

Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and African Union Commission (AUC)

Joint International Migration in Africa Project under Result Area 1: Shaping a Positive Narrative and Removing Barriers to Mobility

Kenya National Task Force on Labour Migration
Concept Note

Theme: *Investing in Return and Reintegration: Pathways for Migrant Women's Economic Empowerment*

Venue: Pride Inn, Nairobi, Kenya

Dates: 1-3 October 2025

Organizers: African Union Commission (AUC) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

Supported by: Government of Italy

1. Background and Rationale

Labour migration is an increasingly significant driver of Kenya's social and economic transformation, shaping households, communities, and national development strategies. Over the past decade, women migrant domestic workers have been at the forefront of this transformation. Their contributions extend well beyond sustaining household economies through remittances; they also enrich national development through skills transfer, entrepreneurship, and contributions to the care economy. Official data indicates that between 2014 and 2024, migration from Kenya to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries increased more than threefold, rising from approximately 60,000 to well over 200,000. These figures are likely to be under estimates based on Saudi Census 2022 which reported the presence of more than 200,000 Kenyans in the Kingdom.

A national assessment conducted jointly by UNECA and the AUC (September–November 2024) highlighted persistent challenges. Women migrants reported widespread violations of employment contracts, including delayed or unpaid wages, unsafe working conditions, and restrictions on mobility, harassment, and gender-based violence. Their labour in domestic and care services seldom received professional recognition, despite its centrality to both host and home economies. The assessment further revealed gaps in pre-departure training, which was often fragmented and inconsistent, and unreliable information sources that left women vulnerable to exploitation. Reintegration pathways for returnees were underdeveloped, often ad hoc, short-term, and poorly coordinated. At the same time, the assessment underscored the transformative potential of returnees. Women bring back entrepreneurial skills, vocational expertise, international networks, and modest savings that, if properly supported could serve as powerful levers for community and national development.

Key findings emphasized:

- The considerable entrepreneurial potential of returnees, constrained by limited access to credit, financing, and structured business development services.
- The negative impact of stigma and restrictive gender norms on women's reintegration into the labour market.
- The urgent need for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), national certification systems, and pathways to professionalize the care sector.
- Gaps in gender statistics and evidence, which limit effective policymaking and narrative change.
- Significant policy and narrative gaps, as return and reintegration remain under-prioritized in migration governance, and positive stories of women migrants are insufficiently leveraged.

2. Purpose of the Task Force Meeting

The September 2025 Task Force meeting will serve as a strategic platform to advance these findings and recommendations within Kenya's migration governance framework. It will convene government institutions, international and regional organizations, civil society actors, private sector stakeholders, and returnee women migrants.

The meeting will pursue four core purposes:

1. To facilitate high-level policy deliberation and ensure systematic integration of assessment recommendations into national frameworks.
2. To serve as a coordination mechanism for enhancing collaboration among ministries, agencies, international partners, and community-based organizations.
3. To promote narrative change and advocacy by highlighting returnee women migrants as dynamic agents of economic transformation.
4. To develop and formally adopt a July–December 2025 Action Plan and Roadmap under the Joint AUC/UNECA project, establishing clear priorities and responsibilities for implementation.

3. Specific Objectives

The Task Force meeting will pursue the following interrelated objectives:

- Review progress under Result Area 1, with a particular focus on capacity building, narrative change, and reintegration initiatives, and agree on a concrete action plan for the next implementation cycle.
 - Train returnee women for business and employment opportunities.
 - Support the establishment of Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs).
 - Align reintegration efforts with opportunities created by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- Deliberate on policy and legislative solutions, including:

- Engagement with proposals from the national assessment and policy briefs.
- Structured dialogue with lawmakers and ministry officials.
- Strategic advocacy around the Labour Migration Management Bill (2024).
- Advancement of gender-responsive labour law reforms.
- Promotion of the ratification and domestication of ILO Conventions C189 and C190.
- Strengthen inter-agency coordination to overcome fragmentation in women's labour migration management, establishing a multi-sectoral framework for reintegration and migration governance.
- Showcase women migrants as economic actors by:
 - Highlighting their contributions to national development, trade, and community resilience.
 - Providing a platform for the dissemination of success stories and entrepreneurship models.
 - Promoting data-driven approaches and gender statistics to shift migration narratives and inform evidence-based policymaking.

4. Expected Outcomes

The meeting is expected to deliver the following results:

- Adoption of an Action Plan (July–December 2025): A concrete roadmap outlining priority actions, responsibilities, and milestones for implementation under Result Area 1.
- Integration of national assessment recommendations into policy and legislative frameworks, particularly the Labour Migration Management Bill (2024).
- Strengthened institutional partnerships across ministries, civil society, development partners, and the private sector to ensure coherent approaches to labour migration governance.
- Mobilization of resources for gender-responsive reintegration programmes, including SACCOs, business incubation initiatives, and expanded market access.
- Development of proposals for national certification systems and pathways to professionalize the care sector, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and standardized pre-departure training.
- Promotion of positive narratives through targeted advocacy campaigns, highlighting the economic and social contributions of returnee women migrants.

5. Stakeholder Participation

The meeting will convene a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders, including:

- Government institutions: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (through the National Employment Authority, the Directorate of Labour Migration, and the National Coordination Mechanism), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Gender.
- International and regional partners: AUC, UNECA, the Government of Italy, UN agencies, and development partners.

- Civil society and private sector: Non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, private employers, and financial institutions.
- Returnee women migrants: Bringing lived experiences and perspectives to inform policy and programme design.

6. Programme Highlights

The three-day programme will combine policy dialogue, technical sessions, and public advocacy. Highlights include:

- Opening Ceremony: Statements by the Government of Kenya, AUC, UNECA, and the Government of Italy.
- Thematic Sessions:
 1. Positive narratives and gender statistics.
 2. Recognition of care work as skilled labour.
 3. Structured approaches to return, reintegration, and welfare.
- Legislative Dialogue: A focused discussion on proposed amendments to the Labour Migration Management Bill (2024).
- Cultural Segment: Showcasing the skills, talents, and enterprises of returnee women migrants.
- Closing Session: Formal adoption of the July–December 2025 Action Plan and Roadmap for Result Area 1, establishing clear priorities, responsibilities, and milestones for the next phase of implementation.