The Future We Want: Creating sustainable foundations for addressing human trafficking and unsafe migration of women and girls in Nepal

Zonta International has committed US$1 million to UN Women from 2016-2018 for The Future We Want project. This report covers the period from April – August 2017.

GOAL
Create sustainable foundations for addressing the links between human trafficking and foreign labor migration of women and girls in Nepal

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
The project is based on a Theory of Change that: if (1) an enabling cohesive legal and policy framework is in place and effectively implemented; if (2) favorable social norms are promoted in homes and communities and information is made available on safe migration and trafficking; and if (3) women are equipped with economic empowerment opportunities; then there will be a reduction in incidents of trafficking linked to foreign labor migration of women.

Photo: A participant learns how to make a crystal necklace in the skills training program organized by UN Women in Thakre rural municipality in Dhading district. Credit: PradeepShakya/UNWomen
ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Objective 1: An enabling environment in homes and communities is created to address structural barriers, gender-based discrimination and stereotypical intergenerational socialization patterns in project districts

- A mapping survey to identify underlying factors and barriers for women’s leadership and participation in economic activities was completed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in June. The survey report revealed that traditional forms of structural discriminations, such as the caste system and patriarchal practices in land ownership and decision-making structures, still exist in the targeted districts. These traditional structures have fueled violence against women and women’s subordination, disempowerment and discrimination within their homes and communities.

- A comprehensive and action-oriented advocacy campaign will be launched in the fourth quarter of 2017 to contribute to the creation of a more conducive and inclusive local environment for women’s empowerment and bring men and boys into the conversation.

Objective 2: Women migrant workers and survivors of trafficking enhance capacity to become independent economic actors in select project districts

- The provision of vocational skills and entrepreneurship development training started with returnee women migrant workers and survivors of trafficking in the project districts. During the reporting period, 12 women, out of 600 targeted, were enrolled in a 225-hour skills training program.
  - Of the 12 women, nine are returnee migrant workers and three are trafficking survivors.
  - The skills development training incorporates sensitization and awareness raising on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), psychosocial support during the training and follow-ups after the training. The post-training follow-up support will consist of support for business start-up or job placement by leveraging learnings, depending on needs and interests of each training participant.

- A total of 25 trainers (20 women and five men) acquired the capacity to provide psychosocial counseling and transfer their knowledge and skills in selected districts. The training participants were selected on the basis of their past experiences in dealing with returnee women migrant workers and survivors of trafficking and knowledge and skills in psychosocial counseling. A three-day Training of Trainers (ToT) on basic psychosocial support was conducted. In the post-training assessment, 90 percent of the participants answered that their understanding and knowledge of psychosocial counseling services increased.

Objective 3: Enhanced coherence/synergy between institutions and policies on the issues of national gender equality commitments particularly in the areas of foreign employment and human trafficking

- A civil society organization was contracted to carry out a gap assessment and a series of capacity development trainings for relevant officials of the government.

- In the coming months, the project will prioritize the commencement of an awareness-raising advocacy campaign and complete the assessment to identify operational gaps between the policies/plans and programs related to labor migration and trafficking.
NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- Local elections in May and June delayed implementation at the field level; however, the local election law stipulates that at least 13,360 women will have to be elected in local elections. As a result, women now comprise 41 percent of representatives in the local bodies and the forthcoming local elections are likely to further bolster this trend.

- A flood in the Terai district in August destroyed 43,433 houses and displaced 20,888 families. This emergency compelled the government, development partners and UN agencies to shift their priority and focus on the flood response.

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CHALLENGES

- The process of federalization created new local government units, which have been vested with full powers and authority to make decisions on their affairs. This development could spur difficulties for project implementation in the field because new decision makers do not necessarily feel ownership of the project and could make decisions that impact/delay project implementation. The project team, however, communicates with local government bodies on a regular basis to ensure smooth implementation.

- Two urban and four rural municipalities were selected in the two project districts to implement the field activities of the project. After local elections, the newly elected bodies proposed a change to the locations because returnee women migrant workers are usually mobile and less likely to remain in a particular place for a long time. The project team will select additional wards in the same municipalities based on the availability of returnee women migrant workers.

- Due to the persistent social stigma of being victims of trafficking, survivors of trafficking were often hesitant to disclose if they had been subject to trafficking while working abroad, making it difficult for the project to identify a sufficient number of survivors to participate in the field activities. Women were encouraged to self-determine their identity as either returnees or survivors. As a result, the majority of the project participants identified themselves as returnee women migrant workers. However, some of them shared their stories of being trafficked during one-on-one interactions.

NEXT STEPS

In the coming period, the project will work on the following priorities:

- Completion of the assessment to identify operational gaps, linkages with various stakeholders and recommendations between the policies/plans and programs related to labor migration and trafficking.

- Support to implementation of leveraging RTI against trafficking and unsafe migration in the post-disaster reconstruction.

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