

GENDER AND TRADE COALITION
WEBINAR SERIES

A Feminist Lens on Migration & Trade:

*Women Reframe the Policy Debate
in a COVID World*

Advocacy Points

Webinar on:

9 April 2021

15.00 SAST/9.00 ET

Webinar points of discussion & advocacy

The intersection between international trade and migration patterns particularly in the era of globalised economies;

The gendered nature of migration and extractive labour patterns;

States complicity in enabling free trade while excluding dignified movement of women;

Whether Covid-19 represents an opportunity for a bottom up, women-centric approach to international trade and labour architecture

Trade and Migration



- Global migration and global trade policies may seem very far from the experiences of migrant women around the globe, yet they directly impact migrant women's lives.
- International migration today is an integral aspect of contemporary economic life. It presents both positive and negative possibilities for the countries and individuals involved.
- The rapid spread of the pandemic caught countries across the world off guard, resulting in widespread lockdowns that clamped down on mobility, commercial activities and social interactions.
- Migrant women are experiencing the worst of the negative socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 related to employment. Many employers choose to keep men on the job believing that they will not be as restricted by family obligations as women. This in turn is a migration 'Push' factor for women.

A world map is shown in the background, with a red speech bubble overlaid on it. The speech bubble contains the text 'Gendered nature of migration and extractive labour patterns'.

Gendered nature of migration and extractive labour patterns

- States have pushed for free trade of goods, services and capital while excluding dignified mobility for women and their families.
- Extractive industries and austerity programs *push* women from their home, while centres of low-wage industry as well as low wage service and agricultural jobs *pull* women to other countries.
- In the era of globalised economies, nations and corporations depend on low paid, mobile and often female labour force to meet profit demands while migration policies create barriers to mobility and criminalise migrants.

- Government policy makers face urgent questions about how to maximise the dubious benefits of migration.
- No international regime exists for migration comparable to the World Trade Organization (WTO), whose complex machinery and rules regulate international trade agreements, dispute resolution mechanisms, ongoing rounds of trade talks, and global trade regimes.
- The cost of this 'free trade' comes at a high price economically, socially , developmentally, politically, emotionally particularly for women and diminishes the role of States.



*States & free
trade without
women's dignity*

Is Covid-19 a woman-centred economic, political and policy ‘make over’?



- The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the inherent flaws of capitalism, a profit-driven system of winners and losers
- COVID-19 has illustrated that women are the most likely to experience job and income loss, precarious health and well-being, made more acute with the restrictions of coping mechanisms in the parallel, horizon economies
- The absence of women's voices in the resolution to the crisis is unsurprising and worrying. Male-centric decisions are pervasive in determining crisis resolution that are gender blind and even gender hostile
- Post COVID-19 recovery also needs to make upfront **investments in social infrastructure**, making sure that public institutions and services that provide care do so with human dignity, rather than profit in mind