



## **Affirm the Rights and Dignity of Women in Migration on International Migrants Day**

**December 18, 2019**

***On International Migrants Day the Women in Migration Network (WIMN) affirms the bold agency of migrant women and all women in migration.***

Today we face a harsh global reality. Xenophobia, the criminalization of migration, development aid tied to border “externalization” and deportations, separation of children from their families, detention of both children and adults (often in for-profit prisons), attacks on migrant labor rights, the wholesale denial of the right to asylum—the hardening of borders occurs even as the demand for migrant labor continues.

***In the midst of this reality, Women in Migration Network celebrates today:***

- Women who choose to leave violent and precarious situations to migrate.
- Those who are resisting extractivism, the climate crisis and displacement.
- Those who are organizing on countries of origin, transit, destination and return, advocating for the rights and full inclusion.
- Those working to end immigration detention and those fighting to be reunited with their families.
- Trans women who are fighting for recognition, livelihoods and dignity against huge odds and targeted attacks, recognizing that migration is often part of their strategy to overcome obstacles to self-determination.
- Those—including migrant women workers—who successfully organized to pass the new International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.
- Intersectional feminists’ pushing back against rising authoritarianism—politics that include attacks on women, migrants, people of color, workers, religious groups, Indigenous peoples and nature.

Among the complex policies causing people to move internally and across borders are industrial agriculture and mineral extraction; land and housing speculation; and “race-to-the-bottom” industrial production which undermines land rights and livelihoods. War, conflict and drug-related violence drive millions from their homes. Effects of climate change increasingly interact with and exacerbate these threats. Climate-related displacement is a growing reality which must be addressed in both global migration and climate policy.

**All of these factors intensify the experience of women who migrate alone or with their families, women who remain in origin countries when a family member migrates, women in transit—often for many years—and women who are deported to origin countries or to a third country (in some cases without their children).** The impact of these policies which drive migration and then deny rights, are gendered. Undervaluing care work replicates in the opportunities open to most women migrants, often restricting them to the informal economy, without labour protections. Sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, including LGBTQI women, occurs through migrations and in the workplaces of migrants, yet migrant women and girls are often unable to access the necessary services—including sexual and reproductive health services—and justice due to fear of arrest, detention and deportation. National laws which restrict women’s rights both drive migration and make the migration journey more hazardous. Families are separated due to draconian migration enforcement policies.

Migrant women are often portrayed as helpless, a gendered construction that depoliticizes their agency and denies their leadership and decision-making roles. As agents of change, women in migration are demanding that governments guarantee rights.

**The Women in Migration Network calls on States to:**

- Make good on the United Nation’s new Global Compact for Migration’s Guiding Principle of gender-responsiveness, “*mainstream[ing] a gender perspective and promot[ing] gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, recognizing their independence, agency and leadership,*” and, more generally, adopt policies that affirm the human rights and dignity of women in migration.
- Ratify and implement fully the Migrant Workers Convention and to adopt, implement and enforce through labour inspection all international labour standards on decent work and occupational safety and health for all migrant workers, especially women migrant workers.

We call on States and the UN System to affirm the agency and leadership of migrant women and their role in developing migration policy while creating policy that respects and fulfills all universal human rights.

To end the demonization of migrants and refugees around the world we also need to address perceptions about the economic security of national workers. A “global” Green New Deal could generate decent work on the domestic front to ensure a just transition from fossil fuels to safe, renewable energy sources.

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