



PERMANENTLY TEMPORARY: AGEING SRI LANKAN MIGRANT DOMESTIC WORKERS (SDMWS) AND EXCLUSIONARY SOCIAL POLICIES IN LEBANON

A Feminist Participatory Action Research



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International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)

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This research report is part of a multi-country Feminist Participatory Research Project implemented by The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) in partnership with colleagues in South, Southeast and West Asia. GAATW gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Women's Fund Asia to carry out this project.

GAATW and the Research Partners stand by the process and findings from the researches. Views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of Women's Fund Asia.

About GAATW's Feminist Participatory Action Research Project on Safe and Fair Migration in Asia

In 2018-2019, the International Secretariat of the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW-IS), in collaboration with eleven organisations across nine countries in Asia carried out a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) titled 'Safe and Fair Migration: A feminist perspective on women's rights to mobility and work'.

In our study, FPAR is used as a framework and approach to capturing migrant women's complex realities and perspectives on labour and migration. What distinguishes FPAR from conventional research is that it is deliberately women-centred and participant-driven; the knowledge comes from the women (community) and is owned by them, and based on their lived experiences. Research participants propose solutions so the research results become a tool to collectively organise advocacy actions. Therefore, this is an outcome of deconstructing the dominant understanding of safe and fair migration and reshaping the concepts from a feminist perspective. We believe our approach of building knowledge from the ground up and creating evidence base will add value in addressing the structural causes of power disparities that affect women's migration and mobility.

Our research community ranges across South, Southeast, and West Asia offering views from both countries of origin and destination, as well as adding the perspective of internal migration from rural to urban areas. Three distinguished sectors of work are covered in this study, including domestic work, garment work, and entertainment work.

The lead researcher groups who facilitated discussions with women migrants are: Anti-Racism Movement (Lebanon), Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (Cambodia), International Domestic Workers Federation (Lebanon), Karmojibi Nari (Bangladesh), Legal Resources Center for Gender Justice and Human Rights (Indonesia), MAP Foundation (Thailand), Sandigan (Kuwait), Self-Employed Women's Association (India), Society for Labour and Development (India), Women Forum for Women in Nepal (Nepal), and an independent researcher based in Jordan.

"Two people will shout as much as they can. But ten people are louder than two."

Borrowing from one of our FPAR research participants' words, we hope each piece of our collective study will help amplify women migrant workers' voice to bring about structural change for a safe and fair migration that works for women.

A consolidated regional report and the country research briefs are available on the GAATW (www.gaatw.org) website.

FOREWORD TO THE 'SAFE AND FAIR' RESEARCH SERIES

In the past several decades neoliberal globalisation, inequality between and within countries, conflict and environmental degradation have prompted unprecedented levels of migration. We are seeing a major trend towards increasing internal migration and urbanisation – by 2050, the global population living in urban areas is expected to reach 66 per cent. Meanwhile there are around 250 million international migrants, of whom half are women. In destination countries, demographic, labour market and economic changes (the privatisation of public services, aging societies, women's growing participation in the workforce) have created a demand for care and service work, with an expectation that this demand will be filled by female workers in the domestic, care, manufacturing and entertainment sectors. In origin countries, economic restructuring and industrialisation have led to loss of traditional livelihoods, agricultural decline, wage stagnation and a growth in precarious work, resulting in gross inequalities, and creating push factors for women to seek alternative income generating activities, including through migrating for work.

While these structural changes play a huge role in shaping “push and pull factors” for migration, it needs to be acknowledged that women are not merely passive subjects in their migration, but that for many, migration is a way of asserting agency and finding freedom from patriarchal societal norms. Many women choose to migrate in order to see the world and gain new experiences, find economic opportunities, to be able to support families and to exercise autonomy and social independence. Despite the many risks and the challenges in accessing information about migration processes and opportunities, women continue to migrate all over the world, including from marginalised communities and rural villages. However, there is a lack of recognition of migration as a right, and of women workers as independent economic actors. States' labour migration policies are broadly missing a human rights and gender-transformative approach to migration and work.

Activists on the left have long critiqued the exploitative nature of some cross-border labour migration schemes that employ workers on poverty wages in substandard conditions, while outsourcing the costs of social reproduction to countries of origin. In the past 20 years, feminists, including GAATW, have tried to bring attention to the particular discrimination and risks created for women migrants by laws and policies governing, and failing to govern, labour migration. Although such initiatives have tried to stress women's perspectives, the conversation about migration has sometimes backfired and produced unintended consequences. Governments of origin and destination countries have in some instances responded not by making migration protective of human rights, but by curbing it through restrictions on women's mobility on the basis of age, marital status, pregnancy and maternal status, and category of work, especially for low-wage workers, and increasing border controls.

Much of this is done with the supposed aim of 'protecting' women from trafficking and exploitation; however, what these protectionist restrictions have done is open up a market for clandestine and debt-financed migration, creating or exacerbating the very vulnerability, violence, and exploitation they were intended to prevent. While non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have tried to bring issues of human rights to the table, they have, perhaps unintentionally, contributed to the repressive government agendas. Some anti-trafficking NGOs perpetuate narratives and images of migrant women

as victims, and infantilising women by portraying them as inherently vulnerable and in need of protection. As a feminist alliance, GAATW sees its role as supporting the empowerment of migrant women to move and work safely and with dignity. This feminist participatory action research project is our collective effort to deconstruct and reshape a narrative of labour migration that is safe and fair for women workers, especially those in the most marginalised segments of society. We hope that this study serves as evidence to fight for the rights of migrant workers and amplify women's voices in the local, regional, and international migration agenda.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social protection for the migrant workers is a crucial factor in determining safe and fair migration and protection of migrant rights in employment.

There are ageing Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers (SMDWs) who have lived and worked in Lebanon for as long as thirty years but are excluded from social policies in both Sri Lanka and in Lebanon. In this scenario, ageing SMDWs opt to continue working in Lebanon where their status is a permanently temporary one as a form of social protection rather than retire and return to Sri Lanka, where the overwhelming burden of survival is placed on migrant women. There are ageing Lebanese women too from the lower economic class in Lebanese society suffer from exclusionary social policies and are denied social protection, which becomes apparent when family support structures too fail them.

By trying to understand the impacts of exclusionary social policies on ageing SMDWs and ageing Lebanese women living in financially vulnerable conditions, this research initially sought to compare them in terms of their experience of social exclusion in order to see whether there could be possible mutually beneficial synergies between these two groups. However, it became apparent during the course of the research that it was far-fetched to think that these two groups were coming together to achieve mutual synergy thus the focus turned to the impacts of social and migration policies on ageing SMDWs in Lebanon. The sponsorship (*Kafala*) system is at the core of the vulnerability and exploitability of domestic workers in Lebanon. However, this study shows that there is a contradictory dynamic for SMDWs: they were able to provide a better life for their families and children back in Sri Lanka through their work in Lebanon but in the process, they had to endure racism, social and psychological violence, precarity and temporariness. When it comes to Lebanese women, they are mostly dependant on the allowances that their children or extended family provide, whenever possible, and they suffer from the lack of medical coverage and elderly care in their own country, which increases their vulnerability. Discussions with twelve domestic workers and three ageing Lebanese women, did not demonstrate a coming together of the two groups. The idea of hiring an ageing MDW to care for ageing Lebanese women has not been introduced yet in the social practices in Lebanon. More importantly, the social exclusion that ageing Lebanese women face is structurally different from that of SMDWs from legal, social and economic perspectives. For SMDWs, the migrant lens brings additional layers of vulnerability and marginalisation to the discussion, including the slavery like sponsorship system and shows that there is no sufficient basis for a comparative analysis of the two groups. However, this study attempts to provide an entry point to open up a social dialogue platform between the two segments of Lebanese society in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations that were derived from the findings and analysis of the fieldwork are as follows:

- There are no clear synergies between SMDWs and ageing Lebanese women. Also vulnerabilities encountered by these groups are not similar. Therefore, we do not recommend research and activities that would be based on the presence of such synergies especially if the project being implemented is of short-to-medium term. In the following section, we elaborate on potential short to medium term actions.

Scope for further research

If any activity seeking to bridge the needs of these two groups by bringing them together is to be implemented, the project may first aim to prepare the groups for the potential encounter. Thus, the project would have a medium-to-long term timeframe. These matters are related to attitudes and perceptions on the one hand; and on the other hand, economic vulnerability of ageing Lebanese women that were targeted in this research. It takes time to initiate behavioural and societal changes. Further steps may include the following:

- Conduct Focus group discussions (FGDs) with ageing SMDWs to assess their interest in providing elderly care for ageing employers and to identify potential capacity building for providing elderly care
- Conduct FGDs with ageing Lebanese women living by themselves in order to assess their needs in home care and to understand the acceptability of hiring ageing SMDWs to perform such work. It is important to note that the Lebanese women need to belong to at least the lower middle class in order to be able to pay the fees and salaries.
- Discuss the potential for employing ageing SMDWs to provide care to ageing Lebanese women with recruitment agencies
- Include other NGOs and collectives working with MDWs in the process

Additional Recommendations

Although the *Kafala* system is the major structural obstacle that SMDWs face, there are some measures that may be taken even within the existing framework to improve their situation. Thus, based on our understanding of these women's experiences, the most urgent issues that need to be addressed are as follows:

At the legal Level

- Abolishing the sponsorship system in Lebanon
- Advocate for a domestic workers' law that ensures decent and fair labour rights for migrant domestic workers

At the socio-economic level

- Lobby for a more inclusive medical insurance, especially for ageing domestic workers, to be paid by employers

- Organising capacity building workshops for migrant domestic workers on financial planning and managing saving schemes to prepare for their retirement

At the community level

- Encourage community building by organising and reaching out to more domestic workers

1. Introduction

Studies concerning Safe and Fair (S&F) Migration have been shedding light on the limitations of the existing legal and social eco-system of domestic work. The latter has become an important component of sending countries' economies, like the Philippines for example, where remittances from domestic work in the Middle East play a crucial part in the GDP's growth¹. Remittances from migrant workers contributes so significantly to the economies of sending countries like the Philippines or Sri Lanka that it becomes difficult for these countries to compel receiving countries in the Middle East to change their current legal apparatus, which makes it possible for employers to exploit domestic workers and increases their vulnerability.

The case of ageing migrant domestic workers who have been residing in the Middle East has not been extensively explored. There are a fairly large number of ageing Sri Lankan domestic workers in Lebanon hence we sought to assess their current condition and their future prospects in the country of origin. Sri Lankan labour migration is historically the first big wave of low-skilled non-Arab migration to Lebanon. Sri Lankan women represent the majority of ageing domestic workers in the country, hence the choice to conduct primary research with them and gather their stories and narratives.

In fact, the obvious and consistent lack of social protection and fair financial compensation for migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in Lebanon, and more specifically the ageing MDWs who might face medical conditions related to their age, continue to hinder the achievement of S&F Migration. Further, many ageing MDWs may acquiesce to being in a permanently temporary state in Lebanon because even at an advanced age they do not want to return for fear of facing financial and social vulnerability there. In this study, the focus is on the perceptions of ageing Sri Lankan migrant domestic workers (SMDWs) living in Lebanon, on their past experiences, their daily lives and their future, and the conditions of ageing Lebanese women who lack social protections. Through our interactions with women from both groups, we have tried to identify possible ways in which we could establish mutually beneficial linkages between the two groups. Initially, this research was trying to assess whether ageing SMDWs could provide elderly and home care to ageing Lebanese women who come from relatively middle-to-low economic classes.

This research aims at identifying the impacts of exclusionary social policies in Lebanon that affect ageing Sri Lankan domestic workers. Whether because of their legal status or their vulnerable socio-economic situation or the lack of proper medical coverage and insurance, these women face structural injustices throughout their careers, and especially at an older age. This study examines how social policies in countries of origin and destination and migration policies interact to produce situations where migrant domestic workers find themselves accepting a permanently temporary status in Lebanon as a form of social protection. This is influenced by an overwhelming burden that is placed on the migrant women community from Sri Lanka. They might be obliged to remain in Lebanon at an old age in order to save money for their retirement and to cover their future needs back home. On another note, ageing Lebanese women are increasingly suffering from the lack of medical and social coverage, and the exponential price rise; both of which are deepening their vulnerability. The initial approach was to examine how both groups can complement each other' needs i.e. SMDWs who feel

¹ Anthony Rowley, "Remittances remain crucial to Philippines economy", The National (11 October 2017). <https://www.thenational.ae/business/remittances-remain-crucial-to-philippines-economy-1.666517>

the need to continue working at an older age may find a job as a home care person for ageing Lebanese women who need daily support. By basing the rationale on participants' narratives, this research explores the potential synergies between the situations of ageing SMDWs and the exclusions of ageing vulnerable Lebanese women might face. Section one provides an overview of the socio-economic, policy-making and regulatory context of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. Section two discusses the significance of this research in-depth and introduces the methodology and the primary research framework. Section three analyses the findings from the interviews of SMDWs while Section four showcases the main perceptions that ageing Lebanese women voiced regarding their current situation.

2. Literature Review

Economic and Political Context on Women's Labour and Migration in Lebanon: Emphasis on SMDWs

Throughout history, Lebanese households have relied heavily on domestic work. Prior to the civil war (1975 -1990), domestic workers were primarily Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, and Palestinian. It was common for child domestic workers to enter households from the time they were eight years old, to serve the host family and receive informal education. However, tensions during the civil war shifted the demographic of domestic workers to migrant women from Asian countries. As Lebanese women became unwilling to be domestic workers, stigma grew around the profession and it increasingly became shameful for Lebanese women to work in the sector. Arab domestic workers were thought to demand more and not work as hard as their migrant counterparts. Moreover, it came to be believed that Lebanese women working as a domestic worker would never get married. This change in perceptions stopped young Lebanese girls from entering the domestic workforce and daughters in economically disadvantaged families started engaging in factory work instead.²

Similar to most Arab countries, migrant workers in Lebanon are governed by the *kafala* (sponsorship) system. Although the system was originally implemented as a gesture to ensure non-nationals were looked after throughout their stay, the system is now used to enable control, exploitation and forced labour. The *Kafala* system allows employers to have a high level of control over migrant workers' as they require the employer's permission to change or quit jobs and puts tremendous powers in the hands of employers who control the residency status of the domestic workers in the country of employment.³ The unequal power distribution leaves workers vulnerable to exploitative working conditions. Despite it being illegal to do so, many domestic workers have their passports confiscated and are not allowed to leave the employers' house.⁴

Sri Lankan domestic workers began arriving in Lebanon in 1978. Their number had significantly increased after the Civil War ended in 1990. Between the years of 1990 and 2006, Sri Lankans were the largest single group of foreign domestic workers in Lebanon, followed by the Filipinas and

² R Jureidini, 'Domestic Service in Lebanon: A Brief History', 2011

³ A. Pande, "The paper that you have in your hand is my freedom: Migrant domestic work and the *Kafala* system in Lebanon", International Migration Review, 2013

⁴ N Kuzbari, "Domestic Work in Lebanon: What are some of the main factors that contribute to the continued exploitation of women migrant domestic workers in Lebanon?", Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World Lebanese American University, 2018

Ethiopians⁵. However, by 2016, a study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that Ethiopians make up 46% of domestic workers in Lebanon surpassing other nationalities. Nevertheless, the strong mobilization among Sri Lankan domestic workers and their active involvement in supporting fellow migrants are one of their notable characteristics. Thus, though Lebanese law does not permit domestic worker to form unions, the active civil society in Lebanon has provided room for domestic workers to mobilize and meet.

The education level of domestic workers varies significantly between nationalities, with Filipino migrants possessing the highest percentage of university degrees. In contrast, the share of those who never went to school is highest among Sri Lankan migrant domestic workers while the highest share of MDWs with primary education is to be found among Ethiopians⁶.

In the earlier years of outmigration in the mid-1970s, the Sri Lankan labour force was predominantly male construction workers. However, in 1981, more than half of Sri Lankan domestic workers were women which further increased to 79 per cent in the mid-1990s⁷. Aged between eighteen and 40, Sri Lankan women who are working abroad as domestic workers usually have around ten years of education and have never held a paid job in Sri Lanka. The main drivers for these women to seek employment abroad are limited economic opportunities back home especially for those married with children. Being unemployed and unable to find jobs in the formal sector, women are forced to seek work in the informal economy where no social benefits, labour laws or retirement plans exist, among others.

Domestic labour has become the single largest source⁸ of foreign revenue in Sri Lanka and is thus a critical source of funding in the nation's rehabilitative infrastructure efforts. In 2013, Sri Lanka planned to ban women travelling to foreign nations, except Lebanon, for work in menial jobs. The exception was due to Lebanon's role in funding the Sri Lankan economy.⁹

On Policy and Regulatory Context Related to Labour Migration in Lebanon

Immigration and emigration have long been part of Lebanon's history. Beginning in the 1800's, migration flows to the territory that became Lebanon has occurred for knowledge and trade. Since the end of the Lebanese civil war, the country has emerged as a destination for both Arab and non-Arab migrants and refugees. As skilled and educated workers continued to emigrate out of Lebanon, the country experienced replacement migration flows from neighbouring countries and Asia. Following Lebanon and Syria emerging as separate nation states after World War 2, Lebanon began receiving Syrian migrant workers due to the proximity and relatively open border between the countries. In

⁵ R Jureidini, 'Domestic Service in Lebanon: A Brief History', 2011

⁶ International Labour Organization, Migrant domestic workers study, ILO, 2016.

⁷ N. Moukarbel, "Sri Lankan housemaids in Lebanon: A case of 'symbolic violence' and 'everyday forms of resistance'", 2009

⁸ R. Jureidini and N. Moukarbel, "Brief on Foreign Female Domestic Maids in Lebanon", American University of Beirut. December 2000. <http://www.inf.org.lb/migrationnetwork/mig6.html>

⁹ N. Mendis, "Is your Sri Lankan a Filipino? The case of Sri Lankan Domestic Workers", Brown Political Review, October 2014. <http://www.brownpoliticalreview.org/2014/10/is-your-sri-lankan-a-filipino-the-case-of-sri-lankan-domestic-workers/>

addition, there was a shift from hiring predominantly Syrian and Lebanese domestic workers to hiring Sri Lankan, Filipino, and Ethiopian domestic workers following the Lebanese Civil War.¹⁰

In the past decade, there has been an increase in infrastructure and real estate projects, resulting in an influx of jobs for migrant low-skilled workers.¹¹ There has also been a shift in attitudes towards accepting migrant workers as a significant contributor to the economic growth and development especially from the side of origin country.¹²

As briefly noted above, migrants employed in domestic work in Lebanon fall under the *kafala*, or sponsorship system. Under *kafala* system, each domestic migrant worker's legal status is tied to her employer. This gives the employer (*kafeel*) the power and authority over the status of migrant workers which has often been criticized for facilitating the exploitation and abuse of workers. Moreover, Lebanon's approximately 250,000 migrant domestic workers are currently excluded from the country's labour legislation. Hence, they are denied the protections and rights stipulated in the labour law and are generally not regarded as "workers" by the Lebanese government¹³. In addition, the government has not yet ratified Convention 189, the landmark International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on domestic workers. Some of the frequent labour rights violation which migrant domestic workers face are: receiving far below a minimum wage, non-payment of wages, lack of sick days or holidays, long work days, forced confinement, intimidation and harassment which are frequently reported¹⁴.

Regarding social protection and health care aspects, Lebanon does not have universal health coverage. It is charged with having a 'clientelist' healthcare system in which more than half of Lebanese nationals have no healthcare coverage. Most believe that the healthcare system is unaffordable and inaccessible for most residents¹⁵. Additionally, social ties are affected by the mass migration of young Lebanese people entering the labour market, to the Gulf countries especially. Thus, hiring a MDW to help their parents in the household chores and to assist them in their health and personal care can become a viable option.

The crucial role of NGOs in the self-organization of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon has been recognized by several studies.¹⁶ Since the 1980s, church-based NGOs started to cater the needs of migrant domestic workers. They had usually provided a safe space for the migrant workers to have a social and religious gathering as well as a meeting venue for informal organising and assisting various services for the workers. In recent years, more local NGOs including Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) became involved and started developing alternative spaces which brought different nationalities and religions. The Migrant Community Center (MCC) is an example of the safe space mentioned above which was established by ARM.

¹⁰ P Tabar, 2015, 'Lebanon: A Country of Emigration and Immigration,' Lebanese American University

¹¹ P Tabar, 2015, 'Lebanon: A Country of Emigration and Immigration,' Lebanese American University

¹² Y D Belay, 2014, 'Migration and State Responsibility: Ethiopian Domestic Workers in Lebanon,' retrieved from <http://www.ijsrp.org/research-paper-0514/ijsrp-p2923.pdf>

¹³ D. Mansour-Ille & M. Hendow, "From exclusion to resistance: Migrant domestic workers and the evolution of agency in Lebanon", *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, February 2018.

¹⁴ F. Massena, "Abused Ethiopian domestic worker is "the poster girl for kafala" in Lebanon", *Equal times*, May 2018. https://www.equaltimes.org/abused-ethiopian-domestic-worker#.XE28v8_7TVo

¹⁵ H. Jayaweera & E. Shlala, "Access to healthcare and health status of Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers", October 2015.

¹⁶ D. Mansour-Ille & M. Hendow, "From exclusion to resistance: Migrant domestic workers and the evolution of agency in Lebanon", *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, February 2018.

Lebanon has seen the significant emergence of a grassroots labour rights movement from workers, which is especially notable in the region. In 2015, the country's first union for migrant workers – the Domestic Workers' Union of Lebanon¹⁷ – was inaugurated as an affiliate of the Federation of Employees' and Workers' Trade Unions of Lebanon (FENASOL) and with the support of International Labour Organization. The establishment of the union was viewed a breakthrough. However, without the Ministry of Labour's recognition, the union still remains illegal. Additionally, following the deportation of its main domestic workers' organizers, its work has been limited and its reach undermined with only 700 members.

The reality of social protection in Lebanon

In order to understand the exclusionary social protection policies and practices in Lebanon impacting the lived experiences of both MDWs and ageing Lebanese women from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, it seems crucial to firstly introduce the major limitations of the current system and secondly to make the nuance between the impacts on both groups.

Lebanon has historically opted for a minimal state intervention in public policy and social provisions which was exacerbated during the reconstruction period of the 1990s. This has led to a predominance of the private sector and non-state actors in the social services provisions in general, and in healthcare and education more specifically. The existing dichotomy between formal and informal economy in Lebanon is extremely obvious, whereby the informal economy accounts for over 30% total economy.¹⁸

Regarding the formal economy, there are different social security systems, one that is specific to the private sector and a multi-layered system for the public sector. One of the major setbacks of having a multitude of systems for the public sector, is the fact that the more the scattered the system, the more it loses the potential to respond to the actual needs of its constituents.¹⁹ For example, there are two separate institutions for civil servants and for military/security forces. The citizens who lack the coverage of a formal social security institution can seek the support of the Ministry of Health that can cover up to 85% for the hospitalization and treatment of certain serious illnesses.²⁰ However, each citizen that wishes to benefit from such support need to prove their inability to afford treatment, which in turn, implies an important amount of paperwork i.e. a lengthy bureaucratic process. Thus, when the conditions require emergency interventions, the paperwork can thwart them from seeking the support of the Ministry and would oblige these citizens to be in debt.

¹⁷ E. Haddad, "In Lebanon, a new domestic workers trade union fights kafala", Equal Times, February 2015, <https://www.equaltimes.org/in-lebanon-a-new-domestic-workers?lang=en#.WwM9iUiFM2w>

¹⁸ World Bank country report, 2016

¹⁹ Nabil Abdo, 'Social Protection in Lebanon: from a System of Privileges to a System of Rights, Arab NGO Network for Development, 2014

²⁰ *Ibid*



Hierarchy of Social Protection in Lebanon, 2016, Issam Fares Institute, AUB

Figure 1 Hierarchy of social protection in Lebanon

According to Cammett (2014), “By 2006, NGOs, sectarian parties, religious charities, community groups, and family-based institutions operated roughly eight hundred health clinics, of which about 450 were fully functional while the remainder operated more sporadically and lacked trained medical personnel or adequate facilities. Non-state providers account for about 90 percent of the delivery of services”. In fact, the implementation of the social security system in Lebanon was never accompanied by active state interventions towards achieving clear welfare goals, which opened the door for politico-religious groups to fill the gap and at the same time to deepen the establishment of their power over the population²¹. The decoupling of social policies from economic policies has resulted in the quasi ineffectiveness of social security, one of the core elements of the social welfare state.

Under the article 7 of the Labour Code, there are an important number of workers who are excluded from any sort of formal social protection such as agriculture workers, migrant and domestic workers, temporary workers in the public sector, and workers who fall under the informal economy system. A report by BlomInvest Bank (2015) states that, there is around 44% of households that do not benefit from any kind of insurance and 45% who benefit from formal state social protection schemes.²² Migrant domestic workers are thereby excluded from the formal social security scheme, from acquiring any retirement rights and from seeking a fair salary for their work since they are not included in the Labour Code (no minimum wage for them).

The above-mentioned binaries and the exclusionary nature of social security are intertwined with the politico-economic landscape that have been developed since the creation of the country and that exacerbated in the past three decades.

²¹ Sarah Al Jamal and Rachel Eichholz, ‘Poverty and Social Protection in Lebanon’, Issam fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, AUB, 2016

²² BLOMINVEST Bank, ‘The Saga of the Lebanese Healthcare Sector: Reforms on the Run amid Persistent Challenges’. Beirut: BLOMINVEST Bank, 2015

3. Research Framework

Significance of the Research

Sri Lanka is the oldest country of origin for domestic workers in Lebanon. A large number of Sri Lankan domestic workers have worked in Lebanon on temporary contracts since 1975. Due to a number of factors, such as the lack of adequate insurance, old age pension, pension portability schemes and the dislocation from relatives and friends; many ageing Sri Lankan domestic workers prefer not to return to their home country and instead choose to stay in Lebanon. The burden of medical bills, burials and repatriation is increasingly borne by the Sri Lankan Women Society (SLWS) in Lebanon or other Sri Lankan associations and community groups. In fact, the SLWS, led by Mala²³, came to life in the early 90s as a self-help group to support the burial and or repatriation of deceased Sri Lankan women workers in Lebanon. Later, the SLWS organized cultural and celebratory events to bring the community together and to raise welfare funds. The SLWS has recently organized a credit saving group for returning Sri Lankan domestic workers from Lebanon. The SLWS is the oldest domestic workers' organisations in Lebanon, if not the whole Middle East.

Given what was highlighted above, this research examines how social and migration policies in Lebanon and Sri Lanka impact ageing Sri Lankan domestic workers and the decision-making process they undergo in choosing to go back to Sri Lanka or remain in Lebanon for work. They might find themselves acquiescing to being permanently temporary in Lebanon, a status that arises from their not being able to aspire to citizenship under the Kafala system combined with their choice to remain in Lebanon in order to avoid being financially dependent on their families back home.

On another note, ageing Lebanese women living in precarious conditions suffer from exclusionary social policies in place in Lebanon. They find it difficult to access health care and social protection and find themselves in increasingly vulnerable socio-economic situations and in need of daily care services that they cannot afford. Indeed, the bureaucratic nature of healthcare procedures makes it even more difficult for these women to access social protection. The structural marginalisation of both ageing Lebanese women and ageing Sri Lankan domestic workers by social policies and migration policies in place is at the core of this research. In fact, this study aims at identifying the similarities and the differences in the exclusionary social policy-making and practices affecting both groups in Lebanon.

Research Framework and methodology

The research focuses on the lived experiences of both ageing Sri Lankan women workers and ageing vulnerable Lebanese women. Thus, a gender lens is relevant to the design of the research. On the one hand, Sri Lankan domestic workers in Lebanon mostly represent women who take the breadwinning role and send their monthly salaries back home and help in raising their children or financing the living expenses of their parents and siblings. On the other hand, Lebanese women find themselves in increasingly precarious contexts when they age, given their low participation in the labour force, especially after they get married and have children. Their un-paid labour in their households does not provide them with tangible retirement allowances or allow them to start saving money throughout

²³ Mala is a Sri Lankan domestic worker that has been living and working in Lebanon for over 30 years.

their life. Amid the lack of any state interventions to protect these women or a functioning free health care coverage for ageing people, these women are to a large extent relying on the contributions of their close and/or larger families.

The study tries to identify the effects of exclusionary social policies on these two groups and tries to analyse potential synergies between them.

The data collection methodology is based on speech-based participation mainly in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), inspired by the feminist participatory action research (FPAR), where the participants are not just the subject of the study but are an integral part of the research process. The questionnaires were designed after the literature review and grasping the context in which this research is inscribed. It is of utmost importance to highlight at this point that the questionnaires were used as a thread of topics to steer the interviews and the FGD; thus, trying to leave as much space for the participants' narratives and stories. Most of the participants were fluent in Arabic, but others needed the English translation of the questions which was done by our research team in order not to lose any shared information.

After getting in touch with Mala, the leader of the SLWS, we managed to get nine domestic workers on board to take part in the FGD, which was conducted on a Sunday at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung²⁴ office in Beirut during the domestic workers' day off. Seven of the participants were aged 50 years and above and the remaining two were in their mid-40s. All participants have been working in Lebanon for over 10 years, whether intermittently or at a stretch. All of them have children in Sri Lanka, most of whom are now working, married and with children themselves. Additionally, two in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with two women domestic workers on the same date to solidify the findings and get in depth information. Eight out of nine participants are working as freelancers now and one has been working with the same employer for 24 years.

In order to include the perception of marginalised ageing Lebanese women, we decided to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with women who fit the above criteria and who are above 60 years of age. Only three women were interviewed due to obstacles when trying to identify women who would agree to speak to us and participate in the study. The Lebanese women we have interviewed were identified through family connections or friends' acquaintances. Moreover, they were not exposed to the conditions of domestic workers since none of them was a domestic worker's employer or was part of a household employing domestic workers.

It must be stressed that the sample does not claim to represent ageing Sri Lanka domestic workers living in Lebanon or marginalised ageing Lebanese women. Rather, it aims at providing some insights into the impacts of exclusionary social policies that affect Sri Lankan women working in Lebanon as well as ageing Lebanese women from the low economic class.

4. Interviews with Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers

In this section, the major findings are discussed and analysed under three main sub-sections: the first one unravels the rationale behind the migration of interviewed Sri Lankan women workers to Lebanon.

²⁴ The Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is one of the six major political foundations in the Federal Republic of Germany, tasked primarily with conducting political education both at home and abroad.

The second sub-section outlines the perception of these women's lived experiences in Lebanon throughout the years and dissects any potential setbacks or improvements that they have witnessed throughout their careers in the country. The last sub-section discusses their perceptions of their own futures, back in Sri Lanka or in Lebanon.

Leaving Sri Lanka: owning up to their responsibilities

The global gendered division of labour in the past decades showcases the feminisation process of domestic work and care labour. Gender norms and stereotypes along with the global commodification of labour induced the concentration of female 'low-skilled' employment in domestic work. Out of economic necessity and personal and familial needs, all the participants decided to come to work in Lebanon as domestic workers. According to them, working in Sri Lanka, when one comes from an extremely vulnerable socio-economic background, serves only in sustaining the minimal basic needs. Seven out of the nine participants have lost their husbands or are divorced, which led them to try and find ways to earn money in order to raise their children and cater to their parents' financial needs.

"My husband died and I had to raise my children. I also had to take care of my husband's parents and my mother. We come from a poor background and in Sri Lanka poor people only work to survive and bring food to their households. That's why I came to Lebanon 24 years ago. I wanted a better life for my children and I needed to cover the medical expenses of my mother."

These women are the main breadwinners of their families, or at least were the main breadwinners until their parents passed away and their children got married or started working. The whole burden of raising the children, paying for their education and providing for their families falls on them. There is a highly shared sense of sacrifice among the participants regarding their decision of leaving their families behind and living for many years in Lebanon.

"When my husband started to get really sick, he couldn't work anymore. So, I had to find a way to bring money, this is where domestic work came as the most relevant choice. I came to Lebanon to help in paying for his medication and treatment. Medicine in Sri Lanka is very expensive and what he used to earn, was not enough. He was sick for 10 years and then he died. In 25 years of work in Lebanon, I was able to raise my children and put them in school. I was also able to build a house. But I feel like I missed on being present for them".

At the expense of weakening their familial and social ties back in Sri Lanka, the participants went on a journey to Lebanon, seeking the improvement of their households' socio-economic situations; thus, obliged to accept looking after their loved ones from afar.

At this point, it seems important to highlight that transnational networks play a crucial role in women's decision to leave Sri Lanka and perform domestic work in the Middle East, and more specifically in Lebanon, where the demand is relatively high. Few of the participants mentioned that at a younger age, they used to see their aunts making their families' lives better by working in Lebanon which fed into the idea of migrating to work in domestic help. All the women who participated in the research knew someone who was already residing and working in Lebanon, whether it was their mother, their sisters, their aunts or their neighbours.

“My aunt was working in Lebanon, and when she used to come visit her family to Sri Lanka, she looked healthy and had nice clothes and brought us gifts with her. I said to myself back then, I also want to be like her and to be able to accomplish what she had accomplished in her family.”

Reality in Lebanon: between bitterness and the sense of fulfilment toward their families

The reality of the situation of domestic workers in Lebanon leaves little doubt regarding the institutional, legal and social racism that these women workers face. As per mentioned in section two of the report, the *Kafala* system burdens MDWs, extremely limits their mobility and gives all the power to the employer. Hence, in a society like in Lebanon, where racism is deeply embedded, such a system enhances the exploitability of migrant women workers.

“I haven’t been to Sri Lanka in 3 years, because my sponsor disappeared and I am stuck without papers. There is someone willing to sponsor me, but I can’t because of the kafala regulations and laws do not allow me to change sponsors without the official approval of the previous one. The other is missing, so I am stuck. My father is now at the hospital, undergoing surgery and I can’t see him.”

It was obvious during the focus group discussion and the individual interviews that there is a shared feeling of ambivalence towards Lebanon, among participants. This finding is at the core of a major contradiction they all voiced. On the one hand, a sense of pride in what they managed to accomplish for themselves and their families through their work in Lebanon and how they were able to turn their lives around. On the other hand, acquiescing to harsh living conditions, sometimes loneliness and the lack of ownership over their daily lives and mobility. They do not dismiss the ‘role’ Lebanon played in improving their economic situations but have emphasized the difficulties of their journeys so far.

“When my parents died years ago, the family I was employed by did not allow me to go to the funeral of my parents. Our lives are hard here, my life was hard. I mean you only have one mother and one father in your lifetime, I lost both of them and I wasn’t able to say goodbye.”

One of the major exclusionary social policies domestic workers face in Lebanon is the lack of suitable medical coverage and health care. Although employers have to pay for a less than basic medical insurance to cover the domestic worker they are hiring by law, it barely covers the basic medical assistance and can only be used once a year for emergency cases, such as accidents or death. The lack of medical coverage for Lebanese citizens feeds into the extremely expensive health care in the country. Doctor visits, tests and medicine are expensive and not covered by the mandatory insurance that employers are confined in doing. Additionally, the situation of ageing Sri Lankan women is even more puzzling since private medical insurance companies do not accept them because they have no proper insurance history in Lebanon.

In the cases of two of the participants, their employers enlisted them on their own private insurance and financed their medical and health needs. Thus, it all boils down to the ‘courtesy’ of their employers when it comes to suitable medical coverage, which demonstrates to what extent their current situation is vulnerable and exploitable.

“I have health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure, and my employer did a private insurance on top of the regular mandatory one, so I can be covered and treated. I consider myself lucky to be with such an employer.”

Regarding the evolution of their experiences in Lebanon since they first arrived and until today, the participants have voiced a small positive change in the society’s attitude towards domestic workers in general, and more specifically towards Sri Lankans, especially in the generations they have helped raising. They argued that it is a small change compared to the time they have spent here. It is important to mention here, that this slight change in attitude was not accompanied by an evolution in their legal statuses that remain the source of abuse and discrimination. Moreover, these women consider themselves pioneers in the community building of domestic workers in Lebanon. They believe that they have paved the way for the new generations of Sri Lankan domestic workers coming to the country. According to them, their feedback, their activism and what they have endured since their arrival, have urged the authorities back in their country to provide capacity building workshops catered to domestic workers and employers’ relationship before moving to destination countries.

“Now in Sri Lanka, each DW undergoes training regarding how to work in the home and to interact with the employers. They [the training] introduce them with their rights and duties. How to talk to Madam, to deal with Madam and to become friends with Madam. They do a 3-month training and thus are much more prepared than we were 25 years ago.”

The improved preparedness of SMDWs before leaving their countries highlights the importance of community building in the sense of grouping each other, sharing their common experiences and building a strong community for themselves, which allows them to fight back, to be involved in activism work and creates synergies with other migrant groups. This in turn impacts the attitude of society and empowers the migrant communities.

“I have been working with the same employer for 25 years. My situation today is very good, but it was not that easy before. When I started my activism work and I started to have contacts and connections with NGOs and people at the embassy, my employer got scared that she [the employer] would get into trouble and this obliged her to acknowledge me as an equal human being”.

Perceptions of their current situation and future plans

When asked about what life may have been like if they had not come to Lebanon, all the participants agreed that their situation and their families’ future would have been worse. Although free basic medical coverage is extended to all citizens in Sri Lanka and public education is also available for all, they firmly believe that they have chosen the right path to secure better living standards for their children and for themselves.

“If we were living now in Sri Lanka, our situation would have been really bad. I don’t have my husband, I have children to raise and I don’t have a house. We are very poor habibi²⁵, I would have worked non-stop and all the money I would have

²⁵ Term of endearment in Arabic that can be translated into “my darling”

earned would have gone for buying food. If I stayed in Sri Lanka, I might have died by now. By coming to Lebanon, I was able to earn money and send it back to raise my children. My son is now living in London, and my daughter works here with me.”

However, they all agreed that the living expenses have increased greatly both in Lebanon and in Sri Lanka, inflation sky-rocketed in the past twenty years, putting more financial pressure on them, whether in their daily expenses in Lebanon or in their planning for their return to Sri Lanka.

“Now we can’t buy a land or a house in Sri Lanka, because even there the prices went up. What we earn now is enough for food, rent, send some money to family and to cover the education of our children but there is no space for savings.”

What makes it even harder for eight of the participants is that they work as freelancers, so they have to cover rent, transportation, medical insurance and the renewal of their permits in Lebanon. The renewal process costs twice as much as for ‘regular’ migrant worker working for one family since the individuals who sponsor freelancers abuse the legal situation of MDWs and ask them to work for free in exchange of sponsoring them. This issue is something they worry about a lot as freelancers, whereby the exploitative system forces them to face new barriers and additional obstacles. In fact, they can be stopped at any time by general security officers and put in jail if they are found not to be living in the house of their ‘sponsor’.

One major fear they have for their future is not being able to sustain themselves if they decide to go back to Sri Lanka. The lack of savings schemes and financial planning puts them in a vulnerable position when they retire.

“Yes, we worked all our lives here, we didn’t think about our own future. We only thought about our families and children. We don’t know what will happen for us when we go back to Sri Lanka since we don’t have bank accounts or insurance. In fact, most domestic workers are mothers, they don’t think about themselves and only want to raise their children. That’s why we don’t have a lot of savings.”

According to the participants, being financially dependent on their children or on their families in the future is not really an option. They have been financially autonomous and independent and they were the main breadwinners in their families. Consequently, they wouldn’t be ready to wait for someone to feed them, pay their expenses or take care of them. However, their current savings are not promising, which impacts their future plans. Most of them need to work till an old age to be able to retire and be financially independent.

“I know I am old but I chose to stay in Lebanon and keep working because I don’t want to wait for my children to give me money and to feed me. I have never been in that situation and I sure definitely won’t start being this way at this phase of my life. Plus, if I go back to Sri Lanka, I won’t be able to work in house cleaning/keeping so I wouldn’t be able to work. No habibi, I decide to stay here and work till I can’t anymore. At least, I am autonomous.”

One particular story came to our attention during the primary research, where the participant’s employer disappeared three years ago. She is without her papers because her employer confiscated her permit and other official papers. She is trapped in Lebanon and under the constant pressure of getting caught. Even if she found a person to sponsor her, the procedures cannot be undertaken

without her going to jail and being deported to Sri Lanka, which in turn, will prohibit her from coming back to work in Lebanon. She would be considered as a sort of a 'felon' for her imposed 'illegality'.

“What did I do wrong? Nothing but as the lawyers told me, I have no other solution but to pay the outstanding sum to the General Security and go back to Sri Lanka. But what would I work there? How would I survive? And they might not let me come back to Lebanon because of this. I am stuck.”

When given the space to talk about their dreams, they started making plans for their future back home. Some mentioned wanting to open their own restaurants or start their catering projects, because they enjoy cooking and they believe it can be their retirement plan. Another one talked about being a supermarket owner and sustaining her life through her shop. One participant discussed her passion for flowers and her fascination with flower shops in Lebanon. Her dream is to import this work to Sri Lanka.

“Our dreams did not come true yet, but we are living a good life.”

5. Interviews with Ageing Lebanese women

Interviews with three ageing Lebanese women were conducted as part of this research to understand some of the vulnerabilities associated with those who belong to the lower economic sections of society and find themselves without constant financial support. One of the participants is divorced and currently living alone in her brother's apartment, another one is widowed and has four children who were married with children and/or living abroad. The last one is single and living in a poor area in the South of Lebanon, in the same neighbourhood as her siblings. This section briefly explores the obstacles they face in their everyday lives, especially from a socio-economic point of view.

Ageing Lebanese women are often financially dependent on what their children or extended family who send them money sometimes monthly or unregularly. Some depend on the savings that their husbands have accumulated throughout their careers. There is a clear financial dependency mechanism in place, given that they were responsible for the household and the upbringing of their children, but were not integrated in paid labour therefore they do not have savings or benefit pensions. In fact, they have performed unpaid labour in their households over the years which does allow them to have any financial income or compensation in the current ecosystem. Women who were employed but were forced into retirement by ill health too suffer when they lack proper and sustainable support structures. In such cases, vulnerability of ageing women increases.

“I am jobless now. I used to work as a nurse in a hospital for 19 years, but I had to stop because of my illness and now no one would hire me. This house is for my brother and I live here for free. When my mum died, the money my siblings used to send her practically stopped. I am stuck, I am tired, and I can't handle it anymore. I feel lonely and bored. I am alone.”

Additionally, the informal economy represents over 30% of the total economy in Lebanon²⁶ which implies that people working without being registered in Social Security, lack social coverage and retirement planning.

“Today, I need a surgery for knee replacement, but I can’t afford it so now I am taking pain killers and I am waiting to put the needed sum on the side to do the surgery. I have no medical coverage so I have to pay for everything myself. Until I arrange the money I need for the surgery, when I am in pain, I sit or lay down and wait it out and then I take the pain killers. When I will do the surgery, my aunt who is 88 years old will help me out...”

Being registered in Social Security is indeed helpful but is not enough in a country where the medical bill is one of the highest in the region²⁷ and the reimbursement mechanism is obsolete whereby it can take up to 8 months to be reimbursed from Social Security. Moreover, private insurance is extremely costly and thus is out of reach for ageing Lebanese women in such conditions.

“I don’t think the coverage I am getting from social security is enough for my condition and age. A lot of the medicine is not covered, the system is extremely bureaucratic, and it takes time to give back the money. It is hard to afford medical attention in these conditions, which means sometimes I have to choose which illness or pain to treat.”

There is a shared feeling of being totally left out by the government among the three participants. They seem to be enduring the harsh living conditions in Lebanon without any ray of hope for an improvement in their situations. Electricity shortages, lack of adequate water supply, extra generators bills, lack of proper medical coverage and loneliness, this is the reality of these women’s daily lives. Lacking such basic necessities at their age increases their vulnerability amid a system that ignores them.

“I regret the fact that I moved back to Lebanon from Abidjan, 20 years ago because of political turmoil. We only have stress and pressure in this country.”

It is interesting to note at this point the contradiction between how Lebanon represented an economic opportunity for many SMDWs and how the same country was a land of disappointment for some ageing Lebanese women. Moreover, employing domestic workers as helpers and caregivers in their households did not seem to be an option for the ageing Lebanese respondents mainly due to their inability to pay recruitment fees and salaries. That solution did not seem like an option to them.

Ageing Lebanese women worry about their lives and their own survival. Some of the main fears they have is being placed in an elderly care centre if they have no one to help them out in the house. One participant voiced her fear of being left alone.

“I am scared of being alone. My health is deteriorating. I don’t have a view of my future life. How should I live in such conditions? I want to have my health back and be able to move.”

In such circumstances, potential synergies can be developed between ageing Lebanese women and ageing SMDWs in bridging their respective needs. The idea behind the latter is to suggest that SMDWs

²⁶ World Bank country report, 2016

²⁷ *ibid*

may provide elderly care for ageing Lebanese women whose families would not think of putting them in a nursing home – a practice that is very scarce in the Lebanese society. Additionally, the Lebanese women we have interviewed come from vulnerable economic backgrounds which partly explains their inability to afford such care. However, the majority of the Lebanese society has a perception that migrant domestic workers are inferior, which in turn, exposes the existing embedded racism and lack of empathy. This was showcased by one of the participants.

“Why don’t they go back to their countries and families when they are old? They are no longer as productive and are unable of using their physical strength. They want us to pity their situation. But we have enough of Lebanese people to pity.”

Nonetheless, one of the Lebanese participants showcased a high level of empathy and understanding towards Sri Lankan women workers, by highlighting that these women left their homes, families and countries to work and save money, that they were not able to raise their own children and that they were uprooted into a country they don’t know or speak its language.

“They leave their houses, their countries, their families for work and money. They come to a country they know nothing of. Of course, I understand their harsh lives and I can be compassionate.”

6. Conclusion

This study aims at identifying, on the one hand the main obstacles faced by both SMDWs and ageing Lebanese women who come from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds. On the other hand, it tries to highlight the potential synergies that might be established between both groups together. SMDWs face structural racism in Lebanon under the *Kafala* system that puts them at the mercy of their sponsor, undermines their daily experiences in country and increases their vulnerability as migrant workers. Ageing SMDWs are obliged to keep working as domestic workers in order to save money for their retirement, despite their old age, and do not have an “appropriate” health coverage. On the other hand, ageing Lebanese women are faced with the nonchalance and negligence of the Lebanese government concerning their medical coverage and socio-economic vulnerability. They rely solely on the money they receive from close or extended family.

However, following the discussions with the domestic workers and ageing Lebanese women, it is clear that the social exclusion that ageing Lebanese women face is structurally different from the one that SMDWs face. Lebanese women are not migrants in Lebanon, whereas SMDWs are not only migrants, but are under a sponsorship system that puts them at the mercy of their Lebanese employer. They are legally under the authority of their employer which adds a substantial layer of vulnerability to their situation. Lebanese women are precarious socially and economically due to the absence of social protections in Lebanon; however, they are Lebanese citizens which puts in a less vulnerable situation than SMDWs – given their migrant status and the nature of their work under the *Kafala system* - and which undermines the linkages the two groups might develop.

ANNEXE 1 – FGD SLWS

I- Introduction

Icebreaker

Introducing consultant/ IDWF/ the research

Overview of the FGD's main topics

Discussing confidentiality

Explain that transportation will be paid at the end and that lunch will be served today

II – Perception of their potential situation in Sri Lanka

- When was the last time you went to Sri Lanka? Do you have family members there? Please specify (husband, brother, mother, children, etc.)
- Have you managed to keep your family ties there? If yes, how? If no, why?
- How you describe your social ties in Sri Lanka today?
- How did you used to spend your monthly salary since you came to Lebanon? And what is the situation today?
- What is your insurance/medical status in Sri Lanka? If you were living there, what would have been your situation now? (Probe: lack of adequate insurance, no old age pension scheme, no pension portability schemes)
- Would you be able to support yourself when you back to Sri Lanka? Who would support you if you go back and in what ways?

III- Perception of their context in Lebanon

- What are the reasons behind you migrating to Lebanon? Did you choose the country you want to go work at initially? If yes, why Lebanon?
- How would you describe your current situation in Lebanon (legal, social, economic, racism)? Would you consider that your situation has evolved from the moment you got to Lebanon until today? (improved, worsened, remained practically the same)
- What are the initiatives that helped in thwarting social and institutional racism? What is maintaining the exclusionary processes in place?
- How would you assess your medical insurance and your retirement plan in Lebanon, if any?
- Please describe your social life in Lebanon. (holidays, days off, social outings)
- What are you mostly worried about today? And why?
- What is the change you would like to see in your daily lived experience as a domestic worker in Lebanon?
- Would you decide to stay in Lebanon in the future? For how long? And Why? (Probe: out of economic necessity, lack of family ties in Sri Lankan, etc.)
- How would you imagine your life in Lebanon in a few years?

ANNEXE 2 - INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS SLWS

I – Personal Details

- What is your civil status?
- Do you have children? If yes, how many? And where do they live?
- What is your current type of work? (Probe: household with little children, household with only the parents, living with the elderly, etc.)

II – Perception of their potential situation in Sri Lanka

- When was the last time you went to Sri Lanka? Do you have family members there? Please specify (husband, brother, mother, children, etc.)
- Have you managed to keep your family ties there? If yes, how? If no, why?
- How you describe your social ties in Sri Lanka today?
- What did you used to do with your monthly pay? And what is the situation today?
- What is your insurance/medical status in Sri Lanka? If you were living there, what would have been your situation now? (Probe: lack of adequate insurance, no old age pension scheme, no pension portability schemes)
- Who would support you if you go back and in what ways?

III- Perception of their context in Lebanon

- What are the reasons behind you migrating to Lebanon? Did you choose the country you want to go work at initially? If yes, why Lebanon?
- How long have you been residing in Lebanon? What is your employment history?
- Were you living in Lebanon when the civil war was on? What pushed you to stay?
- How would you describe your current situation in Lebanon (legal, social, economic, racism)? Would you consider that your situation has evolved from the moment you got to Lebanon until today? (improved, worsened, remained practically the same)
- What are the initiatives that helped in thwarting social and institutional racism? What is maintain the exclusionary processes in place?
- How would you assess your medical insurance and your retirement plan in Lebanon, if any?
- Please describe your social life in Lebanon. (holidays, days off, social outings)
- What are you mostly worried about today? And why?
- What is the change you would like to see in your daily lived experience as a domestic worker in Lebanon?
- Would you decide to stay in Lebanon in the future? For how long? And Why? (Probe: out of economic necessity, lack of family ties in Sri Lanka, etc.)
- How would you imagine your life in Lebanon in a few years?

ANNEXE 3 – INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS LEBANESE WOMEN

I – Introduction

Introduce myself and my background

Outline the main topics of the research

Explain the structure of the interview

II – Personal Details

- How old are you? (If deemed necessary)
- What is your civil status? (married, widowed, divorced, single)
- Do you have children? If yes, how many? And where do they live?
- What is your current type of work? (If any)/ did you work something else before? If yes, why? What about your husband, children?

III – Perception of her situation in Lebanon

- What is your current socio-economic situation? How do you sustain your livelihood? (Probe: own retirement, family heritage, allowances from children living in Lebanon, remittances from children living abroad, no real income but help from other family members, etc.)
- How would you describe your health situation today? (Probe: healthy, chronic illness(es), specific illness, etc.) Do you have any medical insurance? If yes, which one? And who financially supports it?
- If you need medical assistance at home, who would help you out? If it is paid assistance, how would you manage the expenses?
- How would you describe the medical coverage you are receiving? What do you think of the role the Lebanese government plays in it?
- Who helps you in the daily domestic chores? If no one, do you think at some point, you would need a constant presence at home?
- How do you perceive your future in such a context? What makes you worry the most?
- What is the change you would like to see in your daily lived experience in Lebanon?

IV- Perception of Domestic workers' situation

- If not mentioned before, are you an employer of a domestic worker in your household? If yes, how do you support the expenses and from which nationality and age is she? How is the daily experience with her?
- Since when did you employ her? When did you start employing DWs in your house? What are the main reasons (house chores, children, taking care of you?)
- How would you describe domestic workers' situation today in Lebanon? (legally, economically and socially)
- Today, the largest domestic workers' ageing group are Sri Lankans over 50 who have been working in Lebanon for more than 20 years.
- What do you think of these women's situation today? Would you be able to find similarities with your own situation? In your opinion, what are the main changes?

- Would you consider employing an ageing Sri Lankan domestic worker to help you out and keep you company?

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