



## **Inclusive Development**

### **Civil Society Days GFMD 2016, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

#### **Racism & Xenophobia**

Today, we are witnessing an intensification of xenophobia and racism including racist violence, hate speech, and islamophobia against asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. The emergence of political movements and political leaders founded on the manipulation of racist fears leading to the intensification of xenophobia has been fuelled in different degrees among some sections of citizens in different societies of our global community: fear of unemployment, insecurity in difficult neighbourhoods and of the pressure on public services, including schools, housing and health facilities. This fear draws more attention from the media and politicians who exploit prejudiced ideas that portray migrants and refugees as "the threat" to their way of life. The US has elected a president who has shaped an overtly racist, xenophobic and anti-Muslim platform. In Europe, the rise of rightist and fascist parties justify islamophobia accusing people of Muslim faith to be an assault on European values and way of life. Religious, ethnic and racial based discriminations know no boundaries and no region is exempt. From the Rohingya in South Asia whose faith put them at odds in neighboring countries, to South Africa, where xenophobic attacks on fellow Africans from East and West Africa regions exhibited similar fear of loss of employment, space and threat to identity. In this context, discrimination and racist attacks against refugees and migrants has become widespread.

Creating welcoming and inclusive societies in the current global economic system requires a radical and intersectional re-think of how we relate to one another in the context of colonialism, racism, nationalism, xenophobia, austerity measures that threaten the rights of workers, inequality, unemployment, poverty and patriarchy. Building solidarity between oppressed groups demands that we all challenge our own prejudices, the inequalities and discrimination in our own contexts, and the global systems of post-colonial power and privilege that create and foster racism, xenophobia and violence against women.

We are concerned when migrant perpetrators of gender-based violence become an excuse for racism and xenophobia, even leading to physical attacks on migrant and refugee men in the name of "protecting women." We must reject racist tropes about black and Muslim men. Stereotyping, racial and religious profiling of their sexual behaviour with absolutely no evidence to suggest that migrant men are more likely than other men to commit sexually aggressive acts, is both racist and xenophobic. In Europe in 2016, the rush to protect women was used to feed anti-immigrant and refugee sentiment and a backlash against newcomers desperately seeking refuge from war and oppression. This has disturbing historical echoes in the use of violence against Black slaves in the US, or colonised peoples in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East in the name of "protecting our women." All women should be safe from sexual and gender based violence, regardless of the migratory status of the

women or the perpetrators of such acts. Women are assaulted by people who have access to them, whatever the race, religion, nationality or country of birth of victims or aggressors. This is borne out by the experiences of migrant women in countries of origin, transit, return and destination.

### **Migrant Women's Leadership**

Women in migration are key agents of this change and their contribution should be viewed through the full range of human development—as social, political, cultural, and economic agents, of change. Despite, and often precisely due to the challenging conditions they face, migrant women are visionary and organized forces for change within their destination and origin countries. Migrant women lead change from their multiple identities—as workers, students, parents, and LGBTIQ individuals—in many public policy arenas from education, to healthcare, to housing. States should recognize and support migrant women's leadership in such areas as challenging xenophobia, establishing social and economic support networks, addressing violence, building workers centers to claim labour rights, challenging police abuse, and leading migrant rights movements to reform national policies. In origin countries, migrant women can gain economic independence, shift gender relations, and participate politically with new knowledge and leadership. They are leading civil society claims on decent work, public services, against violence, and for land rights.

Diaspora communities cannot be reduced to mere 'banks' into which countries of origin seek funding for development projects or host countries reduce overseas aid using the argument that diaspora remittances are a replacement. The relationship between diaspora communities, their countries of residence and of origin are more complex. The developmental role that women play in community- building in both home and destination countries should be recognized for its social and political value as well as being a cornerstone for creating transnational cultures of diversity.

### **Recommendations:**

1. In order to genuinely facilitate migrant empowerment and inclusive societies, states and private sector employers should adopt gender-sensitive and rights-based policies that create conditions where all women and migrant women in particular can claim full rights and social protections to enhance their capacity to participate in public life.
2. The focus on enforcement in migration governance works against inclusive development and actively promotes 'othering' and xenophobia. Rights based migration governance is essential for building safe, secure, welcoming and vibrant societies. Further, criminalising women migrants due to their migratory status or the work that they do to survive further marginalizes women migrants and denies their human dignity. The important role that migrant women play in the informal sector contributes to development and should be recognized, not penalized. States should therefore heed the call of the UN Secretary-General that: "*an interconnected world needs a dignified approach to human mobility, rather than one built on closed borders and criminalization.*"<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In safety and dignity: addressing large movements of refugees and migrants, Report of the Secretary-General, 21 April 2016

3. States should adopt and implement ILO Convention 87, ensuring freedom of association and protection of the right to organize, particularly for undocumented migrant women workers.
4. States should adopt and implement CEDAW, and in particular, provisions to ensure national policies that allow for the equal participation of women in political and public life. States should incorporate CEDAW General Recommendation 26 on migrant women workers, particularly provisions that facilitate social and political participation such as policies to protect against discrimination in all migration cycles, and rights-based education and training programs for women migrants and officials. In particular, under CEDAW General Recommendation 26, countries of origin and destination should institutionalize the “*active involvement of women migrant workers and relevant non-governmental organizations in policy formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.*”
5. Governments must recognize that women migrants often experience multiple forms of discrimination and must actively prioritize ending all forms of discrimination against women, regardless of legal status or factors including race, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, health and pregnancy status, or occupation.
6. States should provide access to justice mechanisms, due process, and legal assistance to migrant women and girls so they can defend their rights and confront rights violations in the workplace, home and community.