

**17th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum - Part 2:  
“Migration management and its linkages with economic, social and environmental policies to  
the benefit of stability and security in the OSCE region”  
Athens, Lagonissi Grand Resort, 18 - 20 May 2009**

**Brief by UNIFEM CIS: Support for Women Labor Migrants’ Rights in CIS Region  
18 May 2009, Session III**

**Comments on OSCE Guide on Gender responsive migration policy:**

- Very comprehensive resource material with best practices and experience from different countries. Would be useful resource material for UNIFEM regional programme being developed in partnership with Eurazet
- Represents a strong education material which could be used for 1) training for civil servants working on labour migration area; 2) training for Ombudsman’s institution staff in countries of origin and destination. Ombudsman institutions are mandated to monitor/assess a status of Human Rights and can assess results/impact of national policy on migrants status and rights; and 3) as resource book for further education of students specialized on human rights issues (a possibility to introduce a special course on migrants’ rights at judicial faculties)
- Has to be translated not only into Russian, but also official languages of CRA countries to be used further for trainings for civil servants
- Provides step-by-step description of tools to mainstream gender perspectives into policy formulation and implementation
- Explanation How to introduce international standards/norms into national and bilateral/regional policy documents
- Description of minimal general standards and formats (agreement between domestic worker and employer, etc.)

**Findings of UNIFEM regional assessment of female migrants rights in CIS**

**Migration** within the CIS accounts for as much as 13.5% to 16.2% of world migration (depending on how it is calculated, inflows or outflows)<sup>1</sup>. 80% of labour migrants in CIS migrate within CIS. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan supply a bigger number of labour migrants within CIS.

Estimated figures on a number of labour migrants: 20% of economically active population of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and 7% of population of Uzbekistan.

**Undocumented migration represents a large proportion of immigration** originating in the low-income CIS countries: there is estimated number of 3-3,5 million undocumented immigrants in Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> SOURCE: Robert C. Shelburne and Jose Palacin - Remittances in the CIS: Their Economic Implications and a New Estimation Procedure, UNECE, Geneva: November 2007

- **Number of women migrant workers:**

- In Russia a share of women migrants from CIS – **15%** (official statistics). 35,8% of women migrant workers from Uzbekistan go to Russia and 43,3 – to Kazakhstan for a short-term (less 1 year). 81% of Tajik women migrants go to Russia for 3-9 months;
- However, in accordance with experts' estimations a share of women migrants in a total number of labour migrants is **30%** and for some occupations like domestic work could be **80%**. Domestic work by women migrant workers is out of any statistics and any policy documents/regulations.

- **Women-domestic workers represent the most invisible part of labour migrants** excluded and unprotected by labour legislation due to their work in private sphere. They are not included into statistics and any policy documents. In addition to lack of policies there is also a poor institutional capacities to regulate private employers. Intention of ILO to introduce a new international law to protect rights of domestic workers (the subject is within the agenda of 2010 International Labour Conference) has to be supported by concrete commitments/actions at the regional and national levels. There is a good model being implemented in Jordan starting from 2003 with a support of UNIFEM and which could be replicated – introduction a **mandatory contract between employers and domestic workers** to secure labour rights and provide social guarantees for domestic workers.

- **Models of labour migration by women**

- The most prevalent model – **migration by women as independent agents/workers**. Women themselves take decision on migration; themselves organize their departure and represent themselves as active economic agents. Women can leave for migration alone or with her relatives. Each third women from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan comes to Russia alone; each fourth women – with husband, each fifth – with husband and children under 18 years and only 9% of women migrate with their children
- Second model – migration of women together or after their husbands or relatives to accompany them. In this case they are not independent economic agents.
- There is a transition model – women accompanying her husband could also help him at his work and provide some services, etc. They are not independent economic agents; however make contribution to welfare of their families.

**Duration of migration:**

- longer duration of migration for women in comparison with men due to their work is not seriously linked with seasonal activities (services, domestic work, etc.)
- more regular migration with longer duration (more than 8 months) on the country of destination
- seasonal and short-term migration is the most problematic part of migration process. Problems: a weakest adaptation to local conditions, lack of language skills, illegal presence, more vulnerable part of migrants.

- **Relation with local societies**

- Weak integration into the society at the country of destination due to a high level of xenophobia, especially in relations with migrants from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan
- 30% of labour migrants working in Russia had a conflicts with local population
- Around 15% women migrants, working in Russia, lack adequate Russian language skills and more that 1/3 of them have problems in filling in official documents. Half of them want to attend Russian language classes.
- 12% of migrants talk only in own language during the presence in the country of destination. This number is increasing.

- **Problems and needs of women migrant workers:**

- first group of needs - information and consultations about opportunities at labour market at the country of destination and opportunities for employment
- second group - legal assistance, in particular related to migration and labour legislations, and support to return
- third group - pre-departure trainings and vocational education

[UNIFEM programme to address rights and needs of women migrants workers](#)

On 21-22 May 2009 UNIFEM presents findings of the regional study in CIS and holds consultations with involvement of national stakeholders from countries of origin and countries of destination and existing regional body responsible for improving economic cooperation between CAR countries and Russia

Features of the programme:

- strong partnership with EvraZES
  - initiated as multi-agency programme and UNIFEM seeks and look forward to cooperate on its implementation with ILO, IOM, OSCE and other international agencies working in this field
  - aimed at supporting the efforts of governments and CSOs in CIS countries in improving the labor migration management system, securing rights of female migrants and strengthening accountability of states on providing efficient services responding to the needs of female migrants, based on observance of human rights and gender equality principles.
- Interventions are proposed at all levels:  
**at the policy and legislation level** - through impact on laws and policy regulating national and intergovernmental management of labor migration norms contributing to consideration and protection of women with the migrant worker status. Joint advocacy on ratification and enforcement of UN Convention on rights of migrants and their families by countries of destination (among CIS countries only Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan ratified the convention) will be undertaken as well as through a possible advocacy by existing mechanisms such as UN Special Rappourteur on migrants' rights (no country/fact-funding missions in any of CIS countries yet). CEDAW has to be widely used for further advocacy on women's rights, in particular in regard of respect, protection and fulfillment HRs of women migrant workers (as formulated within 2009 CEDAW General Recommendations)

**at the institutional level** through:

- strengthening the capacity of migration service employees to increase the effectiveness of services provided to labor migrant;
- sharing information on existing positive practices on pre-departure services for female migrants;
- introducing common standards/format for health services for female migrants by ministries of health of CIS countries;
- policy dialogue on improving vocational training opportunities for women, based on demand at external and internal labour market;
- introduction of a training course to improve gender responsiveness of migration policy and policy-makers;
- gender-related expert's support has to/could be provided to the council of heads of the CIS migration bodies (set up in October 2007) to respond to increasing female migration to ensure protection of rights and legal interests of women migrants
- The General Trade Union Confederation received in 2008 an observer's status in the council of heads of the CIS migration bodies could be also a strong partner to raise voice and advocate for gender- and labour rights-responsive regional migration policy.
- Support to embassies in receiving countries through capacity development initiatives to enable them to provide services to women migrants (how to obtain rights, how to deal with abuse/violence, etc.). Embassies have to be encouraged to appoint/train a specialist to be responsible for women migrants.

**at the social level** - through facilitating the mobilization of public organizations representing labor migrants towards improved protection of women labor migrants' rights, through cooperation and dialogue with government structures. Agreement signed by NGOs in September 2008 as a result of the forum organized by IOM on establishment of the network in CAR and Russia provides a good basis for further joint actions. The network could contribute to strengthening exchange of information/experience on the programming on legal education, voluntary return of victims of trafficking, social services, their rehabilitation/integration/reintegration; improving partnership with governments on migration and antitrafficking issues; improving legal education/awareness on women's human rights and instruments for their protection; support the migration services in introducing adequate standards/norms protecting rights/interest of migrants. In addition to such existing networks, it is proposed to work in partnership with Diasporas of migrants in countries of destination. A constant dialogue has to be maintained to **discuss and find solutions to mitigate consequences of the financial crisis and its impact for labor migrants.**

Summary of the report on UNIFEM assessment – [www.unifemcis.org](http://www.unifemcis.org) (by 22-23 May)

Full report – in June

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