



RESPECTING WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS

GUIDANCE FOR RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

This guidance is intended to be used by recruitment agencies managing the selection, recruitment and deployment of women migrant workers. It offers practical guidance for recruiters on how they can deliver efficient professional services to their clients and customers in ways that respect the rights of women at all stages of the recruitment and deployment process.

The guidance is based on the Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity and IHRB's extensive engagement and consultation with civil society organisations and recruitment agencies.

There are two core principles applicable at all stages of the recruitment and employment processes:

1. Adopt gender-sensitive recruitment practices

Ensure recruitment practices are responsible, gender-sensitive, and consistent with fundamental human rights standards that require protection regardless of gender status. This includes considering the different experiences and needs of women migrant workers and the particular challenges they may face at all stages of their recruitment and employment abroad, as well as accessible, confidential, and trusted grievance mechanisms that are also gender-sensitive.

2. Maintain confidentiality and protect privacy

Adopt strict confidentiality policies to safeguard the privacy of the candidate at all stages of the process.



Gender-sensitive refers to an approach that acknowledges and addresses the different needs, experiences and power dynamics that may impact different genders. It aims to promote understanding, fairness and inclusion and to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. This guidance in particular seeks to ensure greater awareness, and address the challenges that may be faced by women migrant workers.

THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE IDENTIFIES BEST PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PROCESS

PRE-RECRUITMENT

- 01 **Adopt an Employer Pays recruitment model.** Implement a recruitment model where all recruitment-related costs are borne by the employer, ensuring women workers are not exploited or indebted.
- 02 **Understand and comply with all laws and requirements relevant to migration in both origin and destination countries.** Clearly communicate these laws and restrictions to prospective women migrants. Include any workplace restrictions on women migrant workers in destination countries, for example dress codes, working with males, or working at night.
- 03 **Improve access to migration related information for women.** Recognising women may face additional barriers to accessing reliable, migration-related information, and are vulnerable to exploitation by unauthorised intermediaries such as local agents.
- 04 **Partner with local organisations to facilitate trusted communications and information sharing.** Civil society organisations can help facilitate communication, provide support, and act as useful and trusted intermediaries between recruiters and women migrants.
- 05 **Conduct due diligence on employers.** Partner only with companies that have women-focused safety measures, robust anti-harassment policies, and accessible gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms. Ensure companies using your services have the following:
 - a. Access to safe working, living and healthcare facilities;
 - b. Clear anti-harassment policies;
 - c. Women-focused safety measures e.g. transportation for night shifts; women-only secure accommodation;
 - d. No restrictions on mobility and communication;
 - e. Cultural awareness about migrants' ethnic origin and religious practices;
 - f. Effective grievance mechanisms that women feel confident using, including access to female managers;
 - g. And to the extent possible, feedback from current or former women migrant workers employed at the company should be considered in the due diligence process.
- 06 **Ensure job descriptions and employment terms are accurate and match the candidate.** The skills and abilities of women workers should be conveyed truthfully to employers and match the job specifications as should the job / benefits to workers.
- 07 **Clearly explain employment terms.** Ensure that women understand the job details and employment terms stated in the contract. This should include working hours, wages and benefits, deductions, right to join unions (where possible), right to reproductive health, and social security.
- 08 **Create a safe and supportive environment for women to report any involvement of unauthorised middlemen.** Establish safe ways to report approaches or demands for payments. Ensure women understand that reporting is welcome and will not cost them their jobs.

PRE-DEPARTURE

- 09 **Maintain accuracy and integrity of official documents.** This includes refraining from any actions intended to increase or decrease the age of applicants, or falsifying documents that require family consent, or tampering with medical or other personal documents.
- 10 **Ensure copies of all essential documents are shared with the employee migrant herself.** This should include employment contracts, travel documents, identity documents and insurance documents. Give women the option to share or not share these documents with family or trusted friends. Ensure all are aware of the significance of these documents along with additional information on available support resources and relevant government policies.
- 11 **Include women trainers and gender equality modules.** Enable an open and secure environment for migrant women participating in pre-departure programmes. Consider women's safety when choosing transport and accommodation options for participation in pre-departure processes and training events.
- 12 **Educate women on sexual harassment and how to protect themselves.** Provide orientation/training on safety in the workplace and away from it, on how to make a complaint, as well as use emergency apps and online grievance reporting platforms. Provide a list of emergency contact numbers, embassy, national helpline, etc.
- 13 **Educate women on laws that may affect them in easy to understand formats.** This may include labour laws, a country's criminal justice system, social security laws, immigration laws, marriage laws, and destination country cultural norms and practices.
- 14 **Inform women workers about likely processes relating to wage payment, overtime, and piecework.** Encourage workers to record their earnings and save all salary slips to ensure they have accurate details should any payment or banking issues arise.
- 15 **Encourage women to use formal banking and remittance channels.** Provide training and access for mobile banking, digital wallets, and safe online banking methods.
- 16 **Encourage women, when possible, to open their own separate savings / bank accounts in the country of origin.** Personal accounts will allow women workers to remit their wages as future/emergency savings. Women should record all money remitted.

TRAVELLING

- 17 **Prioritise safety when booking travel.** Where possible arrange daytime departure and arrival times. Direct flights are generally safer. Best practice is for women to travel in groups of two or more for company and security purposes.
- 18 **Ensure women have smart phones before they travel.** All important numbers and digital documents should be available to women workers and stored in their personal phones. They should be encouraged to download and be familiar with using any translation apps that can be of assistance during travel.
- 19 **Arrange for a designated pick-up person.** Women workers should be offered assistance at the point of arrival airport / bus depot in the location of employment in a timely manner and employer contact details should be shared with workers in advance of arrival.
- 20 **Prepare a travel card in both the employee's language and that of the destination country.** The card should contain the details of the employee, next of kin, recruitment agent, employer, embassy contact, country of destination and flight details.

ADVICE TO SHARE WITH WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS

- 21 **Passport or travel document is personal identity abroad.** Women should be instructed to never hand over travel documents to anyone and to always carry these documents with them. For safety, carry scanned copies on mobile phones and also a printed copy at all times.
- 22 **Information on customs regulations.** Workers should be informed of what can and cannot be brought into a particular country to avoid custom fines or confiscation of goods.
- 23 **Avoid carrying parcels for others.** Women should refuse requests from anyone (family, friends, neighbours etc) especially if the parcel is sealed and they cannot see the contents.
- 24 **Ensure bags are not left unattended at any time.**
- 25 **Traveling with spare clothes.** Women should carry a set of clothes and personal hygiene products in their hand luggage in case checked in luggage goes missing or is delayed.
- 26 **Carrying spare cash.** Women should travel with a small amount of spare cash while traveling for unexpected expenses.

DESTINATION COUNTRY

- 27 **Confirm safe arrival in the country of destination.** Recruiters should work with employers to resolve any issues with immigration impacting women workers (in country of origin and destination).
- 28 **Maintain ongoing communication with women migrants and their families throughout the migration cycle.** Agents' duty of care should continue throughout the migration cycle. Check in with employers to ensure women are safe in their workplace. WhatsApp/Signal/Telegram Groups may be another way of maintaining contact with workers
- 29 **Stay accessible to the families of migrants.** Family members of workers may want to be in contact, especially if they face challenges abroad. Recruiters should be prepared to offer guidance and support as needed.
- 30 **Establish strong communications channels.** Home Embassies and any formal and informal support networks in the country of destination can provide useful information and assistance to workers abroad.

RETURN TO HOME COUNTRY

- 31 **Ensure women are repatriated safely to their home countries upon completion of their employment contract.** Where an employment contract is terminated prematurely, for whatever reasons, recruitment agents must assist in ensuring a safe and dignified return.
- 32 **Respect confidentiality.** For the safety of women, confidentiality is especially important in cases of trafficking, sexual violence, or legal issues (e.g. capital punishment cases), to avoid stigma for the worker and her family.
- 33 **Establish anonymous feedback channels.** Make it easy for women to share their experiences and suggest improvements to the migration process. Encourage women migrant workers to raise any concerns/grievances.

By adopting these gender-responsive recruitment practices, recruitment agencies can play a crucial role in protecting women migrant workers, ensuring safe migration, and respect for rights.

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For further resources, visit: [The Responsible Recruitment Gateway](#)
For more information contact IHRB's team via info@ihrb.org

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