: What is the impact of WiF-2's activities on freedom of association in Lebanon and Jordan? Of note, fieldwork was implemented in Jordan's garment sector but had to be abandoned after a first set of Focus Group Discussions because workers' privacy could not be maintained in the factory setting, that is, it was not possible to talk to workers without the presence of other workers in oversight roles and other structural challenges.

The Jordan work was reconceptualized as a result and re-implemented through qualitative phone surveys of returnee migrants in Bangladesh who had previously worked in Jordan's garment sector. The results WS6 therefore focus on Lebanon with additional insights from a draft research paper that will be submitted to peer review before the project ends:

- Abdulrahim, S., Adra M. et al. Participatory action research to identify vulnerabilities among women domestic migrant workers (Working title).
- Nassif, G. et al. Vulnerabilities of women migrants from Bangladesh in Jordan's garment factories. (Working title)

Lebanon

Data and Methodology

The qualitative study in Lebanon aimed to examine how WMDWs organize collectively in a context of multiple crises to enhance their living and work conditions and to mitigate the risk to exploitation, forced work, and trafficking. On the one hand, the multiple crises may have stymied or even reversed efforts by ILO through the Work in Freedom program and other local organizations aimed to empower and support WMDWs' collective organizing efforts. On the other hand, the crises may have opened a window of opportunity for WMDWs to organize differently and more proactively to realize the potential of their collective efforts. The qualitative study utilized participatory action research (PAR) methods to assess how social networks and collective organizing impact the lives of WMDWs in Lebanon, feeding the results into the overall international evaluation. We delineate how the PAR study was carried out including the process of recruiting and training WMDW co-researchers, data collection and management, and analysis and interpretation.

Most studies on the rights of WMDWs in the Arab region are framed within a victimhood and exploitation discourse, and fail to present the multitude of experiences of the community members involved. Utilizing the PAR methodology allows members of a community that is impacted by social inequalities to participate in the design and implementation of a study and the interpretation of its findings, thus giving them an opportunity to determine the narrative around their experience. PAR is a form of action research driven by a collaborative methodological approach that allows researchers and participants to work together to resolve social problems (Brown and Strega, 2005). Through this methodology, the researcher considers "the varied worldviews and life experiences" of participants of research, particularly the marginalized (Stringer, 2007). The PAR methodology is thus suitable to research with women who are often disproportionately impacted by economic downturns and political crises.

PAR is particularly useful in understanding the experiences of WMDWs in Lebanon who have been experiencing discrimination and lack of legal protection, and who were severely impacted by the triple crises in Lebanon over the past year and a half. Although much of the documented literature expands on daily abuses suffered by workers in Lebanon, true change can come only when the women impacted by the abuse themselves propose actions and solutions to improve their social conditions and wellbeing. In this case, researchers need to engage with WMDWs on an equal footing in any attempt to address the political, economic, and social structures and move toward true emancipatory social change.

In this study, our goal was to provide the space for WMDWs to reclaim the agency in their own stories, to reflectively and intellectually express their individual and collective concerns, and to translate the dialogue into more practical forms of collective organizing and activism. We partnered with the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM), a grassroots collective established in 2010 by Lebanese feminist activists working alongside WMDWs, and its sister organization the Migrant Community Centers (MCCs). These centers serve as cultural spaces for the women to gather and socialize, and where they can take free educational, social, and capacity-building classes. ARM has experience conducting participatory research as they had collaborated with the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) to carry out a feminist PAR study focusing on the needs of members of *Mesewat*, a collective of Ethiopian migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. The feminist PAR methodology was chosen by ARM due to its connections to reflexive and dialogical approaches that challenge the notion that knowledge can only be produced by professional researchers ([Anti Racism Movement, 2019b](#)).

We recruited two groups of WMDWs for this study: 9 co-researchers who underwent training on research methods and PAR; and 24 participants who were invited to complete in-depth interviews by the co-researchers. The recruitment of co-researchers (group 1; co-researchers) commenced following IRB approval and with support from MCC staff members. The co-researchers were from Ethiopia (2), Bangladesh (1), Sri Lanka (1), Philippines (2), Nepal (1), and Kenya (2). All co-researchers were older than 21 years of age, had been in Lebanon for more than a year, had at least middle-school education, and were proficient in their own language. The Ethiopian and Sri Lankan co-researchers spoke but did not read or write Arabic while the co-researchers from the Philippines, Nepal, and Kenya could speak and write in English. The co-researcher from Bangladesh was tri-lingual—Bangla, English, and Arabic—and had a high school education. All co-researchers had engaged in activities that contributed to wellbeing of members of their ethnic/immigrant community. They were asked to commit to working on the project for 12 days over the course of a 4-month period. This included a 4-day training that was carried out at one of the MCCs premises in both English and Arabic by the lead researcher, research assistant, and two student interns.

Following the 4-day training on research methods and PAR with the 9 co-researchers, we advertised an open call to recruit 24 research participants, 4 WMDWs from each of the 6 national groups, who were willing to participate in in-depth interviews about social networks and collective organizing. The recruitment of participants was carried out by the AUB research team to safeguard against group pressure from co-researchers or other women in their community. The study was advertised through a variety of social media venues to ensure reaching WMDWs of different nationalities and backgrounds. The participants did not need to be proficient in English and/or Arabic as the interviews were run in their own languages and by one of the co-researchers from their own national community. In-depth interviews were conducted at MCC premises and participants received a transportation voucher and a symbolic stipend.

Study phases

o Phase 1: Training

The training of co-researchers took place at MCC premises during four consecutive Saturdays. The training content was adapted from the guidelines presented in a manual produced by the IDWF in collaboration with the Research Network for Domestic Worker Rights (RN-DWR). The manual, titled *"We want to be the protagonists of our own story" - A participatory research manual on how domestic workers and researchers can jointly conduct research*, is a guide for training of different groups of domestic workers in the Netherlands and South Africa to think about social security (2014). It was designed to create an illustrative outline to "encourage other academics, trade unions, and organizations to undertake research projects that position domestic workers as experts in their own experience" (2014, p. 7). Although the manual focuses on the joint process of creating a questionnaire, and our PAR study is qualitative, we found it very useful in building our methodology. The manual delves into step-by-step instructions for conducting interviews and implementing activities, time limits, and goals for each section, which we followed in our study. The table below presents a summary of the content of the training:

<p>Day 1:</p> <p>Co-researchers introduced themselves and shared their experiences of migration and work in Lebanon. Following, the co-researchers were briefed about the project as well as the PAR methodology. Dialogue about collective organizing was conducted through a series of interactive activities based on those presented in a manual on group learning developed through the fieldwork from two regional training of trainers workshops carried out in Indonesia and Uganda in 2016 by IDWF and ILO (2017). The manual includes detailed activities, games, handouts, and tools that are extremely useful in exploring what successful organization planning looks like, and how to develop a successful organizing campaign plan.</p>
<p>Day 2:</p> <p>On day 2, the trainers presented basics of research methods, utilize activities that will better prepare the co-researchers for the data collection process and other research steps. The training covered the following content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-The different research and data collection methods-The value of qualitative PAR methods-Techniques and tips on how to facilitate discussion circles and conversational interviews-Technical and substantive aspects of research ethics <p>In addition to didactic content, co-researchers engaged in role play exercises on obtaining consent, interviewing, probing, and allowing participants to express their views freely.</p>
<p>Day 3:</p> <p>Although the research study was driven by the overarching aim of investigating collective organizing efforts by WMDWs in Lebanon, in line with the PAR methodology, we dedicated ample time to generating the specific research question that co-researchers expressed interest in and specific interview questions. A joint brainstorming process took place between members of the research team and co-researchers. Once the research question</p>

and open-ended interview questions were formed based on the co-researchers' collective interests. Following, members of the research team and the co-researchers brainstormed prompts to use to enrich the interviews.

By the end of the third day of training, the co-researchers arrived at the following research question:

How do WMDWs try to improve their situation, whether through working alone or working together, to help themselves or others from their community or other communities?

Day 4:

On day 4, co-researchers worked in pairs whereby each facilitated a 20-minute segment of a two-hour mock interview using the guides prepared during day 3. The aim was to facilitate in-depth and rich dialogue while maintaining ethical and best practices. Moreover, this mock experience was an opportunity for co-researchers to practice using their audio recorders and transcribing the data. Although research team members had intended to introduce co-researchers to basic steps of descriptive data analysis through open coding, it was decided to postpone this part of the training in order not to overwhelm the co-researchers and to give them ample time to absorb the content of the training thus far.

o Phase 2: Data Collection & Transcription

Phase 2 was the implementation process as each co-researcher conducted 2–4 in-depth interviews at MCC premises and transcribed the data by hand in their own language. The research team provided support throughout. This process took much longer than originally anticipated for several reasons. The training was completed before the two Easter holidays, during which time co-researchers were involved in several other community activities. As the co-researchers got used to group activities, they delayed data transcription, which is a lonely activity and is the most tedious phase of a qualitative research study. With constant support and encouragement, the co-researchers completed transcribing most of the 24 in-depth interviews they carried out. All the transcripts in a language other than English were translated to English by professional translators.

o Phase 3: Data Management and Analysis

Once the data from the 24 in-depth interviews were transcribed and translated to English, the research team carried out full open coding on the data followed by categorizing the codes into themes and conducting in-depth thematic analysis. The analysis progressed through a rigorous process. To develop a representative list of open-codes, two academic research assistants coded three interviews independently and the two lists of codes were combined into one list. The combined list was used as the template to open-code data in all 24 in-depth interviews. Open codes were grouped into loose categories; for example, codes that are related to each other (relationship with employer, salary, work responsibilities) were categorized under one overarching code on work conditions in Lebanon. Open coding was carried out using the Dedoose software. When the process was completed, all the codes and their attached excerpts were imported into a word document. Following, the lead researcher and the research assistants began a process of re-reading the excerpts under each category of codes, re-interpreting the data, and engaging in a process of thematic analysis. The results of this process

with respect to two overarching codes of 1) helping and 2) discrimination are presented in the findings section.

However, PAR demands the participation of individuals from affected communities in all phases of the research process. The literature on involving participants in PAR studies actively in the data analysis phase is scarce. Much of the PAR literature indicates that the process is highly participatory during in the project's conceptualization, development of themes, and data collection phases; participation then vanishes during the data analysis and interpretation phases. We were not able to identify any guidance in the literature on engaging participants in data analysis and interpretation. This gap in the PAR literature was echoed in a report of a PAR study with women in prison: "Indeed at one point, one of the inmate researchers asked the appropriate question about exploitation, 'So we just collect the data with you, and then you get to analyze and interpret it?'" (Torre et al., 2001, p. 156). This may occur because data management and analysis is more conceptual than other aspects of a PAR study.

Considering this methodological challenge, the research team scheduled an additional set of training days designed to reinforce qualitative data analysis concepts—open-coding, categorization of codes and the generation of themes, and interpretation of data. As of the writing of this paper, this process is ongoing and three out of a set of seven training days have been completed. The results section in the report presents the findings of the analysis carried out by the academic researchers. However, we aim to triangulate the codes and themes generated from the analysis that will be carried out by WMDWs. This comparison promises to lead to deep insights on how positionality impacts analysis and interpretation of data.

Results

This section delineates the findings from the analysis carried out by the AUB research team, considering that the analysis of the data by co-researchers is still ongoing. The table below lists the main codes obtained grouped under broader categories; the list is the outcome of a rigorous process of open coding 24 interview transcripts in English:

Life before migrating to Lebanon <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Childhood-Family back home-Education-Marriage and relationships
Migration experience <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Reasons for coming to Lebanon-Traveling to Lebanon-Recruitment agency-Adapting in Lebanon
Living and working in Lebanon <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Family & friends in Lebanon-Work & living arrangement

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work responsibilities/tasks -Relationship with employer -Salary -Transportation costs -Legal documentation -Changes over the past two years
<p>Social networks/collective organizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Activities -Helping others/seeking help -Use of cell phone -Use of social media
<p>Women's agency</p>
<p>Negative experiences in Lebanon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discrimination -Sexual harassment
<p>Miscellaneous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Religion/religiosity -Health -Motherhood

The two categories of “discrimination” and “helping others/seeking help” provided the richest information about the experiences of WMDWs in Lebanon. “Motherhood” (whether in Lebanon or transnational mothering) and “childhood experiences in the country of origin” were also deemed important; however, it was decided to focus the first set of analysis on migrant women’s experiences in Lebanon. This includes their experiences with discrimination but also the category that touches directly on how WMDWs seek help and help others. Of note, although the academic researchers commenced the study with the idea of exploring collective organizing efforts among WMDWs, the co-researchers insisted on using the terminology of helping rather than organizing. In that regard, the research question transformed through a participatory process from one about collective organizing to one about “helping each other” “to improve their situation”:

How do WMDWs try to improve their situation, whether through working alone or working together, to help themselves or others from their community or other communities?

Discrimination

It was not surprising that general experiences with discrimination emerged as a salient theme in the narratives of participants who were interviewed by co-researchers. Participants were specifically asked during the interview to recount any experiences of discrimination in Lebanon. The majority reported being the subject of discrimination when taking public transportation in Lebanon (when taxi or bus drivers ask them to pay more, drop off at a different location than

what they requested, or drop off a Lebanese or “white person” first). Participants described feeling afraid and unsafe during/following these taxi experiences.

At the supermarket/store, participants described how Lebanese customers receive quicker and better service, and how they are sometimes quoted a higher price than Lebanese customers. In shops, several participants recounted experiences that can be labelled as “micro-aggressions,” such as when they are told that a garment is too expensive or not suitable for them. Some of the offensive/racist phrases WMDWs recalled hearing in Lebanon are: *aswad* and *asmar* referring to dark skin color. In some cases, women were subjected to vulgar sexual insults. In one of the training meetings, WMDWs discussed at length the distinction between discrimination based on national origin or skin color and the specific type of sexual harassment that migrant women experience both because they are women and because they are foreigners.

Some participants reported that they have had positive experiences with employers and never experienced discrimination. Others described racist experiences with employers akin to what has been amply described in published articles and media accounts, such as not being allowed to use the employer’s cups, plates, and utensils or sit on their chairs in the living room.

It was important for the academic researchers not to fuel the narrative of victimhood, and therefore, we searched for evidence in the data on how WMDWs exercise agency and resist discrimination and exploitation. We found that participants in interviews recounted different types of reactions to discriminatory experiences that range from non-agentic to fully agentic: 1) accepting discrimination/ignoring it and brushing it aside; 2) reminding oneself of one’s own value despite the negative feeling experienced following an incident; and 3) standing up to the person discriminating against them. Below are a few short excerpts to illustrate this theme:

- 1) *“Lebanon is not ours. We are strangers ... I do not expect good behaviour in a taxi”; “Took care not let anything unpleasant come”; “But we don't have to react negatively. You have to have patient to explain”*
- 2) *“They do not regard us as human beings”; “We are human beings too”; “After school she [child daughter] tells me what they insulted her. I advise her to ignore them and tell her that all human beings are equal”*
- 3) *“I shouted at him and went out of the cab. What will I do? You are defenceless here in their country”; “I am not your servant; I am your father’s employee”; a WMDW shouted at the person who poured water on her child. “I know I am a foreigner but what I will do to you, you will regret the day you let a foreigner in your compound.”*

Discrimination against WMDWs in Lebanon takes place along intersections of race and class. The interviewees from Kenya and Ethiopia evoked having dark skin color as central to how they or their children experience discrimination. Skin color was salient in excerpts where African participants spoke about discrimination not only by Lebanese but also by WMDWs from other nationalities.

“My daughter is discriminated at school because of her black skin color” Ethiopia1_Amharic

“The first is in relation to skin color. Being called a black is upsetting for both us and our children. I don't like when people refer to him “a black child” ... “your mother is black” ... “Asmerani” ... Skin color is an issue in Lebanon.” Ethiopia3_Amharic

"There is, indeed, discrimination. Even when they pay, they pay more for Filipinos and less for the rest of us. It is cheaper for Bangladeshis, and we are better off. Of course, there is difference in skin color. Since we Africans have dark skin color, they are not good for us. The Filipinos are white so there is a bias towards them." Ethiopia4_Amharic

"Yes, like when you go to a shop, people with white skin get served first even when you got there first. In a taxi if, if a white person gets in after you, they will be taken to their destination first before they drop you because you do not have any other choice." Kenya1_Swahili

"Yes, Instances [of discrimination] have been there. I used to live with a Filipino who used to tell us that my skin is like that of an Ethiopian and that Africans do not shower, and they smell. She continued to tell me that if I wanted work here, I must apply creams to lighten my skin so that I find work. Because dark-skinned people cannot find work here." Kenya1_Swahili

In addition to discrimination based on skin color, a couple of participants highlighted negative experiences based on class position as domestic workers. In these cases, participants related how, despite the value of the work they perform, some Lebanese perceive housemaids as dispensable and not worthy of respect.

"They have it in their head sometimes that every Sri Lankan is a housemaid. But even if we are a housemaid, we should respect our job. A housemaid is doing a valuable service. But there is no such mentality among some Lebanese nationals." Sri Lanka Sinhala

"Lebanese girls considered us dispensable. They considered those who work as domestic workers to have no rights." Nepal4_Nepali

Helping

The academic researchers were glad to learn that some of the participants who were recruited by MCC and interviewed by trained co-researchers are "socio-stars" who are known in their national communities and among the broader WMDWs' community as leaders who have extensive knowledge, strong character, and an inclination to help migrant women in general. Below is an excerpt from an interview with a well-known WMDW whose reputation extends beyond her national community:

"Yeah actually that's my weakness, when I see people who are in need of help, I will really extend my help. Now in my line of work we are doing that. We are giving aid to different migrant workers, we are giving them goods and medical assistance. But even before I worked there, I loved to help people in my college days. I normally go to volunteer in an orphanage or in elderly care home." philippines2_tagalog

Not all WMDWs are socio-stars and many spend years in Lebanon disconnected from networks of WMDWs or other NGOs. When they first arrive to Lebanon, they don't know where to go or who to ask for help. With time, they build social networks and learn how to access help when they need it.

"At that time [when she first arrived to Lebanon] I didn't know about MCC. Of course, now, I know MCC. It provides us foods, oil and so on. When I came in Lebanon at the first time, I didn't even know the phone number of the embassy. I didn't have a mobile phone to report my problem, and no one at home would let me touch the phone. I was very troubled at that time because there was a lot of problem. But now thanks to God, I know a lot of things (I have the information). I know number of

people. Hence, if I get a problem, I can call someone that can help me. Now I have cell phone. So, I can use it. But at that time there was no one who helped me.” ethiopia1_amharic

So, how do WMDWs help each other and how does the help provided allow them to improve their situation in Lebanon. A salient theme in the data from the interviews addressed the forms of help that WMDWs offer to each other. As the most basic level, women provide each other with advice and information. Some of the advice women provide to each other relates to managing their work and their relationships with their employers. In some cases, the advice is neutral or contributes to keeping WMDWs pliant and under the control of their employers. In other cases, WMDWs advise each other to stand up to their employers and ask for their rights. The following excerpts are illustrative:

“Language is the most important thing for newcomers to communicate with their employers (family members in general). I primarily help them (immigrants) with language. I also guide them on how to manage their jobs.” ethiopia3_amharic

“I give them advice at least. I advise them not to engage in illegal work (not to abandon their legal job). I advise them to be good for their employers, even they are bad for you; they may be changed. There is an employer (Madam) at my neighborhood she is very bad for her employees. I gave advice the new employee who came from Ethiopia. Now the Madame (employer) is completely changed and become good. I ask my friend that what you do to her, how she is changed? At least, I give my advice. I share my experience with what I'm going through today as a result of leaving my legal job. I advised them to return home rather than remain here illegally.” ethiopia2_amharic

“MDW: Recently I have this Filipino friend who went through in a not so good situation in her work. I help her to speak with her employer

Me: uhum

MDW: I advised her to talk to her employer if they can release her. I found a new employer for her they fix her papers, everything. Now she's okay.” philippines1_tagalog

“Some madame they don't listen because some maid, you know, some migrant domestic workers they are afraid (pause) we should to teach them (strong tone), you know, we have experience because we pass this life, you know, we pass, we ... for this face that's why in my society, who is coming, the new ones I am giving training for them khalas you will go ask your right,

I: ok

P: they will say no we don't have holiday I say no you will have holiday, go and speak, no need to be Sunday, if she need Sunday you, you tell your madam you need Monday. This is your right. am I right or wrong ? you have your rights

I: yeah, you have your right, of course. This is the part of the whole point

P: some madame will say oh she is going out she is wearing shorts, she wearing, she have... I don't care, maybe, she will have a boyfriend, this is not the madam's problem. the migrant domestic worker she should to know to take care of herself she can keep her boyfriend, this is not, this is fair, human beings.” srilanka4_english

“P: He should help me not to find myself in trouble in these days, because I find myself, because when you tell me “I came here with the salary of \$250 and my boss is paying me a \$100, or \$150” so immediately I tell you give me the boss number or your agent's number

I: (laughing)

P: and with courage, I am calling them, with

I: OH MY GOD

P: why are you doing this? And if the boss, I tell take that girl back to the office with an immediate effect

I: wow

P: and the girl is taken to the office and someone : who are you, don't ask who I am , you will know later." kenya4_english

Other than advice, WMDWs support each other instrumentally. In many cases, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdowns and considering the economic crisis, some WMDWs help by donating food and clothes to other less fortunate workers, new arrivals, or those who are mistreated by their employers and deprived of food. Oftentimes, a WMDW would help others in need from her own money (out of pocket) while other times she will help by helping to raise money from community members or connecting the person in need to an organization that can provide this help.

"MDW: Before with my first employer, there's this one Filipina. We are living in the same building during that time, She's not well fed. The fruits was well counted by her employers and after they eat meals, all food will go straight to the containers to keep. What little food her employers will just give to her. She has no day off, every afternoon you will just see her standing at the balcony of the building. As if she wanted to go out, to be free. What I did was, I will cook Filipino foods since my employer allows me to do so. I'll give her food and some fruits. Then one day I get the chance to talked with her employer, I told them that I have rest day and this is the place I go every Sunday. Until her employer realized something and they trust me so they allowed the Filipina to take her off and about her food she was not deprived anymore. When it comes to other nationalities i do experienced too, even in little things that I can help. The maid was just new, I buy her some clothes and some medicines then if I have some extra clothes I will hand it to her. I will also buy her food, in some little ways i know i could be a help for them. Even a little help." philippines3_tagalog

"P: Yes, I have used my personal wealth and time and helped a lot of people in numerous ways. If some people find it difficult to return home—

I: Do you provide the necessary help?

P: Yes. If someone arrives here and becomes ill. I have got medicines from my personal wealth. Also, if it is difficult to return home, I have helped them with my money(?).

I: How did you help?

P: If they need an immigration service, I have searched according to the law and helped them to the best of my ability. Sometimes financially. Sometimes by providing food and drink. Always try to help in any possible way.

I: What would you do if you could help?

P: I would like to do anything. I am bound to provide whatever help, within my financial capabilities."

"My friend had a gallstone and was on the verge of death. Money was raised to pay for her medical treatment." ethiopia2_amharic

Participants (interviewees) were divided between those who provided help to others and those who spoke about their experiences asking for or gaining support from other co-ethnics or from NGOs. A couple of participants only expressed that they never received help from anyone. However, most reported experiences when they received help from fellow WMDWs, or mentioned receiving food and shelter aid from MCC, Caritas, and other organizations.

"F: I wasn't able to work a bit, I was suffering so much that I couldn't describe it. I was newly married at the time, and my husband was also not working because they had to shut down, so it was bad on all sides. If I worked, they used to pay me 5,000-7,000 L.L instead of 10,000L.L. So we brought things that could be brought with 10,000 L.L, I was struggling a lot, and when I think back about those days, I still feel very bad, I spent those days badly, madam wasn't taking me to work, everything was going in a bad way.

S: Did you receive assistance from anyone?

F: No, no, no. No I did not receive any assistance from anyone." bangladesh4_bangla

In addition to the forms of help that WMDWs provided to each other, one of the salient themes that emerged from the data describes the strategies utilized to help one another. To begin with, WMDWs try to help each other directly before asking for the support of others or referring to the embassy or service organizations.

Of interest, referring to the embassy figured prominently in the context of referring a WMDW for help. Thus, there is a hierarchy or a process through which help is extended. First, one WMDW tries to help another one in need. If she is not able to, then she reaches out to women in her community to seek help. If that is not feasible, then she refers the migrant woman in need to a formal entity—an embassy or a social service organization that can provide this help.

"If it is an ordinary help we are able to do, then we help her ourselves. If not, we will refer her to the relevant institution. Firstly, we would refer her to the Embassy. And we also refer to such relevant places to get required help." srilanka1_sinhala

The way help is extended within the broader WMDWs community is not uniform. The strategy followed depends on the situation and the nature of the help needed (money, legal, medical, etc.)

"How do you help people?

Some people have legal problems. We refer them to places where they can get legal advice. Sometimes we direct them to the places where medical facilities are available. Sometimes we direct people who were unable to pay for their rooms and are without food and drink to the organizations where they provide such assistance. There have been many such cases. There are also cases where we voluntarily help with our personal money. When someone is sick, there are many opportunities to volunteer to help out of our own salary." srilanka1_sinhala

"Did you request the help from someone else, a migrant worker, from a country migrant worker, from a different country, a Lebanese person, an organization like MCC, Kafa, Egna Legna, Siri Lankan Women Society, what do you think is the best person, institution to turn to if a migrant worker needs help ?

P: mostly I get sick people

I: Okay

P: And so far, I would say MSF are the best,

I: okay

P: because any moment I call them, they will pick my call

I: okay

P: knowing what is it? How can we help you? I would say I have this patient, it's like this and this, and they respond with an immediately effect , and if the person is like on contract migrant workers I would contact Kafa and the person will also get help, so I really thank God for them, or if maybe others suggestable they need somewhere maybe they need to socialize, I will direct them to MCC, and at the end everyone is happy, yeah all happy

I: okay, okay thank you." kenya4_english

Of note, while referring a WMDW who needs help to her embassy was evoked by many participants, a participant from Bangladesh indicated that their embassy is not helpful. On the other hand, the Sri Lankan ambassador was praised for being strong and supporting WMDWs.

"Every Sunday, sometimes my madame, my ambassador, she will check how many Siri Lankan go to Sri Lanka, she will go visit in the airport, she can go she is ambassador , then when she go, she sees this girl they say 5 years she work she will not pay any money for her madame , she will send her to , my ambassador bring back her to Lebanon to the embassy and she called her lawyer and she make court for this madame and she pay each money for her, \$5000 she pays for her to go to Sri Lanka." srilanka4_english

Helping does not have to be big. Helping often can be whatever the person can give (big or small) or can take the shape of directing someone where to go. What is valuable about help is that it gives the helper a good feeling and a sense of gratification.

"S: Okay, have you ever helped someone from your country or another country?

F: I have never helped with something big, but if someone has a small problem, I try to stay beside them and give them something even if I don't have it. I believe that because I am a girl, I have to help other girls, or even boys, so if I see a helpless person on the street, I try to help by giving them something. If I had a lot, I could give a lot, but I help with what I can." bangladesh4_bangla

"P: ... and somebody will say "thank you" and I say thank you God for giving me this chance , so I feel I am happy when I see others being helped, so my number is all over and everybody is calling me, I cannot run away from it, I am trying severally to severally run away from it but I can't.

I: my friend, that's not gonna happen (laughing)

P: because I believe maybe this God has put in these

I: yeah God has just chosen you to help people

P: yeah for sure" kenya4_english

“Me: Did you like the experience or not and what are the results on other occasions. Or what are the later results, what it means about what you did what you do. You like the result or not on certain occasions.

MDW: Of course i did like the experience from those activities that i participated. Because first of all you are able to help your fellow migrants and you make them happy. Even if you are of a big help or in small ways. You make them smile in times of crisis and the pandemic and there's no dollars. Even in small things you make them happy.” philippines3_tagalog

One of the issues discussed during trainings with co-researchers related to how WMDWs work together and organize across national borders. As such, it was important to explore this theme in the interviews conducted with participants. The interviews revealed numerous stories of how a WMDW helped other women outside her national group. In general, participants described this as an instinct and that helping and receiving help should not be determined by nationality. They would help WMDWs outside their national group in the same way they help those from their own country.

“MDW: ... And if they don't have money, I also help them if I have extra. Some of my Ethiopian friends and Nigerians if they will to travel to take their vacation. I give them a lot, bunch of chocolates and I also give them dollars to bring back to their country not that much same as for my fellow Filipino friends.” philippines1_tagalog

“ah – ok ya- example if I met Sri Lanka Women because in the group [we] have a Sri Lanka Woman Society if I met Sri Lanka needs help I will call my colleague (?) “MALA” or other from Sri Lanka Woman Society I know that person needs help or we have lot of local “NGO” here like MCC if they needs someone assistance we have “Kafa” we have “Insan” we have a lot of local NGO not only a local NGO even private personalities I mean that they help migrant so if someone needs help of course I ask assistance if I don't have a capacity to help them.” philippines4_english

“N: I have a lot of experience helping not only migrant workers from my country but also migrant women workers from other countries because they also are migrant workers like us. During the pandemic during the lockdown, and in the Beirut explosion, I have helped a lot, if I could by myself and if not by taking help from organizations. For example, I have made a list of names in the pandemic and appealed for relief. I have appealed for the room rent. I also have the experience of treating my friends who were affected by the Beirut blast with the help of the Rosa organization.”

In a couple of cases (mainly participants from Bangladesh), lack of trust within the community emerged in the interview data. In these cases, participants indicated that they even prefer to receive help from individuals outside the community.

“Other nationalities, in my opinion, are way better than Bengalis. Because if I share something about my trouble or stress to a Bengali, they go and share it with someone else with 5 extra statements, which means that if I tell them this much (hand gesture which means less), they will say a that much (hand gesture which means a lot). So I discovered that if I share something with someone from different nationality, they give it a value, I feel comfortable, and they will not go and tell anyone else about it, or if I ask them for something, they will give it to me without hesitation, but if I ask it from a Bengali, they won't give me.” bangladesh2_bangla

“Q: Is there anyone who helped you when you come from Ethiopia? Similarly, have you helped anyone who come from Ethiopia?”

A: I believe that the person who forced me to leave my legal job is from my own country who works with me who is the maid of my employee's mother. My employee was a doctor and she don't stay at home during the day time. My employee took my friend to her mother. I was new at that time. There are two kids at home: 7 month and 3 years old. The older one was very tough to manage. She annoyed me a lot. The older child asks me to buy something, as I was in outskirts (Halaleye Saida) I had to push the stroller for longer time. As a result, I get back pain.

Q: Halaleye Saida?

A: Yes! When I become enraged and insulted, she (the person who works with her) informs my employer's mother, and the employer hears from her mother. I believe that by doing so, she has caused my employer to lose interest in me. I am sure she did that. God forgive me." ethiopia2_amharic

Finally, an important form of help that WMDWs exchange is social support to relieve stress, as the excerpt below shows:

"P: When we meet, we try and come up with ways of building each other but often it's hard because we hardly have enough. But we help each other by sharing, it helps one relieve the stress they have mentally." kenya1_swahili

Conclusions

The main trajectory described by WMDWs in the study is that, when they first arrive in Lebanon, they are socially disconnected and have very little knowledge of where to go to seek help. With time, however, those who transition from a live-in arrangement to working as freelancers begin to learn about sources of support and build social networks. Some WMDWs accumulate such extensive knowledge and networks that they develop a "socio-star" persona, becoming the go-to for other workers who need information, financial help, or medical assistance. These participants and others spoke extensively about the forms of help they seek, obtain, and share with other WMDWs. As such, help can be small or large, tangible or intangible. A main form of help participants spoke about is that of providing newcomers with information and advice, including advice on how to manage their relationship with their employer and demand their rights.

Although advice is a critical form of support, the social networks that WMDWs build also provide them with tangible resources such as food and shelter, money when they are in need, and a safety net if they experience an illness and incur medical expenses. Some migrant workers provide childcare or babysitting to others, a form of help that is not often mentioned in the literature on WMDWs in Lebanon. That most participants indicated willingness to help others in need, and some even reported that they do so from their own personal wealth, is indicative of the strength of the ties that bind the workers despite limited financial resources. These social networks become highly instrumental during times of crisis. The onset of COVID-19 coincided with an economic crisis in Lebanon that has had a tremendous impact on both citizens and non-citizens alike. With the shortage of US dollars and the rapid devaluation of the Lebanese currency, large numbers of live-in WMDWs were abandoned by their employers. At the same time, freelance WMDWs found it increasingly difficult to sustain themselves on salaries paid in Lebanese currency. This was a time of heightened solidarity among the workers as revealed in the data. They helped each other by distributing food, clothes, and medicine.

The study also uncovered the strategies through which WMDWs provide help. Helping is altruistic and participants who provided support to others in need expressed a sense of moral gratification. The study also showed that, among the select group of participants, helping is an activity that transcends national identity. Almost all participants either received help from or helped someone outside their nationality. Notwithstanding a few reported cases of conflict between migrant workers of different nationalities, the data point to class solidarity that supersedes nationality. On the other hand, receiving help from Lebanese was not salient in the data. When participants spoke of their relationships with Lebanese individuals, these were brought up in the context of the employer-worker relationship, although not all were negative. Although WMDWs reported either receiving help from NGOs or volunteering through their relief activities, they did not frame their relationship with these NGOs as one with Lebanese individuals.

In conclusion, the data from in-depth interviews with participants revealed a tapestry of ways through which WMDWs provide and receive help within the community of women migrant workers. Although the social networks that bind WMDWs within their own communities and across national boundaries have limited if any financial resources, they are instrumental during times of collective crisis (COVID-19 or the Lebanese economic meltdown) or individual crisis (such as during times of illness or financial need). Participants spoke of different types of help and strategies for helping and expressed pride in their ability to support those in need. These findings raise questions about the focus on WMDWs as bounded beings whose experiences can only be understood through the employer-worker prism. Instead, the findings expand the discourse on WMDWs in the Arab region to highlight multidimensional relationalities within and across their national group.

We conclude with a final word about the PAR methodology utilized in this study. Given the prohibitive policy context in Lebanon, particularly under the current economic and political circumstances, the PAR study with WMDWs highlighted that maintaining social networks is a prerequisite to micro-level organizing and women's agency to ensure the protection of women themselves and other members of their community. The significance of a PAR study is that it equipped the women—both, as co-researchers and participants—with the resources to narrate their experiences in their own words. This has provided them with the drive to strengthen their communities through social networking and to support future collective organizing efforts.

Jordan

Data and Methodology

We used qualitative data collected from 26 in-depth phone interviews conducted with Bangladeshi women returnee migrants from Jordan's garment sector. The participants had been previously recruited by the three NGOs working with ILO's WiF-2 project and had given consent to participate in a phone survey. The pre-consent form included information on country of last migration. The phone survey focused on the impact of COVID-19 on women migrants in the South Asia to West Asia corridor (see Section 2.3). The phone survey consent form asked for consent to a potential second call, which was used to qualitatively understand experiences of women migrants in Jordan's garment sector and to identify any experiences that women migrants might have with the Al Hassan Worker Center that received support from the WiF-2 intervention. Respondents resided mostly in Dhaka City, while some lived in Gazipur, Barisal, and Narayanganj.

Data collection included information on challenges that women migrants faced pre-departure, during work in Jordan and upon return to Bangladesh.

Results

Reasons for Migrating

“Everyone goes [to Jordan] to earn money, to stand on their own feet.”

Reasons for migrating among survey respondents largely centered on financial need, but also included pressure from family or household members, problematic family or household dynamics, and in a handful of cases, personal incentives to better their own futures. Based on respondents’ answers, it was clear that working in the garment industry in Bangladesh made it very difficult for workers to save money for the future, which was a key issue driving women to work abroad. Several workers noted that it was “impossible” to save money in Bangladesh because companies do not allow overtime, whereas in Jordan, “overtime was required.” Further, as one worker put it, “in Jordan, I have no family, so I can do overtime. In Bangladesh, I have to go home and take care of family after work, you see?” Other workers identified the additional costs of living in Bangladesh that made it difficult to save money. As one worker pointed out, “after spending on my children’s education, home rent, and other costs, I could not [spend] anything.” Another worker noted something similar:

I cannot keep the money [I make in Bangladesh], there are different expenses like medical expenses. On the contrary, in Jordan, if I get sick, the company looks after me. Overall, I can save money in Jordan, but I cannot save in Bangladesh.

Another worker reported that, prior to migrating,

Three or four of my neighbours, who work [in Jordan], told me about the process. They told me, “Why are you struggling here?” Come [to] Jordan. You can make more money. And you know, sister? It is hard to save money when working here in Bangladesh. But it is quite easy abroad.

Family and household dynamics were also a key determinant in migrants’ choices to go abroad for work. In the majority of cases, a family member’s illness and subsequent need for medication and treatment forced workers to move abroad in order to afford these items. Others decided to leave to work abroad as a result of having taken out large loans to afford specialized medication and care for their family members. As one worker explained in detail:

There were some problems in my family. My sister was ill. Our family’s condition was so bad. My father needed regular medicine. My mother was also sick. To manage everything, I faced problems. That’s why I decided to go abroad. After that, I treated my mother. I also [paid for] my father’s treatment, but I could not save him [and] he died.

In a handful of cases, issues of domestic abuse and violence surfaced as a reason for leaving the household to work abroad, although descriptions of these instances were ambiguous, and workers generally felt uncomfortable discussing the subject.

A disruption in family income—either the main breadwinner lost their job, or the income of the breadwinner decreased—made it necessary for them to migrate. As one worker noted, her husband’s income alone was no longer enough to support them and their new baby daughter. Another worker noted that her husband’s earnings were “no longer enough for our children’s education” costs, making it necessary for her to go abroad for work. Similarly, one respondent noted that:

Yes, sister. After my father's death, we had no earning male members in the family. My brother is too young to work. And he is not even that able to work. So, after my father's death, I had to go. Before his death, he was the breadwinner.

Relatedly, several workers reported wanting to migrate to Jordan for work to save money for future investments, including their children's education as well as buying a home for their families. One worker reported that she wanted to "explore what [she] could do" in Jordan for their family: "I told [my husband] we have a future, and it could be better if I went abroad." She knew that going abroad would give her the jump start that she and her husband needed to provide a better life for their daughter and any other future children they might decide to have.

Many respondents noted that saving money was also possible in Jordan because of the higher salaries and the ability to work overtime. "Salary is high there [Jordan], salary is low here [Bangladesh]" reported one respondent, while another worker verified that not only were salaries low in Bangladesh, but there was no chance for a salary increase. Another worker noted:

Actually, I couldn't make enough money in Bangladesh, but I had the potential to make money in Jordan. I could make up to 15-20 [thousand Taka]; it depended on overtime. If I couldn't work overtime, I used to make 15,000 per month, but if I could work overtime, I used to make 20,000 monthly.³⁷

Community and Familial Reactions to Migration

Family and community reactions to women's migration for work varied. Some workers generalized reactions to women's migration for work; one important distinction emerged between responses from "villagers," or non-urban communities, and those in the cities. As one respondent noted, "most girls in our area go abroad," so negative reactions "don't happen here." She continued on, saying that "villagers do not like a girl who comes from abroad. Don't you understand what a village girl going abroad means to them?" Instead, in the city, "everyone knows we [women] work." One worker in particular explained that "public perception of immigrant workers is very negative" and that "people [in Bangladesh] do not like immigrant workers." She also pointed to the differences in peoples' reactions in the villages and in urban areas, noting that "in the village, people refuse to accept any girl as a sister-in-law if she works in garments," either in Dhaka or abroad. Another worker explained in detail that "many boys or men don't want to marry those migrant single girls. They say that 'this migrant girl has gone out of the country [so] this girl is bad; who will marry this girl?'"

In almost all cases, rhetoric surrounding "bad" migrant women and girls was linked to issues of gender and sexuality, and the gendered apprehensions that women would step outside of their socially acceptable roles. This might include, for example, spending time with men who are not from the woman's family, engaging in sexual activities, or simply being out in public alone. As one respondent noted, "people comment that girls live together with boys after going abroad," while another noted that "many people say that if girls go abroad, they get worse. They do contract marriage and other things...people make many bad comments [about them]." These gendered anxieties were present in workers' own responses, which articulated that the newfound "freedom" experienced by women and girls abroad—because, for example, their families and communities are not there to directly surveil them—leads to this "bad" behavior. Many of the women interviewed for this report, however, fought back against the idea that they

³⁷ As of February 26, 2023, 1 Bangladeshi Taka was equivalent to 0.0066 Jordanian Dinar. According to this respondent, she was able to make approximately 99.47JD a month without overtime, and 132.62JD with overtime.

themselves would become “bad” girls; they saw this “bad” behavior as a personal failure of Bengali women and girls, rather than a constructed issue tied to gender norms. Most workers identified with the belief that if they behave well, then they will be treated well and vice versa. As one woman noted, “abroad is not bad. Those who say being abroad is terrible are [not good people].” Another worker noted that she “convinced” her family to allow her to travel abroad by arguing with them that she “could not judge if she did not go [to Jordan] first.” “I believed in *Allah*, and I decided to go there,” she continued, eventually with the support of her family. Other women convinced their families by appealing to their reason, noting that “security is better abroad than in Bangladesh [and that] there is no chaos abroad,” and that, ultimately, working abroad would allow them to better their family’s financial standing.

Recruitment

Process

Most workers reported that they were recruited via formal government channels, something that almost all respondents reported as a “better option” than private agencies or brokers, who often increased recruitment fees in order to make a profit. As one worker noted at length:

Yes, if [women] communicated directly [with] the [BOESL] office, if they do not go to any broker, that’s great. If you communicate with the office directly, there is no possibility of spending money uselessly. You do not need to spend extra money. Brokers flee away along with workers’ money, passport, and other things. These [things] happen. If you go through the office, you can go without any tension. You have 100 percent surety. Nobody will ask for extra money in the office. Suppose you have submitted 30000TK in the office, you have a record of that money. There is no way to lose your money. I think it’s best to follow the BOESL procedure.

Other workers supported this claim, noting that BOESL “does everything” for the workers, which ensures that the worker does not make any mistakes during the recruitment process. Another worker, when asked about bettering the recruitment system for future workers, stressed that, “I always say one thing. Most people make the mistake when they go to a broker. The brokers claim a lot of money. Without going to the brokers, if you go to the office, and fulfil the needs, it is the best.” One worker even noted that she had heard that “there are a lot of problems in private [broker] procedures,” including “police harassment” of workers; knowing this, she “followed the government procedure” to avoid any possible issues.

Importantly, almost all respondents noted that they learned about garment factory work in Jordan and the immigration process itself through close friends and relatives, community members, and even co-workers at their previous jobs in Bangladesh. It was frequently through these personal connections that workers were able to start the immigration process, as many did not have any knowledge about the process prior to migrating. Most workers’ journeys began with Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL), the government-owned and operated recruitment agency, as the Jordanian legal framework prohibits private recruitment agencies to the domestic work sector in Jordan. This is also due to the slow formalization of the recruitment process for garment workers coming from Bangladesh to Jordan and beyond, which, in Jordan, now requires that workers have an authenticated certificate with them upon arrival that ensures that they were recruited by a licensed recruitment agency in the worker’s country of origin, among other stipulations.³⁸

³⁸ ILO, “Migrant Domestic and Garment Workers in Jordan” (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2017).

Most workers began their recruitment process by visiting the BOESL office for an interview; “after passing [the interview], we were sent to the technical,” noted one worker. “There, I had an interview for six days.” These interviews, or “technical,” as many workers called them, included teaching workers how to sew and other tasks that would be required of them in Jordan, as well as briefing them on the living arrangements and other important items that they would need to be aware of once they arrived in Jordan. Upon passing the interviews, workers waited a select amount of time until their visas were issued, and they were cleared to travel. The duration of the recruitment process varied, with most workers noting that the process took approximately three months, while others mentioned waiting nearly six months before receiving their visas.

Fees and Debt Bondage

On average, most workers reported spending between 40,000 and 60,000 Bangladeshi taka (TK) over the course of the recruitment process, with some workers reportedly spending around 80,000 TK. Workers were required to spend money on several items, including the costs to secure or renew their passports, costs of medical examinations and a urine test, finger printing at the BOESL offices, and the costs of shopping for personal items before leaving. Variations in recruitment fees were often linked to the type of recruitment process that the worker was using, in other words, whether they were using BOESL or going through a private broker. Relative to the BOESL recruitment process, many workers noted that much of the recruitment costs they spent were deposited into a bank account and later returned to them.³⁹ Workers were also largely aware that more recently, in 2022, the government of Bangladesh significantly lowered the fees necessary to travel abroad for work, dropping the fees from around 80,000 TK to 30,000 TK.⁴⁰

These costs often pushed workers into debt prior to leaving Bangladesh. Workers are then obligated to stay and work until they can pay off their loans, in a system known as debt bondage.⁴¹ Under debt bondage, workers do not have the opportunity to opt out of contractual obligations and in many cases, are forced to work longer than originally stated in their work contracts under fear of retribution for these debts once they return home. Loans taken out from brokers themselves were the most problematic, with one worker noted, “[the broker] sent me with his money. He helped me a lot [but] I will not be able to pay his debt in my whole life.” Other workers took out loans and paid in installments through remittances sent back during their time in Jordan. However, interest payments on these loans were often high, with some workers reporting interest rates as high as 100 TK a day. These rates often kept workers in debt for longer periods of time, and in some cases forced workers to depend on other sources of financial support. As one worker noted, she was forced to seek support from several different sources, after which she still had to take out a small loan in order to cover the entire recruitment cost:

I sold my necklace and two pairs of earrings. Yes, two chains and two pairs of earrings, I sold them. Then I took help from someone—I paid [BOESL] the money for my

³⁹ This fee is referred to as a “bank draft,” which workers must deposit into a new account, where their salaries will eventually be transferred. These costs were refunded once the worker had been abroad for a certain period of time, generally one to three months. ILO, “Recruitment Experiences of South Asian Migrant Workers in Jordan’s Garment Industry,” *Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FUNDAMENTALS)* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2018), https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_638703.pdf.

⁴⁰ Arab Times Online, “Bangladesh Cuts Labor Fees for Migrant Workers,” December 4, 2022, <https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/bangladesh-cuts-labor-fees-for-migrant-workers/>.

⁴¹ Sabrina Toppa, “Photo Essay: Migrant Workers in Jordan’s Garment Industry,” Carnegie Middle East Center, January 5, 2017, <https://carnegie-mec.org/sada/66598>.

passport. Then when I was ready to go [to Jordan], I did some shopping [but] I did not have any money, so I borrowed from my mother 40,000 TK. Then I went to Jordan.

Another worker complained that “some lenders charge 200 TK [of interest] per thousand” taka, which forced her to supplement her remittances with money earned from selling “gold ornaments” from her family.

Salary and Overtime

As mentioned previously, the promise of higher salaries for garment workers in Jordan drew the majority of respondents to the country for work. Additionally, the higher salaries “justified” the high recruitment costs, as workers felt confident that they would be able to pay off recruitment and any other loans they might need during their time abroad. Interestingly, several workers confirmed that the salaries promised to them by BOESL and in the contractual documents they signed before leaving Bangladesh were often higher than the actual salaries that they received in Jordan. Workers reported that they were told during BOESL trainings that they would receive between 125 and 150 JD, when in reality they received between 99 and 130 JD (approx. 15,000–20,000 TK). The differences in the actual and promised salaries varied according to company, with one worker reporting that her company was known by all workers in garment factories in Jordan as a company that paid significantly lower salaries than others. Other workers reported that the “lower” salaries were not really low, but were a reflection of a salary without overtime pay. “When we [workers] questioned them about it,” noted one worker about the lower salaries, “they [management] said that we would get it when we worked overtime.” Another worker provided more details:

I got less than what they said to me [before leaving]. I got 115 JD; but what this means is that with overtime, the amount [could be] 35 JD more than the 115 JD that they said. So, it was possible to make more.

On average, although their contracts under Jordanian law stipulate that workers can work a maximum of eight hours a day, most workers reported working 11- to 12-hour days, beginning as early as 7:00 A.M. Workers were then allotted half-hour breaks for lunch, with a short 15-minute break in the morning and in the afternoon for breakfast and tea. With overtime added on, workers often found themselves working more than 14 hours per day. One worker reported the following: “[Schedules] depend on the working system [and day]. Suppose today is the delivery [day] for work. We would work until 8:00 or 9:00 P.M., even 10 P.M.” Another worker noted that she had heard from friends that in other companies, workers might even work until 12:00 A.M. if they had not met their production quotas.

However, overtime wages were not an option for many workers, as they felt obligated to work in order to increase the low base salaries. Other workers confirmed this, with one woman explaining that the company promised them that “when you start to work overtime, you will get 20,000 TK. And from the [second] month, we got to work overtime.” Some workers, however, were not as lucky: “With overtime, we received about 16,000–17,000 TK,” noted one worker, while another worker reported making only 15,000–16,000 TK that could increase to 20,000 TK if she worked overtime. One respondent reported that “opportunities” for overtime were not always available in her company: “If I fulfilled the [production] targets, I would be able to earn a lot of money. We used to get [these] opportunities sometimes. We did not get it every month.”

It is also worth mentioning that some workers reported that a small amount of their monthly salary was deducted by the company as “social money,” which can loosely be translated to social security fees. In Jordan, Social Security Law No. 1 of 2014, which applies to all workers

irrespective of nationality, is deducted from workers' monthly salaries, to cover insurances "against work injuries, insurance against old-age, maternity insurance, insurance against unemployment, and health employment."⁴² According to a 2017 ILO report, the monthly contribution to social security for a garment worker is approximately 6.25 percent of the worker's total wages. While workers did not specify that "social money" was used to cover work-related insurances, many workers did report that these "social money" was sometimes returned to them once they left Jordan, while others reported that the deducted money went toward other company costs including airfare, which is paid by the company for first-time migrants.

Finally, some workers acknowledged that there were both monetary bonuses and days off provided by some companies. One worker reported the following: "If you attend [work] without absenting a single day in a month, you will get 500 TK as an attendance bonus." Another worker similarly reported that "we would get [a] bonus if the production [was] good." Additionally, workers reported receiving time off for holidays, in particular Eid. However, it was unclear whether this was paid time off.

Workplace Environment

All of the workers interviewed for this report cited that "work pressure is high" in Jordan, with one woman noting that "with a salary of 30,000 TK, there is no time to urinate." Workers reported that there was pressure for each worker to meet a certain production target every day; if they did not meet this target, they were subject to "scolding" and "sometimes yelling" at the hands of the factory floor supervisor. Some workers reported that their daily schedules were contingent on completing these targets, as one worker noted:

They tell us a sequence, such as you will complete this number to that number. After that, you can leave for the day. Suppose my duty time is 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. but I have completed at 3:00 P.M.: I can come back home at 3.00 P.M.

Another worker claimed that "if I failed to supply the production [targets] on time, they scolded us in their chambers. It sometimes happened." Worker accounts of "punishment" on the factory floor varied, however. Some workers said that punishment "never happened" to them; some workers claimed that they had only heard about past events of punishment taking place; while some workers did report that punishment happened, especially if workers were unable to meet the daily assigned targets. Some workers noted that you were "not allowed to leave [if] the target was incomplete," while others reported that "if you are bad at your work and [are] less producti[ve], they will take you to the General Manager's room." But, she stressed, you were not "punished" by the General Manager; rather, they explained to you what needed to change:

They [General Manager] will ask you to increase your production. They will help you understand where you are doing fault, how to produce more, etc. They will send you back [to the factory floor] after saying these things...No, there was not any punishment.

She continued noting that:

No, [they do not] scold. They used to talk a bit angrily at first. They will get angry when you make a mistake, which is normal because they are liable to the owner. They have to get the production done.

⁴² ILO, "Migrant Domestic and Garment Workers in Jordan," 13.

Another worker reported that supervisors and managers would “shout” in their languages “which we [Bengali workers] didn’t understand. Then we used to cry about that.” Other workers reported supervisors using more exploitative practices when work targets were not met:

Yes, we were bound as there is no freedom [in Jordan] like in Bangladesh. They [managers] used to shout and so on. They threaten that they will [keep] us to work without pay or [will not] allow us to leave the workplace...which is also practiced in Bangladesh.

Other workers noted that the pressure “was immense” and that managers “didn’t understand that everyone couldn’t take the same pressure.” “They would ask you to work at any cost,” noted one worker, “even if your relative dies.”

Sick Leave

However, workers consistently reported that companies covered the costs of medicines and seeing the doctor unless the problem escalated, and the worker needed to be treated off campus at a local hospital. Some workers noted that the companies they worked for were “helpful” if they were sick:

No, they do not pressure [workers to return to work if sick]. If someone is sick, there are doctors; if the doctors see [that] someone [is] sick, they let her go home to rest.

The worker continued, noting that:

There are medical services in the company. If the treatment is available in the company’s medical facility, they used to provide that. If the treatment is not available in the company’s medical service, they used to send [the worker] outside [the campus] for the treatment. If someone used to have a personal problem, they took treatment from outside.

Again, she notes that “mild ailments” were treated, and paid for by the company itself. Another worker reported that:

The company used to bear the expense [of sick leave]. Suppose you got sick while working, the company looks after the matter. If the medical cost is in the range of the company, they bear the cost. If it is seen that [the worker] needs a lot of money, the company provides an amount of money, approximately 30,000 to 40,000 TK, and sends her [back] to Bangladesh.

Any remaining costs would then be the responsibility of the worker upon her return to Bangladesh. Other workers verified this and claimed that companies would cover approximately 50 percent of the larger medical costs accrued by sick workers. Workers noted that the company’s medical team tried their best to “solve” all health issue on campus and would only send workers to off-campus clinics and hospitals in severe cases.

After-Work Hours: Living Arrangements and Activities

After finishing their workday, respondents noted that workers were required to return home to their dormitories. Once there, women showered, cleaned, and cooked, among other activities. Some went out shopping at the local markets in the city, where they picked up food items that were not available from the companies, who provided food to workers. Workers’ opinions about food were mixed, with some arguing that the “food arrangement was good. Two days a week, they used to serve chicken. Two days a week, they used to serve beef. They served eggs every day of the week.” Overall, companies were responsible for providing food to workers

and a small kitchen on each dormitory floor for workers to cook their own food. However, the majority of respondents noted that “we couldn’t eat the food provided by the company [even though] they gave us food properly.” As one worker noted:

Food was arranged by the company. One could cook independently if anyone is not eager to take the company’s food. Not everyone liked their food. My sister and I were there. My sister used to eat their food, but I didn’t. I only took their rice, cooked vegetables, and other items by myself.

Many workers ultimately preferred to cook their own meals, using the stoves provided to them by the company. “I only ate the company food,” one worker noted, “when I didn’t have any money. After getting a salary, I bought eggs, lentils, potatoes, oil, and onion.” As one worker noted, many workers visited local markets to stock up on food items that they preferred:

There were roadside markets like Bangladesh, and I bought from there weekly. When I first went there, it was available once a week. After two years, it started to set up daily. Besides, there were grocery shops at our house, and everything was available there.

The ability to cook their own food, however, was often dampened by the long lines that developed “everywhere; [there was a] queue for cooking, queue for bathing, there was nothing but queue,” noted one worker. Another worker noted that “everything abroad is [queue]-based. You will find [queues] everywhere.” Workers regularly found themselves waiting in line to get access to the stoves in order to cook their meals, and would rush to get to the showers early in the morning “before there was a long line.” While it was unclear how many workers lived on each floor of the company’s dormitories, workers noted that on average, rooms accommodated up to 8–10 women, who each slept in single bunk beds. Each worker had a small locker available, where she was able to store some of her personal belongings. Women’s dormitories were separate from men’s, who were housed in a different building altogether. Entertainment options, like television, were unavailable in most workers’ rooms unless workers bought one themselves. Instead, one worker reported that her company provided “fans” and “quilts” for the rooms. Largely, workers relied on their mobile phones as a “source of recreation,” one worker noted; workers paid their cell phone bills, as these were not covered by the companies. However, one worker did report that in her company, a “hall room” existed that functioned as a community gathering room:

There was a hall room. It was a big room. People would walk from there. Where you could watch television, sound box...bat-ball, badminton, etc. Everyone used to go there on Fridays. It was a place for dancing and singing. These were for our entertainment. The facilities were so good.

On holidays, companies frequently treated workers to special meals and time off. For example, one worker noted that “they used to serve special dishes on Friday. It is a must.” “During different festivals like Eid and Bengali new year,” noted one worker, “[the company] used to provide special dishes for the workers.” “Yes,” another worker recalled, “we celebrated special occasions. They gave us good food on special occasions, such as *biryani*. Also, they served us cakes.” Others reported companies setting up “arranged programs” or field trips on holidays, taking busloads of workers to see special sites and locations across Jordan. As one worker remembered:

The company was arranging picnics on these days [holidays]. They decorated the picnic bus and took us to the Nile River, an apple farm, a shrine, and many other places. They

will take you to picnics if you give money, just like Bangladeshi garments. They fill the whole bus with people and go for picnics.

Working During COVID-19

Several workers reported working in Jordan during COVID-19 and, in particular, during the first year of the pandemic and government-enforced lockdowns in Jordan. As one worker detailed:

Suddenly, we started to hear the word “Corona” from everyone. But we had no idea what it was. One day, at five o’clock in the morning, our house leader, aunty, came and started knocking on the door. I opened the door, and after opening the door, she said, “None of you will go to the office until you get my further instructions.” Your office is closed. I asked her, “Why, aunty?” She said, “This was because of Corona.” You’ll start going to the office after my next instruction. The office was closed for almost 15 days.

She continued on, recalling their return to work and the re-opening of the company:

When the factory reopened after 15 days, they gave us masks and hand sanitizer after we went in line. We used to go to queues where we maintained a one-hand gap; it was the same in all companies then. Hand sanitizer was given every two hours so we wouldn’t get infected with the virus. Two masks were given; we wore one before lunch and the other after lunch.

During this time, workers experienced many difficulties, some of which varied from company to company. Others noted that their families were “creating pressure” for them to return, especially in the face of COVID-19:

Initially, I did not want to [return] due to my poverty. But my husband and daughters pressured me to return because I was afraid of Corona[virus]. My daughters said to me, “if you die, we will not be able to see you.” My husband started quarreling with me before that and told me to return. Then I resigned from my work.

Workers’ reports of working in Jordan during COVID-19 focused primarily on salaries and were varied: While some workers received their full salaries during lockdown periods when the company was closed, others were paid only half their salaries or, in the worst instances, were not paid any salary at all. One worker reported that workers organized, herself included, to protest her company’s withholding of three months of salary from workers on account of COVID-19 and their inability to work at full capacity.

For example, our salary has been withheld for three months due to the coronavirus. So, we had to send our salary to our hometown. For instance, we have parents; please give us our salary. So, some would stay in front of the office, some would remain in the street, and the police would come. Later asked what the problem was. People say they don’t give salaries. Later they would say that they would pay the compensation, then provide a date, then pay the wages within that date.

In all cases, however, workers noted that the companies did continue to provide for workers’ living arrangements and food. However, workers did complain about the stresses of living in the dormitories during COVID-19, where movement was highly restricted in order to prevent workers from contracting the virus. Unsurprisingly, many workers reported that they had known people that had contracted the virus while working in Jordan. Companies tested their

workers frequently and, according to one worker, “those who tested positive were taken to separate rooms and [were given] their treatment there.”

Returning to Bangladesh

Workers reported myriad reasons for returning home to Bangladesh from Jordan, among which family pressures and changes in household dynamics were predominant. Shifts in the care responsibilities also prompted workers to return home. In several instances, workers reported that their husbands and family members, who were tasked with caring for their children in their absence, were “creating pressure [for them] to come back” to take care of these children. For one worker, the death of her husband meant that her young son was now in the sole care of her mother, who told her “I’m alone and cannot take care of your son alone. I need you here.” This prompted the worker to sever her contractual obligations and return home. Several workers reported that their husbands, in particular, put pressure on them to return. In one case, a worker reported that her husband had threatened to marry a second woman if she did not return. Others reported familial pressures related to marriage, with two workers reporting that they returned home to get married under the pressure of their families.

Unfortunately, many workers reported that upon returning to Bangladesh, they once again found themselves under financial strain. Although some managed to make important gains, like buying land or a house for their families, their unemployment in Bangladesh caused them to go through any savings they had earned while working in Jordan. As one worker reported: “Yes, all of it [savings] got spent. I had to bear my father’s medical and children’s educational expenses...I was able to buy land in Dhaka. I have nothing else.” Similarly, the several workers who reported returning to Bangladesh due to illness also faced financial difficulties as they paid for their own medical treatments. As one worker reported, “I [would] not [have] come back” if it were not for her illness, “I was good [in Jordan].”

Factory Floor Discipline

Networks of Discipline and Power: Camp Bosses, Supervisors, and House Leaders

Discipline emerged across all of the completed interviews as an important issue, both on the factory floor and in the after-work hours spent at the women’s dormitories. The notion of discipline has been a key focus of study in feminist research on women workers, in particular women workers in the global South. In these studies, it is important to note that discipline does not emerge primarily through exceptional moments of violence—for example, a supervisor beating a worker—but, rather, through the more banal acts of everyday life in the factory. As Aihwa Ong (1997) and Melissa Wright (2006) both note, the discursive and material practices through which workers are constructed—not only by their supervisors, but by their coworkers, their governments, their families, and their broader communities—all contribute to the very systems of power that control and discipline workers.⁴³ From the responses gathered for this report, it is clear that discipline, including the self-discipline of workers, emerged in relation to the discursive positioning of “good” and “bad” workers. It was clear that being a “good” worker—which has both gendered and racialized dynamics, as will be discussed below—was key to being treated well by company superiors and, overall, experiencing a “good,” in other words a safe and productive, time abroad. In workers’ minds, being “good” was an individual choice: “good” girls made “good” decisions to work hard, to respect their supervisors’ wishes, and to maintain

⁴³ Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia* (State University of New York Press, 1987); Melissa W. Wright, *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2006). See also, Alessandra Mezzadri, “Class, Gender and the Sweatshop: On the Nexus between Labour Commodification and Exploitation,” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 10 (October 2, 2016): 1877–1900, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1180239>.

a “good” reputation while abroad. As one worker noted, supervisors and other company representatives were “good to you if you were good to them.” If workers met their production targets and behaved well during after-work hours, they would be able to do their work “without any problems,” as another worker noted.

But self-discipline, of course, did not evolve in a silo. Instead, while only a handful of workers reported direct instances of violence used as a disciplinary tactic—although, this might be attributed to a fear of retribution for speaking up—all of the workers who participated in this study reported several levels of supervisors, all company employees, who formed a constant source of surveillance over workers. Workers had various names for these employees, from “house leader” to on-site supervisors, including “line supervisions,” a “camp boss,” and others. Still others highlighted a “Sir,” most commonly a non-Bengali man on the factory floor, who was tasked with fielding workers’ complaints and concerns, if they had any. Companies also reportedly housed their own doctors and medical staff, as well as a medical clinic, where workers would go to treat most illnesses unless they needed to go to a hospital to receive more serious treatment. House leaders lived with workers, and “took care of” the workers living in the dormitory. As one respondent noted, her female house leader “checked if [anything] needed to change something, like a damaged light or fan.” The house leader also “took care [of us] if any of us got sick or were required to go to the hospital.”

The high volume of supervisors has several important effects on workers’ self-disciplining. First, with so many supervisors attending to different aspects of workers’ lives in Jordan—floor managers for factory floor problems, a house leader of issues with living arrangements, a doctor and a clinic for health issues, among others—workers are always under the “care” of different managers and supervisors. This effectively works to deflect and de-escalate workers’ concerns, as they are constantly (re-)routed to a different manager each time they have a problem. In other words, workers do not have a formal, singular complaint mechanism at work; instead, they are pushed around between different supervisors to lodge their complaints. As one worker noted:

If we talk to the upper group, they say they will deal with it, and after some time, they make excuses and force us to go back to our work again. You will never get justice.

The second effect that such a high volume of supervisors has on workers is that it presents the company as an omnipresent force: No matter where workers are, they are under the surveillance of a company representative. If workers were sick, they visited a company doctor; if workers had an issue on the factory floor, they spoke with the floor manager; and if workers had a problem with their living arrangements, they spoke to a house leader, another company representative who lived with the workers in their dormitories. As one worker noted,

Suppose, I am facing a problem. I used to share my problem with the Bengali officer that I am facing. The officer used to share the problem with the administration. They used to try their best to solve the problem...There is a Bengali “Sir” who is educated. He can explain my problems [to] the administration and he can tell us the solution given by the company.

This effect was reinforced by the fact that company representatives, as well as recruitment agencies in Bangladesh, frequently told workers that they should “focus on the work.” As one worker noted,

They [managers] told [workers] that [Jordan] was not a place to roam but a place to work. They advised us that we had left our children in Bangladesh [and therefore]

should focus only on work. As we get a seven-day holiday, we should do [only] housework, sleep and care for our health. They counsel us in this way.

Managers and supervisors also “helped” workers in important ways to become more productive, as many interviewees reported. One woman relayed the following story, which happened after she had gotten in trouble for failing to meet her production quotas several days in a row after arriving in Jordan:

Yes, I told that Bangladeshi [supervisor] who was there for our help. I told him that I needed time to learn [and that] once I get adjusted, my work speed will boost. And the Bangladeshi told them [factory managers]. Then, I was told that the office had reconsidered my issue and asked me to try to increase my work speed gradually.

In this instance, the supervisor intervened on the worker’s behalf to protect the worker from possibly being sent back to Bangladesh or from being denied a day’s wages. However, this type of “help” must be nuanced by the fact that, as one worker noted, “they [supervisors] work here and face the same situation.” What this worker is highlighting is that supervisors are under similar pressures to meet performance indicators; when these indicators are not met, they similarly face certain types of punishment. Thus, to “help” a worker is in their best interests, insofar as better worker performance translates into better treatment for them as supervisors. Supervisors did not have much power, this worker noted: “They [supervisors] can only ask if we had problems or if we’re not doing fine.”

This culture of surveillance also helped to discipline workers on the factory floor. All respondents reported feeling significant amounts of “pressure” to meet their work targets and to perform according to their supervisor’s wishes. In particular, workers were aware that if issues arose, they risked being sent home to their dormitories or worse, sent home to Bangladesh; in both cases, workers lost potential wages. For this reason, one worker noted, “nobody misbehaves here [because] if someone misbehaves, they [managers] tell her to stay at home.” One worker reported the following:

I heard about a company that if any employee cannot deliver the target, the company cut[s] money from [their] overtime. In [relation to] this issue, the girls do not protest because they fear to be marked. If they get marked, the company searches her mistakes more.

Being “marked” meant that you were a “bad” worker, and “bad” workers were at risk for being denied their daily wages or even sent home to Bangladesh. In this way, the use of the term “bad” discursively disciplined workers to behave while at work. “Bad” workers were “shamed,” according to one worker, who remembered a strategy employed by the factory floor supervisor that made workers who did not meet their targets remain standing while other workers were allowed to sit down. “Is [this] not a shame? It is a matter of [humiliating] any worker standing because supervisors and other workers look at her. The reason is, she failed to submit work [on time].” Worse, “bad” work was used as an excuse by company supervisors and bosses to put certain workers under even higher levels of surveillance and scrutiny. In some cases, this might mean that “she [the worker] might be pressured to return” home, as one worker noted. While some workers recognized the unfair power dynamics at play in these incidences between workers and supervisors, others reinforced the “good” versus “bad” worker narrative through self-discipline. As one worker responded to questions about worker punishment on the factory floor, “If the failure is mine, I should be humble,” she noted, implying that any mistake made is her fault alone, and could not be blamed on structural issues or the pressures from the company to meet high targets each day.

But the fears of losing wages or being sent back to Bangladesh ultimately helped to perpetuate a culture of silence among workers, who were unwilling to speak up against the company for fear that they might be sent home. As one worker noted, “no one wanted to open [their] mouth” during meetings with welfare officers inquiring about the status of their workplace and living environments. Several respondents confirmed this belief, noting that even though this was “not said by the company,” in other words, supervisors did not expressly prohibit workers from speaking against the company, it was “known that she will face a lot of pressure if [she] speaks.” One worker remembers that during her time as a supervisor, she was told that “if there is any problem [with workers], we will discuss it with ourselves, but you will say nothing in front of the workers.” Another worker noted that she had friends whose monthly salaries had been cut because they spoke up against the company or agitated for better wages. She remembers that some workers “had their passports seized” or were sent away “overnight” so that they barely had time to say goodbye to anyone or even to collect their personal items. This culture of fear also made it difficult for workers to seek any help from those outside of the company, including the Al-Hassan workers center, which many workers had heard about but whose services they had never used. Relatedly, as one worker noted, this culture of fear made it difficult to organize: “But if only one person opens their mouth, it won’t have any effect if everyone doesn’t [also] open their mouth.” Instead, what happens is that only a few people complain and “they are force[d] to quit” because of the “company’s power.”

Further contributing to this culture of silence was the understanding that workers were replaceable and “disposable.”⁴⁴ The notion of “disposability” has been a longtime focus of feminist theorists in studies of factory work around the world; “disposability” refers to the ways that workers are discursively and materially disciplined into cheapened labor that is easily replaceable. Workers’ disposability was reinforced by the fact that companies, according to one respondent, could quickly “replace” workers that misbehaved or worse, were the victims of crimes. One woman relayed a particularly disturbing story of two Bengali women factory floor workers who had died as a result of a boiler explosion. When other workers noticed the absence of these women and pressed the company to respond, the company avoided their questions and simply hired new workers. “They hid many dead bodies this way,” she notes; the company constantly tried to “convince” workers that nothing was wrong, and that no one was missing, by simply hiring newly recruited workers to fill their place.

Individual Responsibility and Being a “Good Girl”

Individual “Choice” and Sexual Relations in Jordan

Answers to questions about gender-based violence (GBV) in Jordan among factory workers were tied up with gendered expectations of Bangladeshi women and how they should behave while living in a foreign country. Many workers were ambiguous in their answers to whether GBV occurred during their time in Jordan, commonly noting that “it happens.” When pressed further, workers laid blame at the *individual* or *micro-level*, noting that “naughty girls” are just that: naughty by *choice*. During her recruitment process, one worker remembered:

They [the company] asked us to go directly to our rooms after work and insisted that we not go out. They warned that the boys out there were not good. So, whether we stay good or not is up to us. If you are good, then the world is good.

Another respondent replied that male supervisors had misbehaved in the past, “but it was on the girls. Those who gave access, it happened to them only,” implying that only the “bad” or

⁴⁴ Wright, *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*.

“naughty” girls experienced any type of gendered violence or manipulation at work. “It will be the girl’s fault if it happens,” noted another respondent. “Good or bad, it is up to you,” another worker noted, implying that individual choice seemed, in her opinion, to underlie instances of consensual and non-consensual sexual interactions. Other workers seemed to approach the issue of sexual relations with neutrality, noting that to “misbehave means that there is both good and bad everywhere” and that “there was no force...nobody can force it.” In other words, this respondent did not agree that sexual violence occurred, again implying that individual choice was at the base of all sexual interactions between Bengali women workers and those they met in Jordan. Speaking about women who form long-term relationships with men in Jordan, one interviewee noted that “if someone does not want to be good, I am unable to make her good. Am I able to make her good? If she chooses to do this, it is her wish.”

Several workers noted that it was the lack of community pressure and norms that gave women a false sense of freedom: As one worker noted, “naughty” or “bad” women who have experienced GBV or other types of “misbehavior” “think that [because] they have gone abroad, they have the freedom to do everything. They do not fear *Allah*.” Relatedly, one worker noted that “If women walk around in hijab, they are more respected.”

Many workers stressed that “problems” often arose between Bangladeshi women and Jordanian men, with several workers identifying viral news stories of Bangladeshi women workers who had disappeared or were abducted from while in Jordan. In one of the worst stories, a worker reported that, following an affair between a Bangladeshi worker and a Jordanian man, the woman was later murdered. One worker reported that prior to arriving in Jordan, she had begun to hear rumors about the dangers of Jordanian men from a friend: “She was saying that here [in Jordan] the [Jordanian men] pick up the beautiful girls, rape them, and throw them in the mountains. I was more and more afraid when I heard this.” One worker reported that she and her fellow workers knew that “if you [Jordanian] do something to a [Bangladeshi] girl, the police don’t keep any proof,” or evidence of the crime. Several workers reported that incidences of sexual violence happened “a lot before, but no longer now,” as one woman reported.

While these beliefs were the norm among interviewees, one respondent offered a more nuanced approach to the sexual and gendered relations between Bangladeshi women and Jordanian men. The Bangladeshi women working abroad experience a freedom they have never experienced: She notes that in Bangladesh, physical and other types of relationships are “hidden,” while in Jordan, “it is not the case.” “There,” she notes, “you can have a relationship, which means having a *habibi*.” Here, she uses the Arabic term *habibi* to signal a love interest or relationship. “This is your option, you choose.” She highlights the temporality of these relationships, noting that “you [women] are not recognized as *habibi* after you come back to your country or your family.” For women that chose to take up relations with either Jordanian men or even other men working in the factory, they would spend “two or three hours” with their *habibi* after work until curfew, when they were required to return to their dormitories because, as she notes, if you were locked out you risked being returned to Bangladesh. In this way, she “lived” with her partner: after work, she would “come home,” to her partner’s house or dormitory, cook, and later return to her own dormitory.

Tellingly, when asked about the “advantages” of having such a relationship in Jordan, the respondent pointed to the *lack* of familial responsibilities as a key driver. “He [*habibi*] sees you as single; he does not see your family.” More importantly, “the family does not see that you are walking around with a boy.” These relationships, as she describes them, seem to provide a brief respite from the gendered familial responsibilities that define her life in Bangladesh. In her

story, “freedom” is more than simply running around as a “naughty” or “bad” girl; it is evidence of the strict family and gendered expectations set on married women in Bangladesh.

“If You Are Good, They Are Good to You”: “Good” and “Bad” Workers in Jordan

Notions of “good” and “bad” were also evident in the ways that respondents described the community of Bengali workers in Jordan more generally. Several respondents highlighted the “bad” nature of Bengali workers relative to how they treated each other within the community. When asked about the different demographics of workers in garment factories in Jordan, respondents noted that Bengali workers, along with Nepali and Sri Lankan workers, outnumbered other ethnicities. However, as one respondent noted, “we Bengalis spoil everything.” She even noted that her own “good” work behavior was evidenced by how non-Bengali co-workers, in particular her supervisors, spoke about her: “Many people would tell me that I am not Bengali; I am like Indian girls, like Nepalese...It means that Bengalis had established a bad reputation,” she noted. Similarly, one worker noted the following:

To be honest, Bangladeshis are not good. But foreigners are really good. Bengalis were jealous of each other. Is that not true, sister? Bengali girls are not that good of people. But foreigners are nice.

Another worker reported that Bengalis not only make more mistakes but gossip more about each other: “It does not seem that we’re in a distant land or that we’re all like sisters, or something like that,” she reported, implying that competition and disagreements between Bengali women workers was often rife. “When girls first go there,” noted another worker, “they are very good, very quiet. [But] they change day by day...Garment [work] is bad” for these women because of the effects it has on them. Several other workers noted that Bengali workers tended to “quarrel” with each other, “did not smile,” and caused other types of issues: “Everyone was good,” noted one worker, “better than our Bengalis.”

Notions of “good” and “bad” workers also emerged in discussions about discipline and punishment on the factory floor and in the living quarters by company staff. Most workers insisted, however, that “if you are good, then good will happen to you” and that only those who made “bad choices” were subject to more severe forms of punishment, including being sent back to Bangladesh. One respondent described the relationship with her supervisors thusly:

For example, if I ask my children to do something, they do not comply. What would happen then? There might be an issue. It happened sometimes [at work], but they [supervisors] used to say sorry to us after some moments. They also asked us whether we were disappointed with him and requested not to continue with that feeling. That was usual and might happen in the workplace.

When probed for more details about whether “scolding” happened, the respondent noted that:

No such thing happened there [Jordan]. As I said, one might get angry if she needs to explain a thing multiple times. Wouldn’t I become angry if I were required to present an item several times to my children? They also got angry, but after half an hour they said sorry to us. It might happen in the workplace.

Supervisors were frequently described as “good” people who were only there to “help” workers. As one respondent noted, supervisors discussed “official issues” with workers; in particular, she remembers her Bengali supervisor discussing “how to behave with others, maintain personal hygiene workload” during one such training on “official issues.” “If you can do the task,” one

worker noted, “it is good for them [supervisors].” In this way, being a “good” worker was seen as important for establishing good relationships with supervisors and co-workers, and for ensuring that you were treated well during your time at the factory.

Racialization

While the majority of respondents claimed that there were no “issues,” or personal problems and quarreling, between workers of different nationalities, racialization emerged in the anecdotes of several workers. Here, the term racialization is used to signify processes of difference-making, and how communities are established and created as fundamentally different from one another ⁴⁵. As a process, racialization is both material and discursive, and ultimately affects how people perceive different communities and their treatment within the larger system. In workers’ responses, differentiation between communities of workers occurred along national lines, and sometimes religious, and was reinforced through workers’ living and working arrangements, as well as their treatment by supervisors of different nationalities. Living arrangements were organized “naturally,” according to nationality: overwhelmingly, Bengali workers lived and worked alongside other Bengalis, while Sri Lankans and Indian workers, for example, also lived and worked in similar quarters. The organization of living arrangements specifically was both tolerated and understood by the respondents, who noted that living with non-Bengali workers was difficult: “They eat different foods, they do different things,” noted one worker. One worker even replied that “it was not possible to live with the Nepalese...their living style was foreign and challenging for us to adjust to.” Relatedly, some workers pinned issues of cleanliness onto certain communities of work. For example, one Bengali worker who experienced bed bugs complained that the bugs “continued to return even [though] they sprayed pest-control medicine” in her room. She reasoned that:

Of course, we cleaned. But there were so many people [in the dormitories]; they cooked and kept wet clothes in the room. So, there were always bed bugs. Maybe bed bugs are all over their country...Some girls cooked a lot and were very dirty. Maybe something was wrong with their country. Otherwise, why don’t we have this many bed bugs in Bangladesh?

In contrast, some of the respondents felt that other communities “did not like Bengali people or Bengali food.” As one worker reported, other workers would “say that they get a terrible smell from Bengali people.” “They,” these other workers, “did not want to maintain a social relationship with us,” she noted, “they did not like how we bathed [and] they did not allow Muslims to sit in front of their gate.” As well, Bengali workers themselves sometimes reinforced and maintained boundaries between themselves and other nationals. As one worker noted, “among the Bengali workers, some workers were arrogant. They used to not talk with others [different nationalities] and say that everybody is not the same.”

While workers claimed there was no “discrimination” between workers of different nationalities, tensions often emerged between supervisors and workers of different nationalities. In many instances, racialization took place through the relationships between workers and supervisors of different nationalities, with some workers reporting that supervisors sometimes favored workers of their same nationality. As one worker commented on at length:

⁴⁵ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography,” *The Professional Geographer* 54, no. 1 (2002): 15–24; Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, American Crossroads 21 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

As the manager was Sri Lankan, they [Sri Lankan workers] used to have many advantages. In some cases, they highlighted that Sri Lankan workers are performing better, and Bengali workers are performing poorly. They used to insult Bengali workers more than Sri Lankan workers. They would insult us but be proud of their [Sri Lankan] girls...The supervisor insults me a lot. They say, "Sri Lankan girls are submitting the targets, why are you unable to submit?"

Other workers noted that Bengali workers were more frequently "scolded" than other workers. These power dynamics intersected with higher pay, with many respondents identifying that Sri Lankans and Indians "had privilege and superiority" over Bengali workers. When pressed to elaborate on these privileges, one worker noted that "they used to get a higher salary" and that they were treated better by factory owners and other higher-ups. Interestingly, these higher salaries did not seem to bother workers when they spoke about the "good work" that supervisors and bosses generally did, as discussed in the previous section. Rather, they pointed to higher salaries as problematic primarily when associating supervisors and bosses with one specific nationality and their specific treatment of Bengali workers in general. Relatedly, racialization occurred between factory floor workers and Jordanian workers, who, according to one worker, "used to sit idle and work only in the presence of supervisors." This, she reasoned, was because "they were native, so they were more powerful" than Bengali and other migrant workers.

Conclusions

Earning more income than in Bangladesh was the main motivation for women to work in Jordan's garment sector for long hours. Women often had a positive experience, particularly when compared to the Bangladesh garment sector and many would like to return, but ideally with better conditions pre-departure.

Most of the interviewed migrants were not aware of the activities of the Al Hassan Worker Center, as it mostly deals with grievances that workers bring forward themselves and supports entertainment or leisure activities for which most women migrants interviewed did not have time.

The study had some constraints linked to doing its methodology of phone surveys. Specifically, phone interviews did not allow us to observe nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice. While we asked if women put their phone on speakers, there was still a risk that family members, relatives, or neighbours were near the respondents. Background noise, such as traffic or other people talking, made it sometimes difficult sometimes to understand respondents were saying. Moreover, several interviews were affected by poor phone connections; this impacted data quality.

Workstream 7: Recap and Recommendations

WS7 recaps and reassesses the findings across workstreams and develops summary recommendations. It asks the following research questions: Based on workstreams 1-6, what are final learnings for WiF-2 and other programs focused on reducing forced labour and trafficking and What are final recommendations for the WiF-2 ToC? The following is a series of summary recommendations from the six workstreams:

Based on the research that is currently largely under review with various journals we identified a series of policy recommendations that informed the WiF-2 program and can support future migration programs in the South-to-West Asia migration corridor and beyond:

For the WiF-2 Theory of Change

Intervention areas identified by ROAD workshop participants suggest that WiF-2 activities are focusing on key vulnerabilities of women migrant, but suggested several additional actions that a WiF-2 type program could consider:

1. Improve linkages between migrant women in their home countries (pre-departure) with NGOs and advocacy groups in destination countries in the South-to-West Asia migration channel with targeted support to sub-channels, such as the recruitment process of migrants to the garment sector in Jordan, which is currently challenging for migrants to navigate without working with costly agents. Such contacts and information channels at the beginning of the migration process can increase the sense of safety for migrant women and reduce their indebtedness, thus reducing overall migration related risks and vulnerabilities.
2. Involve migrant workers in the design and implementation of WiF-2 trainings and other migration interventions can ensure that challenges migrants face are communicated by migrants themselves and thus are more likely to reflect lived realities.
3. Add interventions focused on reintegration. Lack of reintegration programs can lead to a cycle of continued distress migration. Of note, following the COVID-19 pandemic several programs, including WiF-2 initiated ad hoc reintegration support.
4. Incorporate COVID-19 pandemic and other health concerns into programming. This includes providing information on COVID-19 and other health challenges in local languages, advocacy on access to health services; and direct support to homeless and income-less migrants abroad.
5. In Nepal, focus advocacy activities on government agencies that are considered more influential and because their policies directly adversely affect women migrants' safety.
6. In Bangladesh, focus advocacy activities on both government (General Directorate of General Security and Ministry of Labour) and private sector actors; they are perceived as equally influential, but not collaborating adequately.
7. In Jordan, operate WiF-2 type activities through NGOs and private sector as engaging the government is unlikely to reduce vulnerabilities in the current policy environment.
8. work actively with embassies to support vulnerable women migrants in all destination countries. South Asian countries can learn from Southeast Asian countries, for example, the Philippines.

In countries of origin—WiF-2 training activities

5. WiF-2 training activities increased access to information on migration compared to areas where WiF-2 did not operate; potential migrants in areas where training took place had a better understanding of migration risks. Providing accurate information on likely salaries, as well as risks associated with migration is important for migrants to take informed decisions.
6. Provide language training, as lack of language skills of destination country is a key source of vulnerability.
7. In Bangladesh, training in villages provided by WiF-2 was preferred over training provided by the government due to easier access and content; however, such trainings and information still only reach a small share of potential and actual migrants.
8. Programs focused on reducing vulnerabilities in migration should focus training activities on potential migrants, rather than the general population.

In countries of origin—Recruitment actors

3. Reduce or remove reasons for migrants' needs to rely on recruitment actors as they can be the cause of long-term indebtedness of migrants. This requires coordination between government agencies and NGOs that directly work with migrants and also that migrants' voices are listened to by government and NGOs. As long as migration information is not transparently shared through information channels that potential women migrants can access, recruitment actors or middle-men/women have the opportunity to exploit migrants.
4. Recruitment actors should be registered and agents with substantial complaints should lose their license or registration.

In destination countries—Activities in the employer space

6. In Lebanon raise awareness of employers on content of labour contract as an effective means to reduce vulnerabilities.
7. In Lebanon continue to advocate for an update to the standard labour contract for alignment with ILO Convention No. 189.
8. In Lebanon, support recruitment that bypasses recruitment agencies to reduce vulnerabilities of women migrants.
9. In Lebanon and Jordan, implement a large-scale advocacy program focused on reducing racially motivated treatment of workers both in the care and garment factory sectors.
10. In all West Asian countries, make worker contracts available in languages that migrants understand.

In destination countries—Activities with recruitment agencies

3. In Lebanon, increase oversight over recruitment agencies, with a focus on them upholding labour laws.
4. In Lebanon, facilitate recruitment without engaging recruitment agencies.

In destination countries—Activities focused on freedom of association and social networks

5. In Lebanon, create spaces for migrant domestic workers who provide elderly care and facilitate information channels that allow elderly care recipients to speak directly with each other.
6. Continue to support migrant and worker centres that can help reduce immediate vulnerabilities.
7. Enable women migrants' mutual support systems through migrant centres, collective action institutions or virtual (digital) channels.
8. At the micro level, support migrant domestic workers' social networks by providing technology, such as cell phones or cell phone data packages, to migrant workers to ensure that they can develop and retain social networks.

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- Wu, J., Kilby, P., Mathema, J., & Bhattarai, A. (Under review). The Precarity of Women's Short-term Migration: A Case Study from Nepal. *Journal of Migration Studies*.
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Annex B:

B.1. Publications linked to the ROAD migration project

Journal papers

Published

- ELDidi, H., C. van Biljon, M. Alvi, C. Ringler, N. Ratna, S. Abdulrahim, P. Kilby, J. Wu and Z.A. Choudhury. (2022). [Reducing vulnerability to forced labour and trafficking of women migrant workers from South- to West-Asia](#). Development in Practice. Special issue on Modern Slavery and Exploitative Work Regimes.
- Joyce Wu & Patrick Kilby (2022): [The precarity of gender, migration, and locations: case studies from Bangladesh and Nepal](#), Development in Practice.
- Kilby, P., & Wu, J. (2021). 'Migration and the Gender Impacts of COVID-19 on Nepalese Women'; Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies, special issue on gender and COVID-19 (December). [Migration-and-the-Gender-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-Nepalese-Women.pdf \(researchgate.net\)](#)
- [The role of social identity in improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) and health services: Evidence from Nepal](#) – Research paper, September 19, 2021, Development Policy Review.

Under review

- Wu, J., P. Kilby, J. Mathema and A. Bhattarai. The Precarity of Women's Short-term Migration: A case study from Nepal. *Journal of Migration Studies*. Under review.
- Wu, J., P. Kilby, S. R. Rashid, N. M. Sarker. Patriarchal Bargains in Short term women's migration from Bangladesh. Under review. *International Migration*. Under review.
- Abdulrahim, S., Z. Cherri, M. Adra and F. Hassan. Beyond Kafala! Employers' discriminatory attitudes and violations of the rights and freedoms of women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Under review.
- Choudhury, Z.A. Authority and Influence in Emigration Policy Domains: Evidence from Bangladesh and Nepal. *International Migration Review*. Under review.
- Choudhury, Z., Sufian, F.D., Ringler, C., Alvi, M., Hasan, A., Ratna, N. & C. Ringler. Does information, including on agency, reduce vulnerabilities in the South-to-West Asia Migration corridor? A quantitative assessment. *Journal of Development Studies*. Submitted.
- Abdulrahim, S., K.N. AlDeen, N. Awad and M. Adra. *The health of women migrant domestic workers in the Arab region: A systematic review and narrative synthesis*.
- Sufian, F, Alvi, M. F., Ratna, N. & C. Ringler. *Development and Validation of a Women's Empowerment in Migration Index (WEMI): Evidence from Bangladeshi Returnee Migrants*. Submitted to World Development.
- Sufian, F., Alvi, M., Ratna, N. & C. Ringler. COVID-19 and vulnerability of low-skilled female migrants: Findings from phone survey with Bangladeshi returnee migrants from West Asia. Submitted to International Migration Review.

Working Papers

Published

- Abdulrahim et al. CEDIL Design Paper: [Gender-Sensitive Risks and Options Assessment for Decision Making \(ROAD\) to Support WiF2, Design paper 4](#)
- ElDidi, H., C. van Biljon, M.F. Alvi, C. Ringler, N. Ratna, S. Abdulrahim, P. Kilby, J. Wu and Z. Choudhury. (2021). [Reducing vulnerability to forced labor and trafficking of short-term, low-skilled women migrant workers in the South Asia to Middle East corridor](#). IFPRI Discussion Paper 2049. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).
- Kilby, P., & Wu, J. (2020). [Migration and the Gender Impacts of COVID-19 on Nepalese Women: Global Development Working Paper 1. Humanitarian And Development Research Initiative \(Hadri\) At Western Sydney University, 2020](#). <https://doi.org/10.26183/59d6-7s16>

Under review

- Nassif, G. & S. Dakkak. Elder Care in Lebanon: An Analysis of Care Workers and Care Recipients in the Face of Crisis. Under review. IFPRI Discussion Paper series.
- Ringler, C., Abdulrahim, S., Adra, Alvi, M. F., Choudhury, Z.A, ElDidi, H., Kilby, P., Nassif, G., Ratna, N., Sufian, F. & J. Wu. L. 394 Final Academic Report and Evaluation. (CEDIL working paper series)
- Abdulrahim, S. & M. Adra et al. Social Networks, Collective Organizing, and Freedom of Association: A Qualitative Participatory Action Research Study with Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon. Submitted to IFPRI working paper series.

In preparation

- Choudhury, Z.A. et al. Inside the West Asian Receiving States: Understanding Stakeholder Networks in Labor Migration in Lebanon and Jordan (Working title)
- Nassif, G. et al. Vulnerabilities of women migrants from Bangladesh in Jordan's garment factories. (Working title)

Policy Notes

Published

- [Reducing Vulnerability and Precarity of Low-Skilled Women in Short-Term Migration from the Global South: Key Policy Recommendations for the G-20](#) – Policy note on key risks along the migration pathway, on the role of women's empowerment and on impact of WiF interventions, September 2021
- Abdulrahim, S., Cherri, Z., Adra, M. and Hassan, F. (2023). [Beyond Kafala: Employer roles in growing vulnerabilities of women migrant domestic workers](#), CEDIL Evidence Brief 7. London and Oxford: Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning.
- Alvi, M., Ratna, N., Sufian, F., Hoque Khan, M. and Ringler, C. (2023). [Development and validation of a Women's Empowerment in Migration Index \(WEMI\)](#), CEDIL Evidence Brief 8. London and Oxford: Centre of Excellence for Development Impact and Learning.

Blog posts

published

- [When ties that bind increase migrants' vulnerability: Insights from the south to west Asia migration corridor](#)
- [Women's labour migration: A journey fraught with violence](#)
- [From helping to collective organizing: Insights from women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon](#)

Media coverage (selected)

- [“কাজ করতে হয় ১৪ ঘণ্টা, সাপ্তাহিক ছুটি পান না ৭৬ শতাংশ \(You have to work 14 hours, you don't get 7 percent weekly leave\)”](#) – Prothom Alo (in Bangla, with English option), 12 May 2022
- [“Provide them with language skills training”](#) – Daily Star, 13 May 2022
- [“Study: 79% of women migrants jobless since return to Bangladesh”](#) – Dhaka Tribune, 12 May 2022
- [ভাগ্য বদলের আশায় মধ্যপ্রাচ্যে গিয়েও বেতনভাতা পাননি ৩৭ শতাংশ নারী \(37 percent women did not get salary even after going to the Middle East in the hope of changing their destiny\)](#) – Sara Bangla, 12 May 2022
- [‘নারী অভিবাসীদের ভোগান্তি নিরসনে প্রয়োজন নীতি গ্রহণ’। \(Adoption of necessary policies to alleviate the suffering of women migrants.\)](#) – DBC, 12 May 2022
- AUB face-to-face netmap and ROAD workshops:
 - <https://www.annahar.com/arabic/section/77-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9/15032022050507899>
 - <https://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/education/528839/%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B4-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-aub-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1>
 - <https://aliwaa.com.lb/%D8%A3%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A3%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%89/%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8/%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%B4-%D8%B9%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%81%D9%8A-aub-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AF-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B4%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%AC%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B2%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A9/>
 - <https://www.annahar.com/arabic/section/77-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9/15032022050507899>
 - <https://www.annahar.com/arabic/section/77-%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9/15032022050507899>
 - <http://www.alkalimaonline.com/Newsdet.aspx?id=633504>
 - <https://alintichar.com/224966>

Project video of early findings

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/736876295>

Summary outreach webinar

[Can we reduce vulnerabilities of short-term low-skilled women migrants in the S-to-W Asia corridor? - YouTube](#)

B.2: Net-Map process guidance (Example Lebanon)

Overview of the Workshop:

Net-Map is a facilitation or interview technique that helps people understand, visualize, discuss, and improve situations in which many different actors influence outcomes. By creating Influence Network Maps, individuals and groups can clarify their own view of a situation, foster discussion, and develop a strategic approach to their networking activities. More specifically, Net-Map helps players to determine what actors are involved in a given network, how they are linked, and their level of influence.

In this workshop we will focus on identifying the actors that affect women's migration across the entire migration chain from South Asia to Lebanon and how these actors interact with each other.

The workshop focuses specifically on migration of women from South Asia to Lebanon to work in the domestic care sectors. This includes actors involved in the enabling environment of migration, actors involved in recruitment, actors involved in training activities, those involved in the transfer of migrants to host countries, those involved in employment processes in the host countries, those involved in supporting migrants in host countries, and those involved with returnee migrants in home countries.

We will start by listing all the actors involved in the migration process from South Asia to Lebanon and discuss the role of each of these actors. We will then determine how these actors are linked, examine how influential each actor is, and then discuss ways to reduce vulnerability to forced labor and trafficking that women migrants might experience in general and also in relation to Covid-19.

Net-Map is a tool to explore how things are actually done, not how things 'should be' or how they are 'officially' or in formal documents. This is why we need the personal knowledge and insight of people like you, who have knowledge of the stakeholders involved in migration and how they interact.

The overall guiding question that frames the session is:

Who influences the migration of female workers from South Asia to Lebanon for work in the domestic care sector?

o **Step 1: Determine Actors**

Which actors play a role in the migration process of women migrants from South Asia to Lebanon for work in the domestic care sector?

- Prompt the workshop participants by asking for actors within various categories (government, NGO, private, donor, research etc.).

Note: Be sure to include the organizations the participants represent.

- Each category of actors gets a different color sticky note. Sticky notes will be spread out on the large sheet (or sheets) of flip chart paper.

Note: Decide what the actor categories are before the workshop. Let the workshop participants add any categories that are missing

- Government (regional and national)
 - Donors
 - NGOs (possibly split international and national NGOs)
 - Research organizations
 - Private Sector
- Ask participants to describe why the actor they identify is important in the migration process and what their role is
 - Actors do not have to be highly influential, but they do have to be “involved” or influence the migration process. We want to know who is not-influential as well as long as they are involved.
 - Use sticky notes to write the names of the actors, spread these on a large flip chart sheet, in no particular order: Spread them out sensibly so that there is room to make connections among them.

○ **Step 2: Drawing links between actors**

For each actor on the sheet, who is connected to whom by the following types of relationships? Pre-identify 3-4 links of interest (no more than 5). Options include:

- Formal authority/informal pressure—who exerts authority over other actors?
- Money/financial flows—who provides financial resources to other actors?
- Information and technical advice—who provides this information and technical advice?
- Lobbying/Advocacy—who lobbies which actor for increased influence and say over the migration process?

- One link at a time, explain the definition of the link, and go through all the actors on the board asking if a link exists.

Note: Links should be very specific to avoid linking all actors to every other actor. Links should be done in different colours. (for example, formal authority: black; money flows: red colour; technical advice: green colour)

Link definitions:

- Formal Authority/informal pressure: Formal authority is any official relationship that links people based on a formal chain of command / organizational hierarchy. Informal Pressure is the ability to influence or obstruct the other actor’s decisions outside official means such as political or social power
- Money/financial flows: exchanges of money including funding/lending (such as loans or grants from a donor to a NGO or government) or direct payment for a specific service (for example, in relation to recruitment)
- Communication of information or technical/policy advice: professional information or advice provided from one actor to another, for example, on how to reduce vulnerability and exploitation of women migrants

- **Lobbying/Advocacy:** who lobbies or advocates with which actor for increased influence and say over the migration process?

- o **Step 3: Attribute Influence Levels**

How strongly can actors influence the migration process of women from South Asia to Lebanon?

- **Define influence:**
 - o We define influence as the ability to substantially affect the migration process across all components (recruitment, training, actual migration, activities in host countries, return and reintegration). We are interested in the current and actual state of influence, not a possible future level of influence over the issue. The focus is on the ability to influence the migration process, not on the actor's overall level of influence.
 - o If you want to clarify further: "*what are different ways someone could influence migration of women to Lebanon?*" After they give some input, add any additional possible way of influencing that you see.
 - Ways of influencing include, but are not limited to: changing formal rules and policies, providing respected information on an issue, funding or withdrawing funds to support migration, bending or breaking the rules, etc.
- **Attribute influence:**
 - o First, ask the influence level of each actor and place an influence piece/checker piece or tower.
 - The more influence an actor **has the higher the tower (more checker or other pieces).**
 - The towers can be as high as the interviewee wants.
 - Two actors can have towers of the same size.
 - If an actor has no influence at all, no checker piece is put.
 - o Second, after setting up the influence towers, verbalize what you see, starting with the highest tower. E.g. "Actor X has the highest tower with a height of five pieces, followed by the actors Y and Z, both on towers of four." Encourage the participants to adjust anything if they have second thoughts. Then adjust the heights of the other towers accordingly.
 - o Third, review the entire board, starting with the most influential actor all the way down to the lowest, ask the participants about the sources and effects of influence. Prompt explanations about all actors that are very high, very low, or seem a bit inconsistent or unclear where their influence comes from. Examples include:
 - I see you have put this actor on the highest tower. Why? Where does his/her influence come from?
 - You have linked this actor to so many others, but you say he/she doesn't have much influence, why is that so?

- The purpose of doing this in three stages is to allow the participants to reflect on their answers and possibly make changes upon noticing inconsistencies.

- **Step 4: Discussion**

After the Net-Map is completed, lead participants in a discussion around the following questions:

- What are major constraints to a safe migration process of women from South Asia to Lebanon?
- Looking back at the map, how can we reduce forced labor and trafficking of women migrants from South Asia to Lebanon? (which actors need to change what?)
- What additional vulnerabilities need to be removed as a result of Covid-19? How can this be done?

B.3. The ROAD process guidance

1.1 Overview of the process followed by brief Q&A

2.1. Finalize Risk event (an event with uncertain consequences): event that can be refined:

trafficking and/or forced labour of low-skilled female labour migrating from Bangladesh to the Middle East

2.2. Define Values associated with Risk Event (optional)

Participants individually define 2 values, linked with resources, groups, services, outcomes or other things that they value regarding migration pathways for Bangladeshi women. Each participant individually sends (via chat) 2 short value statements after ~1 minute, followed by discussion; no consensus needed

2.3. Define Triggers (immediate cause of a risk event)

Facilitator reviews definition of a trigger and provides examples (Ex. Covid-19, economic crisis in Lebanon, prohibition of female migration can be triggers for forced labor versus trafficking). Participants individually define 2 triggers and put in chat box (2 minutes). Facilitator places each trigger in model with participants providing guidance on grouping similar triggers (i.e. proposed triggers that are very similar or just worded differently) and missing triggers

2.4. Define Drivers (threat, trend or other risk source causing a trigger to occur)

Facilitator reviews definition of a driver and provides examples (poverty, debt are Ex.). Participants individually define 1 driver and facilitator places each in model (associated with triggers) with participants providing guidance (1 min reflection). Add more drivers in group.

2.5. Define Consequences (outcome of a risk event)

Facilitator reviews definition of a consequence and provides examples (abuse is an Ex.) Participants individually define 2 consequences from occurrence of risk event (1 minute). Facilitator places consequences at bottom of risk event; group additions of more events.

2.6. Review Causal Risk Model

Participants are invited to review and discuss the causal risk model. Prompting questions may include

- a. Is there anything important missing?
- b. Are key triggers, drivers and consequences reflected?
- c. Is there any linkage to defined values?

3.1. Progress Summary

The facilitator summarizes the process by which the causal risk model was produced and explains the next steps in the process. Participants are also asked to approve the redrawn causal risk model and minor amendments are made if necessary.

3.2. Identify Controls (an action that modifies the likelihood of a driver or a trigger causing a risk event)

Facilitator reviews definition of a control and provides examples (gov debt relief if debt is the trigger is an Ex). Participants individually define 2 controls and adds them in chat. Facilitator places them on whiteboard, grouping as necessary. Facilitator defines 4-5 primary controls next to causal model with participants' guidance and labels them as C1, C2, C3, C4 etc. next to each control

3.3. Apply Controls

Participants collectively indicate which controls can be applied effectively to each causal pathway (i.e. drivers->triggers, triggers-> risk event) and the facilitator represents this on causal diagram. If

numerous causal pathways have no controls, facilitator asks group to identify additional controls.

3.1. *Identify Mitigants (an action that ameliorates the after-the-event consequences of a risk event)*

Facilitator reviews definition of a mitigant and provides examples (EX: insurance for migrants). Participants individually define 2 mitigants and adds in chat. Facilitator places mitigants adjacent to causal risk model, grouping as necessary. Facilitator defines 4-5 primary mitigants next to causal model with participants' guidance and labels them as M1, M2, M3 etc. in a table with an empty cell next to each mitigant.

3.2. *Apply Mitigants*

Participants collectively indicate which mitigants can be applied effectively to which causal pathways (i.e. risk event-> consequences) and the facilitator represents this on causal diagram. If numerous causal pathways have no controls, facilitator asks group to identify additional mitigants.

3.3. *Identify Feedback Effects*

Facilitator briefly describes causal risk system and asks for feedback effects either from consequences to drivers or triggers or from controls & mitigants to drivers and triggers.

3.4. *Presentation of causal risk system in plenary (model 1, 2 and 3)*

Description of all three causal risk models

3.5. *Identify Priorities*

Facilitator explains that each participant will now allocate 5 stickers across the key identified controls and mitigants. Each sticker represents an investment of "effort" in terms of financial investment, research or other resources into the application of that option.

3.6. *Group Reflection*

The facilitator leads a reflective group discussion on the results. Prompting questions may include: What was surprising? What was missing? How are these results different to how you would typically conceive the issue? What improvements could be made to this type of process? How could this process be applied for actual decision-making?

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

- *risk event* - an event with uncertain consequences;
- *trigger* - an event that is the immediate cause of a risk event;
- *driver* - threat, trend or other risk source causing a trigger to occur;
- *consequence* - outcome of a risk event affecting objectives;
- *control* - an action that modifies the likelihood of a driver or a trigger causing a risk event;
- *mitigant* - an action that ameliorates the after-the-event consequences of a risk event;
- *option* - an action that modifies the outcomes from or likelihood of a risk event, i.e. a mitigant or control.

Appendix B4: ROAD causal risk diagrams

Figure B.4.1 Causal Risk Diagram Bangladesh Breakout Room Group 1

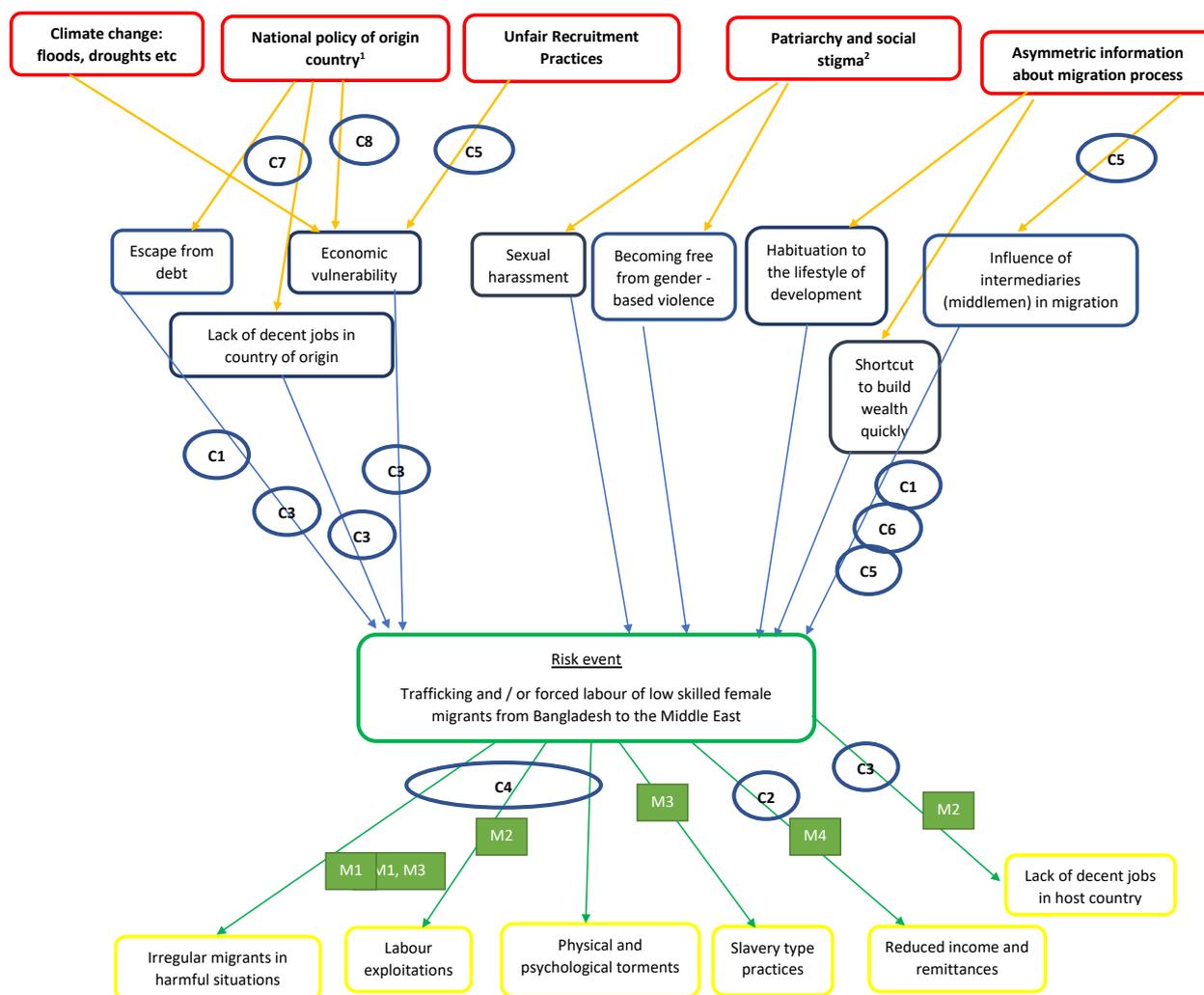


Table B.4.1 Controls and Mitigations, Bangladesh Breakout Room Group 1

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Reduce the cost of immigration to (help save and reduce the burden of debt)	M1. Hotline/resource centre in the home country to help victims
C2. Improve the wages negotiation by the expatriate ministry	M2. Certification of skills acquired or gained in the source country
C3. Safety Nets	
C4. Agreement with destination country to include better working conditions	M3. Hotline/ resource centre for victims in the host country
C5. Accountability of recruitment intermediaries	
C6. Regulation of migrant channels: Publications of the list of accredited intermediaries	M4. Ensure savings through local bank accounts for migrants
C7. Skill development of women, including soft and life skills	
C8. Enact WEWB 2018 to ensure the well-being of female migrants	

Notes:

- A number of factors identified as drivers were rearranged as triggers
- Lack of decent jobs in the country of origin was identified as a driver but is both a driver and a consequence.

- ¹ Predominantly neoliberal policies which makes it difficult for low skilled women to get gainful employment in countries of origin
- ² Discrimination of social categories was changed to patriarchy and social stigma

Figure B.4.2 Causal Risk Diagram Bangladesh Breakout Room Group 2

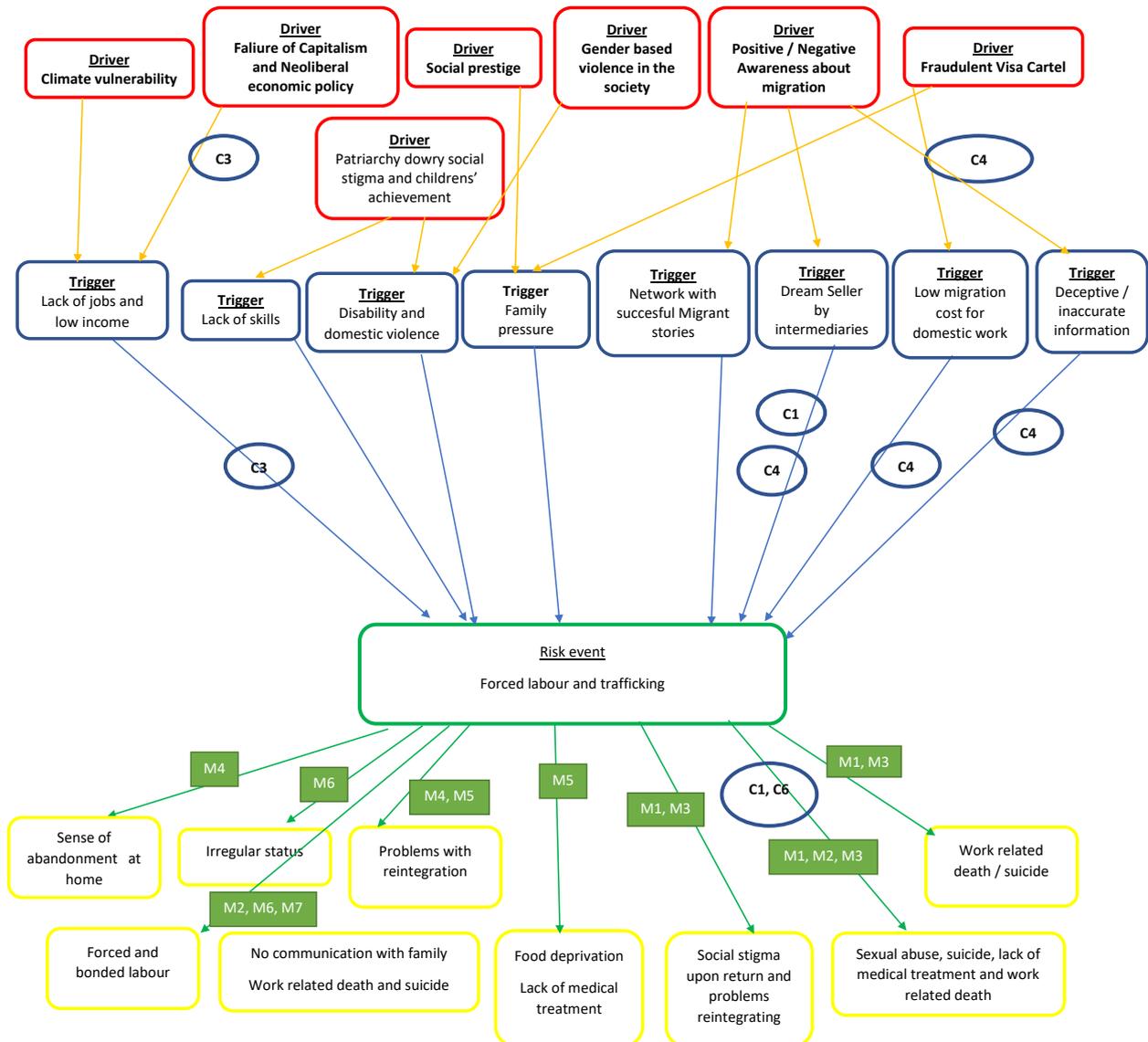


Table B.4.2 Controls and Mitigations, Bangladesh Breakout Room Group 2

Controls	Mitigants
C1. A collaborative effort between government organisations and non-governmental organisations for informed ethical migration	M1. Counselling and shelter homes should be placed as key mitigants
C2. Appropriate sector-based negotiation	M2. Regular monitoring of human rights situation at the destination country
C3. Improve the wage structure at home country	M3. Local government and NGO interventions regarding community counselling
C4. Improve coordination between government and recruitment agencies to control intermediaries	M4. Psychosocial and economic reintegration at home with family
C5. Reduced and no cost of migration in general	M5. Safety nets programmes for migrant workers and family members
C6. Review and monitoring of policies MoUs and bilateral agreements	M6. Improved legal support in-home and destination countries
	M7. Improve the presence of labour attaches and expand their scope of work.

Figure B.4.3 Causal Risk Diagram Bangladesh Breakout Room Group 3

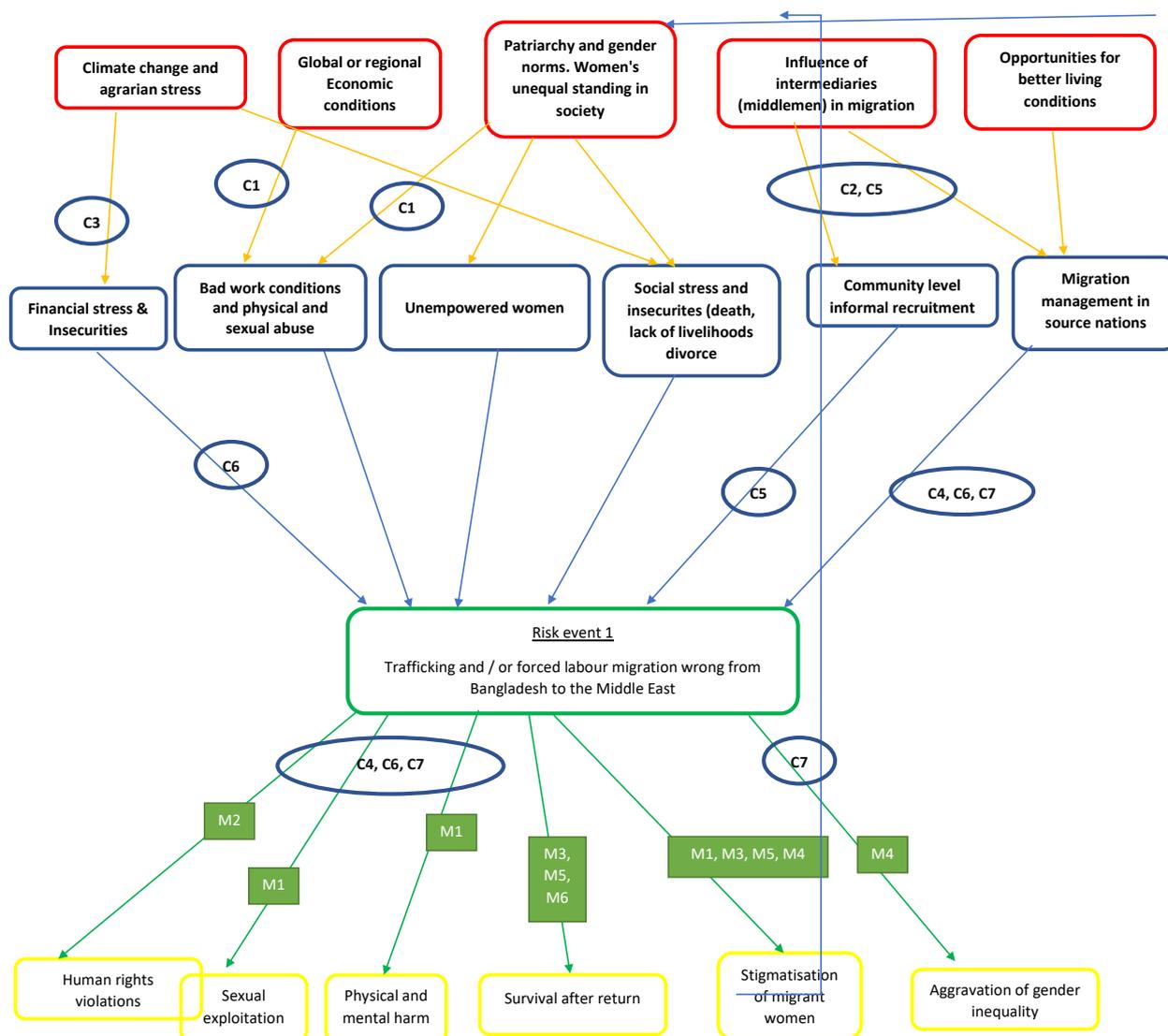


Table B.4.3 Controls and Mitigations, Bangladesh Breakout Room Group 3

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Social policies and protection	M1. Psycho-social council and services
C2. Community-based organisations to replace intermediaries (middlemen)	M2. Uphold the UN and ILO conventions 189 on domestic workers and 190 on domestic violence
C3. Agricultural policy changes	M3. Change in values on how women are treated in both home country and destination country
C4. Follow up with destination countries authorities and create better opportunities	M4. Media telling the true narrative on migration
C5. Address issues of corruption	M5. Changing community values and mindsets in home and destination countries
C6. Collaborative monitoring system and early warning	M6. Repatriation and reintegration programmes
C7. Uphold UN and ILO conventions	

Figure B.4.4 Causal Risk Diagram Nepal Breakout Room Group 1

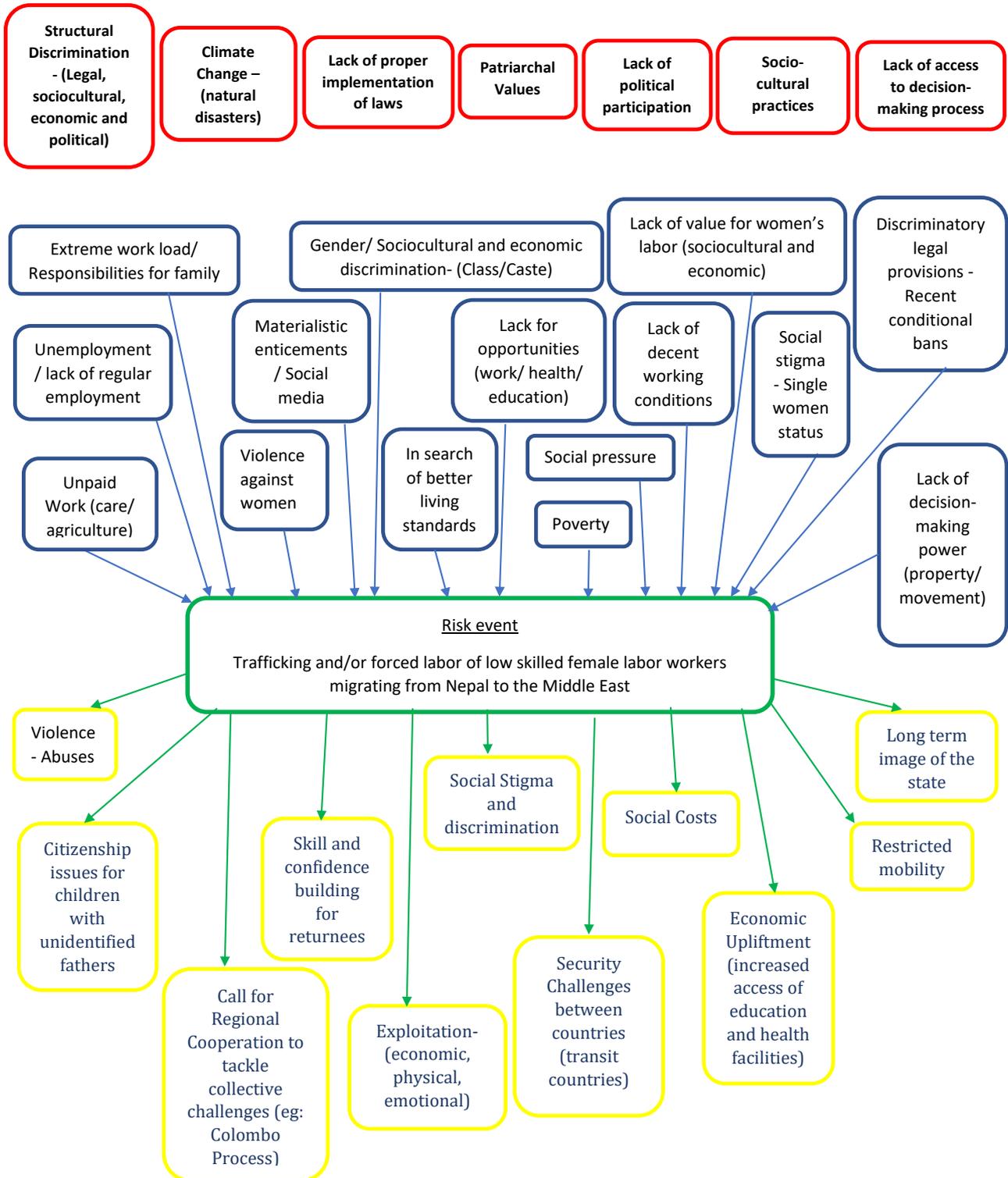


Table B.4.4 Controls and Mitigations, Nepal Breakout Room Group 1

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Providing sustainable livelihood options	M1. Socio-economic reintegration program
C2. Continuous conversation inviting duty banners	M2. Forming an federation of women migrant workers abroad at all level to influence the government at political party
C3. Transfer knowledge to the policy makers	M3. Province based research on care deficit
C4. On the job training skills	M4. 1 month paid holiday for mother of small children
C5. Defensive martial art training	M5. Advocacy on minimum wage for the returnee migrant worker
C6. Gender sensitization at all levels	
C7. Enabling of the local governance	
C8. Compulsory joint ownership of property between husband and wife	
C9. Conscious media campaign	
C10. Increasing the number of skills	

Figure B.4.5 Causal Risk Diagram Nepal Breakout Room Group 2

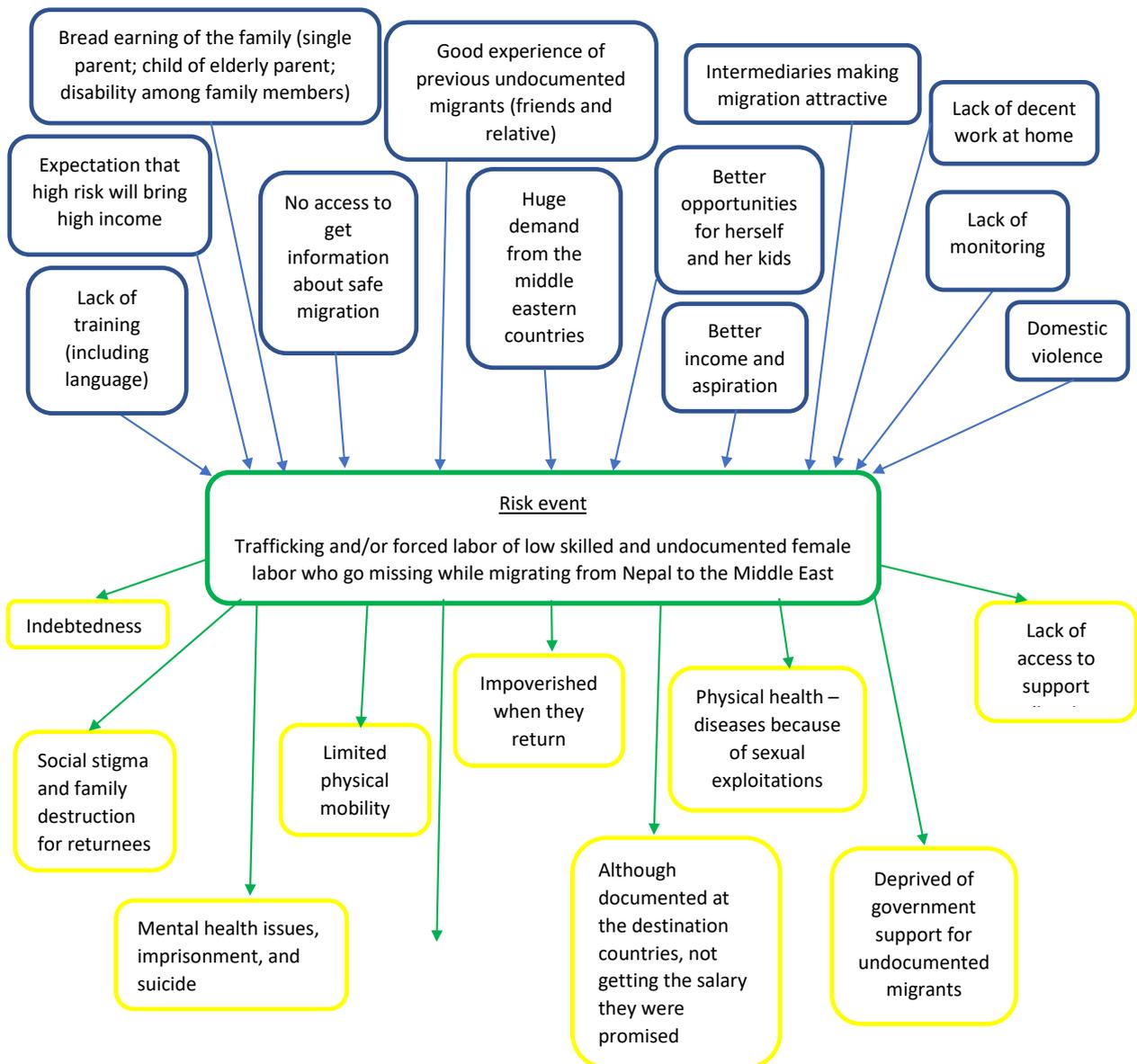
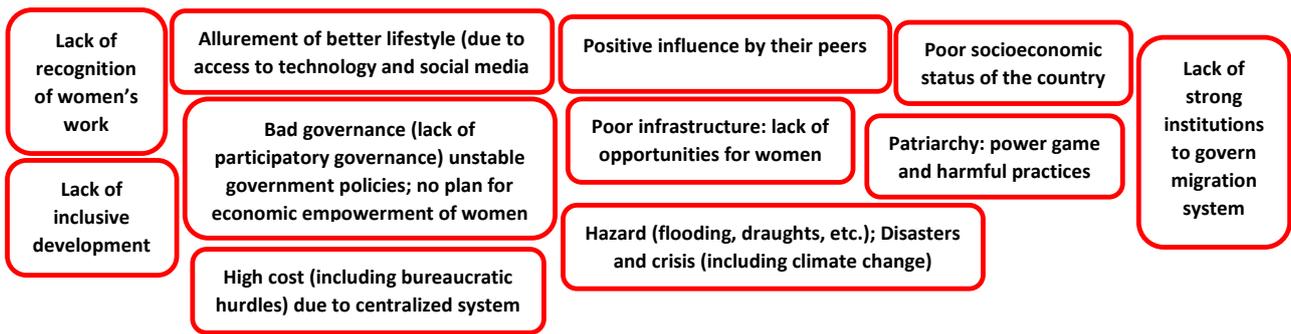


Table B.4.5 Controls and Mitigations, Nepal Breakout Room Group 2

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Decentralized government and equitable of distribution of resources	M1. Legal, and other support from the government (Consular Office) even for the undocumented migrants
C2. Modernization of agriculture (use of modern agriculture technology; government investment in technology)	M2. Reintegration policies from the government
C3. Industrialization (agro-processing and agri-business)	M3. Community awareness activities on the social stigma
C4. Inclusion of migration topics and gender roles and responsibilities in the curriculum	M4. Government should encourage migrant in terms of giving priorities on employment once they return
C5. Vocational and skill development training	M5. Increase of the human resource in Nepali embassy and focus on bilateral agreement with destination countries
C6. Localization and implementation of national law	M6. Universal Period Review of the human rights status of all destination countries
C7. Coordination among different stakeholders for effective implementation of laws	M7. Broader insurance coverage (24 – hours) for domestic works
C8. Use of social media for awareness on gender and safe migration	M8. Diplomatic missions, CSO, destination countries, community, government to create access of information
C9. Legal and moral education at community level (by government, NGOs, CSO)	M9. Implementation of the loan program of the government
C10. Dissemination of right information from the foreign employment board	M10. Government to government agreement with destination governments
C11. Good governance around recruitment for migration	M11. Open the ban on labour permit for women going to middle east for domestic work
C12. Proper inspection at the airport	M12. Provide Distant psychosocial counselling
C13. Free education for women; affirmative action to end discrimination against women	M13. Writing to the Nepalese embassy and dissemination through social network

Figure B.4.6 Causal Risk Diagram Nepal Breakout Room Group 3

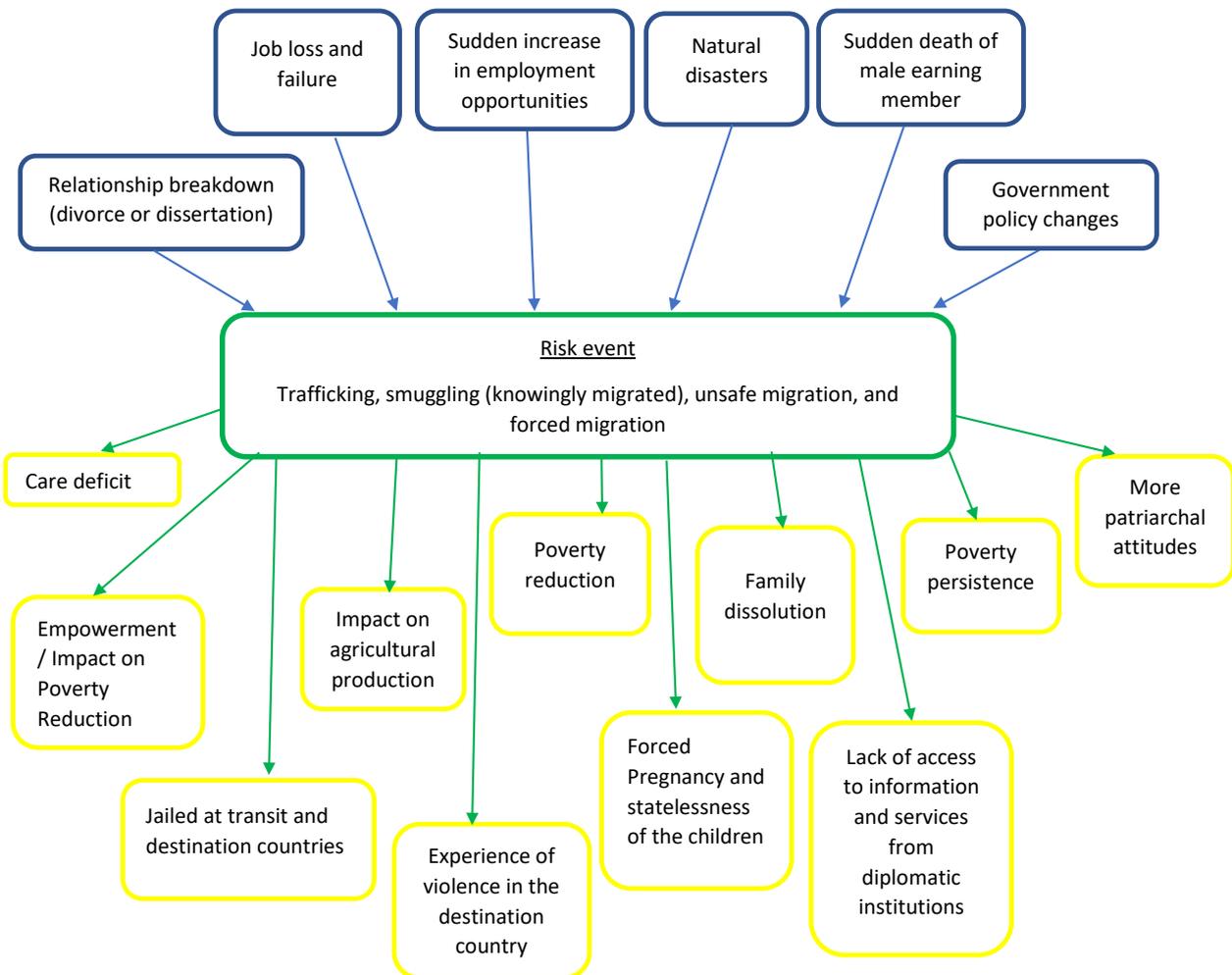
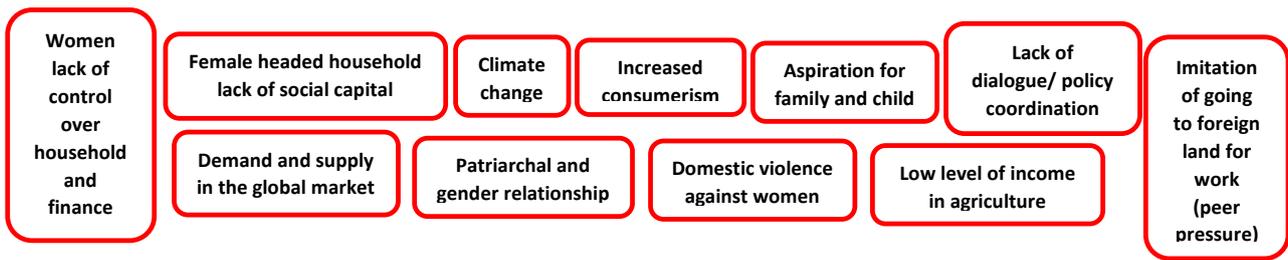


Table B.4.6 Controls and Mitigations, Nepal Breakout Room Group 3

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Empowering women through Information about domestic violence and other rights	M1. Opportunity for adequate decent work
C2. Establishment of women friendly migration policies	M2. Strong repatriation policies for undocumented migrant women
C3. Localization of recruitment practices	M3. Documentation of migrant workers
C4. Pre-decision orientation	M4. Strengthening the consular service in destination countries
C5. Access to decent working condition	M5. Access of migrant workers in country of destination with different support group and diaspora
C6. Access to employment and equal wage	M6. Deploying women labour attaché and health attaché
C7. Access to decision making (including use of assets)/ Meaningful participation from Household to the nation	M7. Strengthening coordination of government with Diaspora in countries of destination where missions are not there.
C8. Equal access to education	M8. Setting up diplomatic missions in destination countries where it is not there
C9. Policies which considers women specific need around climate change and disaster relief	M9. Bilateral agreement and MoU with destination countries
C10. Commercialization and mechanization in agriculture.	M10. Lifting ban on women's migration
C11. Shifting women in service sectors from agriculture sectors.	M11. Policy makers to move away from a protectionist approach to a right based approach and recognize women agency
C12. Working in supply chain	M12. Bilateral NGO/advocacy group coordination between destination countries and Nepali organizations
C13. Recognition of gender labour in agriculture and women contribution	

Figure B.4.7 Causal Risk Diagram Lebanon Breakout Room Group 1

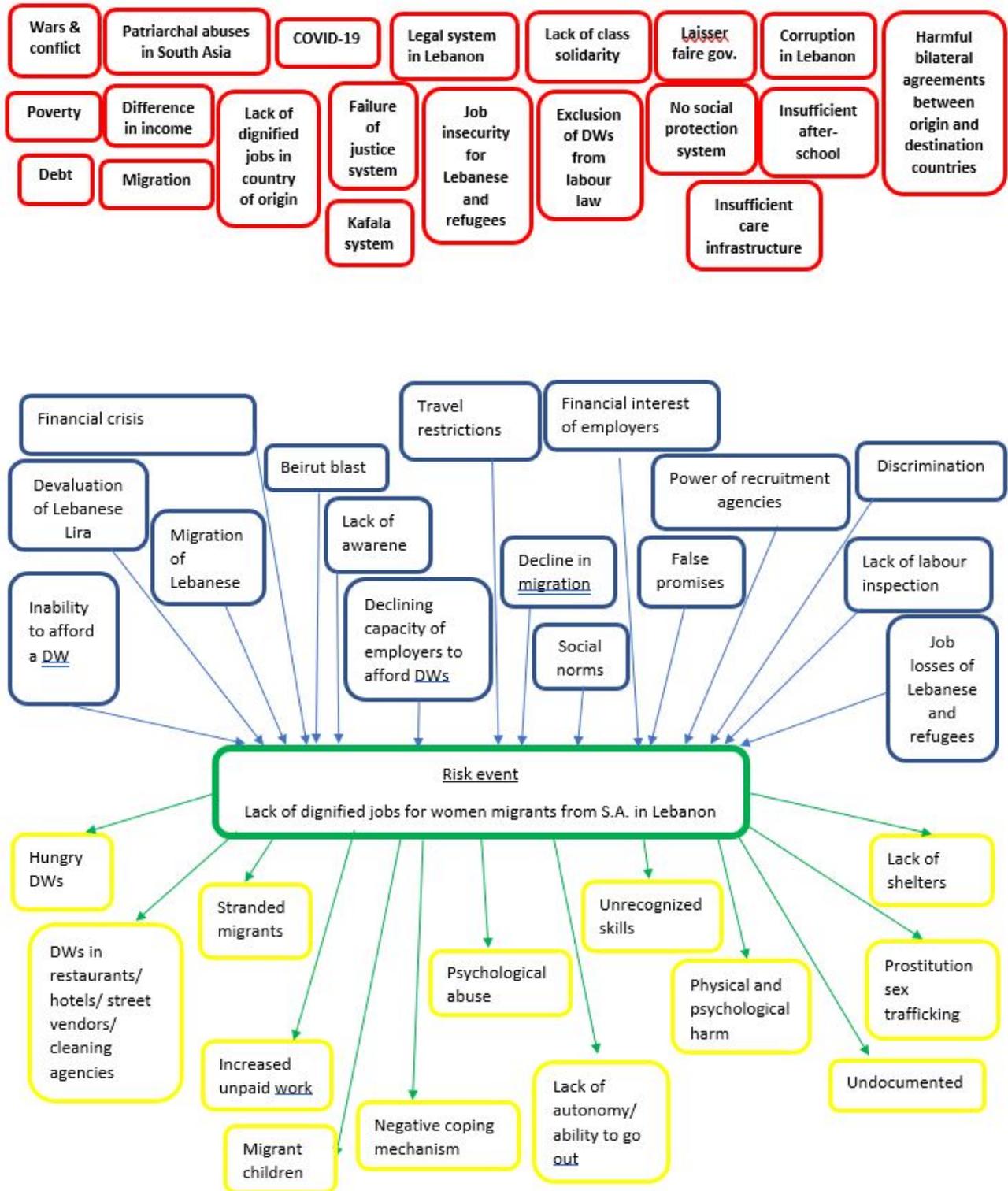


Table B.4.7 Controls and Mitigations, Lebanon, Breakout Room Group 1

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Dismantle Kafala system	M1. Food banks
C2. Institutions directly link employers with employment	M2. NGOs legal support
C3. Add migrants into labour law	M3. Legalizing freelance work
C4. Change mental morals of employers	M4. Access to services and information
C5. Stop licensing new recruitment agencies	M5. Strengthen the community of MWs
C6. Invest in care infrastructure	M6. Giving voice and power to MDWs
	M7. Skills in care and negotiation

Figure B.4.8 Causal Risk Diagram Lebanon Breakout Room Group 2

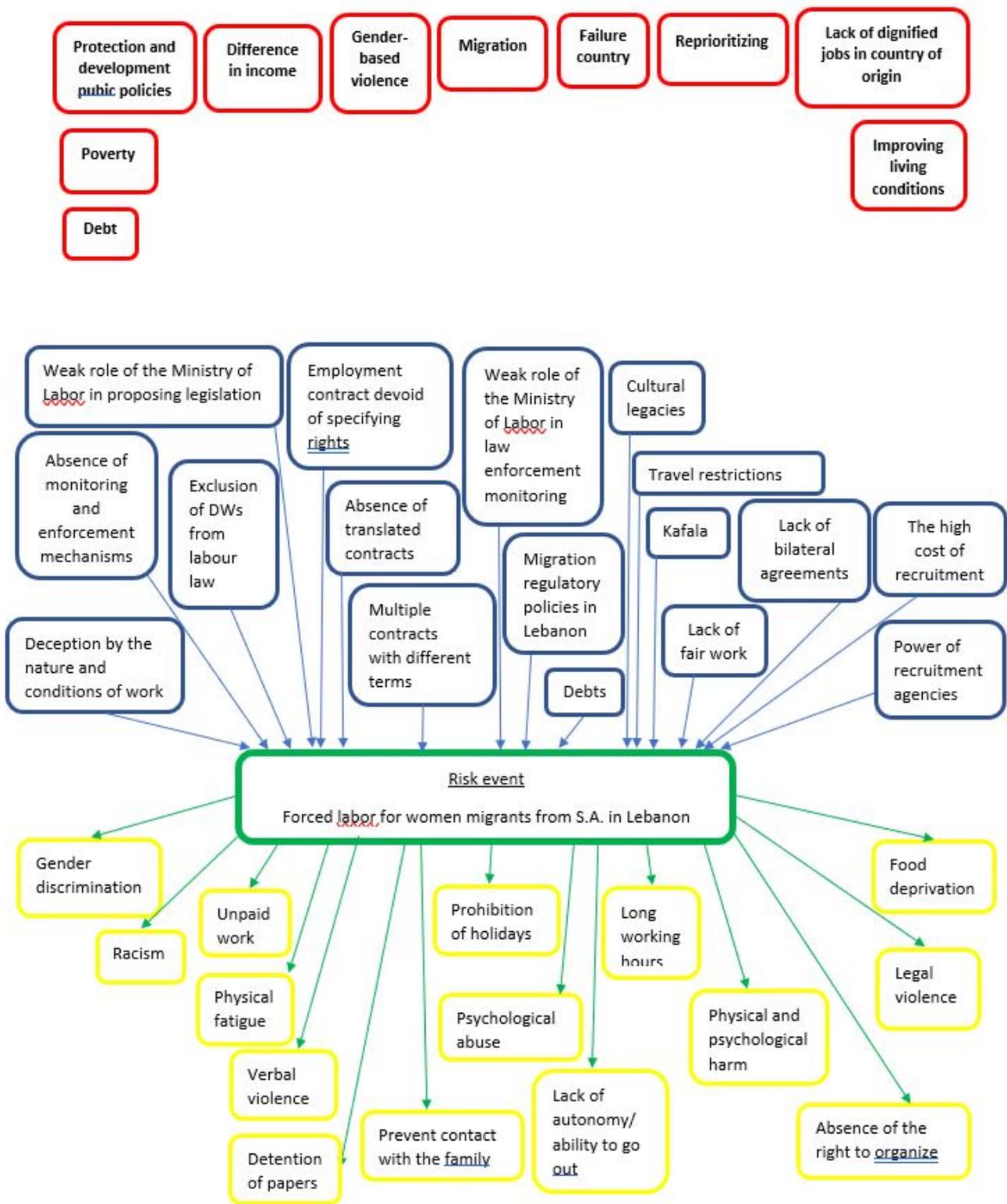


Table B.4.8 Controls and Mitigations, Lebanon, Breakout Room Group 2

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Regulation of recruitment sector	M1. Dismantle Kafala system
C2. Develop bilateral agreement that adhere to international standards	M2. Activating the role of labor arbitral councils
C3. Add migrants into labour law	M3. Modify the role of the National Employment Institution
C4. Adoption of unified labour in line with international standards	M4. Awareness and advocacy campaigns
C5. Strengthening and activating the role of the Ministry of Labour in legislation and oversight	M5. Pressure to find structural reforms
C6. Regulating immigration policy	M6. Giving voice and power to MDWs
C7. Determining rights and duties in contracts	M7. Inclusion of domestic work in the labour law
C8. Establishing fair and sustainable development policies in the country of origin	

Figure B.4.9 Causal Risk Diagram Jordan Breakout Room Group 1 (Arabic-language)

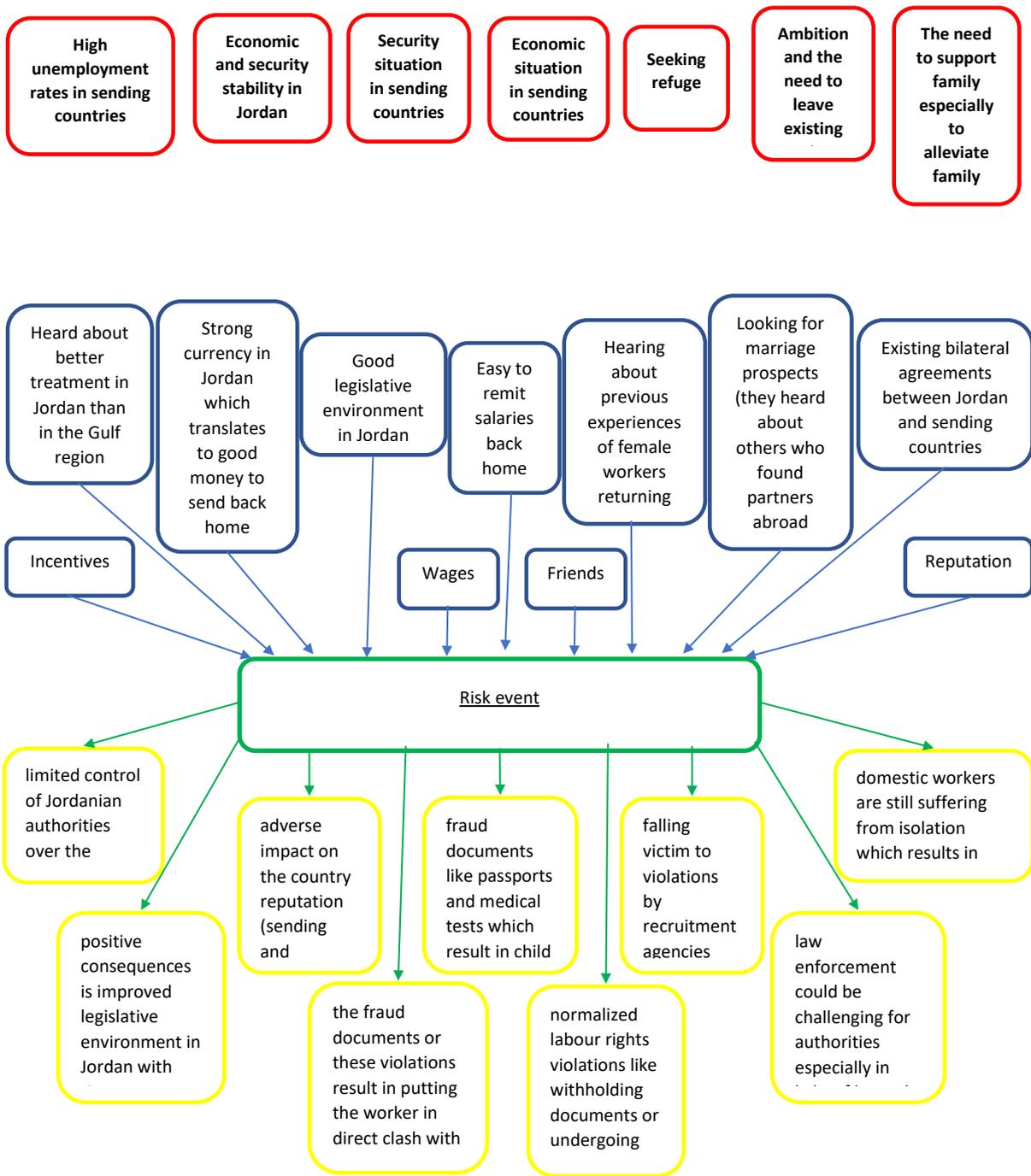


Table B.4.9 Controls and Mitigations, Jordan, Breakout Room Group 1 (Arabic Language)

Controls	Mitigants
C1. existing technical support systems to support the work of law enforcement	M1. active civil society and international organizations that support the workers in Jordan and information about the topic
C2. unified system to control emigration to Jordan	M2. Further automation of support systems which makes it easy to collect information about the topic and enhance our understanding of it
C3. Bi- and multi-lateral agreements between sending and receiving countries which include ways to combat violations	M3. Improve collaboration between media in sending and receiving countries and improve accountability
C4. Punitive systems that reduce the possibility of violations and deception	M4. Legislations that protect migrant workers just like they protect locals which makes it easier to advocate for the rights of migrant workers
C5. Orientation at the sending country to make sure the workers have not been deceived or given false information	M5. Existence of platforms to make it easier for workers to file complaints against the violating employers
C6. Inter-country and interregional cooperation to combat violations that happen throughout the corridors	M6. Improve inspection process and increase number of labour inspectors
C7. Exhort control over recruitment agencies as well as over the movement of workers from one country to another	M7. Improve workers literacy of their rights and where to go in case they feel exploited
C8. increased punitive measures to prevent exploitation of workers	M8. Strengthening worker communities in the receiving countries
	M9. establish grievance mechanisms at the factories and the workplace
	M10. Sending countries should improve their economic situation to reduce the severity of the problem
	M11. Enhance knowledge of employers about workers' rights
	M12. Provide more data about the problem and make it publicly available so we know more about the details of the risk event and enhance working on it

Figure B.4.10 Causal Risk Diagram Jordan Breakout Room Group 2 (English-language)

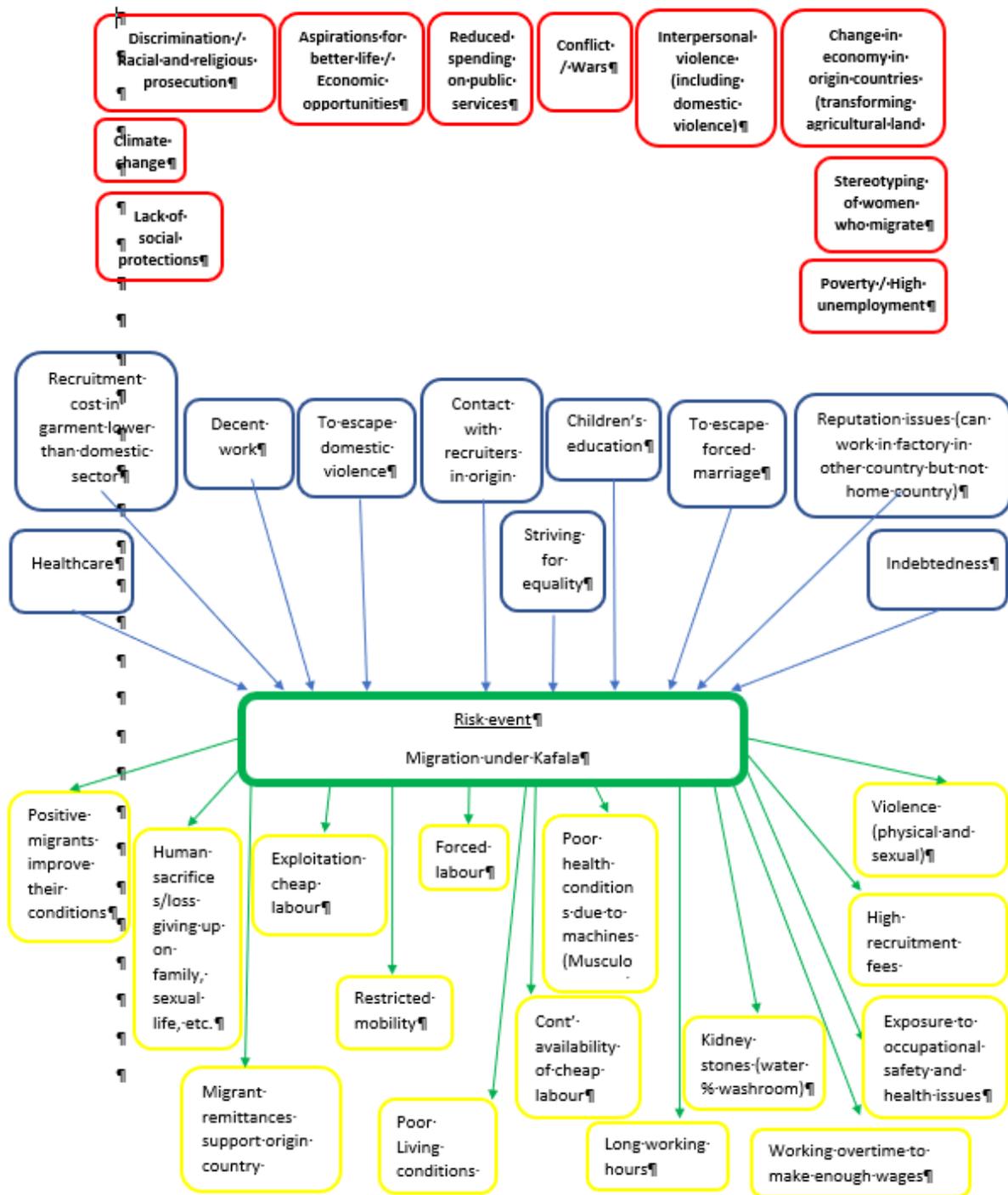


Table B.4.10 Controls and Mitigations, Jordan, Breakout Room Group 2 (English Language)

Controls	Mitigants
C1. Appointing local representative for migrant workers	M1. Lower production target
C2. International labour migration frameworks	M2. Medical insurance
C3. Bi-Lateral agreements (impact?)	M3. Legal aid in destination country
C4. Political Stability	M4. Pre-departure training
C5. Establishing Diplomatic Presence	M5. Make information about rights available
C6. Establish proper dialogue between workers and government	M6. Proper representation in destination country
C7. Adopt global compact on migration	M7. Involve Media (Impact?)
C8. Freedom of association	M8. Orientation in destination countries
C9. Reduce ambiguity in labour law	M9. Improve labour inspections
C10. Workers syndicates for migrant workers	
C11. Include workers in bi-lateral agreements	
C12. Sufficient resources to MOL for labour inspections	

Appendix B5: Additional WS2.1 tables

Appendix Table B.1 Work in Freedom Program Phase 2 (Bangladesh)

Indicator / Reporting Period*	Year 2: (1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020)	Year 3: (1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021)	Year 4: (1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022)	Total (WIF II)
1. Number of potential women migrant workers, girls, and their families who are reached by outreach activities (door-to-door visits, community/courtyard meetings) on issues around mobility by choice, alternative employment, or other entitlements, how to make informed migration decisions.	9,817	16,583	30,008	56,408
2. Number of women and girls who are reached by pre-decision orientation (1.5 days pre-decision programs) **	563	9,099	5,284	14,946

Source: Annual Technical Progress Reports of Work in Freedom program (correspondence with the WIF Technical Office, Sept 21, 2022). * The program did not have a partnership during Year 1 (1 April 2018 - 31 March 2019). No women reached during this period. ** Social workers of the WIF program reached beneficiaries with need-based information through door-to-door visits, courtyard meetings, and 1.5-2 days of community orientation training.

Appendix Table B.2 Indicators of Exposure (Exposure to ILO's or its partner Organizations' Activities)

Has anyone from any NGO contacted you or have you contacted any NGO about migration in the last one year	1= Yes 2=No
Are you involved in any of the activities of the NGO: KN/BNPS/OKUP?	
Have you ever heard of ILO's Work in Freedom (WiF) program?	
Did your husband or any principal male member in the family participate in any activities concerning KN/BNPS/OKUP or ILO/WiF?	

Appendix Table B.3 Indicators of Deliberation (Migration-related Deliberation)

How often did you contact other potential migrants/others who want to go abroad in the last month?	1. Never 2. Less than once a month 3. Every Month, at least once 4. Every 2 Weeks, at least 5. Every Week, at least once 6. Everyday
How often did you contact other returnee migrants last month?	
How often do you talk about migration with your family last year?	
How often do you talk about migration to your neighbors?	
How often do you talk about migration to your friends?	
In the last 12 months, how often did you attend a public village gathering / communitymeeting / training from NGO for gathering information about migration?	
In the last 12 months, how many times have you been to a community meeting/training from NGOs for domestic income-earning opportunities?	
In the last 12 months, how many times have you attended a meeting and/or trainingorganized by the government for gathering information about migration?	
In the last 12 months, how many times have you been to a meeting and/or trainingfrom government organizations for domestic income-earning opportunities?	

In the last 12 months, how many times have you met with a broker/'Dalal' for gathering information about migration?	
In the last 12 months, how many times have you visited the District Employment Manpower Office (DEMO) for gathering information about migration?	
In the last 12 months, how many times have you visited the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) for training or exit clearance?	
(Added to the binary index) Have you recently visited any place or contacted any person or organization to know about finding work abroad? The binary index: Deliberation = 1 if composite index <= median, and 0 otherwise	1= Yes 2=No

Appendix Table B.4 Perceived Risk of Women's Labor Emigration

In your opinion, how likely can one of the following situations happen to a woman as a migrant in another country for work?	
Losing all her money	1 - Very unlikely 2 - Unlikely 3 - Neutral 4 - Likely 5 - Very likely
Getting beaten	
Forced labour or conditions similar to slavery	
Having off food and water	
Being deported	
Being imprisoned	
Getting extremely ill	
Dying	

Appendix Table B.5 Perceived Causes of Migration Failure

What according to you is the most important cause of a 'failed' migration for women?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Returning earlier than planned 2. Not having the earnings expected by family 3. Returning with a disability, disease, or prolonged sickness 4. Return that caused suspicion of losing reputation (sexual) 5. Imprisoned/Deported from abroad
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