



**Spotlight  
Initiative**  
*To eliminate violence  
against women and girls*

# COVID-19 and Women Migrant Workers in ASEAN

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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, countries in the ASEAN region have implemented measures to prevent the spread of the pandemic, including lockdowns, quarantines, and border closures. Policy responses related to migrant workers have varied from facilitating visa extensions,<sup>2</sup> to, in a single country, immigration raids and detention.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the region many businesses and other organizations (including migrant and women support services) have had to cease operations or reduce working hours. In May at the time of drafting this brief, some countries in the region have eased restrictions, though wary of secondary waves of infection as crowded migrant dormitories, other accommodation, and detention centres have been prone to outbreaks.<sup>4,5</sup>

This brief explores the multi-dimensional impact on women migrant workers, highlighting that COVID-19 is not only a health crisis, but also a crisis with detrimental effects on freedom from violence and harassment, employment, income, social protection, access to services, and access to justice.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak, there were an estimated 10 million international migrants in ASEAN, of whom nearly 50 per cent were women.<sup>6</sup> In countries of destination in the region women migrant workers compose the majority of workers in domestic work, entertainment, seafood processing, electronics manufacturing, and garment manufacturing, among others. Migrant workers send a large amount of money back to their families in home countries, with some studies indicating women send home a larger share of their income than men.<sup>7</sup> Remittances by women and men totalled US\$147 billion to East Asia and the Pacific.<sup>8</sup> Women migrant workers can also bring back new knowledge of job skills, as well as politically and socially empowered outlooks.

In normal circumstances, women migrant workers are at risk of multiple intersections of discrimination and violence based on race, ethnicity, nationality, age, migration status or other sex- or gender-associated characteristics.<sup>9</sup> The emergency situation results in increased risk of violence and harassment against women migrant workers perpetrated by employers, partners, law enforcement officials or front line service providers.<sup>10</sup> “Social distancing” measures, particularly when implemented through movement restriction and quarantine procedures, may increase the risk of violence against women migrant workers. Women migrant workers may find themselves trapped with those who perpetrate violence against them.<sup>11</sup>

While women and men migrant workers in the region strive to protect their livelihoods and their health, many women migrant workers are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and the economic and health impacts of the pandemic. A number have faced cuts in pay and retrenchment. Those who remain employed may be forced or coerced to continue work in unsafe conditions, or without sufficient protective equipment.<sup>12,13</sup>

In these situations, movement restrictions and quarantine procedures restrict women migrant workers from seeking assistance and accessing social networks and support services. The above mentioned increase in violence and harassment, and changing nature of labour rights violations, come at a time when violence response services, migrant support, and legal aid are hard to access.<sup>14</sup>

The ILO-UN Women Spotlight Initiative Safe and Fair Programme is committed to ensuring women migrant workers’ rights are protected and they receive support when and where they need it. This brief outlines the immediate impact of COVID-19 on women migrant workers and the critical programmatic and policy responses needed.

## 1) Safety from violence and impacts on well-being

Gender based violence is a life-threatening, global health and human rights issue that violates international human rights law and principles of gender equality.<sup>15</sup> Previous emergencies have shown that during humanitarian crises, levels of sexual, intimate partner and other forms of violence against women grow more acute.<sup>16</sup> During COVID-19, stress, the disruption of social and protective networks, and decreased access to services can all exacerbate the risk of violence for women,<sup>17</sup> including women migrant workers.<sup>18</sup> Hotlines responding to incidences of violence have reported increased calls.<sup>19</sup> In Singapore, AWARE's Women's Helpline received 33 per cent more violence-related calls in February 2020 compared to the same month last year.<sup>20</sup> In Malaysia, the Talian Kasih hotline for women and children reported a 57 per cent increase in calls while the national movement control order has been in effect;<sup>21</sup> and the Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) has reported a 40 per cent increase in calls about violence to their hotline.<sup>22</sup> Particular impacts on ASEAN women migrant workers include:

- Women migrant workers who still have jobs, might be at an increased risk of workplace violence, abuse and exploitation.<sup>23</sup> Lockdowns increase isolation and make it harder for migrant domestic workers to leave situations of violence.<sup>24</sup> Some employers in the region do not allow domestic workers to access their mobile phones even during non-work hours, making it hard to access trade unions, CSOs and other service providers when they need help.<sup>25</sup>
- Returnee women migrant workers are vulnerable to violence and harassment on their journeys back home and in mandatory COVID-19 quarantine facilities.
- Increased risks of intimate partner violence in lockdowns<sup>26</sup> whether in destination countries, or upon return home are high as family members spend more time in close contact and families cope with additional stress and economic losses.<sup>27</sup> Perpetrators may use fears brought up by the pandemic to employ psychological violence and controlling behaviour to isolate women further.



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Hotlines responding to incidences of violence have reported increased calls.





**Increasing narratives blaming outsiders for bringing the virus only exacerbate the discrimination women migrant workers face.**

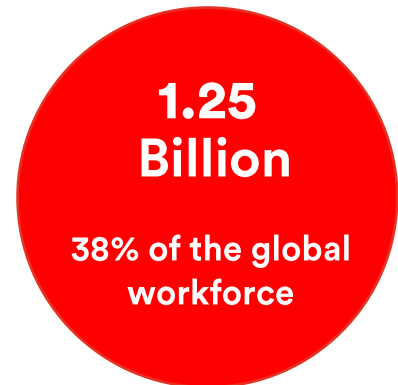
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- Violence has serious short- and long-term consequences on women's physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health as well as on their personal and social well-being. The health consequences of violence against women include injuries, untimed/unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV, and disability. Mental health impacts for survivors of gender-based violence include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, substance misuse, self-harm and suicidal behaviour, and sleep disturbances. In addition, a survivor of violence may also face stigma and rejection from her community and family.<sup>28</sup>
- According to a Safe and Fair study, public attitudes towards women migrant workers in several destination countries in ASEAN were generally not positive even before the pandemic.<sup>29</sup> Increasing narratives blaming outsiders for bringing the virus only exacerbate the discrimination women migrant workers face.<sup>30</sup> In some ASEAN countries of origin, migrants are being quarantined on the outskirts of their villages and face discrimination as possible carriers of the virus.<sup>31</sup>
- During emergencies such as the COVID-19 outbreak, migrant women affected by violence could face more difficulties in accessing essential services, including critical and life-saving health, psychosocial care, police and justice or social services, due to barriers such as language, availability, or concerns for their migration status.<sup>32</sup>
- Many services addressing violence have been closed or downscaled. Due to office closures, some service providers have reverted to remote services using online and/or phone technologies, to which not all women migrant workers have access. In addition, resources and priorities have been diverted to more traditional, immediate humanitarian responses (such as cash and food distribution), and away from gender-based violence services.<sup>33</sup>

## 2) Impacts on jobs and social protection

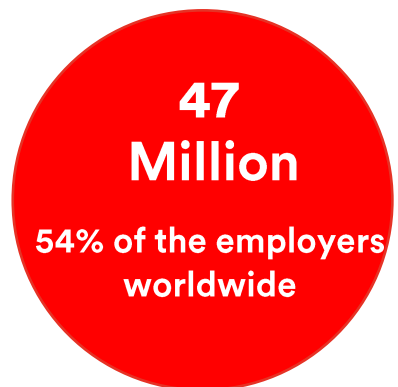
The COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive economic disruptions, with particular effects on women, migrants, informal and gig economy workers, younger workers, and elderly workers.<sup>34</sup> The ILO estimates that 1.25 billion people (representing 38 per cent of the global workforce) are working in sectors that are at high risk of workforce displacement<sup>35</sup> and nearly 47 million employers (representing 54 per cent of the employers worldwide) operate businesses in the hardest hit sectors.<sup>36</sup> Particularly in the low and middle-income countries of ASEAN, high proportions of women migrant workers are in informal employment.<sup>37</sup> Workers across the region have seen reductions in or entire loss of income, as well as losses of employment-related benefits and social protections,<sup>38</sup> and often the risk is higher for women migrant workers.<sup>39</sup> Trends include:

- The impact on income-generating activities is particularly critical for workers not covered by labour law or social protection. Women and migrants tend to be disproportionately represented in this category.<sup>40</sup> As such, already existing inequalities, including gender inequality, can be exacerbated.
- Domestic workers have reported being overburdened, given additional duties, not paid overtime, and not receiving paid leave days during lockdowns.<sup>41</sup> Caregiving to the sick at home has its own health risks.
- The ILO projects that among the worst-affected sectors globally are some sectors which employ migrant women. They include:
  - Accommodation and food services (with 54.1 per cent women workers globally),
  - Manufacturing (with 38.7 per cent women workers globally),
  - Wholesale and retail trade (with 43.6 per cent women workers globally).<sup>42</sup>



Estimated people working in sectors that are at high risk of workforce displacement

Source: ILO, 2020.



Employers operating business in the hardest hit sectors

Source: ILO, 2020.

- Money sent home as remittances to East Asia and the Pacific is expected to fall by 13 per cent during the pandemic.<sup>43</sup> This will have a significant impact on families in countries of origin.
- Many of the migrant women who still have jobs are frontline and essential workers, fighting the pandemic and making sure that people have their basic needs met. They include workers in health, transport, agriculture, and essential public services. Globally, there are 136 million workers in health and social work, including nurses, doctors, workers in residential care facilities, social workers, as well as support workers, such as laundry and cleaning staff, who risk contracting COVID-19 in the workplace. Women make up approximately 70 per cent of the sector.<sup>44</sup>
- National economic contingency policies often do not fully include migrant workers, and have been designed mainly for nationals only.<sup>45</sup> Thus, women migrant workers may not be able to benefit from income support or other emergency livelihood measures.<sup>46</sup>
- In the event of retrenchments, national policies and/or employers may prioritize jobs for nationals.<sup>47</sup> This results in migrant workers being laid off first.
- Loss of jobs and announcements of border closures in the ASEAN region resulted in many migrant workers rushing to return home on crowded transportation, without social distancing being possible. Thousands of documented migrant workers crossed ASEAN borders upon the announcement of COVID-19 emergency measures. Official statistics at some government-monitored border crossings in the region showed a higher percentage of men returning,<sup>48</sup> while there have been anecdotal reports of higher percentages of women crossing borders irregularly outside of official checkpoint areas. More women than men in ASEAN countries tend to be undocumented,<sup>49,50</sup> thus their migration tends to be more precarious than those of men.



**13%**

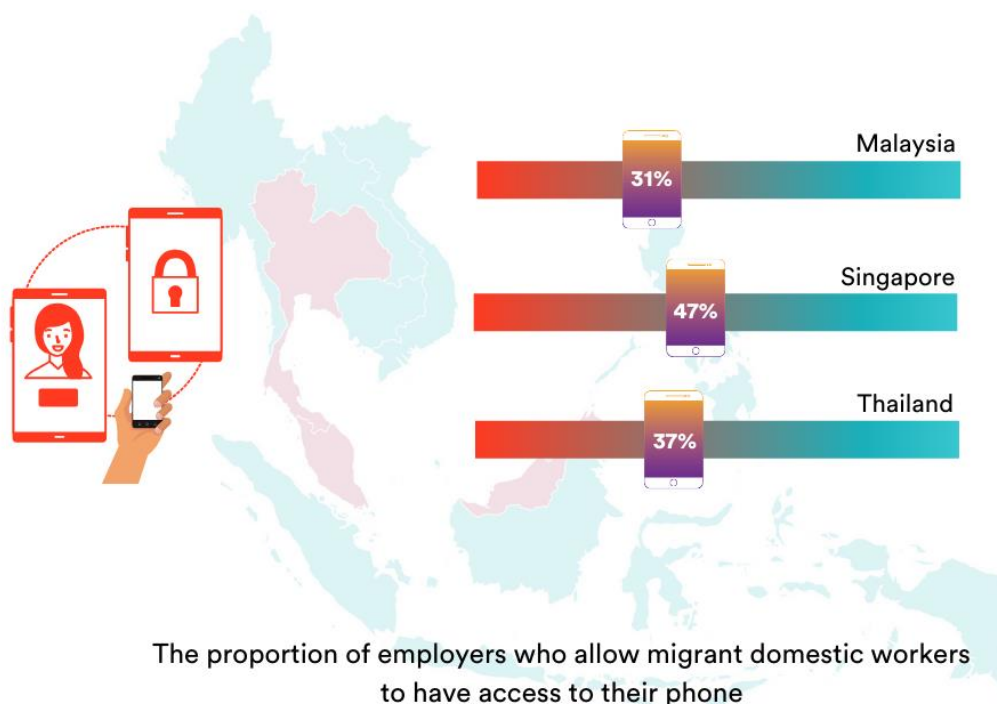
**Money sent home as remittances to East Asia and the Pacific is expected to fall during the pandemic**

Source: World Bank, 2020.

### 3) Impacts on health and caregiving

Women migrant workers in low-paid jobs in ASEAN have an increased health risk during the pandemic because they often live or work in conditions without the means, space, information, or PPE to follow public health and social distancing measures.<sup>51</sup> This has significant potential impacts on their health, as well as on their role in paid and unpaid caregiving, as below:

- Women migrant workers can face challenges accessing accurate information about COVID-19 in their own language. Access to information is critical for them to understand the scale and impact of the pandemic; how to protect themselves and limit the virus spreading; as well as what to do and what services are available if they show symptoms. While some organizations turn to various communications technologies and social media platforms to reach out to migrant workers and provide remote services, a large number of migrant workers have no access to phones or the internet. Some may work in remote areas, while migrant domestic workers may not have access to their communications devices.<sup>52</sup> Some returnee migrant workers live in rural areas where there is limited connectivity.
- Women migrant workers who remain at work in destination countries may lack access to personal protective equipment and guidance on safety measures in languages they understand.<sup>53,54</sup>
- Women migrant workers particularly in construction and manufacturing sectors in destination countries tend to live in shared, crowded accommodation, often provided by employers. This makes social distancing difficult to practice. COVID-19 has spread rapidly in (male) migrant dormitories in Singapore and GCC countries.<sup>55</sup> For women, there can be an additional risk of sexual and other harassment in migrant accommodation,<sup>56</sup> and at times of lockdown and quarantine, the risk may increase.<sup>57</sup>



Source: ILO and UN women, 2019

- Documented and undocumented migrant workers have expressed concerns and fears about getting themselves tested or seeking care if they suspect they have COVID-19. While testing and treatment have been made free to migrants in some countries, migrant workers worry about risks of arrest and detention in interactions with government officials, including in the health sector.<sup>58</sup>
- The responsibility for paid or unpaid care work during the pandemic falls disproportionately on women. In normal times, women across the Asia-Pacific region carry higher care burdens than men, spending 4.1 times more time on care of children, the elderly and the sick.<sup>59</sup> Increases in the number of people who are sick due to the virus thus lead to more care work as well as more health risk for women. School closures also mean more time spent taking care of children at home.<sup>60,61</sup> This responsibility is leading to mental health strain. For instance, in a UN Women rapid assessment 68 per cent of women (compared to 54 per cent of men) in the Philippines reported mental and emotional health impacts related to COVID-19.<sup>62</sup>
- As the health sector across the globe urgently responds to the pandemic, some services for women, including those responding to violence, have been diverted to address resource shortages.<sup>63</sup> In some cases, reproductive health services have had to close or operate with fewer resources.<sup>64</sup> Access to health services is critical and can be life saving. Responses to sexual assault/rape are particularly time-sensitive, ie. provision of emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy needed within 72 hours, and Post – Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) medication to prevent HIV infection needed within 72 hours of possible exposure.<sup>65</sup>
- Food insecurity and concurrent lack of nutrition have emerged as a health problem for migrants due to containment measures, including border closures.<sup>66</sup> Where women migrant workers in countries of destination have lost income, they may have no means to purchase food, much less masks or hand sanitizer.

**68%** of women in the Philippines reported mental and emotional health impacts related to COVID-19

Source: UN Women, 2020





## Snapshot of responses by the Safe and Fair Programme<sup>67</sup>

In line with the World Health Organization guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and with global guidance on GBV in Emergencies, which prioritizes services, the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative Safe and Fair programme, through its partners, is implementing gender-responsive interventions. Safe and Fair is working to respond to the pandemic with short and long-term COVID-19 response strategies, including:

### Service provision

- Providing legal aid and case management services to facilitate access to justice for women migrant workers who may have been unfairly dismissed or who have faced violence, harassment, abuse and exploitation.
- Supporting organizations specialized in addressing violence against women migrant workers to remain operational, including with enhanced capacities to provide remote service provision.
- Ensuring that essential services providers from all sectors, including Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), have personal protective equipment and protocols in place to protect themselves and others from COVID-19, without compromising the accessibility and responsiveness of services.
- Providing technical and other support to shelters and quarantine facilities hosting women migrant workers for gender- and safety-responsive management of the virus.
- Supporting hotline services in countries of destination to be available in the languages of women migrant workers. Building capacity of first responders, including hotline operators, to confidentially respond to women migrant workers' cases of violence.
- Supporting the provision of quality psychological counselling to frontline service providers operating during the pandemic to cope with stress.
- Supporting the update of referral mechanisms and service directories to take stock of developments brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and disseminate directories through key partners, peer networks and CSOs.
- Building the capacities of partners, including employers and service providers, on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policies.

### Policy advocacy

- Advocating with governments to make sure that risks of violence that women migrant workers face during the crisis are not ignored.
- Advocating with government and employers to allow migrant workers to extend their visas and work permits and/or extend deadlines for renewals until movement restrictions and other lockdown measures are lifted.

- Advocating with employers to retain migrant workers and provide flexible arrangements to ensure income and medical health benefits are not lost at this time.
- Advocating with employers and governments to extend health and social services to all migrant workers, including women and those who are undocumented, especially when faced with violence, illness, or sexual and reproductive health and rights needs. This should include access to COVID-19 testing and medical services.
- Advocating with governments to allocate resources to keep essential services for survivors of violence running, including shelters, health, police, psychological, social and justice services.<sup>68</sup>
- Advocating for the inclusion of Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) policies in COVID-19 response plans in coordination with relevant stakeholders.<sup>69</sup>
- Advocating with governments to make services to survivors of violence a fundamental part of social protection plans and investments for medium- and longer-term recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>70</sup>

## Information sharing

- Working with partners (CSOs, MRCs, trade unions, women workers organizations, and front-line responders) to monitor the evolving situation.
- Working with service providers to collect confidential and secure sex-disaggregated data about violence against women migrant workers, in order to understand service demand and outcomes. Nevertheless, Safe and Fair advocates that violence against women, including women migrant workers during emergencies and epidemics, requires immediate action and it is not necessary to do new surveys before acting.
- Supporting radio/TV programmes/ media statements on the impact of COVID on women migrant workers, including the increasing incidence of VAW and discrimination against migrant worker communities.
- Developing a safety plan checklist, to be disseminated widely, including to women migrant workers, for key information on what to do if exposed to violence and abuse.

### SAFETY PLANNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A safety plan **DOES NOT** replace urgently calling the police for help, but will help you be prepared. Call the police for urgent help when needed.

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER UNDER THE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- » **Keep up to date** on transportation availability.
- » During an urgent crisis, **call the police** or the nearest women's organization.

#### THINGS TO PACK IN YOUR EMERGENCY BAG

- Identification
- Legal documents
- Extra keys
- Cash and cards
- Extra clothes
- Sanitary products
- A prepaid cell phone
- Phone charger
- Regular medications
- Important contact numbers

#### THINGS TO KNOW IF YOU ARE A WOMAN MIGRANT WORKER

- » You **ALWAYS** have a right to safety and protection no matter your migration status.
- » Call the nearest **women's or workers' organization** or other services you need.
- » Ask for **translation services** when you seek services.
- » Link with peer support networks that can provide information and services.
- » Contact the number of your **embassy and consular services** if you are abroad.



#### TO GET SUPPORT, CALL THE FOLLOWING NUMBERS

COUNTRY	POLICE	SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS
Cambodia	1288	1280 (Helpline Number)
Indonesia	112	081317617622 (PITPA)
Lao PDR	191	1362 (Lao Women's Union)
Malaysia	999	03 7956 3488 (Women's Aid Organisation)
Myanmar	199	067 3 404 222 (Union Government)
Philippines	177	0919 777 7377 (WFP Women and Children's Protection Centre)
Singapore	999	1800 777 5555 (WOMBE) 6341 5535 (Home)
Thailand	191	1300 (One Stop Crisis Centre)
Viet Nam	113	1900 96 96 80 (Viet Nam Women's Union)

Specialized for women migrant workers in Singapore.



## Key recommendations for labour migration & ending violence against women (EVAW) actors

Increased risks of violence and harassment are interconnected with women migrant workers' job and income losses, lack of social protection and basic health care, increased debts, and a high risk of COVID-19 exposure due to the nature of work or accommodation conditions. Violence must be treated as an urgent issue that requires immediate, life-saving support. Measures to prevent and respond to violence against women migrant workers particularly should be prioritized for immediate action during the pandemic. To address these issues, key recommendations, in line with ASEAN priorities and the Joint Statement of the ASEAN Labour Ministers on Response to the Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Labour and Employment, include:

### Role of Government



#### Safety from violence

- Recognize that violence against women, including women migrant workers during emergencies and epidemics requires immediate action, and it is not necessary to generate new survey evidence before acting.<sup>71</sup>
- Allocate resources to keep essential quality services for survivors of violence available. Shelters, hotlines, health, police, psychological, social and justice services are vital.<sup>72</sup> Ensure these services are particularly inclusive of women migrant workers and train front-line providers for quality pandemic responses. To do so, ensure that resources are allocated, protocols are in place, and staff have safety equipment. Further, allocate resources to the mental health of service providers, who will likely be requested to take on increased caseloads.

- Ensure the management of quarantine facilities housing migrants is gender-responsive.<sup>73</sup>
- Improve systems for coordinated responses to violence against women, including women migrant workers, during emergencies. Update service directories with referral pathways for essential services (including healthcare, policing and justice services, psychosocial support, and reporting and complaints mechanisms) accessible to migrant women and girls, regardless of their migration status.<sup>74</sup> Include MRCs and CSOs in COVID-19 response plans and allocate more resources to them and women's organizations providing services to women migrant workers, including in shelters and quarantine facilities.
- Provide that survivors of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work have effective access to gender-responsive, safe and effective complaint and dispute resolution mechanisms, support, services and remedies.<sup>75</sup>

#### **Jobs and social protection**

- In responding to crises, governments should ensure, in consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations, that all measures provided are developed or promoted through gender-inclusive social dialogue. All migrant populations including women migrant workers, irrespective of their migration status should be provided the full protection of their human rights during the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, without prejudice and discrimination and in compliance with international law.<sup>76</sup>
- For countries of origin: Develop mechanisms to support women migrant workers who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 crisis, including assistance in finding new employment and in labour migration-related debt management.
- For countries of destination: Consider extending deadlines for renewals of work permits and visas, granting migrant workers with prolonged rights to stay and work, until relevant offices are safe to open for due processing.<sup>77</sup>
- In line with the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 of caring societies, develop gender sensitive and inclusive COVID-19 response plans.
- Ensure access to remedies and compensation for unfair treatment, and translation services to assist in access to justice in these cases. Ensure that women migrant workers' specific needs are recognized and addressed, including the availability of women as frontline staff.<sup>78</sup>
- Monitor and work to ensure availability of adequate PPE and sick leave in migrant- and women-dominant sectors.<sup>79</sup>

- In stimulus packages and employment policies, prioritize specific needs of women and support to businesses and sectors where women migrant workers are concentrated.
- Include women migrant workers and the sectors where they are concentrated in measures for extending social protection and relief measures. These include employment retention schemes (e.g., short-time work arrangements, partial unemployment benefits and other time-bound support for enterprises); time-bound financial/tax relief; and income smoothing measures to support business continuity.
- Include survivors of violence as a fundamental part of social protection plans and investments for medium and longer-term recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Crisis support for survivors is urgent and can prevent further trauma, disability and death.<sup>80</sup> There is evidence that giving cash to poor households when designed to reduce the risk of domestic violence, can result in lower rates of such violence.<sup>81</sup>

### Health and caregiving

- Ensure that employers of women migrant workers in essential services identify and mitigate risks of worker exposure from COVID-19.
- Develop occupational safety and health guidelines on COVID-19 in languages that migrant workers understand. Develop and launch public information campaigns on matters relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, EAW, and migration in the languages of migrants.
- Ensure the availability of essential services, especially to women migrant workers in situations of high risk, including in jobs entailing interactions with co-workers and clients, as well as those in crowded housing. Further, ensure the availability of sexual and reproductive health services, including GBV services.
- Ensure that all women migrant workers, including those who do not have regular immigration status, have access to humanitarian assistance and emergency relief, including food, shelter and provision of personal protective equipment and hygiene kits (which contain sanitary and personal hygiene products required by women).

### Role of Employers



### Safety from violence

- Integrate PSEA policies in COVID-19 responses.<sup>82</sup> Train staff on PSEA policies and their application. Ensure women migrant workers have information on the policies and available services for incidences of violence and abuse.

### Jobs and social protection

- Dismissals should only be made in cases when the need is genuine and other alternatives have been exhausted such as reducing work

hours, limiting or restricting the hiring of new employees, limiting overtime, and reducing workforce wages though not below minimum wage.<sup>83</sup>

- Employer and business membership organizations may take steps to mobilize the private sector to support national efforts, for example by establishing funds to strengthen national health capacities, providing financial support for groups in vulnerable situations.<sup>84</sup>
- Employers can play a key role in extending social protection for women migrant workers, such as sickness-related benefits and free access to COVID-19 testing and screening.

#### Health and caregiving

- In sectors where workers are being asked to take on increased workloads and overtime during the pandemic, be mindful that reduced rest periods may have harmful consequences on the physical and mental health of those workers. Fatigue and stress may also increase the risk of workplace injuries and accidents. It is important to provide safe working environments including during emergencies.
- Take OSH measures to prevent and mitigate COVID-19 at work, ensuring workers of all nationalities and genders have equal access to training, IEC, PPE, as well as physical distancing and clean workspaces.<sup>85</sup>

**Role of workers' organizations, migrant workers' organizations, women's organisations, and CSOs**



#### Safety from violence

- Keep shelters for survivors of violence operational and with protocols to avoid spread of the virus.
- Enhance existing hotlines to provide counselling on violence against women, including women migrant workers, and referrals. Include languages spoken by women migrant workers.
- Update service directories to reflect the available services during the pandemic and disseminate them widely through social media, websites and leaflets.
- Support women migrant workers with safety planning. Keep records (ethically and confidentially) of the cases and ensure follow up.
- Ensure access of women migrant workers to case management, psychosocial support, legal aid, and access to justice. Shift to remote service provision if needed. If using technology solutions, ensure confidentiality and safety of survivors' data.
- Participate in or organize online events sharing the emerging needs you observe among women migrant workers and develop responses inclusively.

#### Jobs and social protection

- Assist women migrant workers, irrespective of their immigration status, to receive all wages and social security benefits due to them,

as well as to access remedies and compensation for unfair treatment and to report abuse and exploitation.

### **Health and caregiving**

- Develop and launch public information campaigns targeting migrant workers and include information on the specific needs of women on matters relating to the COVID-19 pandemic in the languages of migrants. The campaigns should cover how to stop the spread of COVID-19, signs of infection, who to contact for help, how to social distance and self-isolate, and immigration updates. Information for migrants should also be available about emergency support including hotlines, shelters and support in case of violence and harassment.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Catherine Laws, Deepa Bharathi, and Rebecca Napier-Moore at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Valentina Volpe and Younghwa Choi at UN Women; with input and review by Joni Simpson, Nilim Baruah and Panudda Boonpala at ILO and Katja Freiwald, Melissa Alvarado, Nansiri Iamsuk and Sarah Knibbs at UN Women. This brief was designed by Pichit Phromkade.

<sup>2</sup> *Bangkok Post*: “Visas extended, relief measures approved”, in *Bangkok Post*, 21 Apr. 2020, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1904435/visas-extended-relief-measures-approved> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>3</sup> *BBC*: “Malaysia migrant raids ‘to reduce Covid-19 spread’”, in *BBC*, 2 May 2020: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52515000> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>4</sup> *The Guardian*: “We’re in a prison’: Singapore’s migrant workers suffer as Covid-19 surges back”, in *The Guardian*, 23 Apr. 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/23/singapore-million-migrant-workers-suffer-as-covid-19-surges-back> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>5</sup> *Bloomberg*: “Virus Surge in Southeast Asia Migrant Workers Serves as Warning”, in *Bloomberg*, 28 Apr. 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-28/virus-surge-in-southeast-asia-migrant-workers-serves-as-warning> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>6</sup> Total migrant stock in ASEAN was 10.1 million in 2019, of which 47 percent women. UN DESA: International migrant stock 2019, 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>7</sup> See review of literature in ILO: Labour mobility between Asia and the Arab States: Sharing of experiences and progress under the Bali Declaration with specific focus on women migrant workers, Interregional meeting background paper, Bangkok, 3-4 December 2019.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank: *World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History*, 22 Apr. 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>9</sup> UN Women: *Action brief: A guide for action to stem increasing violence against women amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific*, 2020, <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/action-brief-a-guide-for-action-to-stem-increasing-violence-against-women-amid-the-covid-19> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>10</sup> UN Women: *Addressing the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on women migrant workers*, 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/guidance-note-addressing-the-impacts-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-women-migrant-workers> [accessed 8 May 2020].

<sup>11</sup> WHO: *COVID-19 and violence against women*, 2020, <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/vaw-covid-19/en/> [accessed 8 May 2020].

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# Spotlight Initiative

*To eliminate violence  
against women and girls*

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