



ILO-DFID Partnership Programme on Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East (Phase 2)

QUICK FACTS

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Administrative Office: DWT/CO-New Delhi

Technical Office: FUNDAMENTALS

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16,204,507 USD

Key Words: [Use themes as provided in i-eval Discovery](#)

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The "Fair Recruitment and Decent Work for Women Migrant Workers in South Asia and the Middle East (WIF)" project was launched almost a decade ago to help reduce women migrants' vulnerability to forced labour and trafficking in the regions mentioned above. The project was managed by the ILO Delhi office and received support from FUNDAMENTALS and other collaborating ILO units and offices.

The project aimed to achieve the following outcomes to reduce the likelihood of insecure environments for migrant women from South Asia:

- Women have greater ability to make their own decisions during the migration process, which creates an enabling atmosphere for safe migration into decent work.
- Increased levels of collaboration, accountability, and respect among key actors along migration pathways to create an enabling environment for safe migration into decent work.
- Strengthened laws, policies, practices, and systems for social protection, safe labour migration, and decent work for women.

WIF Phase II covers major migration corridors from South Asian countries (Nepal, Bangladesh, and India) to GCC countries, Lebanon, and Jordan, with India treated as both an origin and destination country. Activities were designed to address factors contributing to female migrants' vulnerability, which were identified in different parts of their journey, with different activities planned for areas of origin and destination.

Present situation of the project

According to normal programming, the implementation of the WIF Phase II has ended in January 2023. However, an extension was introduced until June 2023 for most activities and until March 2024 for activities concerning the dissemination of the research and findings of the project.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

This is the final, independent evaluation of Phase II of the WIF project. The evaluation covers all activities and components carried out by the field offices of the programme under the direct

responsibility of the ILO throughout lifetime (the period between April 2018 and January 2023) of the project.

The main recipients of the evaluation are:

- ILO Project Management Unit
- ILO Offices and/or focal points in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Lebanon, and Jordan
- Relevant ILO departments and technical units
- FUNDAMENTALS (Fundamental principles and rights at work department)
- External Implementing Partners (Ministries of Labour, Ministries of Expatriate/Overseas Affairs, and other relevant government partners; Worker organizations, including national trade union platforms, the International Trade Union Confederation, and sector-specific affiliates; Employer organizations including International Organization of Employers; International Employment Confederation; and UN Agencies)
- Department for International Development (DFID)- UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO)
- Project partners and stakeholders

Methodology of evaluation

The evaluation applied the key OECD/DAC evaluation criteria and complied with the ILO Policy Guidelines for results-based evaluation (2020) as well as the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Norms and Standards in the UN System. Additionally, during the evaluation, PPMI followed strict data protection policies aligned with the General Data Protection Regulation from the European Union.

The evaluation relied on three forms of data collection: desk research, interviews, and a debriefing workshop. In all data collection tools and approaches, the evaluation team ensured that female respondents were consulted and that evaluation questions considered how WIF activities affected female migrants, as well as overall systemic perceptions towards gender.

Overall, 19 interviews were carried out with both national and regional representatives. The final debriefing workshop focused on dissemination of the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

Among the difficulties encountered was the limited quantitative data collection obtained in the report. However, this was mitigated through careful and extensive triangulation of multiple sources. Furthermore, the Project team had to work with relatively short timelines. Nevertheless, careful planning and the evaluation team's experience allowed to meet tight deadlines as well as collect, analyse, and present the gathered information.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation found that the Programme was highly **relevant** to female labour migrants. Their needs were assessed multiple times and addressed through activities, consequently, their access to services and institutions was increased. The Programme also addressed the needs of governments, supporting origin countries in increasing the safety of their nationals abroad and destination countries through advocacy activities to improve their image in the international community. The project activities were valuable for partners, including trade unions and civil society organizations representing migrant workers, and included capacity building and dialogue with employer organizations. However, certain constituent organizations did not believe that the objectives of the Programme were important for their goals and priorities.

The Programme demonstrated a high level of **coherence** with international goals and strategies, as well as some level of coherence with the goals and strategies of the respective countries. The Programme's outcomes and outputs were aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). Its objectives included promoting gender equality, sustainable economic development, inclusive employment, and the eradication of poverty. Furthermore, it aimed to align with origin countries' goals of providing safe migration opportunities for women. However, there was no evidence that destination countries had initiated strategies for safe migration and decent work for migrants.

Regarding cross-cutting priorities, the Programme prioritized gender equality and supporting female labour migrants but did not prioritize social dialogue due to the context, where the priorities of

constituents were not always aligned with the priorities and objectives of the Programme.

Despite facing challenges, the Programme was **effective**, it achieved its targets and increased women's ability to make choices during migration. Many women became more empowered through the Programme's activities. However, to tackle discrimination against women, the Programme could have delivered more community awareness activities. Collaboration, accountability, and respect along migration pathways improved overall, but external factors, such as economic downturns and the COVID-19 pandemic, negatively impacted progress. The Programme effectively blocked harmful policies in two cases and contributed to gender equality but was less effective in promoting international labour standards and social dialogue due to contextual factors. Overall, partnerships were crucial to the Programme's success.

The program implementation was **efficient**, as evidenced by the achievement or surpassing of all targets despite a 20% budget reduction. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with monitoring mechanisms and communication. However, external challenges caused some implementation delays, resulting in a no-cost extension primarily for research and dissemination activities.

Regarding the **impact** of the Programme, the evaluation showed some improvement in the agency and awareness of female labour migrants, which reduced their vulnerability. However, since most causes of distress migration remained, individual-level impact will not fully eliminate women's vulnerability. Some decision-makers' perceptions of migration were also positively influenced, but more efforts are needed to achieve broader results. Stakeholders reported that the impact on the community was not widespread enough. The WIF program had both positive and negative impacts, signalling that the issue of female labour migration was extremely complex, and the target population was suffering from many types of consistent discrimination. It was found too early to assess the impact of WIF on the work of ILO. However, some evidence suggests that the ILO is considering incorporating the lessons learned and research results of the program into its future programming.

The evaluation found that implementing partners are highly committed to their work and will continue many of the interventions, which supports the **sustainability** of the results. However, there are multiple factors that can hinder sustainability, such as the insecurity of CSOs' resources and reliance on donor priorities. Changing the perception of the public, trade unions, employers, and international actors is necessary to ensure that the approach of WIF persists. The commitment of governments could also increase sustainability, but it was not present in most countries. Although some progress has been made in destination countries with priorities in women's empowerment, governments have not yet shown persistent interest in sustaining results, which can threaten the long-term viability of the outputs.

Conclusions:

- The WIF project's second phase addressed urgent issues faced by migrant women on migration pathways between/within South-Asia and the Middle East.
- The project design targeted three levels, ensuring a holistic approach to improving the protection of female migrants' rights and reducing their vulnerability to trafficking and forced labour.
- Complementarity and alignment were ensured with other ILO projects, CSOs, and national partners. The project also contributed to national strategies and priorities.
- The project achievements made important steps towards reduced vulnerability of women and changes in the vision of stakeholders towards the rights and protection of female migrants.
- The project implementation took place in a complicated context of female labour migration, considering existing customs and policy frameworks conducive to trafficking and abuse of migrant women.
- The sensitivity of the migration topic and the lack of strong policy systems for the protection of migrants mean that the results of the WIF efforts can be reversed or lose momentum if pressure from ILO is reduced.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Recommendation 1:

- Explore opportunities to continue supporting female labour migrants and migration processes in the project countries. Activities include:
 - Continuing advocacy and disseminations of research outputs.
 - One-pager guidelines on how to include findings to new projects.
 - Highlight the gender dimensions in other projects.
 - Actively explore funding opportunities for gender-sensitive migration projects.
 - Ensuring that sufficient resources exist for overcoming risks and barriers in similar projects.

Recommendation 2:

- Build on the partnership model in future projects, both for labour migration, but also other ILO priority areas. Activities include:
 - Prepare material on how to create efficient partnership model.
 - Include existing partners in follow-up projects.
 - Help sustain local support institutions (e.g., migrant centres).

Recommendation 3:

- Continue focusing on capacity building of key stakeholders, particularly the social partners, to ensure protection of female migrant workers.

Recommendation 4:

- Ensure that the significant amount of knowledge products created during the Programmes implementation are disseminated. Activities include:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Online dissemination events for results, and use of digital media for sharing knowledge.- Integrating knowledge into educational settings.- Dissemination of whole-migration approach internally in ILO and in relevant UN Agencies.
Main lessons learned and good practices	<p>Lesson learned 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- To combat discrimination and reduce some forms of distress migration of women, more frequent and comprehensive workshops are needed to overcome prejudice in their communities. <p>Lesson learned 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Work done to achieve policy changes may be lost due to changes in government commitment. Thus, continued pressure on policymakers is necessary to achieve results. Therefore, a clear advocacy strategy is required to ensure the sustainability of partners involved in advocacy work. <p>Lesson learned 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of organization and representation among constituents prevented the formation of a tripartite structure. Without this structure, key actors were not involved in implementation. A mechanism for increasing cooperation between all actors may have helped with their inclusion. <p>Best practice 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Over ten years, the Programme formed strong partnerships with committed, knowledgeable, and hardworking partners who significantly contributed to the success of implementation in all areas. Partners were carefully chosen, and communication was effective. <p>Best practice 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Through effective communication between the partners and the ILO, partners were allowed great flexibility in the implementation. This was beneficial for the continued

relevance of the project, especially in the face of external difficulties.

Best practice 3:

- Effective coordination between other interventions was achieved by regular meetings between ILO and WIF team members and the staff having multiple roles in ILO. Close collaboration resulted in avoiding duplication, increased the number of people reached and activities performed.

Best practice 4:

- Self-organisation and collective representation of women were effective activities to reduce their vulnerability. Collective representation allows for stable channel to voice concerns for rights, helps in acquiring resources, overcomes isolation, and aids in advocacy work in the long-term.

Best practice 5:

- The programme collected significant and important findings through combining implementation with research. It involved partners in the generation of knowledge products, allowing for useful "real-time" insights and speeding up the knowledge production process.

Best practice 6:

- The Programme was effective as it was implemented in countries that were connected to specific migration corridors, rather than a single country or multiple unrelated countries. This approach enabled tailoring of activities to the local context in recognition of the push and pull factors of labour migration.