

## Overview of Phase I (2001-2004)

The programme was launched in 2001 in Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines as countries of origin and Jordan as a country of employment, drawing on the migration experiences of countries such as Sri Lanka. Phase I activities focused at the national level, to establish baseline information, government and institutional partnerships and raise awareness of the issues.

### Phase I achievements included:

- international commitments to integrate women migrants' rights into global and regional consultations, women's rights conventions (CEDAW) and international reports;
- exchanges, advocacy and awareness-raising through conferences, workshops and multi-media materials, resulting in country of origin governments collaborating on migration issues and the government of Nepal adopting training and other materials from the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong;
- in **Jordan**, adoption of a special working contract for foreign domestic workers, labour law amendments developed to recognise and protect domestic workers, introduction of regulations for recruitment agencies and establishment of the first women's rights NGO that also addresses migrant women's rights;
- in **Nepal**, identification and inclusion of women migrant workers' concerns in the National Development Plan, CEDAW National Plan of Action and CEDAW NGO report and a media campaign resulting in government policy reform;
- in **Indonesia**, a provincial law on protection of migrant workers drafted in Blitar and similar commitments made by other provincial leaders, a gender perspective mainstreamed into a national bill on protection of migrant workers; and
- in the **Philippines**, a pilot savings and investment scheme initiated by a migrant workers' NGO, and local government support gained for inclusion of gender-responsive reintegration provisions in local development plans and in the investment code.



## Overview of Phase II (2005-2007)



Phase II consolidates and expands activities initiated in Phase I countries, incorporating lessons learned and targeting gaps identified in these countries. There is greater emphasis on increasing regional dialogue between countries of origin and employment to improve conditions for women migrant workers; addressing demand-side issues of migration for work including in the Arab States region; promoting and facilitating policy changes to increase protection for women migrant workers; generating private sector involvement; and implementation of pilot projects. The Programme has expanded to include Bangladesh, Cambodia and Lao PDR as countries of origin and Hong Kong and Thailand as countries of employment.

### Phase II activities include:

- promoting the adoption of a General Recommendation on Women Migrants under CEDAW;
- mainstreaming lessons learned into global initiatives (Global Commission on International Migration, Beijing + 10);
- regional meetings to develop new initiatives and share good practices;
- facilitating implementation of Thailand's MOU on employment with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar;
- development of a regional code of conduct for recruitment agencies; and
- pilot projects on pre-recruitment/pre-departure training.

### About UNIFEM

UNIFEM provides financial and technical support to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic empowerment worldwide.

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Asia-Pacific and Arab States  
Regional  
Programme on  
Empowering  
Women Migrant  
Workers in Asia

# Context

## Context

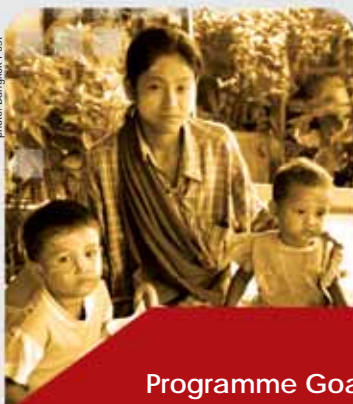
Every year an estimated two million Asian women migrate to other countries to seek work, primarily as a family survival strategy. They courageously leave all that is familiar to them to face unknown risks. Women migrant workers are vulnerable to exploitation because they are marginalized in multiple ways by society. Gender-based discrimination and limited work options due to low skill levels contribute greatly to this situation. Domestic workers may be at particular risk of abuse and exploitation because their work takes place behind the closed doors of private homes.

The number of Asian women migrants has increased steadily over the last decade and they now make up at least 50% of all migrants in Asia, with a majority employed as domestic workers. In countries such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines, women account for between 60 to 80 percent of migrants. Their remittances contribute significantly to their home country economies while their labour benefits employment country economies, a double contribution to development and poverty reduction. Despite this, societies allow women migrant workers to be subjected to human rights violations both during the migration process and in the workplace.

"Domestic workers may be at particular risk of abuse and exploitation because their work takes place behind the closed doors of private homes..."



photo: Bangkok Post



# Goal & Objectives

## Programme Goal

UNIFEM's mandate is to promote women's human rights and empower women from a rights-based perspective. The UNIFEM Asia-Pacific and Arab States Regional Programme on Empowering Women Migrant Workers in Asia 2001-2007 takes a gender and rights-based development approach to addressing the concerns of women migrant workers and ensuring their rights are recognised and respected. It was awarded the **International Prize for Pioneering Development Projects** from the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations in 2003. The Programme is currently being implemented in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Jordan, Lao PDR, Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand.

## Objectives

The programme works at global, regional and national levels and its objectives are to:

- empower women migrant workers in countries of origin and employment by advocating for changes in policy, institutional and social environments that will allow women to claim their rights and share the benefits of migrating for work;
- promote the use of international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to address issues;
- promote policy dialogue, advocacy and sharing of good practice between governments; and
- strengthen women migrant workers' capacities and their economic and social security in origin and employment countries.



## Beneficiaries and Partners

The programme focuses on women migrant domestic workers, partnering with national governments, civil society organisations, the private sector, academic institutions and regional and international bodies to achieve its objectives.

## Programme Strategies

Key strategies are to:

- mainstream gender-related migration concerns into national development plans, policies and strategies;
- advocate for policy and legal reforms that empower and protect women migrant workers;
- strengthen institutional and socio-economic environments through advocacy, increasing capacity, facilitating links and exchanges, and piloting innovative initiatives;
- promote dialogue and partnerships between governments, agencies, NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders to address global, regional, and multisectoral dimensions of migration and to ensure ownership and sustainability of initiatives;
- promote regulation of recruitment;
- facilitate training and service provision from the pre-recruitment to reintegration stage; and
- raise awareness of the issues and change perceptions among migrant women workers, other key stakeholders and the general public.