Migrant Domestic Workers Caught in Humanitarian Crises

What States of Origin Can Do to Counter Vulnerabilities

11,5 million migrant domestic workers globally*

17,2 % of all domestic workers globally are migrants*

* Source: ILO 2015
IDENTITY DOCUMENTS ARE SOMETIMES WITHHELD...
- Employers, recruitment agencies or traffickers sometimes confiscate documents.
- Limits freedom of movement and may limit access to public services.

WHAT STATES OF ORIGIN CAN DO
- PROVIDE TRAININGS for consular officials on the protection of their nationals’ rights and the implementation of employment agreements, crisis management, evacuation and return, development of contingency plans, information collection on nationals abroad, etc.
- ALLOW TEMPORARY ADMISSION for nationals returning home who cannot prove their identity.
- ENSURE TIMELY ISSUANCE of emergency travel documents and encourage nationals to email themselves a scan of their passport before going abroad. Deploy consular teams to locations with high concentrations of nationals, supported by rapid response teams sent from capital.
- ENHANCE COOPERATION by signing bilateral employment agreements with host States to strengthen regulations protecting migrant workers. Negotiate consular representation agreements with third countries (if there is no dedicated consular presence).

...WHICH CAN IMPEDE THEIR MOVEMENT TO SAFETY.
- May prevent immediate access to assistance.
- Leads to reliance on consular services for new travel documents.

Recommendations based on the MICIC Initiative Guidelines to Protect Migrants in Countries Experiencing Conflict or Natural Disaster.
Contact: icmpd-micic@icmpd.org / www.icmpd.org/our-work/migrants-in-countries-in-crisis
MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS CAUGHT IN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

EVERYDAY HARDSHIPS THEY MAY FACE

- They may experience language barriers and lack access to social networks.
- They may even be deprived of personal freedoms and freedom of movement.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

- Risk to be cut-off from life-saving information or services, such as evacuation efforts.

SOME MAY BE ISOLATED FROM COMMUNICATION CHANNELS...

- Which hampers access to crucial information.

WHAT STATES OF ORIGIN CAN DO

- SET UP REGISTRATION SYSTEMS for nationals abroad to provide them with information and assistance: user-friendly online systems, highlighting benefits and services.
- USE MIGRANTS’ SOCIAL NETWORKS and work with civil society and diaspora organisations to reach isolated nationals abroad.
- DEVELOP CRISIS ALERT SYSTEMS to enable authorities and nationals abroad to act according to crisis intensity.
- DEPLOY MOBILE RESPONSE TEAMS of consular officials to reach isolated migrants and disseminate information about alert levels, evacuation plans, available assistance, etc.

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EVERYDAY HARDSHIPS THEY MAY FACE

POTENTIAL DEPENDENCY ON EMPLOYERS OR RECRUITERS...

- Often faced with precarious legal situations (exclusion from labour law, right to form unions, etc.) and sometimes even debt bondage.
- Tied-visa systems: wherein workers are dependent on their employers to maintain legal status, change jobs or even leave the country.

WHAT STATES OF ORIGIN CAN DO

NEGOTIATE BILATERAL AGREEMENTS
on migrant workers to regulate their protection, emergency procedures and evacuation.

ENCOURAGE ETHICAL RECRUITMENT PROCESSES
in the State of origin and host State.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

...MAY HAVE DIVERSE CONSEQUENCES IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

- Migrant domestic workers who stay with their employers or recruiters may be...
  - ...locked-in & left behind.
  - ...delivered to embassies or centers for safety and repatriation or taken along by their employers/recruiters.

PROVIDE PRE-DEPARTURE TRAININGS
including language training, crisis information, emergency contacts and empowerment strategies, using tools such as migrant-to-migrant learning.

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS
between consular posts and nationals, individual employers and recruitment agencies to facilitate the flow of information and assistance. Special events at consulates may help to familiarise nationals with emergency procedures.

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WHAT STATES OF ORIGIN CAN DO

**EVERYDAY HARDSHIPS THEY MAY FACE**

- Some domestic workers may have irregular status...
  - Most arrive legally, but some of them may be pushed into irregularity.
  - Often a negative consequence of temporary or restrictive migration schemes.

- May fear fines, detention and deportation.

**HUMANITARIAN CRISIS**

- Which may inhibit them from seeking help.

**WHAT STATES OF ORIGIN CAN DO**

- Distribute identity cards without migration status to promote access to services. States of origin could authorise consular posts to issue status-free IDs.

- Institute a ‘No Questions’ policy regarding immigration status in the host State.

- Negotiate exceptions with host and transit States regarding exit, stay and entry requirements.

- Advocate with and among States on keeping borders open to facilitate movement to safety.

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