BACKGROUND

As a country of origin, transit and destination for migrants, Ethiopia has witnessed international movements of women, men, girls and boys. In Ethiopia, migration is a highly gendered phenomenon, with women and girls making up 46 per cent of migrants leaving Ethiopia as well as 50 per cent of those migrants living in Ethiopia. With women’s rate of unemployment more than double than that of men (11.7 per cent versus 5 per cent),1 migration is considered by many Ethiopian women as an opportunity to escape economic hardship.

Women from Ethiopia migrate within Eastern Africa as well as to North and South Africa, Middle East, and Europe due to a variety of factors. Escaping poverty, lack of sustainable livelihood options, achieving higher social status and leaving behind restrictive gender roles that is limiting their access to opportunities and resources are some of the important reasons for migration.

While migration can contribute to the social and economic empowerment of women, it can also increase their risk of exposure to severe human rights violations. Migrant women face a heightened risk of physical, sexual, and psychological violence during the migration journey, and at the countries of destination including trafficking in persons.

In countries of destination, many migrant women work in low-paid jobs in the service and care sector, with inhumane conditions, with little or no access to social protection and basic services.

Returnee migrant women face considerable reintegration challenges in Ethiopia, including limited access to decent work and gender-responsive reintegration services jeopardizing migrant women’s experience of safe and dignified return, re-admission and sustainable reintegration.

Ethiopia has shown its commitment towards safe migration by ratifying and implementing various relevant national and international instruments including the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

It is critical that the development and implementation of national migration policies, laws, strategies, and services recognize and address the specific needs, challenges and situations of vulnerability of all women in migration. To strengthen policymaking and services provision it is vital to produce and analyze sex-disaggregated data on the specific experiences of women and girls migrating from, into and through Ethiopia.

UN WOMEN’S PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

With support from the Government of Germany, UN Women is implementing the “Making Migration Safe for Women” project to ensure that migration is safe, regular and orderly for women migrating from, into and through Ethiopia and that international norms and standards for protecting and promoting migrant women’s rights are strengthened.

The project, which will run through December 2025, aims to contribute to three outcomes:

1. Ethiopian government and relevant stakeholders develop and implement gender-responsive migration policies, laws and services;
2. Migrant women, including migrant women returnees have access to decent work; and
3. Governments and relevant international human rights bodies ensure the promotion and protection of migrant women’s rights through strengthened global norms and standards.

Stakeholders and interventions

UN Women will work closely with partners and stakeholders to implement the following project activities:

Government partners:

• Provide capacity building and technical support to mainstream gender equality considerations in the implementation of migration policies, laws and services;
• Strengthen the capacity of stakeholders involved in the referral mechanism and service provision to migrant women returnees to provide gender-responsive reintegration services
• Provide support to Ethiopian Statistical Services on the generation, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in migration

Civil society organizations, including women’s organizations:

• Support the provision of essential services for migrant women and returnee survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV)
• Strengthen the capacity of CSOs, counsellors and social workers in the provision of essential services including mental health and psychosocial support for GBV survivors
• Support awareness raising efforts on safe labour migration

Migrant women:

• Access to information on safe labour migration and rights at all stages of migration
• Access to skills training, business development services and support (self-) employment and economic empowerment initiatives for migrant women returnees

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This publication was produced as part of the Making Migration Safe for Women project funded by the Federal Republic of Germany.