



# Sustainable Development Goals Beyond 2015 for Migrants and Communities

Women In Migration  
GFMD-Civil Society Days 2015, Istanbul, Turkey

***‘The 2030 Agenda fails to address the structural changes necessary to truly transform and improve the lived realities of women affected by migration’***

## **-Agenda 2030: Missed Opportunities -**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to be “a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centered set of universal and transformative goals and targets.” Welcome aspects include the universality of the new goals as well as a focus on non-discrimination, which recognizes the particular concerns of women facing multiple oppressions. We are encouraged by commitments to gender equality and women’s empowerment as both a cross-cutting theme and a stand-alone goal; a goal on inequality; and those areas where international human rights commitments are affirmed, such as the right to safe drinking water.

The lack of accountability mechanisms in the new Agenda is a serious weakness and a significant disadvantage against other, binding, agreements such as trade pacts. The Agenda marks a substantial setback from commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In the Beijing Platform governments agreed to advance 50 strategic objectives covering 12 “critical areas of concern” through very specific commitments including: poverty, health, education, violence, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision making, the environment, and the media. The Platform challenged austerity programmes and the impact of macroeconomic policies on women and acknowledged that the neoliberal model of development has failed the majority of the world’s women. In contrast, the 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer vague recommendations with little accountability.

Whilst the Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals include some good provisions for women in migration, the Agenda fails to address the structural changes necessary to truly transform and improve the lived realities of women migrants and women affected by migration.

The goal of addressing inequality within and between countries is important but fundamentally flawed in its target to control migrations. This limited understanding of migration puts the interests of the state ahead of the human rights of migrants and ignores that it is state restriction of regular migration and border controls which are responsible for irregular migrations and the smuggling of migrants.

National migration policies and practices, particularly circular and temporary migration models endorsed by the SDGs, prevent and restrict the movement of migrant workers and increase their risk of being put in abusive and irregular situations where they can be exploited by recruiters and employers, contradicting states’ commitment in the SDGs to “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, goal 8, target 8.8 (available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>)

The current refugee and migration crises show the limitations of the SDG's approach to both migration and development by exposing the necessity of migrating due to failed development policies, including austerity programs; the net outflow of capital from poor nations; disasters related to climate change; displacement due to resource extraction and land-grabbing; war and conflict. With its continued reliance on the neoliberal model of development emphasizing growth and an increasing role for the private sector, the SDGs perpetuate an economic model that *drives* inequalities and relies on the unpaid labour of women and girls.

### **-Contributions of Women Migrants: Beyond Remittances-**

The GFMD Third Thematic Meeting in Geneva on 8 September <sup>2</sup> noted that migrant women workers make significant contributions to development beyond remittances. This includes women's leadership, knowledge and social and economic contributions in countries of origin and destination. While the payments from migrants make up considerable contributions to the national treasuries of many countries (through VAT, property taxes, school fees, etc.), many of these same nations plead poverty when asked to provide minimally decent consular services to their nationals abroad. This creates an equity and human rights issue for those who are deprived of those services. Furthermore, the countries that embrace remittance-driven economic development have done little or nothing to recognize and facilitate the political representation of nationals living abroad, nor to assist with reintegration if they return home.

Whatever women migrants' contributions to development are, global economic processes over which they have no control still may and often do work against their efforts to provide for their livelihoods and those of their families in countries of origin. Women migrant workers' role in development cannot be instrumentalized but must be seen in the complex nexus of their choices, their lack of choices, their family relationships and their ability to claim rights, including economic and social human rights. Development agendas will certainly benefit from migrant women's leadership and economic contributions, but the SDG agenda must not assume that resources emerging from women's precarious survival strategies constitute development financing, or could provide any excuse for not fulfilling national commitments to ODA and shared global responsibility for development financing.

### **- Recommendations<sup>3</sup>-**

1. States should make good on their 2030 Agenda/SDGs commitment to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, and in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment, in the context of progressively realizing their obligations to the human right to decent work.
2. States, private sectors, and civil society should ensure full and equitable access of women and their children to health care, education, water, and sanitation as per SDG objectives 3, 4 and 5.
3. Civil society should engage critically with the limited and harmful framing of migration in the 2030 Agenda/SDGs and its reliance on a development model that is sustainable only through the unpaid and underpaid work of women and girls.
4. Women must be involved in shaping measures of accountability and monitoring implementation of the SDGs at local, national and global levels.

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<sup>2</sup>See "Contributions of women migrant workers to development: going beyond remittances," Background Note prepared for the GFMD Third Thematic Meeting, 8 September 2015, Geneva, [https://www.gfmd.org/files/documents/gfmd\\_turkey2014-2015\\_tm3\\_background\\_note.pdf](https://www.gfmd.org/files/documents/gfmd_turkey2014-2015_tm3_background_note.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>See also Women and Migration 2013 Advocacy Document in English, Spanish, French: <http://wgmwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/final-advocacy-doc-ENGLISH.pdf>