



Migration, Remittances and Possible Return of Ethiopian Domestic Workers in Lebanon

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List of Acronyms

Amel	Amel Association International
ARM	Anti-Racism Movement in Lebanon
CLDH	Centre Libanais des Droits de l'Homme – Lebanese Center for Human Rights
CLMC	Caritas Lebanon Migrant Center
COC	Code of obligations and contracts, Lebanon
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FENASOL	National Federation of Workers and Employees Trade Unions in Lebanon
GSO	General Security Office (Ministry of Interior)
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
IDWF	International Domestic Workers Federation
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISF	Internal Security Forces (Ministry of Interior)
LBP	Lebanese Pound
MCC	Migrant Community Center
MDW	Migrant Domestic Worker
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoL	Ministry of Labor
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SORAL	Syndicate of the Owners of Recruitment Agencies in Lebanon
SUC	Standard Unified Contract
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crimes
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United-States Dollar

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About the Project

This study falls under the Securing Women Migration Cycle (SWMCO, a three-year project financed by AICS (Italian Agency For Development Cooperation) and lead by Italian NGO CELIM. Its main purpose is to increase protection within the migratory cycle of foreign workers employed in domestic work in Lebanon, with a specific focus on the Ethiopian domestic workers and support the return and reintegration in Ethiopia.

The project aims to strengthen the network of assistance and protection for 1,500 domestic workers, through the improvement of living conditions in three selected shelters and the retention center of the General Security Office (GSO). The project also supports the socio-economic reintegration of repatriated Ethiopian domestic workers, enhance their economic remittances both for the purpose of job reintegration and for local economic development.

The study is implemented by CeSPI (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale), an independent think tank based in Rome, that has pursued a line of research both in Lebanon and Ethiopia, in association with Caritas-Liban that has provided valuable expertise as well as technical and logistical assistance.

Introduction

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), *“the current global estimate is that there were around 244 million international migrants in the world in 2015, which equates to 3.3 per cent of the global population”*¹.

The United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration defines an international migrant as *“any person who has changed his or her country of usual residence”*², distinguishing between “short-term migrants” (those who have changed their country of usual residence for at least three months, but less than one year) and “long-term migrants” (those who have done so for at least one year). But it is important to highlight that not all countries use this definition in practice.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) reports that there are 11.5 million migrant domestic workers (MDW) and over three quarters are female, whereas overall, the proportion of female migrants in the world is 48% female and 52% male³. The ILO defines a migrant worker *“as a person who migrates from one country to another (or who has migrated from one country to another) with a view to being employed other than on his own account, and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant for employment”*⁴. Under ILO instruments, a *“domestic worker means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship”*, i.e. it *“means work performed in or for a household or households”*⁵.

In Lebanon, the traditional migrant domestic worker coming from Sri Lanka has long been surpassed by cheaper labor coming from Africa and namely Ethiopia. As such, as highlighted in a 2017 study *“Ethiopia remains a significant ‘source’ country for female domestic workers to the Middle East and Gulf States, despite widespread reports of exploitation and abuse”*⁶, with an estimated 170 to 180,000 Ethiopian women depart each year to migrate throughout the world, among whom 60-70% are estimated to be irregular migrants⁷. Like other nationalities migrating from Asia and Africa for the purpose of domestic work, Ethiopians face harsh conditions in the context of Middle Eastern

¹ International Organization for Migration, World Migration Report 2018, p. 1, available on https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf

² UNDESA. Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration: Revision 1. United Nations, New York, 1998, available on https://unstats.un.org/unsd/publication/SeriesM/SeriesM_58rev1E.pdf

³ International Organization for Migration, World Migration Report 2018, p. 17, available on https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf

⁴ Convention Migration for Employment Convention, No. 97, Article 11§1.

⁵ Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers, No. 189, Article 1.

⁶ Joanna Busza, Sehin Teferra, Serawit Omer and Cathy Zimmerman. Learning from returnee Ethiopian migrant domestic workers: a qualitative assessment to reduce the risk of human trafficking, Globalization and Health, 13:71, September 2017, available on <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-017-0293-x>

⁷ Carter B, Rohwerder B. *Rapid fragility and migration assessment for Ethiopia* Birmingham, GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2016, p. 1.

countries, as portrayed in the recent crackdown against Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia⁸.

According to the figures shared by the General Security Office (GSO) in Beirut, Ethiopians are now the number one country of belonging of MDWs in Lebanon with more than 156,000 residence permits to workers from that country for the year 2018 (see table 1 below). Despite the ban established by Ethiopian authorities in 2009, this figure represents an increase by 16.5% with the number of permits delivered in 2017 (over 134,000 Ethiopian MDWs registered) and close to 50% increase from the year 2016 (over 104,000 registrations back then). The reason why Lebanon continues to allow for Ethiopians entry to the country is because the GSO considers that if a migrant worker “has a valid tourist or work visa upon arrival, the immigration official will allow the person to enter Lebanon, irrespective of whether a deployment ban is in place in the country of origin”⁹. As such, the GSO considers it is not Lebanon’s place to enforce a ban adopted in another country. Moreover, these figures do not include thousands of Ethiopian workers who now live under irregular status for a number of factors and reasons and stand the risk of arrest and deportation at any moment (2,412 Ethiopians were deported in 2018, cf table 7 below).

Year	Number of Residence Permits delivered
2016	104,714
2017	134,488
2018	156,779

Source: General Security Office, received 20 February 2019

In the 1990’s the Sri Lankan community was the largest of the MDWs groups in Lebanon. But in the past decade or so, for economic reasons, countries from Eastern Africa started to become migration sources to the Middle East and in particular to Lebanon. Cheaper labor and cheaper procedures led to this large flux of Ethiopian workers into Lebanon, bringing them to forming the largest MDW group in the country today.

⁸ Tom Gardner, Ethiopians face beatings and bullets as Saudi ‘deportation machine’ cranks up, *The Guardian*, 16 August 2019, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/aug/16/ethiopians-face-beatings-and-bullets-as-saudi-deportation-machine-cranks-up>

⁹ Hélène Harroff-Tavel, Alix Nasri. Tricked And Trapped Human Trafficking In The Middle East, International Labor Organization, in collaboration with Heartland Alliance International, 2013, p. 48

Based on the documented conditions, it comes as no surprise that Lebanon has been labeled as an “*injury country*”¹⁰ given the severity of abuses faced by migrant workers, first of all (but not only) by their employers (see table 2 that gives some indication on the age and gender of the sponsors of Ethiopian MDWs in Lebanon). This information is not systematically recorded by the authorities as shown in table 2 but remains an interesting indication as to the profile of the migrants’ employers and sponsors in Lebanon. As such, one can note women form the majority of employers, as it is the women and wives who run the migrants job in households. They are the “*Madame*” migrants speak of when they speak of their migration experience in the country when they work for a Lebanese family. And even in the cases when men constitute the front sponsor vis-à-vis the authorities, woman in the households are the active bosses who manage the work of the domestic workers.

Table 2				
Profile of the Lebanese Sponsors of Ethiopian Migrant Domestic Workers for the year 2018 - Broken down by age and gender				
<i>Age</i>	18-30 years old	30-60 years old	>60 years old	Total
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	756	11,225	3,723	15,704
Female	1,241	12,924	4,577	18,742
Unknown	3,001	63,906	27,594	94,501

Source: General Security Office, received 20 February 2019

A 2010 ILO study denounced the “*triple discrimination*”¹¹ the migrants were suffering from in the country, including the Gender, Racial and Social profiles of the workers. Despite some positive developments that have occurred in the past years, Beirut has yet to improve the provision of legal protection when it comes to recruitment practices and labor conditions.

Hence, this study offers to look specifically into the situation of Ethiopian domestic workers in Lebanon and more specifically cover a less explored field, i.e. the significance of remittances in the migration journey of Ethiopian workers presently to Lebanon, whether staying under a regular *kafala* status, or working as “freelancers” in an irregular fashion. Among the research objectives were the need to deepen the knowledge of the overall framework of the flow of economic remittances from Lebanon to Ethiopia, focusing on the economic behavior and needs of Ethiopian women engaged in domestic work in Lebanon, and to advance proposals to enhance their remittances as leverage for job reintegration in home country and/ or for development of the contexts of origin.

¹⁰ Jebli Shrestha, Eleanor Taylor-Nicholson. No Easy Exit, Migration Bans Affecting Women from Nepal, Labor Migration Branch (MIGRANT) Fundamentals Principles and Rights at work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS) International Labor Organization (International Labor Organization), 2015, p. 15.

¹¹ Asha D’Souza. Moving towards Decent work For Domestic workers: An Overview of the ILO’s work, International Labor Organization, Bureau for Gender Equality, Working Paper 2/2010, p. 26.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) refers to remittances as “household income from foreign economies arising mainly from the temporary or permanent movement of people to those economies”¹². Following the same definition, “remittances include cash and noncash items that flow through formal channels, such as via electronic wire, or through informal channels, such as money or goods carried across borders. They largely consist of funds and noncash items sent or given by individuals who have migrated to a new economy and become residents there, and the net compensation of border, seasonal, or other short-term workers who are employed in an economy in which they are not residents”¹³.

According to the World Bank, “in 1990 migrants remitted around USD 29 billion to lower- and middle-income countries in 1990. This amount had more than doubled to USD 74 billion in 2000 and reached USD 429 billion in 2016. Globally, remittances are now more than three times the amount of official development assistance. Migration can also result in the transfer of skills, knowledge and technology – effects that are hard to measure, but that could have considerable positive impacts on productivity and economic growth. Beyond these economic impacts, emigration can generate beneficial societal consequences for countries of origin, including poor and fragile States. For example, it is increasingly recognized that migrants can play a significant role in post-conflict reconstruction and recovery”¹⁴.

From a methodological standpoint, the study relied on the massive literature available on the issue of protection of MDWs in the Middle East and Lebanon, along with some specific thematic analysis available on the situation of Ethiopians and the significance of remittances in the scope of South-South migration. In addition, the research team conducted, between mid-January until February 2019, a survey¹⁵ composed of 60 interviews with Ethiopian female domestic workers who are either under a sponsor (*kafeel*), 38 workers out of 60, or a freelancer under irregular status (22 workers out of 60).

As shown in table 3 below, the age of respondents ranged between 17 and 38 with workers who arrived to Lebanon as early as 1998 with the latest entries recently in 2018. The sample also reflected different family profiles, such as married (with or without children), divorced and single workers, having large and smaller dependencies back home. The interviewers involved three social workers from Caritas-Liban and Amel Association, among whom one experienced Ethiopian social worker, which helped greatly in offering comfortable and safe venues for the gatherings. Interviews also occurred at the freelancers’ rooms or at the employers’ house when possible. The workplaces of the respondents covered many Lebanese governorates, including Beirut neighborhoods, the southern suburbs of the capital, Jounieh, Dora, Jal El Dib, Dora, Adonis, Saida, Aramoun,

¹² International Monetary Funds, Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, Sixth Edition (BPM6), Washington, D.C., 2009.

¹³ *Idem*

¹⁴ International Organization for Migration, World Migration Report 2018, p. 4, available on https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf

¹⁵ Design of the survey was inspired by the works of Richard P.C. Brown Jørgen Carling Sonja Fransen Melissa Siegel. Measuring remittances through surveys: Methodological and conceptual issues for survey designers and data analysts. *Demographic Research*, Vol. 31, Art. 41, 21 Nov. 2014, pp. 1243-1274.

Choueifat, Hazmieh, Mansourieh, Beit Mery, Adonis, Rmeileh, Chouf, Jounieh, Byblos, Tripoli and Zahle.

Pseudo	Age	Workplace or Worker's Address	Status	Date
Zana	25	Choueifat	Kafala	19/1/2019
Sofi	34	Sfeir	Kafala	19/1/2019
Saba	27	House of the worker – Chiyah	Freelance worker	20/1/2019
Jacko	29	House of the worker – Chiyah	Freelance worker	20/1/2019
Sisi	32	House of the worker – Chiyah	Freelance worker	20/1/2019
Malak	26	Aramoun	Kafala	25/1/2019
Tania	22	Aramoun	Kafala	25/1/2019
Fani	26	Beirut	Kafala	27/1/2019
Lala	27	Beirut	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Zala	28	Beirut	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Rika	20	Beirut	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Rama	22	Sfeir	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Randa	24	Sfeir	Kafala	27/1/2019
Kanda	24	Bir Hassan	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Aisha	29	Zkak El Blat	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Sana	25	Sanayeh	Kafala	27/1/2019
Rim	25	Sanayeh	Kafala	27/1/2019
Lili	26	Chiyah	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Lor	28	Chiyah	Freelance worker	27/1/2019
Zainab	24	Beirut	Kafala	28/1/2019
Merartu	26	Adonis	Freelance worker	27/01/2019
Mebrit	30	Ashrafieh	Kafala	24/01/2019
Mahder	35	Mansourieh	Freelance worker	27/01/2019

Helen	23	Ain El Remmeneh	Freelance worker	26/01/2019
Halima	21	Adonis	Freelance worker	28/01/2019
Hasima	26	Hamra	Kafala	25/01/2019
Feleku	19	Hamra	Kafala	28/01/2019
Beza	31	Mansourieh	Freelance worker	22/01/2019
Alemnesh	28	Mansourieh	Kafala	27/01/2019
Alem	25	Beit Mery	Kafala	26/01/2019
Alema	28	Jbeil	Freelance worker	26/01/2019
Zimuta	30	Hazmieh	Freelance worker	26/01/2019
Zenebech	27	Jounieh	Freelance worker	27/01/2019
Shiwa	25	Zahle	Freelance worker	27/01/2019
Worknesh	23	Amchit	Freelance worker	4/2/2019
Tigist	30	Saida	Kafala	4/2/2019
Tesfanesh	28	Adma	Freelance worker	25/01/2019
Sedenesh	24	Tripoli	Kafala	25/01/2019
Yeshi	35	Ain El Remmeneh	Kafala	4/2/2019
Netsa	26	Nahr El Mot	Kafala	23/01/2019
Mestu	27	Beirut	Kafala	26/01/2019
Aysha	19	Chouf	Kafala	20/01/2019
Meseret	25	Beirut	Kafala	19/01/2019
Louna	26	Beirut	Kafala	19/01/2019
Hanine	18	Beirut	Kafala	19/01/2019
Hanane	24	Beirut	Kafala	26/01/2019
Habtam	29	Beirut	Kafala	26/01/2019
Genet	29	Jounieh	Kafala	19/01/2019
Aynalem	22	Beirut	Kafala	26/01/2019
Beyene	25	Jbeil	Kafala	27/01/2019
Misgana	25	Beirut	Kafala	26/01/2019
Worke	27	Jal el Dib	Kafala	27/01/2019
Tsonam	20	Beirut	Kafala	26/01/2019
Rania	32	Beirut	Kafala	19/01/2019
Salam	22	Chouf	Kafala	19/01/2019
Tseha	25	Dora	Kafala	26/01/2019
Sonita	22	Dora	Kafala	26/01/2019
Sarah	38	Beirut	Kafala	19/01/2019

Sonia	28	Beirut	Kafala	19/01/2019
Sofanit	17	Beirut	Kafala	26/01/2019

The fieldwork was complemented by three focus groups (see table 4) gathering different respondents from the individual meetings, which served as a validation tool to what was recorded in a more personalized and isolated discussion. Focus groups were held in March and April 2019 and were structured in three main areas covered in the discussion using an imaginary friend back home in Ethiopia to assess which advise should be given to her before she arrives to Lebanon and how to best prepare for domestic work under Lebanese conditions; how would she manage her money and earnings and finally questions about her potential return back to Ethiopia and potential gains and losses from the migration journey.

Date	Place	Nb of Participants	Additional information
17 March 2019	Migrants Community Center, Jounieh	11	10 women, one man
6 April 2019	Amel Association Community Center, Chiyah	8	All women
7 April 2019	Private house in Chiyah	10	8 Ethiopian women and a Bangladeshi couple living in the same neighborhood

Moreover, experts and stakeholders were solicited for interviews (see table 5) to discuss the matters of MDWs labor protection and the prominence of the remittances.

Organization	Name	Date	Place
General Security Office	Major George Abi Fadel, Head of Division for Arabs and Foreigners	17 December 2018	Beirut
Ministry of Labour	M. George Ayda, Director General of the Ministry	30 January 2019	Chiyah
Amel Association International	Zeina Mohanna, Head of the Migrants Program	30 January 2019	Beirut
International Labor	Zeina Mezher, Migrants	1 February 2019	Beirut

Organization (ILO)	Specialist, National Project Coordinator		
Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) in Lebanon and Migrant Community Center (MCC)	Farah Salka, Director	21 February 2019	Beirut

The team had also aimed at gathering financial data to further determine the scope of the remittances being transferred to Ethiopia from Lebanon, several requests were made to financial services agencies such as OMT, Western Union and MoneyGram¹⁶ requesting amounts transferred for the years 2015-2017. All agencies declined to share the transfer information. Under Access to Information Law¹⁷ a formal request was sent to the Central Bank¹⁸, which centralizes this type of data. A thorough follow-up of the request then occurred with the Directorate of Statistics within the Central Bank, but without any positive outcome, the Central Bank thus failing to comply with its obligations under Access to Information law.

However, the information obtained by the migrants themselves, through interviews and focus group gatherings, as to remittances amounts and the individual use of transfer agencies or other means of transfer compensated the lack of response by the financial companies and formal institutions.

¹⁶ Electronic Messages sent on October 26, 2018.

¹⁷ Law numb. 28, 10 February 2017.

¹⁸ Letter posted from LibanPost on January 23rd 2019 with a recorded delivery by acknowledgement slip dated January 24th, 2019.

1. National Legal Framework relevant to Labor Migration for Ethiopian Domestic Workers

A. Lebanon's International Obligations and national measures towards Migrant Domestic Workers

On the account of protection towards foreign labor and domestic work, Lebanon is party to the basic human rights conventions. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provides that everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of work hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as the right to just remuneration to ensure "*an existence worthy of human dignity*"¹⁹. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966, which Lebanon acceded to in 1972, also mentions these rights and states that all persons must enjoy just and favorable conditions of work.

On labor matters, Lebanon has ratified two ILO conventions that are relevant to the protection of migrant workers: the Forced Labor Convention No. 29, the Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labor and the Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect to Employment and Occupation, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex with respect to access to employment and conditions of employment, all of which were ratified by Lebanon in 1977.

However, Lebanon is not a signatory of any Convention pertaining directly to the protection of migrant workers, such as the UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and three important ILO Conventions: Migration for Employment, Convention No. 97; the Migrant Workers (Supplemental Provisions) Convention No. 143 and ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

Lebanon is considered as "*the top country of destination for female migrant workers*"²⁰ in the Middle East, where migration is in theory strictly controlled²¹. As such, foreign workers must be sponsored by a resident in Lebanon. It is the employer who covers the relevant fees for a work permit and a residency permit for the worker, thus becomes the "sponsor" or *kafeel* of the migrant worker and beholds a great deal of power over her, and it is important to stress that female migrants hired for domestic work are forced to live in their employer's home.

The sponsoring request is processed through the Ministry of Labor (MoL) that holds the prerogative of issuing the proper work authorization to migrants, if all regulatory conditions are met. Based on this prerequisite, the Interior Ministry then issues residence permits to the migrants through the GSO, the government agency responsible for monitoring the entry, residence, and departure of all foreigners, including foreign workers,

¹⁹ Article 23 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

²⁰ Into the Unknown: Exploitation of Nepalese Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon, Anti-Slavery International, KAFA, the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions, May 2014, p. 2.

²¹ Cf. Françoise De Bel-Air. Migration Profile: Lebanon, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Policy Brief, 12, December 2017.

as stipulated by Legislative Decree number 61, which was issued on April 4th, 1953. Under such a system, labeled officially as the *kafala* system, Lebanon's migration policy continues to disregard many of the safeguards to ensure proper labor conditions.

A first crucial setback lies in the fact that *"the Lebanese Labor Code, enacted in 1946, excludes domestic workers, both Lebanese and foreign, from its provisions. This exclusion means that MDWs are not guaranteed protections that other workers enjoy, such as Lebanon's minimum monthly salary [...], a maximum number of working hours per day, or a minimum of 15 vacation days. It also means they have no guaranteed accident [coverage] or compensation for unfair termination of employment"*²². Under Lebanese regulations, MDWs are considered category four workers, among the cheapest labor resources, which work permit cost 240,000 LBP (160USD) and the residence permit 300,000 LBP (200USD).

Second, the *kafala* related regulations fail to ensure the protection of migrants communities against potential abuse, either from their employers or from the local authorities. This *"vulnerability to exploitation"*²³ has drawn important efforts of human rights activists and researchers for decades, documenting cases of abuse and dissecting the regulatory framework relevant to migrants entering into Lebanon.

After the formation of a national steering committee for MDWs matters in 2005, the main stakeholders (MoL, MoJ, GSO, ISF, Union of Recruitment Agencies, ILO, IOM, Caritas-Liban, KAFA) came together to discuss various policy reforms towards MDWs. This Committee was formed based on ministerial decision of the MoL and does not have any executive prerogative or power, but rather constitutes a proposition force by relevant stakeholders in the area of MDWs issues.

Among the achievements, we can highlight for instance, the termination of the use of the *"isolation room"* where migrants were parked upon the waiting (sometimes for 12 hours without food or water) of their sponsor to come and pick them up²⁴. Other improvements include the issuing a code of conduct for recruiting agencies²⁵ in June 2013 for SORAL, in consultation with the Middle East Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Labor Organization (ILO). It was aimed at improving the performance of SORAL's members and ensuring the rights of migrant domestic workers. By pledging to abide by this code, owners of recruitment agencies hoped to distinguish themselves *"from illegal and unregulated agencies, which often fail to commit to the ethics of the recruitment business"*²⁶.

²² Lebanon: Without Protection : How the Lebanese Justice System Fails Migrant Domestic Workers, Human Rights Watch, 2010, p. 16

²³ Alix Nasri Wissam Tannous. Access To Justice For Migrant Domestic Workers In Lebanon, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center, International Labor Organization, 2014, p. 5.

²⁴ Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, "Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality", *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

²⁵ The Code of Conduct was drafted by the Lebanese MoL, the Syndicate of Owners of Recruitment Agencies in Lebanon (SORAL) and Caritas Lebanon's Migrant Center (CLMC), cf PROWD Fact sheet No. II (1): Code of conduct for the syndicate of the owners of recruitment agencies in Lebanon (SORAL), available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/publication/wcms_210551.pdf

²⁶ Marie-José Tayah. Decent Work For Migrant Domestic Workers: Moving The Agenda Forward, International Labor Organization, Geneva, 2016, p. 93.

Table 6 Main Provisions within SORAL's Code of Conduct (CoC) of 2013	
Main Sections of the CoC	Key principles
Commitment to labour and human rights standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparency in business operations - No discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, political orientation, national origin, religion, class... - No intimidation, exploitation (sexual and financial), and physical abuse of workers
Pre- departure stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing full information to the worker about her conditions of employment in Lebanon - Verifying the validity of the workers' qualifications
Sensitization of workers and employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicating in a language that is understood by the worker^{SEP} - Introducing workers and employers to their rights and obligations - Providing workers with contact information for service provider
Contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No placement of underage workers - No salary deductions
Repatriation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PEAs are responsible for the cost and logistics of repatriating workers during the trial period (first three months of the worker's employment)
Trial Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PEAs shall respect the terms of the trial period of a worker's employment - When the trial period elapses, PEAs shall periodically check on the worker by contacting worker and employer - PEAs shall provide appropriate housing to the worker, if she decides or is asked to leave the house of her employer without restricting her freedom of movement or putting her to work.
Follow-up after contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PEAs should provide medical assistance to distressed workers and access to forensic doctors - PEAs should report employers' violations of workers' right to the relevant authorities - PEAs should refrain from placing workers in the homes of employers known for their abusive practices

Add to that the establishment of a new GSO detention center instead of the infamous underground prison under the Tahouita bridge. Hotlines were also made available to migrants (1741 at the MoL and 1717 at the GSO), even if the language barrier can still be considered an issue.

More importantly was introduced the Standard Unified Contract (SUC) between the employer and the MDW in 2009, formally stating the employers' and workers' rights and

obligations. This contract, subject to the general law regulating contractual obligations, known as the General Contractual Obligations Law of 1932, was seen as a legal tool to uphold the basic protection of MDWs in Lebanese courts facing any abuse by employers. The enactment of this SUC between the Sponsor/*kafeel* and the domestic worker became mandatory for the issuing of any work permit by the MoL.

The Standard Unified Contract for MDWs in Lebanon

The standard contract is to be signed by both parties before a work permit is issued. The contract is renewable for one year and includes a probationary period of three months. Among other entitlements, it provides the right to a salary paid at the end of each working month, medical care, sick leave for half a month with pay and half a month with half pay, and a travel ticket at the end of the contract. It entitles workers to communicate with their family at least once per month at the employer's expense, limits working hours to ten hours per day, and guarantees eight hours of rest at night as well as weekly rest of no less than 24 continuous hours²⁷.

However, practice showed how the impact of the SUC remained limited, given how the “*channels of communication [of MDWs] are often restricted, and legal redress is practically inaccessible to them*”²⁸. The contract is issued in Arabic, which the migrant cannot read or understand. Should the employer or the Notary faithfully detail the content of the contract, challenges arise on the implementation phase, as little can the MDW resort to legal and administrative tools to file a complaint. Aside from home confinement or paper confiscation, the domestic worker also is subject to a dependency to her employer who solely decides of the trajectory of her migration journey once she arrives to Lebanon based on the *kafala*, since only the sponsor can allow for the worker to leave once the employment is officially formalized. All in all, Hamill identifies three main factors of struggle: “*the sponsorship or ‘kafala’ system, the recruitment process, and the lack of labor protection and legal redress*”²⁹.

As such, the Lebanese legal and policy framework covering labor matters of migrants in Lebanon “*is not in line with ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and other relevant standards including those linked to Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work [...] including the right to freedom of association*”³⁰.

The scope of the violations recorded against MDWs in Lebanon led Ethiopia to impose a ban on its nationals to migrate to Lebanon for work as early as 2009. And in 2013, “*the Government of Ethiopia imposed a total ban on the deployment of Ethiopian domestic workers abroad. For travel, migrant women rely on informal networks of traders and*

²⁷ Marie-José Tayah. Decent Work For Migrant Domestic Workers, op. cit., p. 53.

²⁸ Kathleen Hamill. Policy Paper on Reforming the “Sponsorship System” for Migrant Domestic Workers: Towards an Alternative Governance Scheme in Lebanon, KAFA, January 2012, p. 12.

²⁹ Kathleen Hamill. Trafficking of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon A Legal Analysis, KAFA, March 2011, p. 5.

³⁰ Sawsan Abdulrahim, Interwined, A Study of Employers of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon, International Labor Organization, 2016, p. 1.

*informal financial services. Dalalas or returning Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) who become brokers are the usual first point of contact for Ethiopian women wanting to migrate. These networks are cheaper and provide women with a less restrictive alternative than working with recruitment agencies*³¹.

But given the high demand for female migrant workers in Lebanon, which hosts more to 156,000 Ethiopian female workers (2018 figures), migration dynamics towards Lebanon managed to circumvent the ban through indirect (sometimes illegal) routes and complex itineraries to reach their destination. As explained in a 2011 ILO report, *“a number of female migrant workers are using the services of illegal brokers to migrate to Lebanon. To avoid being intercepted at Bole International Airport by immigration officials, they first travel to Nairobi, Kenya, and from there, travel to Dubai, UAE and then proceed to Beirut, Lebanon. Alternatively, they first travel to Djibouti or to the Sudan, and from there go to Beirut, Lebanon”*³². One migrant interviewed was very vocal on this subject stating *“it doesn’t make sense because this happen before many years but still girls are coming”*³³.

Indeed, such travel bans have proved limited since the GSO considers that if a migrant worker *“has a valid tourist or work visa upon arrival, the immigration official will allow the person to enter Lebanon, irrespective of whether a deployment ban is in place in the country of origin”*³⁴. This was confirmed by the GSO, which considers it is not Lebanon’s place to enforce a ban adopted in another country. Hence, it is worthy of noting that direct flights are available between Addis Ababa and Beirut and that the route is much used by Ethiopian workers, especially those in possession of valid residence permits in Lebanon and going home on a holiday.

Still, the ban has made it ever more difficult to recruit MDWs from Ethiopia in the recent years as Lebanese authorities finally put some attention onto the Bilateral Agreement proposition of Addis Ababa, which aims at enhancing the protection of its nationals under migration status in Lebanon. This agreement is similar to the precedent when Lebanon and Philippines signed a bilateral agreement in 2012³⁵, which is enforced today. Based on this agreement, SORAL had signed an MoU with the Filipino authorities agreeing to a minimum wage of 400USD for Filipinas (the minimum wage in Lebanon is 450USD), in which the Union *“acts a guarantor of this arrangement”*³⁶. According to George Ayda from the MoL, the *“bilateral agreement with Ethiopia is now pending at the Presidency of the*

³¹ Marie-José Tayah and Adamnesh Atnafu, Promoting and protecting the rights of migrant domestic workers in transit : The case of Ethiopian women migrants, Research Series, Global Action Programme on Migrant Domestic Workers and their Families, ILO, 2016, p. 2, available on https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/briefingnote/wcms_533537.pdf

³² Trafficking in Persons Overseas for Labor Purposes The Case of Ethiopian Domestic Workers, International Labor Organization, Addis Ababa, 2011, p. 49.

³³ Interview with ‘Mahder’, Ashrafiye, Beirut, 27 January 2019.

³⁴ Héléne Harroff-Tavel, Alix Nasri. Tricked And Trapped Human Trafficking In The Middle East, International Labor Organization, in collaboration with Heartland Alliance International, 2013, p.48

³⁵ Memorandum of Understanding on Labor Cooperation Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines Represented by the Department of Labor and Employment and the Government of the Republic of Lebanon Represented by the Ministry of Labor (Annex A Protocol to the Memorandum) (with Arabic Version), 1st February 2012, cf. <http://www.poea.gov.ph/laborinfo/bLB.html>

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 88.

*Republic*³⁷, “Once it is adopted, the agreement will be sent back to the MoL for the implementation level”³⁸. No information on the content of this agreement could be obtained from the MoL.

In the meantime, experts agree that such travel bans actually encourage trafficking as unlicensed recruitment agencies can operate illegally, resorting to black market, exploiting the workers and sending them through complicated routes, sometimes reaching the level of human trafficking. When asked about their travel route from Ethiopia to Lebanon, the majority of respondents answered having to undergo a very long and twisted journey before reaching their destination. One of the survey’s respondents “Beza”, aged 31 who arrived in Lebanon in 2010, “had a transit to Sudan and took me 3 days; I suffered with no food”, she said³⁹. Another also endured a harsh ordeal travelling to Lebanon: “I got her ticket to Sudan where I stayed for 3 weeks waiting for my visa. I was staying in very bad condition and sleeping in a container. After 3 weeks, my agent informed me that the visa was ready and I travelled to Lebanon. I arrived at the airport where I waited for hours for my employer to pick me up”⁴⁰.

Under international law, human trafficking consists of the “recruitment, transfer, or receipt of human beings by coercive or deceptive means for purposes of exploitation – including both sexual exploitation and labor exploitation”⁴¹. The scope of Human Trafficking differs from the elements defining Forced Labor even if several points share common aspects. The ILO identifies several elements that point to situations of forced labor⁴², which include:

- restrictions on movement and/or confinement to the workplace or to a limited area;
- retention of passport and identity papers so that the worker cannot leave or prove her identity and status;
- withholding of wages or refusal of payment ;
- debt bondage/bonded labor ;
- threat of physical or sexual violence ;
- threat of denunciation to the authorities or of deportation.

Furthermore, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 which aims to “end child labour, forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking”, efforts to protect those who are seeking to improve their lives by migrating for work increased in the past years. Globally, migrant workers are growingly learning lessons about the opportunities and hazards of labor migration.

In Lebanon, depending on the background and status of the domestic workers, “they may be classified as victims of labor exploitation and possibly trafficking, depending on the

³⁷ Interview with M. Georges Ayda, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Chiyah, 30 January 2019.

³⁸ It was not possible to obtain a copy of the text of the agreement.

³⁹ Interview with ‘Beza’, Tabaris, 22 January 2019.

⁴⁰ Interview with ‘Meseret’, Caritas-Liban Shelter, 19 January 2019.

⁴¹ Kathleen Hamill. Trafficking of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon A Legal Analysis, KAFA, March 2011, p. 5.

⁴² Asha D’Souza. Moving towards Decent work For Domestic workers: An Overview of the ILO’s work, International Labor Organization, Bureau for Gender Equality, Working Paper 2/2010, p. 29.

*specific circumstances*⁴³. Based on such challenges, the GSO launched a cooperation with what used to be the Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC, today Caritas-Liban) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) in the context of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in January 2005 in order to offer Safe House protection to vulnerable MDWs. This MoU is still in effect today and allows Caritas to shelter abused and endangered female migrants in secret safe houses. The NGO's workers and lawyers would then eventually coordinate the issue of each case with the relevant authorities (employer, GSO and Ethiopian embassy) in order to find a proper solution in the benefit of the worker's situation.

Moreover, the MoU provides for the protection of trafficking victims and their accommodation in a safe shelter, and discusses all types of protective measures:

- The project on protection of and assistance to women victims of trafficking in Lebanon provides for the following activities:
- Establishment by Caritas of the "Safe House" as a temporary shelter for trafficking victims;
- Provision of services that meet the basic needs of the beneficiaries;
- Implementation of long-term solutions for the women concerned, including voluntary return to their countries⁴⁴;

Additionally, Lebanon ratified in October 2005 the Palermo Protocol, which constituted an important achievement as it compels the state to recognize MDWs trapped in trafficking situations as victims and not as criminals, specifically in relation to their immigration status in the country. As such, the Lebanese Parliament adopted Law No. 164 on the Punishment for the Crime of Trafficking in Persons, which came into force in August 2011⁴⁵. It came as a Counter-Trafficking Working Group (CTWG) was established earlier in 2010, consisting of several local and international NGOs (ALEF, Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre, Heartland Alliance, KAFA and World Vision). As highlighted in a study in 2013, "[t]he entry into force of this law marked a significant milestone for the country in combating human trafficking. The law included a non-punishment clause for victims, as well as provision for the confiscation of the perpetrator's assets"⁴⁶. At the GSO, a Human Rights and Migrants Unit to fight human trafficking was created in October 2016 to further prevent and combat anti-trafficking in Lebanon.

This complements the Intergovernmental Task Force on Migration and Human Trafficking that was established in October 2012, through active lobbying by the Caritas Migrants Center and includes the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Internal Security Forces, the GSO, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Caritas-Liban,

⁴³ Kathleen Hamill. Trafficking of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon A Legal Analysis, KAFA, March 2011, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Lebanese Republic, National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, 25 September 2015, p. 14.

⁴⁵ Prohibiting all forms of human trafficking and prescribing penalties of up to 15 years' imprisonment and the payment of a maximum fine of 600 times the official minimum wage for perpetrators and their partners, accomplices or other instigators.

⁴⁶ H  l  ne Harroff-Tavel, Alix Nasri. Tricked And Trapped Human Trafficking In The Middle East, International Labor Organization, in collaboration with Heartland Alliance International, 2013, p. 150.

with a mission of monitoring the issue of Trafficking in Lebanon. According to the Lebanese authorities, around 40 verdicts were issued in Human Trafficking cases in Lebanon since the adoption of the law between 2011 and 2017.

Despite the latest legislation additions, Lebanon is far from fulfilling its international obligations as will the next sections will highlight. As stated the Human Rights Council in 2015, the country's "*immigration policy still needs to be revised*"⁴⁷, namely given the consequences attached to the *kafala* system serving as the governing framework for MDWs in Lebanon.

⁴⁷ Human Rights Council. Summary prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Lebanon, 10 August 2015, p. 4.

B. The Tenacity of the *Kafala* within the Lebanese Framework

The *kafala* system represents the mandatory legal framework that regulates the work status of all MDWs in Lebanon, which is an ad hoc system that falls outside the national Labor Law provisions. Thus, Ethiopians entering Lebanon for domestic work purposes are first assigned a *kafeel*, i.e. a guardian or a sponsor, a system, which was initially inspired from the Gulf countries. Generally processed by recruitment agencies (or Private Employment Agencies – PEA), the latter match the solicitation of a Lebanese household or office place and the readiness of an Ethiopian woman already registered in migration agencies in her country. PEA agencies in Lebanon and Ethiopia coordinate the different aspects of the migration flow into Lebanon. The agencies in Ethiopia are in charge in recruiting the female workers and eventually training them on “Lebanese specificities” (type of cleaning, oriental cooking, basics in Lebanese dialect, behavioral approach), even though surveyed Ethiopian workers in Lebanon complain about the concentration of such awareness sessions in the capital. The agencies in Lebanon would take care of the visa issuance with the GSO (for a period of three months that would then be turned into a yearly residence permit) after obtaining a preliminary clearance from the MoL after identifying a potential client/sponsor. It is the *kafeel*, who would have settled a fee for the Lebanese recruitment agency (between 1,500USD and 2,000USD for a migration procedure in provenance of Ethiopia), that is then in charge of picking up the worker from the Beirut airport, at the General Security migration desk. It is unclear what transactions happen between the PEA from both countries, many workers have stated they had to pay fees directly to the agency in Ethiopia, before being extorted one month salary in Lebanon by the Lebanese agency upon their arrival to their employer’s household. Among the survey respondents, 26 out of 60 declared they had to pay between 200USD and 300USD to the Ethiopian agency before coming to Lebanon, 12 had to pay between 350USD and 500USD, 7 between 600USD and 1,000USD. Only 5 out of 60 didn’t advance any fee before their migratory journey to Lebanon and three don’t know how much a member of her family who was in charge of the procedure paid. Most of the respondents confirmed they had to pay new fees (generally one or two months of salary) once in Lebanon for the Lebanese agency, even though this practice is strictly forbidden by the MoL in Lebanon.

Hence, the settling into the *kafala* system means the beginning of a long nightmare for many Ethiopian girls arriving to Lebanon with very different expectations to what they were told, promised and relayed before leaving their country.

Most of the interviewed workers in the course of this study were under a sponsorship system (38 out of 60) and many detailed how problematic this system can be. First, one can notice that the habit of paper confiscation remains durable, as 34 out of the 38 Ethiopian workers under *kafala* are not in possession of their papers. Only 4 workers declared keeping their original documentation.

27 respondents out of 60 are paid between 150USD and 200USD per month, with a number of common features characterizing this category. First, all of the low paid workers interviewed in the survey are under a *kafala* system and two, they have reached the Lebanese marketplace during the past five years or less. Usually, domestic workers can

secure a salary increase after an initial three years term, generally the time around which they can benefit from a ticket back home to visit their family, at the expense of their sponsor. The return process would then be negotiated based on a salary bump promise, usually around 50USD. It greatly depends on the profile of the employer, who in many cases decides to follow this routine, partly in order to avoid having to pay for new PEA fees in case the present worker decides not to return.

Some among the respondents don't even have mobile phones and still use the "centrale" to call home from time to time at the discretion of the employer, such as 'Feleku', aged 19 who arrived in Lebanon in 2016⁴⁸, or 'Sedenesh', aged 24, who arrived in Lebanon in 2017⁴⁹. Others use a *telecarte* 'Kalam' (Talk) that is activated from a landline phone directly from their employers' household, which costs 15,000LBP per unit. Those who have a mobile phone generally use IMO application (equivalent of Skype) or sometimes *Whatsapp* to stay in touch with their family members back home, when they can access the Internet from their employer's households.

Out of the 38 sponsored migrants interviewed, 22 didn't benefit from a day off on a regular basis whereas 16 declared they were awarded this right every week. 14 workers stated not having a "private space" within the employer's household and 6 others refused to answer this question, whereas 18 MDWs answered they were given a private room in their employer's household.

From the freelancers corner (22 interviewed workers) and who are living irregularly in the country, practically all of them have their papers beheld by their former employer (except one), but most have much higher earnings, ranging between from 300USD to 700USD a month (16 out of 22 workers). Only two freelancers were having a hard time finding independent clients and stated "*not earning much*".

Many workers interviewed were victims of wage retention, one respondent, now an irregular freelancer, said her former employer still owed her 450USD, the equivalent of three months of salary that remain unpaid with little resort for her to claim the amount⁵⁰. Another is still owed 400USD from her former *kafeel*⁵¹. A third came to Lebanon just two years ago and quickly stopped receiving her salary. Her *kafeel* now owes her 6 months and he is not letting her to travel. She escaped the house and went to Ethiopian consulate, which then referred her case to Caritas for the legal and social support⁵². 'Meseret', aged 25, also ended up at the Caritas shelter after her employer took her to the airport to deport her without paying her five full years of salary (9,000USD). She refused to board and was referred to Caritas for support⁵³. The largest wage retention within the survey is the case of 'Sarah', aged 38, who stayed 15 years in Lebanon but remained unpaid for almost 13, i.e. an amount of 23,000USD⁵⁴.

⁴⁸ Interview with 'Feleku', Badaro, 28 January 2019.

⁴⁹ Interview with 'Sedenesh', Dora, 25 January 2019.

⁵⁰ Interview with 'Saba', House of the respondent, Chiyah, 20 January 2019.

⁵¹ Interview with 'Jacko', House of the respondent, Chiyah, 20 January 2019.

⁵² Interview with 'Mestu', Caritas-Liban shelter, 26 January 2019.

⁵³ Interview with 'Meseret', Caritas-Liban shelter, 19 January 2019.

⁵⁴ Interview with 'Sarah', Caritas-Liban shelter, 19 January 2019.

On this critical issue, the GSO, and more broadly, the MDWs Steering Committee that gathers all major stakeholders in this field (Ministry of Labor, ILO, IOM, Caritas-Liban...), the problem of establishing evidence is the most prominent obstacle, the issue ending up being the MDW's word against her employer's. Major Abi Fadel from the GSO stressed on the fact that his office *"doesn't favor the side of the Lebanese over the one of the migrant"*⁵⁵

This is why the Steering Committee is considering securing a mandatory bank account to the MDWs in Lebanon through which wages would be paid and hence formally recorded. *"The GSO is at the source of this idea, given the large numbers of cases involving allegations of unpaid wages"*⁵⁶, said Major Abi Fadel. Director General of the Ministry of Labor Georges Ayda also favors this idea⁵⁷ but admitted that banks could be reluctant in implementing such a measure, referring to a meeting with Lebanon Banks Association, probably as to avoid being associated with the violations and abuses that MDWs suffer from in Lebanon. Zeina Mohanna mentioned of an initiative of trying to introduce Bank of Ethiopia into Lebanon but failed, *"as we are still struggling today to find a mechanism to protect everyone's rights"* admitting *"we haven't found that right mechanism yet"*⁵⁸. On the bank account idea, Mohanna isn't convinced of its efficiency: *"it was tried in Jordan but failed"*⁵⁹.

If installed, the bank account system could eventually remedy to a serious issue when it comes to wage payment, i.e. a formal and clear-cut proof of payment or not by the employer. Eventually, it *"would maybe be the safest"* method says Zeina Mazher from the ILO⁶⁰, and *"would need to be regulated by the Central Bank with an automatic reporting system if the wages are not paid"*⁶¹.

However, many other issues would appear, such as access to the bank by the worker as her only day off is a Sunday (for accessing the branches) or for those who never benefit from this fundamental right, will have little chances of accessing their bank accounts, not to mention the important running costs that might be imposed on the account and other associated services (withdrawal cards, transfers etc.). *"What about if her sponsor decides to send her back home, will she be able to retrieve her savings, how could she then access her money?"* asks ILO expert Zeina Mezher⁶².

Ultimately, this wage payment guarantee doesn't remove away the fact that MDWs under the sponsorship system are not free of their movement and remain utterly dependent of

⁵⁵ Interview with Major Georges Abi Fadel, Head of the Arabs and Foreigners Division, General Security Office, Beirut, 17 December 2018.

⁵⁶ Interview with Major Georges Abi Fadel, Head of the Arabs and Foreigners Division, General Security Office, Beirut, 17 December 2018.

⁵⁷ Interview with M. Georges Ayda, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Chiyah, 30 January 2019.

⁵⁸ Interview with Zeina Mohanna, Head of the Migrants Program, Amel Association, Beirut, 30 January 2019.

⁵⁹ *Idem.*

⁶⁰ Interview with Zeina Mezher, Migrants Specialist, National Project Coordinator, International Labour Organization, Beirut Office, 1st February 2019.

⁶¹ *Idem.*

⁶² *Idem.*

the good will of their employer⁶³. *“There are little safeguards in what could eventually become another trap for MDWs in Lebanon”*, concludes Mezher on this topic⁶⁴.

As such, *“the kafala is a horrible system that creates only misery. Only when abolished can we then move, speak and live without fear”*⁶⁵. Many studies corroborate how much the sponsorship system *“creates an environment where all migrant domestic workers have the potential to become entrapped and exploited”*⁶⁶. As previously analyzed by Jureidini, it actually *“binds the foreign worker to their local employer in a legal as well as financial dependency. It is impossible for them to arrange their own papers without assistance from their Lebanese sponsors and private employment agencies. Yet, the domestic worker is legally responsible for her regular status. If, for example, an employer does not renew the worker’s papers, or if the employee leaves the employer (‘runs away’), the worker automatically becomes an ‘illegal alien’ and is subject to arrest, imprisonment or detention and deportation”*⁶⁷.

Many other experts and activists have expressed the inadequacy of the *kafala* with basic international standards relative to human rights and migration labor. According to Hasna Abdul Reda, a lawyer with the Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), *“Kafala is legal slavery”*⁶⁸, in addition to justice grievances they face as noted by Legal Agenda Director and Public Defender Lawyer Nizar Saghiye: the *“Kafala system doesn’t allow access to justice for MDWs” – They have two choices, either detention and deportation or accepting the long and complex judicial process that would eventually lead to negotiations with the employer”*⁶⁹. For activist Gino Raidy from the NGO MARCH, *“the Kafala system needs to stop, and grotesque things like deporting migrant workers’ children, must never happen again. At a time when everyone seems to be forgetting their compassion and humanity, you should never lose sight of the injustice our society and government deals upon its most vulnerable members, and do something to change that. I hope the migrant community in Lebanon continues their noble fight for basic rights and justice, and that they will always find an ally in their struggle with us, Lebanese folks who unlike that disgusting mother who complained*

⁶³ On the notion of *“spatial exclusions”*, cf the works of Amrita Pande. From ‘balcony talks’ and ‘practical prayers’ to illegal collectivities, Migrant Domestic Workers and Meso-Level Resistances in Lebanon. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 3, June 2012, pp. 382-405.

⁶⁴ *Idem*.

⁶⁵ Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, “Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality”, *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

⁶⁶ Kathleen Hamill. Trafficking of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon A Legal Analysis, KAFA, March 2011, p. 5.

⁶⁷ Ray Jureidini. An Exploratory Study of Psychoanalytic and Social Factors in the Abuse of Migrant Domestic Workers by Female Employers in Lebanon, KAFA, January 2011, p. 9.

⁶⁸ *Idem*

⁶⁹ “Migrant Domestic Workers Protest on their Day: ‘Kafala is Slavery’” [in Arabic], *Al Akhbar*, 25 June 2018, available at <https://al-akhbar.com/Community/252832/%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%84-%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%B6%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85%D9%87%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A>

about a Sudanese child being enrolled at a daycare center, do not let racism get in the way of their humanity”⁷⁰.

The violations and abuse related to the MDWs status and conditions have been thoroughly recorded and documented by CSOs and international organizations. Some reports also tackled how such situations could amount to human trafficking⁷¹. As pointed out in the 2015 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report on Lebanon presented by local CSOs, “*the immigration and security challenges in the region not only threaten the safety of the population, but also raise concerns about the capacity of the state to adequately protect and uphold good human rights practices in this situation*”⁷².

In order to better monitor the critical situation of many MDWs in the country due to the built-in flaw that is the *kafala*, Human Rights defending NGO ALEF listed eight indicators to ensure basic rights for MDWs in Lebanon⁷³:

- Right to favorable labor practices
- Right to primary healthcare and public health
- Right to adequate housing and shelter
- Right to fair trial
- Right to immigration/repatriation protection
- Right to adequate procedure in case of legal detention
- Right to Children protection
- Right to social security

The *kafala* system is flawed because it originally designs a contractual layout that is fundamentally detrimental to workers, as it opens the door to abuse and exploitation as per the “*unequal balance of power*”⁷⁴ that comes to be between employers and workers in the household. All in all, “*the kafala system constitutes an asymmetrical relationship between employer and employee: it leaves room for many rights violations such as confinement to the house, no time to rest, no day off, no right to quit, non-payment of salaries, physical and sexual abuse, etc.*”⁷⁵. On that, two of the survey respondents testified they were physically abused by their employer. One worker, aged 24, answering from a Caritas shelter, initially tried to cope with it because she “*needed the money*” but couldn’t so ran away and was referred to Caritas by friends⁷⁶. The second, aged 22, also escaped her

⁷⁰ Alice Su, Abused Migrant Workers End Up in Prison After Trying to Flee, News Deeply, Refugees Deeply, 9 June 2017, available at <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/06/09/abused-migrant-workers-end-up-in-prison-after-trying-to-flee-2>

⁷¹ Cf. Trafficking in Persons Overseas for Labor Purposes The Case of Ethiopian Domestic Workers, International Labor Organization, Addis Ababa, 2011

⁷² Civil Society Reports, Universal Periodic Review for Lebanon, 2015, p. 60.

⁷³ ALEF – Act for Human Rights, Migrant Domestic Workers and Human Trafficking Indicators, A Guidebook to Measurement and Implementation for Civil Society Organizations in Lebanon, February 2019, p. 15.

⁷⁴ Asha D’Souza. Moving towards Decent work For Domestic workers: An Overview of the ILO’s work, International Labor Organization, Bureau for Gender Equality, Working Paper 2/2010, p. 18.

⁷⁵ Sawsan Abdularahim, Servant, Daughter, or Employee? A Pilot Study on the Attitudes of Lebanese Employers towards Migrant Domestic Workers, KAFA, 2010, p. 20.

⁷⁶ Interview with ‘Hanane’, Caritas-Liban shelter, 26 January 2019.

nightmare, which also meant leaving without her unpaid salaries for a duration of two years (3,600USD)⁷⁷.

In a 2011 assessment, Hamill stressed that *“undocumented migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are caught in legal limbo and face significant obstacles which prevent them from regularizing their immigration status in the country. If apprehended by police, they face immediate detention and substantial fines for immigration violations. Often their precarious legal situation is compounded by the difficulty they face in retrieving their identity documents from previous employers who may simply refuse to respond or may demand payment in return”*⁷⁸.

Indeed, the dreaded *tanezul* (or release process) constitutes an overpowering tool in the hands of the sponsor. Even when all goes well for the worker with his/her employer, the termination of the contract is problematic, whether the decision comes from the employer or from the worker, as the *kafeel* holds a tremendous leverage against the worker, especially when she wishes to remain in Lebanon to work. And if harsh work conditions or any other trouble shatter the relationship between the two parties, leading the worker to request to terminate the contract, switching employment isn't guaranteed as he/she would need the *kafeel* to agree transfer the sponsorship (to release her) to another employer. *“The sponsorship system traps the worker since there is no legal protection ... the worker has no way to untie this knot”*⁷⁹, says Ghada Jabbour, head of the anti-trafficking unit at KAFA, a local NGO working with migrants and against gender-based violence.

Hence, MDWs get easily trapped in a “Master/Servant relationship”⁸⁰ where abuse takes place “across the social spectrum and is often perpetrated by those who are educated and well respected within their social circles”⁸¹, creating a distorted professional relationship, polished through the formality of a signed contract at the Notary, which actually imprisons them in a closed employment with their sponsor. For Farah Salka, executive director of local non-government group Anti-Racism Movement, “There is no way to negotiate under this system of slavery ... You can't upset the person who is your sponsor because they are the only the legal tie for you in Lebanon”⁸².

Facing the grievances of such as system, many stakeholders have been very active supporting MDWs communities in terms of psychosocial assistance, medical care, legal counselling, rights awareness, education and even unionizing. Many CSOs have been lobbying the relevant authorities for years in order to take on the different factors

⁷⁷ Interview with 'Salam', Caritas-Liban shelter, 19 January 2019.

⁷⁸ Kathleen Hamill. Trafficking of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon A Legal Analysis, KAFA, March 2011, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Heba Kanso, Trapped by the system, Ethiopian workers in Lebanon see no freedom, *Reuters*, 15 February 2018, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-migrants-irregular/trapped-by-the-system-ethiopian-workers-in-lebanon-see-no-freedom-idUSKCN1FZ195>

⁸⁰ Kathleen Hamill. Policy Paper on Reforming the “Sponsorship System” for Migrant Domestic Workers: Towards an Alternative Governance Scheme in Lebanon, KAFA, January 2012, p. 13.

⁸¹ Sawsan Abdularahim, Servant, Daughter, or Employee? A Pilot Study on the Attitudes of Lebanese Employers towards Migrant Domestic Workers, KAFA, 2010, p. 20.

⁸² Heba Kanso, Trapped by the system, Ethiopian workers in Lebanon see no freedom, *Reuters*, 15 February 2018, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-migrants-irregular/trapped-by-the-system-ethiopian-workers-in-lebanon-see-no-freedom-idUSKCN1FZ195>

hindering the labor standards of migrant workers in Lebanon, and formalize an organizing structure for MDWs in Lebanon: *“In January 2015, the Domestic Workers Union was announced in Lebanon – the first of its kind in the region. The ILO was instrumental in establishing the union, and is committed to support it to gain credibility and increase outreach in a way that reflects the empowered voice of the domestic workers”*⁸³.

However, the Lebanese authorities never recognized this union, as the Ministry of Labor refuses to grant the necessary authorization for its formal establishment. When asked about this, Director General George Ayda replied *“there can be no union organized by non-Lebanese, or we will end up with security chaos”*⁸⁴. As peculiar as it seems, the security argument is a powerful ally and argument even for non-security officials, here the Ministry of Labor justifying the denial of Lebanon’s international obligations towards foreign workers on its soil.

On the issue of healthcare, Ethiopian workers are, as other migrant workers, denied basic health rights during their migration period in Lebanon. As foreigners, they are not entitled to any social security and those in regular kafala status depend on private insurance policies. As such, a mandatory health insurance policy was implemented in 2009 and covered by the sponsor/kafeel but its coverage is too minimal and doesn’t cover pregnancies, chronic diseases and more serious medical conditions and situations. But this insurance policy *“covers nothing”*, as per the direct testimonies of MDWs in Lebanon, *“we are forced to rely on ourselves and sometimes raise money among our communities to pay when accidents happen or when our friends are sick”*, says Meriam Prado Duval, one of the founders of the Alliance for MDWs in Lebanon⁸⁵. From the survey conducted, one respondent who is divorced had escaped her initial kafeel to now become an irregular freelancer. As a consequence, she *“has no papers, they are still with my first kafeel, which is creating issues for me, for example I need a medical operation but cannot do it because I have no paper”*⁸⁶. Another respondent stated that *“despite healthcare insurance, sometimes I was suffering from my stomach but my employer was not providing for medicine”*; hence she was buying them at her own expense⁸⁷.

Hence, undocumented workers have no access what so ever to health coverage whether public or private⁸⁸, and like those under the sponsorship system, benefit from no pension system whatsoever⁸⁹. ILO expert Zeina Mezher also mentions lack of social security among

⁸³ International Labor Organization, “ILO and the Domestic Workers Union in Lebanon host a strategic planning workshop”, 19 February 2017, available on https://www.ilo.org/beirut/events/WCMS_546383/lang--en/index.htm

⁸⁴ Interview with M. Georges Ayda, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Chiyah, 30 January 2019.

⁸⁵ Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, “Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality”, *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

⁸⁶ Interview with ‘Lili’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

⁸⁷ Interview with ‘Mestu’, Caritas-Liban Shelter, 26 January 2019.

⁸⁸ For more on this issue, see Bina Fernandez. Health inequities faced by Ethiopian migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. *Health & Place*, Volume 50, March 2018, pp. 154-161, available on <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1353829217305981>

⁸⁹ Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, “Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality”, *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

the core challenges facing MDWs in Lebanon, “*when they go back to Ethiopia, there isn't any kind of pension system*”⁹⁰. Moreover, according to Mezher, social security doesn't even appear on the map whenever reforms are contemplated for MDWs or in bilateral agreement negotiated between Beirut and Addis Ababa.

On that, authorities prefer to concentrate on daily healthcare coverage rather than long term social protection for migrant workers. Director General George Ayda suggests enlarging the scope of the current healthcare insurance policies dedicated to the MDWs, thus including a repatriation clause in case of death (covering the transport of the corpse) and, more importantly according to the high civil servant, to treat and cover “*psychological disorders*” whenever needed⁹¹.

The harshness of the *Kafala* pushed and urge to push many workers outside the system, and given the unequal balance of power, the MDWs face the permanent risk of arrest and deportation. The GSO estimates the number of irregular Ethiopians in Lebanon to 40 to 50.000⁹², being both the largest regular and irregular group among the migrant communities in the country.

Moreover, many reports point at the “*weakness of the judicial system in terms of guaranteeing access to justice for migrant domestic workers victim of exploitation*”⁹³, where, in practice, “*the victims' ability to seek and obtain compensation through the civil courts is limited*”⁹⁴. According to the Human Rights Council, “*an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 MDWs in Lebanon, continue to face challenges in accessing legal system, securing employment and mistreatment by their employers. Several States recommended Lebanon during its 2010 UPR to abolish the sponsorship (Kafala) system, which exposes them to the risk of deportation should they choose to leave their employer. Despite recommendations to ensure the existence of legal frameworks that protect their work conditions, namely by including them within the scope of the Labour Law, Lebanon failed to do so*”⁹⁵.

Looking at the UPR recommendations as reported by the OHCHR, “*migrants do not have access to either proper legal aid nor to language facilitation throughout the trial proceedings. It recommended enhancing effective access to legal aid, making State legal aid compulsory for all courts and for any crime*”⁹⁶.

⁹⁰ Interview with Zeina Mezher, Migrants Specialist, National Project Coordinator, International Labour Organization, Beirut Office, 1st February 2019.

⁹¹ Interview with M. Georges Ayda, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Chiyah, 30 January 2019.

⁹² Interview with Major Georges Abi Fadel, Head of the Arabs and Foreigners Division, General Security Office, Beirut, 17 December 2018.

⁹³ Alix Nasri Wissam Tannous. Access To Justice For Migrant Domestic Workers In Lebanon, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center, International Labor Organization, 2014, p. 45.

⁹⁴ Alix Nasri Wissam Tannous. Access To Justice For Migrant Domestic Workers In Lebanon, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center, International Labor Organization, 2014, p. 17.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Council. Summary prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Lebanon, 10 August 2015, p. 10.

⁹⁶ Human Rights Council. Summary prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and

Moreover, experts have denounced the “*existence of a discretionary prosecution system*”⁹⁷. In a 2011 study, El Mufti analyzed the causes of theft charges filed by employers against domestic workers in a survey conducted for Caritas-Liban. The latter showed the use by public prosecution of false theft charges against runaway MDWs as a means to establish cause for arrest. The research could establish that the high incidence of non-prosecution before trial was actually due to the fact that employers were often using the filing of complaints of theft to put pressure on the domestic worker to abandon and withdraw any abuse claim she would have processed⁹⁸. The Human Rights Council had denounced that “*arbitrary detention is still an ongoing practice in Lebanon, mainly used against migrants and foreigners. HRW noted that refugees and migrants are detained by Lebanese Security Forces for long periods after the end of their sentence while awaiting deportation*”⁹⁹. According to the GSO records for 2016-2018, more than 2,000 Ethiopians are arrested every year (more than 3,000 in 2017) and around 2,000 were deported yearly (almost 3,000 in 2017), as shown in table 7 below.

Year	Number of Ethiopian nationals arrested	Number of Ethiopian nationals deported
2016	2,086	1,891
2017	3,124	2,873
2018	2,690	2,412

Source: General Security Office, received 20 February 2019

Despite the immense challenges, important contributions can be observed from rights activists engaged to fight discrimination and denial of basic rights to MDWs in Lebanon. First, the instauration of Labor Day Festival where MDWs can march, celebrate and remind sponsors of their rights every year, and benefit from wide media coverage. Eventually, migrants started handling their own monitoring and resorting to naming and shaming to denounce grave violations against their communities¹⁰⁰. Media also regularly report abuse cases and give voice to those enduring this exploitation system in place. For instance, Reuters reported in February 2018 the case of an Ethiopian worker, “Betty” who

paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Lebanon, 10 August 2015, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁷ Alix Nasri Wissam Tannous. Access To Justice For Migrant Domestic Workers In Lebanon, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center, International Labor Organization, 2014, p. 19.

⁹⁸ Karim El Mufti. False Accusations Of Theft Commonly Filed By Lebanese Sponsors/Employers Against ‘Runaway’ Migrant Domestic Workers: A Legal Study, Caritas Lebanon Migrants Center, Beirut, 2011

⁹⁹ Human Rights Council. Summary prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Lebanon, 10 August 2015, p. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. for instance Dipendra Uprety (a male migrant worker) who launched a blog on the matter in May 2017 called *This Is Lebanon*, <https://thisislebanon.org/>

*“said she worked like a slave, facing sexual, verbal and physical abuse, until she managed to escape. But her new-found freedom was not all she had hoped and for the past five years she has found she is still trapped, working without legal work and residency permits. ‘I live in fear at any minute I can get arrested and go to jail’, Betty, now 29”*¹⁰¹.

Additionally, wide campaigns on the necessary humane and respectful treatment of MDWs in Lebanon are regularly carried out throughout the Lebanese territory to raise awareness among public opinion. In 2018, Documentary entitled “Thank you Soma”, directed by Carol Mansour¹⁰² and developed by the ILO¹⁰³, offered an “*endearing look at the relationship between a domestic worker in Lebanon and the young woman she brought up. Thank You Soma also shows us the reality of domestic workers who leave everything behind to come and work in Lebanon and the Arab world*”¹⁰⁴. “*With this film we hope to challenge pervasive social perceptions about domestic work, and show the issue from a new perspective*”¹⁰⁵, says Dr Ruba Jaradat, ILO Regional Director for Arab States. “*We also hope to engage Arab youth in the conversation about migrant domestic workers’ rights, and encourage them to think about the role of domestic workers in their families and society*”¹⁰⁶.

In 2019, a ‘mockumentary’ this time was produced by ALEF-Together for Human Rights, and called “*Mtallat Baladi Assil [My country is authentic]*”¹⁰⁷, which represents a sarcastic film about the situation of MDWs in Lebanon. Presented as an “*awareness film directed at the Lebanese society*”¹⁰⁸ it aims at “*recreating the universe MDWs in Lebanon delve into, from a satirical but critical angle*”¹⁰⁹.

Yet, authorities do not seem to be very receptive to these arguments. According to Major Georges Abi Fadel, head of the GSO Division for Arabs and Foreigners, “*there is nothing new on the radar for the kafala system in Lebanon*”¹¹⁰, meaning there is no intention among the authorities to scrape it and replace it with more humane and respectful employment framework.

¹⁰¹ Heba Kanson, Trapped by the system, Ethiopian workers in Lebanon see no freedom, *Reuters*, 15 February 2018, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-migrants-irregular/trapped-by-the-system-ethiopian-workers-in-lebanon-see-no-freedom-idUSKCN1FZ195>

¹⁰² “Thank you Soma”, directed by Carol Mansour, researched by Muna Khalidi, produced by Forward Film Productions; first screened on 18th December 2018 at Cinema Metropolis Empire Sofil, Beirut.

¹⁰³ “Thank you Soma”: ILO documentary explores relationship between migrant domestic workers and Arab youth, ILO News, 18 December 2018, available at https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_655169/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁰⁴ Lara Mekkawi, “Thank You Soma”: Paying tribute to all domestic workers raising children in the Arab World, *Beirut Today*, 17 April 2019, available at <http://beirut-today.com/2018/12/17/thank-you-soma/>

¹⁰⁵ “Thank you Soma”: ILO documentary explores relationship between migrant domestic workers and Arab youth, ILO News, 18 December 2018.

¹⁰⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁰⁷ “Mtallat Baladi Assil”, by ALEF, 55mn; first screened 19th June 2019 at Dar Nimer for Arts and Cultures, Beirut

¹⁰⁸ Twitter Post by ALEF, 30 March 2019, available on <https://twitter.com/alefliban/status/1111960641747726336?lang=en>

¹⁰⁹ Twitter Post by ALEF, 30 March 2019, available on <https://twitter.com/alefliban/status/1111960641747726336?lang=en>

¹¹⁰ Interview with Major Georges Abi Fadel, Head of the Arabs and Foreigners Division, General Security Office, Beirut, 17 December 2018.

But recently, there were news reports about the current Ministry of Labour, Camille Abou Sleiman looking into the idea of abolishing the *kafala* system¹¹¹. That said, this is easier said than done since the security services are very much attached to this type of social control of foreigners coming for domestic work purposes into the country and quickly being victim of its entrapment process.

¹¹¹ *Al Akhbar* newspaper, 19 August 2019.

2. The Migration Journey of Ethiopian workers into and out of Lebanon

A. Regular and Irregular Statuses: An Entrapment Process

As noted in the previous section, the sponsorship system carries with it the building blocks of potential abuse and vulnerability for foreign migrants coming to work in Lebanon. What is initially thought to be a journey to deliver their families from poverty can turn out to become a nightmare for the MDWs. *“When we come to work in Lebanon, we do it for the money our families need back home”*¹¹², said a migrant narrating her story in a recent encounter during the Migration Study Week in Beirut. As expressed by one of the survey respondents, *“we thought it [the fact of coming to Lebanon to work] would end our poverty”*¹¹³.

Thanks to their informal gatherings such as the Union for MDWs or the Alliance for MDWs in Lebanon, migrants today are very vocal in spreading the culture that *“domestic work is not slavery, domestic work is decent work”*¹¹⁴. As noted in the previous section, score of reports and studies have documented the deep suffering of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon. As the largest female migrants group in the country, Ethiopians are no strangers to the numerous violations they face because of the entrapment mechanism encapsulated in the *kafala* system, which was apparent in the survey and focus groups conducted. Benefiting from basic rights *“is a lottery, it depends on the madam”*¹¹⁵ as expressed during one of the focus groups held in Jounieh¹¹⁶. Rim, aged 25 and single, mentioned the stress of MDWs conditions, saying *“they [the authorities] should fix the conditions we work 24h and are paid 250\$ and we die for it sometimes; each week you hear someone is dead, and no one cares if we are happy, while if the ‘Madame’ is not happy she will take me to the office, but if I want to go back she won’t let me”*¹¹⁷. 26 years old Lili criticizes the fact that *“we are paid monthly what a Lebanese family pays for one lunch”*¹¹⁸.

Most workers interviewed in the course of this study, with a few exceptions¹¹⁹, had to pay for the “migration opportunity” both in Ethiopia (between 250USD and 1,000USD) and Lebanon (between two to three months of salaries). *“From back home, we have to start paying the mafia to travel and work”* said a veteran Sri Lankan MDW, among the founders

¹¹² Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, “Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality”, *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

¹¹³ Interview with ‘Lor’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹¹⁴ Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, “Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality”, *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

¹¹⁵ Term used by MDWs to designate their female employers.

¹¹⁶ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹¹⁷ Interview with ‘Rim’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹¹⁸ Interview with ‘Lili’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹¹⁹ Interview with ‘Mahder’, Ashrafiye, Beirut, 27 January 2019.

of the Alliance for MDWs aimed at furthering protection of her fellow migrants in the country¹²⁰.

When asked about this, GSO high ranking officer Georges Abi Fadel mentioned the will of his services to eradicate the habit of withholding the first three months of the woman's salary, officially to cover the expenses of her home country's PEA. "*The GSO explicitly banned this action two and a half years ago*", said Major Abi Fadel. However, authorities still face many obstacles, one being that "*MDWs are being pressured through their families back home, so even if we manage to enforce the non withholding of her initial salaries, maybe she would be sending the amount back home for her family to pay the agency there*"¹²¹.

Most of the workers who responded to the individual survey are presently going through their first migration experience in Lebanon (49 workers out of 60) with a wide range of entry dates into the country ('Yeshi', aged 35, reached Lebanon in 1998). Previous experience is absent among the majority of this sample of Ethiopians as some never worked before, or were students or pupils before coming to Lebanon; one even narrated how she entered the country with a forged passport because she was underage (she entered Lebanon when she was 16 in 2017)¹²². A few others were already cleaning houses and wished to reach better paying conditions abroad rather than in their village. Other workers had worked in Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.

On the other hand, some interviewed migrants are very pleased with their work conditions and are well treated by their employer. They enjoy freedom of movement and engage with the larger Ethiopian community in Lebanon that organizes cultural and social activities. "*We could visit historic places such as Byblos, Harissa, the Cedars and Baalbek*" observed one of the respondents, aged 30 under a *kafala* status since 10 years in Lebanon¹²³.

However, it is worth observing that the migratory entrapment process actually starts before any Ethiopian PEA or Lebanese sponsor is involved, before even the female worker leaves her country. Focus group discussions highlighted the **knowledge gap** of the workers between the period before their migration and after the experience obtained in Lebanon. One respondent, a freelancer aged 28, mentioned how "*people there do their best to come to Lebanon; they don't know lot of girls are suffering; some people even sell their houses and cows in the village to send their girls after seeing how their neighbors' life improved*"¹²⁴.

¹²⁰ Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, "Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality", *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

¹²¹ Interview with Major Georges Abi Fadel, Head of the Arabs and Foreigners Division, General Security Office, Beirut, 17 December 2018.

¹²² Interview with 'Sofanit', Caritas-Liban shelter, 26 January 2019.

¹²³ Interview with 'Mebrit', Hamra, Beirut, 24 January 2019.

¹²⁴ Interview with 'Lor', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

During a focus group, workers acknowledged that fact that “before we come to Lebanon, we knew nothing of the country, nothing on the weather, the food, the system, the wages”. When asked what would they advise future candidates to migration back home, the respondents wish to offer to reduce this knowledge issue and tell them that a worker in Lebanon “many times don’t get her own room, or will have problem if doesn’t understand Arabic or even know how to properly clean a house like the Madam wants”¹²⁵. In another focus group, participants stressed on “the loss of privacy here for them, with the employer always searching in her stuff, and will most probably throw away the clothes and stuff she brought with her”¹²⁶, also warning that “she might even need to ask for a permission to go to the toilet”¹²⁷. Others even advise “not to trust anyone, not even Ethiopians already here”¹²⁸. Once in Lebanon, many MDWs are actually led into working “three jobs, cooking, cleaning and raising the kids”¹²⁹. And as explained by focus group participants, “we don’t know before coming [to Lebanon] that we need to deal with the kids, and girls may not know that they needs to take care of the kids”¹³⁰. As well summarized by a freelancer in an interview: “I thought people will be good and I will help my parents but it was the opposite”¹³¹.

Participants in focus groups unanimously agreed they learned much in coming to the country: “now we know everything and we can advise the girls back home”¹³². Even though some workers said their recruiting agency in Ethiopia share some basic insights (“do not talk back at Madam”, “do not look at husband”), they agreed it “was not systematic”¹³³ and the information provided really light. **In the pre-departure period, Ethiopian respondents mentioned trainings were now being offered to future MDWs to travel to Lebanon**, “but it is always limited in time and occur presently only in Addis Ababa”¹³⁴, which means far away provinces do not benefit from these important inputs to better prepare the workers planning to migrate to Lebanon. Out of the 60 individual respondents, more than half were not from Addis Ababa, showing a large diversity of where the Ethiopian MDWs originally come from.

Focus groups also uncovered an interesting trend relative to information sharing between migrants and migratory candidates, as Ethiopian workers stressed how it was actually difficult to convey the warnings, since “even when we tell the girls back home, they don’t believe us. They would reply: ‘if you are not happy why are you staying then? You are lying because you don’t want us to come’ ”¹³⁵. Another participant mentioned the same idea: “they think we are saying that only to prevent them from coming and becoming ‘happy and rich’ like us”¹³⁶. So observations made by experienced workers in Lebanon are too often not taken seriously by new comers who have to discover the bitter reality once they reach

¹²⁵ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹²⁶ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in a private house in Chiyah, 7 April 2019.

¹²⁷ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in a private house in Chiyah, 7 April 2019.

¹²⁸ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹²⁹ Testimonies by Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, “Migration Study Week: Migration, Mobility and circulation in the Middle East, rethinking inequalities and informality”, *Lebanon Support*, Beirut, 26 August 2019.

¹³⁰ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹³¹ Interview with ‘Rama’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹³² Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹³³ *Idem*.

¹³⁴ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹³⁵ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹³⁶ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

their migration destination. One respondent, under the *kafala*, admitted she was one of those girls, as some advised her not to come and she thought that they don't want her to be like them and improve their lives, she "*didn't know it would be like this*"¹³⁷. Despite the international efforts and measures in order to better prepare workers to their migration destination¹³⁸, field observations continue to highlight multiple issues on that level.

MDWs also face the **risk of not getting paid**¹³⁹. Focus group participants stress on the fact "*not to accept that her payment to be 'saved' by the sponsor or postponed because she might not get it at all*"¹⁴⁰. MDWs can even become victims of "*fraudulent practices at the recruitment stage [that] can leave low-skilled workers extremely vulnerable. These practices might include debt bondage linked to payment by low-skilled migrant workers of excessive recruitment fees, costs and charges and deception about the nature and conditions of work, often leading to detrimental contract substitution and human trafficking for labor exploitation*"¹⁴¹.

The contractual agreement signed by the MDW and the employer in the reformed framework of the *kafala* system (with the inclusion of the SUC) incorporates provisions on wage protection and allows the employee to terminate the contract in three specific cases: "*if the employer does not honor the payment of salary for a period of three consecutive months; if the employer or a relative of the employer beats, assaults, sexually abuses or harasses the domestic worker; and if the employer uses the domestic worker without her consent in a capacity other than that for which he or she had been recruited*"¹⁴². However, the SUC contains "*ambiguous language*"¹⁴³ and its application is difficult to monitor. For instance, it stipulates that resolving any conflict between the employer and the domestic worker is the responsibility of the MoL. "*However, nowhere is the process or a mechanism to lodge a complaint defined*"¹⁴⁴. This flaw makes it difficult for a migrant worker to report major violations and abuse.

As a consequence, the present contractual regulation doesn't solve the issue of the migrants who wish to terminate their contract, even when based on serious violations. This often leaves the MDW "*with only one viable option: that of leaving without obtaining the consent of the employer, which in the eyes of the authorities amounts to absconding*"¹⁴⁵.

¹³⁷ Interview with 'Sana', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹³⁸ Cf. IOM, Best practices Pre-departure Orientation programs, available at <https://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/What-We-Do/docs/Best-Practices-in-Migrant-Training.pdf>

¹³⁹ See Kathleen Hamill. Trafficking of Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon A Legal Analysis, KAFA, March 2011, p. 5. On the work conditions, see also Asha D'Souza. Moving towards Decent work For Domestic workers: An Overview of the ILO's work, International Labor Organization, Bureau for Gender Equality, Working Paper 2/2010.

¹⁴⁰ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹⁴¹ Ray Jureidini, Ways Forward In Recruitment Of 'Low-Skilled' Migrant Workers In The Asia-Arab States Corridor: International Labor Organization white paper, Beirut, 2016, p. 6.

¹⁴² Hélène Harroff-Tavel, Alix Nasri. Tricked And Trapped Human Trafficking In The Middle East, International Labor Organization, in collaboration with Heartland Alliance International, 2013, p. 60.

¹⁴³ Sawsan Abdularahim, Servant, Daughter, or Employee? A Pilot Study on the Attitudes of Lebanese Employers towards Migrant Domestic Workers, KAFA, 2010, p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ Sawsan Abdularahim, Servant, Daughter, or Employee? A Pilot Study on the Attitudes of Lebanese Employers towards Migrant Domestic Workers, KAFA, 2010, p. 24.

¹⁴⁵ Sawsan Abdularahim, Servant, Daughter, or Employee? A Pilot Study on the Attitudes of Lebanese Employers towards Migrant Domestic Workers, KAFA, 2010, p. 24.

As the available options for them to defend their rights remain very limited, *“the final resort for many is often to run away, but that immediately renders the women vulnerable to arrest”*¹⁴⁶. One respondent from the conducted survey had this thought on this: *“they should know we run away because we are suffering”*¹⁴⁷. Many others respondents interviewed in shelters with the support of experienced Caritas-Liban social worker, counted their ordeal, confirming how difficult it was to gain grounds against the all mighty will of a sponsor in the present regulatory context.

Discrimination also affects the **children of migrant workers** in Lebanon who are being denied documentation and face the risk of deportation. Because Lebanese authorities consider it a breach of their residence’s rules and regulations, the GSO *“has detained and deported migrant domestic workers apparently for having children in Lebanon”*¹⁴⁸, denounced HRW in a 2017 press release. This phenomenon started *“as of early 2014”*¹⁴⁹, according to INSAN, when the *“General Security began deporting Lebanon born children of migrant workers with one or both of their parents. Although General Security refused to officially comment on this issue, the unofficial justification for this decision was that migrant worker are in Lebanon to work and not start families and have children”*¹⁵⁰. Moreover, *“denying residency renewals to long-term workers who have given birth while living in Lebanon disproportionately interferes with their right to family life”*¹⁵¹.

INSAN estimates the number of MDWs who have children in Lebanon at around 10,000, which *“constitutes only a fraction of the number of MDWs who live independently (estimated at around 85,000), yet the overwhelming majority of those who are deported are MDWs with children”*¹⁵². We had the chance of seeing some of these children during focus group discussions, as migrants would bring them along to play in the venue, as they were courteously engaging in the discussion.

Moreover, the birth of children of MDWs if they are in *“irregular situation in Lebanon cannot be registered; they usually do not have their identification papers or sometimes even a birth registration because they are the children of unrecognized refugees or migrant workers whose residency permit has expired. This hinders the possibility to register them in their respective embassies and they end up stateless”*¹⁵³. Children born as the result of rape by employers, or relatives of the employers living under the same roof, is also to be taken into consideration even though there are no official figures on such dramatic situations in Lebanon, and abortion is illegal in the country, making it quite impossible for the migrant victim to resort to clandestine and costly procedures.

¹⁴⁶ Alice Su, Abused Migrant Workers End Up in Prison After Trying to Flee, News Deeply, Refugees Deeply, 9 June 2017, available at <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/06/09/abused-migrant-workers-end-up-in-prison-after-trying-to-flee-2>

¹⁴⁷ Interview with ‘Lili’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹⁴⁸ Lebanon: Migrant Domestic Workers With Children Deported, Human Rights Watch, 25 April 2017

¹⁴⁹ Roula Hamati. Trapped: Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon, INSAN, 2016, p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ *Idem*.

¹⁵¹ Lebanon: Migrant Domestic Workers With Children Deported, Human Rights Watch, 25 April 2017

¹⁵² Roula Hamati. Trapped: Migrant Domestic Workers in Lebanon, INSAN, 2016, p. 18.

¹⁵³ Civil Society Reports, Universal Periodic Review Lebanon, 2015, p. 48.

The issue is also painful to freelancers who are residing in an irregular fashion in Lebanon, as they cannot travel in normal conditions back and forth between Lebanon and Ethiopia. Many married respondents were affected as they can't visit their children, while they remain at the same time trapped in Lebanon to continue supporting their families back home, while facing a greater risk of arrest and deportation. This doesn't mean that MDWs under *kafala* systematically benefit from the joy of visiting their loved ones in between contracts, as many sponsors do not grant them their right to a holiday and a cover a plane ticket, despite being among the SUC provisions.

Authorities in Lebanon are well aware of these issues and shortcomings that face MDWs and regularly pledge for reforms and changes in the sector, as the ILO continues to deeply engage with the authorities to “*ensure international standards are included into any ongoing reform*”, according to ILO expert Zeina Mezher¹⁵⁴.

Among State stakeholders, the GSO lies as a crucial actor in how MDWs are treated in Lebanon, and it regularly reminds the public how it has made improvements in this area and how it “*now gets involved in securing mediations for MDWs in difficult situations with their sponsors*”, as pointed out by Major Abi Fadel¹⁵⁵. According to the head of the Arabs and Foreigners Division at the GSO, referrals even come from NGOs and Consulates to investigate sensitive cases and coordinate the return of the worker to her country after trying to solve her issues (unpaid wages, irregular status, abuse, etc.).

As such, the GSO has been actively pushing through the Steering Committee for MDWs a status reform that would upgrade MDWs from ‘category four’ workers (the category of the MDWs in Lebanon) to ‘category three’, which would allow PEA to directly employ them and offer them to work in houses and offices per hour. “*This would bring more flexibility into the domestic workers work flow*”, agreed George Ayda from the Ministry of Labor¹⁵⁶. At this time, this option is only available for irregular workers in Lebanon, also called “freelancers”, so they are held to no sponsor and live and pay rents in shared rooms or flats with other workers in usually poor and marginalized areas.

This measure would allow for the irregular workers to join a formal PEA, settle their situation with the authorities and secure a regular status that would get her out of the legal limbo thousands of MDWs are enduring in the country. Instead of considering eradicating the *kafala* system, the Steering Committee is actually thinking of enlarging it to the PEAs those in charge of getting the workers into the country and not just for households and offices. “*This would solve the issue of the worker being forced to sleep at her employer's place*”¹⁵⁷ explains George Ayda, the Director General of the Ministry of Labor, which “*creates many problems within a household, especially with husbands or when children grow up and enter their teen years*”¹⁵⁸, clearly hinting at the high probability of sexual abuse that comes with the *kafala* system. According to the Director General, this

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Zeina Mezher, Migrants Specialist, National Project Coordinator, International Labour Organization, Beirut Office, 1st February 2019.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Major Georges Abi Fadel, Head of the Arabs and Foreigners Division, General Security Office, Beirut, 17 December 2018.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with M. Georges Ayda, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Chiyah, 30 January 2019.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with M. Georges Ayda, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Chiyah, 30 January 2019.

¹⁵⁸ *Idem*.

measure would solve “50% of all the problems within a household in relation to MDWs”¹⁵⁹, because “many problems arise from the context of daily interactions”¹⁶⁰, or in another words, because the worker is basically living in her workplace.

It is not clear how today’s “freelancers” would welcome this measure if ever implemented and if they would agree to re-enter an entrapment system through the PEA, knowing that this option doesn’t prevent situations of abuse (including sexual), labor exploitation (number of services per day) or guarantee wages payment. A freelancer might prefer to remain on her own watch, secure her regular clients, pay her rent and remain free from the hazards of the *kafala* trap. On the other hand, workers wanting to exit the country legally to visit their family, or escape the risk of financial instability when relying on informal ties with clients, could be tempted by this type of compromise.

Aside of the ordeal and potential calamity that can strike any MDW in her migratory experience in Lebanon, workers engaged in this study were additionally involved in a discussion about their financial management and how they viewed the ultimate purpose of their remittances.

¹⁵⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with M. Georges Ayda, Director General, Ministry of Labour, Chiyah, 30 January 2019.

B. Ethiopian Workers Remittances: A Fundamental Migration Factor

When the wage payment is not an issue, MDWs can count on a regular income that can eventually be increased as they stay longer in the same household (under *kafala* system). Or an informal worker can widen her network of informal clients (if she is under irregular status). In the survey carried out for this study, 20 workers out of 60 earn less than 200USD of salary per month; 22 earn between 200USD and 350USD, whereas 18 declared earning more than 350USD per month, with 6 going as high as 600USD and 700USD (see table 9).

On the level of **financial management**, Ethiopian workers in Lebanon have disparate ways of dealing with their earnings. *“If the Madam is good, then we don’t need to buy anything, she provides food and clothes and phone coupons”*¹⁶¹. In the survey, only 15 respondents out of 60 have the chance of working for sponsors who cover all their expenses, as they manage to send all their earnings to Ethiopia. So, *“in the good cases, she will not spend anything to be able to cover the expenses of her family and she will send all the money back to the family though western union and sometimes with friends to try to sell the dollar in the black market”*¹⁶².

But all of the others (four respondents did not reply to this question) have to spend a part of their small salaries to buy their own food, medication, phone recharge and even clothes. And this covers both sponsored workers, not only the freelancers, who de facto will need to spend for their living expenses in the country. As put by a focus group participant: *“if she was not lucky, she may have to spend the money to eat, to live, to buy stuff, especially if she ran away and become a freelance, and in this case she will be barely able to save any money or to send back home which cause a lot of problems for them with the families and mainly with the husbands”*¹⁶³. In another focus group, “bad cases” were also discussed when migrants *“can only be able to send a small amount of the money each five or six months, because everything here is expensive and it is almost impossible to live with the 150\$ and to save money, but at the same time she cannot go back home”*¹⁶⁴.

Freelancers might earn higher income than sponsored workers, but work can prove unstable and with it the level of earnings. An interviewed freelancer hoping to save money for herself (she is single and her parents passed away a long time ago) mentioned that many times she’d use the little she saved to pay her rent¹⁶⁵.

The **mobility factor** plays a large role in how the migrant worker spends their money. Whether the woman is allowed a day off and granted to step out of the employer’s home will impact the consumption level of the worker (transport, shopping, hairdresser...). At the same time, many workers who enjoy a day off also engage in community life in migrants center, NGOs and other networks that allow them to share, learn and support a solidarity system among themselves, with the support of local civil society efforts. In

¹⁶¹ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹⁶² Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹⁶³ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹⁶⁴ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in a private house in Chiyah, 7 April 2019.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with ‘Lala’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

addition to Church where many stated going, the workers also gather in community centers where they can also enjoy extra training in diverse fields, such as Arabic and English lessons, cooking classes, knitting and other social activities.

Coming back to the size of **remittances** (see table 9), it is worth observing only 15 respondents could send 100% of their earnings to Ethiopia, all of which work under a sponsor. 23 respondents stated they would send between 75% and 90% of their salaries back home, when 19 respondents could afford to send between 50% and 70% of their salaries. Two could send as little as 20% to 30% (one respondent declined to answer).

As such, remittances stand as the overarching goal of the entire migratory process and hence the reason why most migrants actually agree to hand in large fees to be included in the cycle towards the Middle East, and more specifically Lebanon, where there continues to be high demand of cheap labor. According to an IOM report, *“migration can generate very large benefits for migrants, their families and countries of origin. The wages that migrants earn abroad can be many multiples of what they could earn doing similar jobs at home”*¹⁶⁶. And a recent World Bank report calculated that *“migrants from the poorest countries, on average, experienced a 15-fold increase in income, a doubling of school enrolment rates, and a 16-fold reduction in child mortality after moving to a developed country”*¹⁶⁷.

As such, the importance of remittances is confirmed by survey respondents and focus group participants. *“We sacrifice freedom and happiness but at least we can cover the basic needs back home”*, said a participant in the focus group in Jounieh¹⁶⁸. Covering the expenses for food, education, rent and save for a house for their families back home, appear as the main purposes of the remittances sent by Ethiopian workers in Lebanon. Most respondents need to sustain large families of minimum 4 to 6 persons (sometimes up to 10 siblings) who directly depend upon their regular money transfers¹⁶⁹.

But the support system isn't always successful for a minority of workers: one respondent whose husband and child rely on said her husband is not allowing her to talk with her son because she is not sending money since there is no much work¹⁷⁰. As stressed by one of the respondents, aged 25, *“it was useful for my family but not useful for me because I am tired of the work”*¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁶ International Organization for Migration, World Migration Report 2018, p. 1, available on https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf

¹⁶⁷ World Bank. Migration and Development. A Role for the World Bank Group, Washington, D.C., 2016, available on <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/690381472677671445/Migration-and-development-a-role-for-the-World-Bank-Group> .

¹⁶⁸ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹⁶⁹ On the importance of remittances on economic development, see Bichaka Fayissa, Christian Nsiah, The impact of remittances on economic growth and development in Africa, *The American Economist*, Vol. 55, No. 2, Fall 2010, pp. 92-103.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with 'Zala', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹⁷¹ Interview with 'Misgana', Caritas-Liban shelter, 26 January 2019.

Regarding the **transfer process** in itself, *“the safest way to send money is through western union services, but not every month, and someone from our family collect it at the bank in Ethiopia or in a western union office”*¹⁷² (see table 8 below for transfer costs at Western Union).

Amount	Fee
0 to 50 USD	5USD
50.01 to 500USD	7USD
500.01 to 1,000USD	10USD
1,000.01 to 2,000 USD	18USD
2,000.01 to 3,000	35USD
3,000.01 to 7,500USD	50USD
Source: Western Union, prices as of March 6, 2018	

Another common option for Ethiopian MDWs is to send cash with friends returning to the country who could then deliver it to the family. This comes with a double advantage, one avoiding the recurrent transfer fees of the financial service agencies; and a second point is to avoid the problematic currency ratio USD/Birr within banks and official financial institutions, as migrants prefer to take their dollars to the black market to benefit from more beneficial exchange rates. Also, some workers have no other option than to rely on friends using such informal channels because in order to *“use western union she will need legal papers, so it is hard for freelancer, sometimes they try do it using the name of other friends or send money directly to Ethiopia”*¹⁷³.

In any case, focus group participants advise their fellow workers still in Ethiopia to *“open a bank account before coming to Lebanon”*¹⁷⁴, which would facilitate the financial management of their wages and remittances.

Looking into whether some **money is being saved** (see table 9), the study showed this concept isn't easy for many MDWs interviewed. As stated by expert Zeina Mohanna, *“usually, MDWs send most of their money back home, but matters related to basic budget management is not clear to them”*¹⁷⁵.

Actually, some workers stressed that *“the family is saving it for me there”*¹⁷⁶, assuring that they have a business project in mind for when they go back. One respondent mentioned she can access her bank details from internet in Lebanon and hence monitor that her

¹⁷² Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹⁷³ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹⁷⁴ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in a private house in Chiyah, 7 April 2019.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Zeina Mohanna, Head of the Migrants Program, Amel Association, Beirut, 30 January 2019.

¹⁷⁶ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

account is not tampered with¹⁷⁷. *“But it really depends on families”* said another participant who says to monitor the savings process thanks to *“formal bank receipts being sent by my family through Whatsapp”* application when the money received is deposited in the worker’s bank account¹⁷⁸.

But not all workers can count on their family back home: *“many girls worked for 10 years and went back to find nothing and had to travel again to a different country to work again; sometimes you can’t trust even your family”*¹⁷⁹, said a focus group participant. One respondent, aged 26 complained her ex-husband who is supposed to be looking after her two children was taking the money for himself instead of spending it on the kids¹⁸⁰. Another, aged 25, complained that she is *“only working and spending all the money and nothing is being saved; my life is passing and no one asks about me except if the need money”*¹⁸¹. Others prefer not to get involved with remittances management and let *“my mother decide”*¹⁸².

Life strains make it hard on Ethiopian migrants to actually save some money during their migration journey in Lebanon. Even though many admitted discussing about money management with their family, the remittances are actually governed by life circumstances back home, and a very small number of workers could actually declare the proportion of savings based on their hard work. Out of the 60 individual respondents of the study’s survey, 27 answered that saving money was not either a priority or a possibility at this stage, with another 18 who wished to save some money aside but couldn’t specify whether this was actually being achieved. Many workers send their remittances directly to their families and depend on their relatives needs before considering establishing a clear saving plan. One respondent under *kafala*, admitted having little visibility as to her financial viability, saying she was not sure as to how much money I will have upon her return to Ethiopia¹⁸³.

Hence, the main purpose of the remittances for interviewed workers was to attend the most pressing life needs back home, without necessarily planning for the future. As highlighted by ‘Mestu’, aged 27 who is divorced and needs to care for her son and her parents back in Ethiopia, *“I do not think about savings because my family is in need for the money to support my son”*¹⁸⁴. She used to send 90% of her salary to her family and has no bank account there. ‘Tsonam’, aged 20, needs the money to secure medicine for her sick money back home and can’t save from her earnings¹⁸⁵.

Like ‘Mestu’, many see the remittances as a life cordon to support their loved ones in Ethiopia. Those who do put savings on the map, actually have little visibility as whether part of the remittances is being saved or not by the recipients. Those who have their own

¹⁷⁷ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹⁷⁸ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

¹⁷⁹ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with ‘Lili’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹⁸¹ Interview with ‘Rim’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹⁸² Interview with ‘Tania’, House of the employer, Aramoun, 25 January 2019.

¹⁸³ Interview with ‘Randa’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with ‘Mestu’, Caritas-Liban shelter, 26 January 2019.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with ‘Tsonam’, Caritas-Liban shelter, 26 January 2019.

bank accounts and an open connection channel to their relatives back in Ethiopia can better manage these issues, whereas those who can't contact them regularly or doesn't have a bank account has less chances of durably managing her assets back home.

On the other hand, some 15 respondents were actually able to systematically save some money each month (from 5% to 70% depending on the profiles and family situations, mainly single migrants), with monthly incomes ranging between 150\$ and 600\$ for both freelance and sponsored workers. Among those can be observed a few success stories from satisfied migrants as to their migratory experience. 'Tseha', aged 25 who has been in Lebanon since 2011 is "*satisfied with what I lived in Lebanon. By coming here, I escaped a forced marriage my parents had arranged for me and could provide for my family. I now plan to get married and have kids when I return soon*"¹⁸⁶. 'Aysha', aged 19, had worked in Saudi Arabia from where she managed to pay the hospital expenses of her father in Ethiopia. After arriving in Lebanon two years ago, she now plans to buy a house for her family¹⁸⁷, as she stated she was able to put aside 40% of her remittances in a bank account in Ethiopia. According to her, the experience so far in Lebanon is very useful, because "*I will be able to buy a house and to secure my future and the future of my father as well*"¹⁸⁸. 'Beyene', aged 25, is providing for her sick husband and her daughter's school expenses for the past 5 years now and is hoping to go back to Ethiopia in two years¹⁸⁹. 'Genet', aged 29, managed to get her daughter an education thanks to the money sent account and claimed she had a say in how the money was spent despite having gone through her husband's bank account and not one she could control directly¹⁹⁰. 'Aynalem', aged 22, was on the same track supporting her child's school fees in Ethiopia before her employer stopped paying her and ended up at the Caritas shelter for support¹⁹¹.

Table 9
List of 60 Ethiopian Respondents
Salaries, Remittances, Expenses and Savings Ratios

Pseudo	Place of Origin	Status	Monthly Earning	Remittances Ratio	Expenses Ratio Lebanon	Savings ratio
Zana	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	50%	15%	35%
Sofi	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	70%	30%	0%
Saba	Dessie	Freelance worker	200-500\$	40%	30%	30%
Jacko	Addis Ababa	Freelance worker	400\$	50%	50%	25%
Sisi	Burayu	Freelance worker	400\$	75%	25%	0%

¹⁸⁶ Interview with 'Tseha', Dora, 26 January 2019.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with 'Aysha', Rmeileh, employer's house, 20 January 2019.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with 'Aysha', Rmeileh, employer's house, 20 January 2019.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with 'Beyene', Jbail, 27 January 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with 'Genet', Jounieh, 19 January 2019.

¹⁹¹ Interview with 'Aynalem', Caritas-Liban shelter, 26 January 2019.

Malak	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	80%	15%	5%
Tania	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	75%	25%	0%
Fani	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	85%	10%	5%
Lala	Addis Ababa	Freelance worker	Not much	50%	50%	0%
Zala	Geto	Freelance worker	Not much	60%	40%	0%
Rika	Sordo	Freelance worker	200\$	50%	50%	0%
Rama	Waikiti	Freelance worker	400\$	75%	25%	0%
Randa	waikiti	Kafala	400\$	100%	0%	0%
Kanda	Osana	Freelance worker	300\$	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	0%
Aisha	Tower a small city	Freelance worker	550 \$	20%	40%	40%
Sana	Addis Ababa	Kafala	250\$	70%	30%	0%
Rim	Nazrit	Kafala	250\$	70%	30%	0%
Lili	Addis Ababa	Freelance worker	300\$	30%	70%	0%
Lor	Debre brahen	Freelance worker	500\$	60%	40%	Can't specify
Zainab	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	80%	20%	0%
Merartu	sebeta	Freelance worker	250\$	60%	40%	0%
Mebrit	Gonder	Kafala	250\$	75%	25%	Can't specify
Mahder	Addis Ababa	Freelance worker	500\$	100%	0%	Can't specify
Helen	Combolcha	Freelance worker	400\$	60%	40%	Can't specify
Halima	Jima	Freelance worker	400\$	40%	Not mentioned	Can't specify
Hasima	Hosaena	Kafala	400\$	60%	25%	Can't specify
Feleku	Hosaena	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	Can't specify
Beza	Huruta	Freelance worker	700\$	60%	35%	Can't specify
Alemnes h	Jima	Kafala	600\$	80%	20%	20%
Alem	Natherat	Kafala	250\$	100%	Not mentioned	Can't specify
Alema	Bahrdar	Freelance worker	600\$	75%	25%	40%
Zimuta	Addis Ababa	Freelance worker	600\$	75%	25%	Can't specify
Zenebec	Butajra	Freelance	250\$	80%	20%	0%

h		worker				
Shiwa	Gonder	Freelance worker	500\$	75%	25%	Can't specify
Worknes h	Burayu	Freelance worker	200-400\$	60%	Not mentioned	50%
Tigist	Dessie	Kafala	450\$	75%	25%	Can't specify
Tesfanesh	Wolayta sodo	Freelance worker	350\$	60%	40%	Can't specify
Sedenesh	Jima	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	Can't specify
Yeshi	Natherat	Kafala	700\$	70%	30%	Can't specify
Netsa	Addis Ababa	Kafala	600\$	80%	20%	Can't specify
Mestu	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	90%	10%	0%
Aysha	Shashamane	Kafala	200\$	70%	30%	40%
Meseret	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	80%	20%	0%
Louna	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%
Hanine	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	90%	10%	0%
Hanane	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	30%
Habtam	Gonder	Kafala	180\$	80%	20%	Can't specify
Genet	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	20%
Aynalem	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	70%
Beyene	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	90%	10%	30%
Misgana	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%
Worke	Addis Ababa	Kafala	200\$	80%	20%	Can't specify
Tsonam	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%
Rania	Nazrit	Kafala	180\$	90%	10%	0%
Salam	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%
Tseha	Hadiya	Kafala	250\$	80%	20%	40%
Sonita	Adama	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%
Sarah	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%
Sonia	Hawassa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%
Sofanit	Addis Ababa	Kafala	150\$	100%	0%	0%

Beyond the savings aspect, the study looked into the planning projection of Ethiopian migrants in Lebanon. 12 respondents stated having no plan whatsoever other than providing for their families, but the rest of the interviewees had very vivid forecast of the future possibilities. 37 respondents out of 60 wished to return to Ethiopia to open a business, whether a shop (clothes, hairdressing salon, mini-market) or a restaurant and snack, with a Lebanese flavor to it. As many have learned the Arabic language and cooking Lebanese food, many respondents are confident they could succeed in a restaurant business, either selling '*manouche*', a traditional Lebanese eating or a more general Lebanese snack¹⁹².

Others wish to capitalize their experience in looking after kids by opening a kindergarten back home¹⁹³. As such, many respondents are eager to use newly acquired skills through their work in Lebanon to move forward in Ethiopia. Babysitting, teaching Arabic or English, doing make up, sewing, hairdressing, were also mentioned in the course of the study. One respondent wishes to "*be working with people who speak Arabic in Ethiopia*"¹⁹⁴, another has set the ambition of "*working with the recruitment agency and teach the girls about the work before coming*"¹⁹⁵, while others (7 respondents) want to focus on pursuing an education, such as studying nursing back home within five year as thanks to her savings collected patiently in Lebanon¹⁹⁶. Some wish to move to another migratory destination and one wished to stop working and get married when returning to her country.

¹⁹² Interview with 'Zenebech', Ashrafieh, 27 January 2019; Interview with 'Shiwa', Ashrafieh, 27 January 2019.

¹⁹³ Interview with 'Beza', Tabaris, 22 January 2019.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with 'Helen', Ashrafieh, Beirut, 26 January 2019

¹⁹⁵ Interview with 'Worknesh', Hazmieh, 4 February 2019.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with 'Aisha', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

C. Addition: Impact of the present financial crisis in Lebanon on MDWs.

Moreover, the recent events in Lebanon have pushed MDWs into even greater dismay. As the financial and monetary crisis struck the country, access to foreign currency (mostly dollars) became scarce, while the value of the Lebanese Pounds took a hit in the parallel markets, reaching 2,300 LBP for one dollar instead of the official rate of 1507.5 LBP.

The consequence for migrant workers in the country lays a double edge: as they are not being paid in dollar currency but in Lebanese pounds, in order to send money abroad, they are forced to resort to currency change offices who are applying the unofficial rate. As such, migrant workers are losing up to 30% of their salaries value due to the applied ratio, as shown in a small illustration below.

Status	At the official rate (1\$=1,500LBP)	At the unofficial rate (1\$=2,000LBP)	Difference
A MDW at 150\$ a month, paid today 225,000LBP	150\$	112.5\$	Loss of 37.5\$ (25% of basic salary)
A MDW at 300\$ a month, paid today 450,000 LBP	300\$	225\$	Loss of 75\$ (25% of basic salary)

As such, migrants are having a great deal of difficulty transferring money abroad because of the unfavorable exchange currency rate and the restrictions imposed on banks and financial institutions due to the present conditions. Lebanon's Banks Association has issued a press release informing that banks would not be allowing international wires in the time being, despite the lack of the proper legislation to sustain it, imposing a de facto capital control onto the population. As for transfer agencies such as OMT and Western Union, they are allowing transfers strictly in foreign currencies, which means migrants will need to convert their Lebanese pounds into dollars at the unofficial rate before being able to send money to their families, hence enduring a high cost in the process. As a reminder, 70% of the surveyed Ethiopian workers stated they would resort to these financial agencies to send remittances back home.

On the other hand, MDWs need to sustain the higher cost of living due to inflation pressures in the marketplace, namely the freelancers among them who are facing major problems with the reduction of the worth of their salaries. A migrant interviewed in *L'Orient-Le Jour* indicated that "converting money into dollars to send to our families is too expensive, and even the prices displayed in the stores in Lebanese pounds become excessive. If

this situation persists, how are we going to survive?" She asks¹⁹⁷. Three Bangladeshi workers also witnessed that, in nine years of work in Lebanon, they have never experienced such a difficult situation: "I cashed the equivalent of 350 dollars in LBP. But today my salary is worthless, regrets one of them. I will not stay long"¹⁹⁸.

This adds to the difficulties that were documented during the field survey of this study that was held prior to the recent deterioration of the financial and monetary situation. As a result, it has been reported that many migrant workers have started to leave the country. French-speaking Media *L'Orient-Le Jour* gathered a testimony from a travel agency stating that they noted a noticeable increase in travelers from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Egypt back to their countries. "*As an indication, during the month of November, 600 Bangladeshis, 100 Sri Lankans and 95 Indians bought their return ticket for their country through the agency. In normal times, only 300 Bangladeshi, 15 Sri Lankan and 30 Indians leave each month*", said the young woman to *L'Orient-Le Jour*¹⁹⁹. During the same period, the Filipino Embassy in Lebanon announced that "*more than 1,000 Filipinos, mostly women accompanied by a few children, have arrived at the Philippine embassy in Beirut to register for the free repatriation program scheduled for next February [2020]*"²⁰⁰.

It's too early to determine whether Lebanon will be experiencing massive return waves from migrant workers on its soil, but the harsh deterioration of the financial and economic situation is taking a huge toll on the lives of the MDWs whose struggle to make a living has worsened in the past weeks.

¹⁹⁷ Anne-Marie El Hage. Crise du dollar : la main-d'œuvre migrante touchée de plein fouet, *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 5 December 2019, available at <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1197442/crise-du-dollar-la-main-doeuvre-migrante-touchee-de-plein-fouet.html>

¹⁹⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁹⁹ Crise au Liban : campagne de rapatriement des travailleurs philippins. *L'Orient Le Jour*, 5 December 2019, available at <https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1197515/crise-au-liban-campagne-de-rapatriement-massif-des-travailleurs-philippins.html>

²⁰⁰ *Idem*.

Conclusion & Recommendations

Author of an unpublished study on the Ethiopian returnees after their migration period in Lebanon, Zeina Mohanna from Amel Association stresses that “*many migrants are initially happy with job opportunities through domestic work*”, however, “*many of those who returned did not find work back home*”²⁰¹.

Looking at the survey results, it is interesting to observe a short term planning pattern, as most respondents state they wish to stay another “*two to three years*” in Lebanon sometimes “*five*”, while some consider they will be returning in a few months. However, personal and family reality seems to catch up with them at every stage, regardless of how long they have already been residing in Lebanon, as they opt for staying another round of domestic labor in the country, with the risks entailed to their dependency onto the sponsor’s wishes. Should the employer choose not to renew the contract, the MDW might have no other choice than to be sent back home. There she will have to operate a new migration process with the large expenses attached to it such as paying the recruitment agency there and endure a salary sacrifice of two to three months in Lebanon as “*fees*”. And should the employer accept the migrant be “*handed*” to a new sponsor (the release process or *tanezul* as analyzed earlier), the nightmare of finding a new employer accepting the release “*price*” constitutes a paramount situation where MDWs are treated like trading objects.

One respondent staying irregularly in Lebanon expressed sometimes she think it would be better to be able to go back but she is afraid on how to go back to her country because she would be imprisoned; but without the *kafeel* she has more money with less working hours²⁰². Risk calculation for freelancers makes it more relevant to make use of their time in Lebanon, as long as they are not caught, in order to earn money and help their families. When the same respondent was asked when would she plan to return to Ethiopia, she replied: “*I hope soon*”, an answer that resonates in the Lebanese reality much like: ‘at some point in the distant future’.

When the migration journey actually ends, whether on a voluntary basis or not, the Ethiopian returnee has learned “*the value of money because how much she struggled to get it. It’s a main lesson from Lebanon, how to deal with various solicitations and growing through experience and maturity in life*”²⁰³, according to participants in a focus group. A very small number of respondents do not wish to return at this point or in the distant future and hope to be able to reach “*South Africa*”²⁰⁴, “*Europe or the USA*”²⁰⁵ to work there. One respondent, who has been working for the same *kafeel* for three years, said she did not wish to return at all while she advised Ethiopians not to come to Lebanon²⁰⁶.

²⁰¹ Interview with Zeina Mohanna, Head of the Migrants Program, Amel Association, Beirut, 30 January 2019.

²⁰² Interview with ‘Jacko’, House of the respondent, Chiyah, 20 January 2019.

²⁰³ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in MCC Jounieh, 17 March 2019.

²⁰⁴ Interview ‘Jacko’, House of the respondent, Chiyah, 20 January 2019; Interview with ‘Kanda’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019

²⁰⁵ Interview with ‘Lala’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

²⁰⁶ Interview with ‘Sana’, Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

What they lose in freedom in Lebanon, they have the potential of gaining some power back home. 'Kanda', aged 24, considers that "*Yes, I saved money, I understand more what I can do with my life, before I understood nothing*" admitted one single respondent, working for a company in Lebanon²⁰⁷. As a participant explained in a focus group: "*in Lebanon we cannot even move or go back home when we feel or want to, but back home if we go back with money no one can force you on something you don't like*"²⁰⁸. One participant expressed that she actually felt "*freer here than in her village*"²⁰⁹, but this did not appear to be the overarching perception across the MDW respondents.

Many stressed how the financial aspect represents the sole migration factor and purpose, without any other type of usefulness. One respondent's expectation prior to her coming to Lebanon was to "*get rich quickly*" as she is able to send 75% of her salary working for the same sponsor for the past three years²¹⁰. Many respondents stated not having acquired any useful skills to be invested back home, other than having supported their loved ones financially. 'Rim', aged 25, answered when asked what she had learned that she could now speak Arabic, but in a sarcastic way, as to underline how such a tremendous effort was in return given very little reward²¹¹.

Moreover, the idea of returning to Ethiopia with somehow a different stature was prevailing in many respondents' answers during the survey. Many migrants said expected to go back "*stronger*"²¹², "*more confident*"²¹³ and "*more independent*"²¹⁴. 'Louna', aged 26 now feels empowered because she was "*spending money on her husband and not the other way round*"²¹⁵. As a 28 years migrant expressed it: "*everything is different now*"²¹⁶, fulfilling a shed of hope despite the unfairness and the injustice between all these individual migratory paths hoping for a decent present and a bright future.

²⁰⁷ Interview with 'Kanda', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

²⁰⁸ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 6 April 2019.

²⁰⁹ Ethiopian participant to a Focus Group in a private house in Chiyah, 7 April 2019.

²¹⁰ Interview with 'Tania', House of the employer, Aramoun, 25 January 2019.

²¹¹ Interview with 'Rim', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019

²¹² Interview with 'Fani', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019; Interview with 'Randa', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

²¹³ Interview with 'Lor', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

²¹⁴ Interview with 'Zana', Haret Hreik, 19 January 2019; Interview with 'Jacko', House of the respondent, Chiyah, 20 January 2019; Interview with 'Aisha', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019; Interview with 'Rim', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019

²¹⁵ Interview with 'Louna', Caritas-Liban shelter, 19 January 2019/

²¹⁶ Interview with 'Lor', Amel Association Center, Chiyah, 27 January 2019.

Recommendations for Lebanese authorities:

To the Lebanese Parliament:

- Ratify the Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers (Convention 189) of 2011.
- Abolish the *kafala* to replace it with a legal framework defending equitable contractual agreement and respectful of rights and obligations of employers and workers and the interest of recruitment agencies.
- Ratify the Bilateral Agreement adopted with the Government of Ethiopia.

To the Ministry of Labour:

- Review the terms of the Standard Unified Contract:
 - remove the *tanezul*/release clause for when employers breach the contract
 - include freedom of movement
 - translate the SUC into a language understood by Ethiopian migrant workers (and from other nationalities), in coordination with the National Steering Committee and the Notary Public agents²¹⁷.
- Enforce a zero-tolerance approach towards discriminatory and predatory practices by employers, PEAs and security services through monitoring mechanisms, investing in inspection capabilities and supporting awareness programs and campaigns.
- Recognize the MDWs Union established in 2015.
- Enlarge mandatory health insurance for migrant workers to covers healthcare needs, including psychological support.
- Allow for migrant workers to open bank accounts as option to receiving their salaries or for saving purposes

To the Ministry of Justice:

- Further implement Law 164/2011 on Human Trafficking and strengthen awareness within the judicial system and security services.

²¹⁷ The ILO has already translated the SUC but the Notary Public agents are not officially using the translated versions, cf. MDW guide, available at <https://www.labor.gov.lb/Te mp/Files/e7139eae-3987- 4dbd-a32a- 3b723864e808.pdf>

- Increase judicial resources in order to treat complaints by MDWs who have endured grievances and violations and grant them temporary visas and work permits for the duration of the judicial proceedings.

To the General Security Office:

- Enforce alternative measures to arrest and deprivation of liberty for regulatory obligations
- Systematically uphold judiciary decisions relevant to the migrants' status, whether overruling deportation or granting temporary residence
- Refrain from deporting children of migrants living in Lebanon.

To the Central Bank:

- Increase transparency on financial data and capital flows between Lebanon and Ethiopia.

To Ethiopian Authorities:

- Ratify the Bilateral Agreement adopted with the Government of Lebanon.
- Increase oversight over PEAs in Ethiopia as to recruitment procedures for MDWs
- Increase resources to prevent human trafficking under migratory channels.
- Increase support of stranded Ethiopian workers in conflict with the justice system in Lebanon

To International Organizations:

- Maintain pressure on both countries to reform their respective legislation in order to increase protection of Ethiopian migrants.
- Maintain support to local CSOs in Lebanon and Ethiopia to support and assist Ethiopian migrants in their social, financial and legal issues.

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