

Sharing on South Asia

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From among the seven countries that belong to the South Asian region, all of them except The Maldives are 'sending' countries. The Maldives is a 'receiving country.'

The Reality

- *Certain restrictions present in the South Asian countries – Bhutan and Afghansitan is not considered in this report. India restricts the age of Migrant women to 30 Years, In Bangladesh and Nepal the age was 25 years until recently but has now being brought down to 18 years. In Sri Lanka the cutting age is 18 years at present but recommendations are being made to raise it to 25 years.*
- *Percentage of women migrant workers is till very small except in Sri Lanka where the majority of the migrant workers is still women. In Nepal it was 1% until a few years ago but now it has increased to 4%. In Sri Lanka the percentage was 70% female migrant workers but now it has come down to 50+ %. The reason is that more countries especially South Korea has opened to men and a large increase of male migrant workers has been the result.*

Some of the problems faced by Female Migrant workers.

- *The female migrant workers from South Asian go mainly as domestic workers or care givers. The exploitation and abuse that female migrant workers from the South Asian countries have to face during their work is the same – physical, psychological and sexual abuse.*
- *On the part of the Job Agencies: These job agencies are not regulated and are a law to themselves. This is true except in Sri Lanka where all the Agencies have to be registered in the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau since its inception in 1985. However in Sri Lanka the sub-agents who go the rural areas to recruit labor for the agents exploit the situation. They are not responsible to anyone and their only desire is to recruit as much labor as possible. They are up to all kinds of exploitation, even to go so far as to falsify the ages of girls in order to make them eligible to get their passports and visas for employment abroad.*
- *The negative impact on the families and especially the children when the molther of a family goes abroad.*
- *Undocumented workers who – more open to exploitation, less pay more vulnerable.*

Some strategies for improvement

- *Governments are concerned to lessen the present exploitation in all forms, since they depend on the remittances of migrant workers to sustain their economies.*
- *Better pre-departure training facilities provided free of charge. Facility of obtaining bank loans etc.*

- *In order to avoid the abuse of domestic workers at the hands of employers the Governments are encouraging more skilled labour to migrate.*
- *Scholarships are given to the children of female migrant workers in Nepal.*
- *Making civil society aware of the advantages that accrue to the country through the migrant workers, thus raising the respect due to those who come and try to integrate into the economy of the country.*
- *Encouraging the media to report success stories of women migrant workers who have returned, in place of only reporting the abuse and exploitation faced by them.*
- *In Sri Lanka a good Insurance Scheme has been put in place for all migrant workers. This is a help for workers who face problems when working abroad, especially in the first few months they have to return home for any reason etc. as well as payment made for health care etc.*
- *Upgrading of the Embassy staff in the 'receiving' countries. Nepal would send a woman attaché to the embassy where 10,000+ women are working.*
- *In 2007 a new Ministry was created by the Government to take care of the welfare of Migrant workers. In 2008 this Ministry sought the help of the ILO to formulate a road-map towards making a National policy for migration. This work has been completed now, and IOM will take it over and work out a strategy to implement it. Hopefully this will be accepted as a National policy as both the Government officials and NGOs worked together towards formulating it.*