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Chunhui Yuan
John Kent *Editors*

Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Economic Management and Green Development

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Xiaolong Li · Chunhui Yuan · John Kent
Editors

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International NGO Issues on Female Migrant Workers

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Abstract. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are confronting various global issues connected with female transient specialists. Discrimination, exploitation, and a lack of access to essential services and rights are among these issues. NGOs, however, can make a difference in the lives of female migrant workers in several different ways. This research considers possible solutions to this problem. This paper assesses approaches through different evaluation criteria, including the feasibility of the mass application, effectiveness towards beneficiaries, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability. Considering various evaluation criteria, government agencies can implement regulations to ensure social protection coverage. Studies show that NGOs not only face several pressing issues regarding female migrant workers but also have opportunities to affect their lives positively. To improve the lives of female migrant workers and reduce discrimination and exploitation, NGOs can work toward providing healthcare, education, training programs, and legal protection. NGOs can advocate for policies and programs that support female migrant workers and raise awareness about their rights and needs.

Keywords: NGOs · Discrimination · Exploitation · Mass Application · Cost-Effectiveness · Sustainability

1 Introduction

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are confronting various global issues that affect female migrant workers. These issues can be categorized as discrimination, exploitation, and a lack of access to essential services and rights, and among others. NGOs usually have financial capabilities and can make a difference in the lives of female migrant workers in several ways. NGOs have the abilities to improve the lives of female migrant workers. Women who work as migrant workers can benefit from educational and training opportunities offered by NGOs [1]. NGOs can also advocate for policies and programs that support female migrant workers and raise awareness of their rights and needs [2].

Meanwhile, female migrant workers experience many issues that affect them at workplaces compared to their male counterparts, such as lower wages, fewer opportunities, and fewer chances of advancement in their jobs or careers. Moreover, female

migrant workers frequently encounter workplace sexual harassment and abuse [3]. Coupled with a lack of access to basic rights and services, domestic female migrant workers are specifically exposed to sexual harassment [3]. Rights that the workers are denied include limited access to healthcare, education, and legal protection.

Furthermore, female migrant workers need to work on the barriers that may further make them more exploited by their employees. Some of the raised issues are also caused by the worker's ignorance or naivety. Consideration of some possible approaches to solving this problem has been implemented. This paper assesses approaches through different evaluation criteria, including the feasibility of the mass application, effectiveness towards beneficiaries, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability, and can greatly help female migrant workers solve their issues, especially with the aid of NGOs.

2 Approaches to Improve Female Migrant Workers

One possible approach is to organize media campaigns to prevent misleading narratives and create a positive societal attitude toward female migrant workers. Gender campaigns can be run via traditional media channels, like television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and billboards. Also, the campaigns can be run on new digital media, such as websites, banner advertisements, and social media [4]. Media usually feature an element of providing interactivity. Such interactivity includes liking, sharing, commenting on social media content, and also downloading campaign apps. Engaging with campaigns can determine the effectiveness of a public health campaign on a broad spectrum. Although it is easy for us to implement such activities, the effectiveness of beneficiaries, cost-effectiveness and sustainability are not distinct in the short and long term. The activities can be divided into different types of campaign content, including messages, targeting, and source.

The cost-effectiveness of messages depends on the target audience, in other words, beneficiaries. Existing research indicates that messages from mass media need to consider age, sex, culture, engagement levels in targeting activity, personal characteristics, and other factors of beneficiaries [4]. However, even introducing mass media campaigns that are created algorithmically in order to target a certain audience does not assure a change of attitude on people's perspectives. Moreover, changing the attitude of the mass public has not been proven to have a significant causation in encouraging migrant women to seek higher-quality jobs. Therefore, the research eliminates this approach for the above reasons.

Another possible approach was establishing pre-departure training programs in migrants' countries of origin. Stakeholders could make strategies and design different pre-departure training programs for female migrant workers [5]. However, this approach would most likely not be mass applicable because immigrants originate from various regions across the globe, meaning their needs in these training programs would differ significantly. Hence, governments or other stakeholders would have to design different training programs and face the possibility of it not applying to migrants from other regions, making this approach rather cost-ineffective.

It is also reckoned that government agencies can implement a regulation that provides certain social protection services for female migrant workers [6]. The research investigates how the regularization affected employment and wages and the regulation's long-lasting impact in creating legal employment for migrant female workers. On a broader

scale, an analogy to this would be the International Labour Standards (ILS). International labour standards lay out basic principles, articulate the rights of the workers, establish objective policies, or give guidance on the means and procedures to be implemented by the International Framework for Labour Standards (ILS). ILS is designed to promote decent work for employees of all ethnicities and nationalities [7]. Moreover, government agencies can require companies to comply with the implemented regulation and simultaneously provide them with benefits for hiring female migrant workers [8], making the process much more efficient. In addition, the output of the regulation outweighs the input in the long term, considering the benefits migrants joining the workforce can bring to the economy.

Last, beneficiaries can gain many benefits under the regulation, including equal opportunities for employment, protection of their legal rights, etc. The regulation may create long-term legal employment prospects for female migrant employees, who remain strongly attached to the formal labour market. In terms of these evaluation criteria, regulation implementation conducted by government agencies is the most effective approach. To a certain extent, many companies prefer hiring overseas employees as they are affordable and therefore, they will save a lot of money. The companies look for talent pools in those overseas countries where there is lower demand for particular skills, but also where there are also highly skilled professionals who are seeking occupations [9]. More often, it is possible to offer salaries that are competitive and which can fairly compensate their employees while they are able to save more money compared to the market rate in their local countries. At the same time, hiring female migrant workers may increase corporations' expenses. However, it may help to promote companies' images because people are likely to give business to companies with diversity. Being a diversity-positive company will also encourage a wider, more diverse pool of applicants to seek occupations.

Furthermore, government agencies should monitor the following regulations and provide insurance coverage. One of the obvious benefits is managing cash flow uncertainty. Insurance coverage provides payment-covered losses, and the uncertainty of paying for losses that may occur is greatly reduced [10]. If an unexpected event occurs, an individual or an entity can claim compensation or be reinstated to their previous financial position by the insurer. The insurance of affordable premiums compensates for the possibility of bigger losses if individuals are not insured.

3 Behaviours, Barriers, and Activities

The regulation requires stakeholders (companies and domestic employers) to provide healthcare benefits, maternity and paid family leave, and sick leave to female migrant workers. However, due to financial distress, many companies and domestic employers have difficulties complying with the regulation [11]. To overcome this barrier, governments and NGOs can provide companies under the heavy economic burden with request-based funds. A consideration is that government agencies have only so much that could be used as funds to invest in this regulation. Therefore, there will be strict factors that the stakeholders would have to meet to acquire monetary support.

Today, many countries have passed equal-opportunity laws and also adopted resolutions set by the UN on women empowerment [12]. Besides, gender budgeting is used

by governments in promoting equality through the use of fiscal policy. Gender budgeting involves analysing the contradicting impacts of budgets on both men and women, allocating funds fairly, and setting some archivable targets, such as equal opportunities for school enrolment to girls and giving funds to meet the goals. Gender budgeting usually focuses on important national purse strings, and relative financial ministries are eager to note gender gaps if they understand the economic losses they can cause [13]. In some cases, domestic employers would like to avoid government monitoring which may worsen the current situation. Domestic sector unions should motivate the public that female workers are part of the financially driven forces. For instance, the latest available Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number five emphasizes the interlinkages among all the goals, gender equality plays a pivotal role in order to drive progress in the SDGs, and women and girls also play a central role to enable them to lead the way. Meanwhile, governments and stakeholders can set up specific monitoring departments, including close surveillance and heavy fines.

From the beneficiaries' perspective, female migrant workers should seek occupations covered by the regulation. To realize this goal, they should overcome three main barriers. Firstly, most female migrant employees lack access to information about the benefits they can receive from their corporations. Setting up some gender-responsive information campaigns can help to improve this situation. At the same time, these companies can also use social media as a platform of knowledge diffusion to protect migrant female workers' legal rights. For instance, on October 19, 2020, the UN Women and FinDevCanada co-organized the "Investing in Gender Responsive Companies" event. The event was hosted by WE EMPOWER-G7 Programme and organized in support of Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs). Secondly, it is hard for female employees to balance work and maternal responsibilities. Female employees should be good career planners [14]. They should be allergic to their organizations and the reality that they must plan to have children and work simultaneously. During this period, they should set boundaries and never lose self-confidence. Thirdly, female migrant employees lack the skill sets to fulfil higher-quality jobs. To tackle this problem, they should develop their skills and cultivate their abilities through orientation and skill development programs.

4 Issues Faced by Female Migrant Workers

Migrant workers frequently experience exploitation, discrimination, and a lack of access to essential services and rights. Migrant workers do not have resources such as legal power to fight for their rights against exploitation. NGOs are equipped with resources that can help migrant workers solve the issues that affect them while at the workplace. The following are the issues that migrant workers face while at the workplace.

4.1 Discrimination at the Workplace

Discrimination against female migrant workers at work is one major issue. Compared to their male counterparts, most female migrant workers usually work in informal employment, such as domestic workers, where they are usually paid lower wages and lack access to the advancement of their positions [15]. Employers view the employees as weak, and

their output is lower; therefore, they do not provide better employment contracts. Additionally, since some women work as housekeepers where regulation of work ethics has not been fully implemented, female migrant workers frequently experience workplace sexual harassment and abuse. This discrimination may significantly impact the lives of female migrant workers and their families. The effect can be physiological and health wise.

4.2 Lack of Access to Basic Rights

Female migrant workers also lack access to basic rights and services. Since female employees work in companies or jobs that have not abided by government regulations, the employees are vulnerable to exploitation. Employees should have access to healthcare, education, and legal protection [2]. When a basic service such as access to healthcare services is denied, people become weak or have mental detrimental. Therefore, their output declines which might also lead to further denial or rights since they might be denied quality or enough food necessary for our growth. However, since they do not have human recourses to fight for their rights legally, female employees who lack access to their basic rights end up being denied their rights.

4.3 Exploitation

Employers and recruiters frequently exploit female migrant workers. Most female migrant workers are usually recruited online. Afterward, most of them are employed in the domestic sector. Their employers decide the amount of money to pay them and also dictate the terms of employment. Most of them are paid less than the minimum wage or are forced to work in hazardous conditions [2]. Female migrant workers' lives can be significantly impacted as they are verbally abused and forced to work more than what they were told before they departed their countries. Their employees can force them to work for more hours with the minimum wages they get paid.

5 Solutions for the Issues Facing Female Migrant Workers

5.1 Education and Training Programs

Women who work as migrant workers can benefit from educational and training opportunities offered by NGOs. NGOs can plan for education and training programs that will help better the lives of migrant workers in the following ways.

Firstly, the rights and requirements of female migrant workers can be the subject of advocacy work by NGOs [2]. Female migrant workers will learn about their rights and how to get services from education and training programs. Gender equality at workplaces is one right that female migrant employees need to enjoy. The workers should not be mistreated or exploited just because they are women. All employees should be subjected to equal rights and terms of employment if they belong to the same employment category. In the training programs, the right to better healthcare services can also be taught. NGOs should teach the workers what their employers need to do in case their employees fall

sick. If employers do not provide healthcare privileges which might be expensive or they are denied the right to healthcare services, NGOs can take the employees who do not have access to a hospital or take legal action against the employers who deny the workers such services. Also, NGOs can provide mental or primary healthcare services [16].

Secondly, female migrant workers' chances of finding better-paying jobs can be improved through education and training programs [2]. Helping female migrant workers find work is another essential solution that international NGOs can provide. Most female migrant workers usually have fewer skills which make them work in the agricultural sector, hospitality, and other jobs that do not require high skills. However, NGOs can sponsor the workers to learn skills that can help the workers get employment in industries that require highly skilled labour. The workers can be employed in the technology industries where they will be subjected to better employment contracts. After training, NGOs can support female migrant workers by linking them to employers who create employment opportunities for female migrant workers or providing services for job placement [17].

Finally, NGOs can assist female migrant workers in preparing resumes, improving their interview skills, and learning about job opportunities and requirements. There are the basic needs that employers look for in employees. If shown such necessities, female migrant employees get a better chance of getting good jobs.

5.2 Supporting Female Migrant Workers in Navigating Complex Legal Systems

Navigating legal systems frequently present difficulties for female migrant workers. The workers must understand immigration laws and regulations to navigate the legal system in cases of discrimination or abuse [18]. By providing information and assistance, NGOs can assist female migrant workers in navigating these complicated legal systems. The aid could mean helping female migrant workers get the legal help they need by giving them advice or collaborating with legal representatives. Similarly, NGOs will help female migrant workers file complaints or provide legal representation.

5.3 Collaborating with Other Organizations and Stakeholders

By collaborating with other organizations and stakeholders, NGOs can play a crucial role in addressing the challenges faced by female migrant workers [19]. For example, NGOs can work with governments, the private sector, and community groups. These organizations can collaborate to share resources and expertise and develop more efficient solutions to the problems faced by female migrant workers. The resources are owned by NGOs and collaborating with these organizations can help advocate for policies that support female migrant workers. These policies include implementing measures that help employers abide by the employment policies and also the requirements of migration requirements [13]. Similarly, NGOs and stakeholders can champion the increment of Female migrant workers in the unions and associations that fight for the rights of international employees [13].

NGOs and other stakeholders can collaborate to help female migrant workers obtain affordable housing. Under international laws, affordable housing can be defined in form

of access to secured housing conditions [20]. Affordable housing should also ensure the workers are not subjected to eviction and there is also security in the region. However, access to affordable housing has been difficult for female migrant workers who live independently or support their families [20]. By providing female migrant workers with safe and affordable housing, NGOs and stakeholders can play a crucial role in addressing this issue. Their roles may entail developing long-term housing solutions or providing temporary housing. Also, they can ensure that the housing is safe and meets the needs of female migrant workers.

Programs that specifically address the requirements to employ female migrant workers can also be developed by NGOs [21]. Governments have the power to implement minimum wage requirements at job levels. NGOs can collaborate with governments to ensure all employees meet such requirements. Similarly, creating programs that offer female migrant workers financial assistance or establishing support groups for these workers who are financially stranded.

6 Conclusion

Female migrant employees are exploited due to several reasons. It might result from social media platforms, traveling, or workplaces. They encounter several barriers that decrease their efficiency at the workplace. Several approaches can be taken to reduce exploitation. If better considerations are implemented, the barriers that prevent them from exploitation or fathering their studies and getting better job opportunities can be overcome. Despite even dozens of countries implementing laws that govern employment contracts, female migrant workers still undergo several workplace challenges. However, governments are not better placed to handle the needs of migrant workers as they have many projects to handle. Therefore, the challenges faced by female migrant workers are crucially addressed by international NGOs.

Discrimination, exploitation, and lack of access to fundamental rights and services, and difficulties locating employment opportunities and affordable housing are among the most notable issues faced by female migrant workers. The solutions to issues of this great magnitude need practical solutions like education and training programs, legal assistance, healthcare services, job placement services, and safe and affordable housing. Due to the financial requirements of these issues, it is recommended that solutions be provided by international NGOs with the help of other stakeholders.

NGOs can also develop programs that cater to the particular requirements of female migrant workers and assist them in navigating intricate legal systems. To fully meet the needs of female migrant workers, collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders is also essential. Education and training programs can assist female migrant workers in developing new skills and increasing their chances of finding better-paying jobs and avoiding exploitation. Finally, NGOs can advocate for policies and programs that support the rights and requirements of female migrant workers.

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