



# Empowering Women Migrant Domestic Workers in Sri Lanka

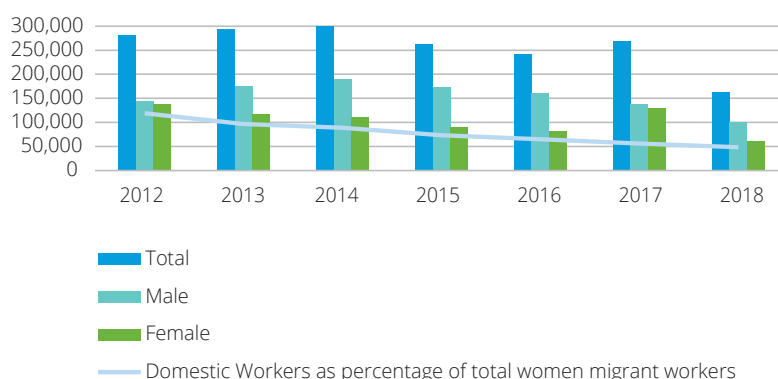
Between 2012 and 2018,  
**40.2% were women**  
of the total 1,813,226 migrant workers



Globally, women migrant workers were responsible for approximately half of the estimated USD\$601 billion in global remittances in 2016 despite the fact that women are consistently paid less than men.

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

Figure 1: Recent Trends in the Mobility of Women Migrant Domestic Workers



## Despite their immense contribution Women Migrant Domestic Workers undergo...

- Risk of **exploitation** at the hands of recruitment agencies/agents/intermediaries
- **Discrimination** in accessing regular migration due to a lack of gender-sensitivity in recruitment procedures
- **Contract substitution** by the recruitment agency in the country of destination
- Significantly **longer hours of work** with **lower wages**
- Linguistic and cultural barriers
- Women migrant workers face more **restrictions in their freedom of movement and association**, especially women in domestic work
- **Limited or no access to collective bargaining**
- Inadequate food intake, **substandard accommodation facilities and healthcare**
- **Higher risk of sexual and gender-based violence**, and a lack of independence and privacy.



## VOICES OF WOMEN

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

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

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

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## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

### EMPOWERMENT

Remove discriminatory barriers to women's mobility by repealing the Family Background Report

Institutionalize gender responsive ethical recruitment practices

Explicitly address protection measures for women in the National Labor Migration Policy

Introduce online recruitment systems leaving no leeway for intermediaries

Create platforms for women migrant workers to voice their achievements, needs and concerns

### PROTECTION

Promote gender- responsive employment contracts

Introduce prevention strategies to respond to sexual and reproductive rights in the National Migration Health Policy

Strengthen gender-responsive Global and Regional Platforms on Labor Migration

Negotiate more gender-Responsive Bilateral Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding; for example the Bilateral Agreement with Kingdom of Saudi Arabia & Sri Lanka

### CAPACITY BUILDING

Ensure grievance mechanisms are accessible to all migrant workers including women by decentralizing the grievance handling mechanisms to the regional offices of Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment

Create robust specialized accreditation and skills development opportunities targeted to labor market needs

Staff and train missions adequately to address issues experienced by women migrant domestic workers such as sexual & gender-based violence