



Gender & Migration Analysis

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The causes of human mobility cut across a spectrum of issues and women¹ who are impacted by migration (at home, in transit or destination countries) experience multiple and intersecting identities, including gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, migration status, disability, and national origin. Women in migration are in every sector, region and identity. The framing of *Women-in-Migration* goes beyond migrant women to explore the realities of all women affected by migration.

We view women's mobility as a continuum within countries and across borders, based in some cases on choice, but increasingly driven by economic, political, gender-based, conflict-driven, or climate-change factors. Gender-based violence or gender discrimination are also drivers of women's migration. Women's lived realities do not easily fit into current national and global frameworks and categories of people on the move—categories that serve to include some and exclude others and create a false hierarchy of “deserving” and “undeserving” migrants. Rural women, facing the impact of trade agreements, austerity programs, export-oriented agricultural policies, climate change, land-grabbing and other factors are compelled to migrate internally, often to urban areas. When cities cannot absorb all of these displaced workers many will migrate to neighboring countries. Others migrate within their region or from South to North. States often fail to recognize multiple and complex reasons for women's migration, common realities across differing official migration categories, and their obligation to fulfill human rights and treaty obligations regardless of the category or status.

At a time when states, the UN system and civil society prepare the framework for a Global Compact on Migration, it is important to point to limitations in the current discourse on women in migration:

- A gender analysis is about gendered roles of women, men, Trans and intersex persons, not only about women. Gender is not a binary.
- For a gender-inclusive framework it does not suffice to sprinkle “women and girls” throughout a document without addressing the deep-seated systemic obstacles to realization of women's human rights and gender equality.
- Migrant women are not primarily victims and “vulnerable populations” to be rescued. They are agents of their own lives and of community change.
- Women in Migration is not only about domestic workers and trafficked women or refugee women—it is about the broad and diverse ways that women are impacted by their own migration or that of family members.

¹ “Women” is understood as including lesbian, bisexual, trans and gender non-conforming, and intersex women

- While gender-based violence is present in all aspects of women in migration—in home, transit and destination countries, migrants are targeted for violence for a *range* of reasons including migration status, nationality, race, religion, etc. Violence is often perpetrated by the state, including in the context of immigration enforcement.
- The majority of trafficking is labour trafficking, not sex work. Trafficking must end, particularly through the full implementation of international labour standards in national law. But “trafficking” must not be used as an excuse to further militarize borders, increase enforcement and criminalize people who transport migrants and migrants themselves.
- The “protection of women” must not be utilized to criminalize migrant men and exacerbate xenophobia in the name of “women’s rights.”
- “Migrant women’s contribution to development” is a framing that instrumentalizes women’s labour rather than affirming women’s human rights and women’s agency.
- “Managed migration” begs the question, management of whom (it’s not all migrants), by whom, for whom, for what purpose? It is a model that benefits both countries of origin and destination at the expense of migrants’ rights.

A gender analysis of women in migration and a clear commitment to women’s human rights and gender equality in home, transit and destination countries must:

- Situate women in migration in the context of the current global economy, which drives human mobility. Failed development policies, global economic shocks, and corporate investments are driving displacement and a growing demand for women’s low-wage, precarious labor. Women’s paid and unpaid labor in the global economy cannot be an afterthought—this work greases the wheels of the entire system—in the home, the workplace, the community, and fills gaps in services that the state should provide. Increasingly this labor is “moved” from one place to another to meet the need of new sites in the global assembly line. Migrant women supply the care work for financial centers and aging populations in the global north. Women’s labour is at the very heart of the development agenda and must be addressed in the context of human rights.
- Recognize the rights and agency of women rather than reinforcing gendered power relations.
- Take into account the complexity of women’s status due to race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national status and other factors, as well as dominant discourses that seek to pit one identity group against another.
- Recognize that women are not a “group” to be added on to the analysis and policy frameworks, we are half of the world’s population and half of all international migrants.
- Recognize that human rights are universal for all, and states have the obligation to promote and protect these rights. We cannot lift up one group as more deserving of rights when they must be extended to all.
- Work to protect *women’s rights*, not protect women. Often efforts to protect migrant women lead to worse outcomes. An example is age limitations for migrant contracts which lead young women to migrate through more dangerous and precarious channels. This limits women’s autonomy and enjoyment of rights.