

Women Migrant Workers' Capacity and Contribution

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Women migrant workers are a productive force. As human beings with human rights and freedoms, they are entitled to protection and promotion of their rights as workers and to a life without violence. As active agents in development, they are entitled to the benefits of development. With a growing consciousness among governments of the substantial levels of these money flows and their development potential, governments of some migrant sending countries are developing a range of policies to maximize the scale and impact of remittances in ways that also benefit women migrant workers.

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Resilience at a personal level

Women who have been violated in the migration process transcend their victimization. They marshal their inner resources to cope, survive and develop resilience. They exercise their agency in negotiating constraints. As one woman put it, 'every time I am pained, I envision the face of my 3 year old son who is always hungry back home, and that gives me the strength to cope

Contribution to family, community and countries of origin

Women migrant workers are active participants in the development process. Studies in several countries suggest that women are more reliable remitters of savings than men. Despite lower wages and informal sector employment, women migrant workers make a significant contribution to national accounts and development in countries of origin. While sex disaggregated data on remittances is generally not available, studies in the Philippines show that women are more than half of the total migrants and contribute 1/3rd of the official US\$ 6 billion remitted annually. In Nepal 25 per cent of GDP comes from overseas remittances. Nepalese women working abroad sent home 7.6 million rupees in 1997, 11 per cent of total remittances of 69 million rupees. This figure would be higher if undocumented flows were considered.

Remittances have had significant macro economic effects in several countries of origin in coping with trade deficits, reducing pressure on local currency, reducing external debt etc. Research also points to a great deal of investment of remittances in education and health of children and other family members. Some studies also indicate that they raise average levels of income in sending countries through multiplier effects.

Contribution to countries of employment

Women migrant workers also contribute to economic development in countries of employment. Their labour and skills deployed in economic sectors where labour is scarce, generates value and their expenditure in countries of employment contributes to the economy.