

**High-Level Launch of the Policies and Practice Guide
to Gender-Responsive Implementation
of the Global Compact for Migration
July 21, 2021**

The Solidarity Center is the largest U.S.-based international worker rights organization. We are a member of the Council on Global Unions and the Women in Migration Network.

The migration of women workers continues despite and as a result of the pandemic. Many women migrant workers are forcibly returned to their origin countries, are laid off in their destination countries without any social safety net protections, or are compelled to work in conditions that are dangerous or in jobs deemed essential yet are treated as if they are disposable. They don't have the option to change jobs because of a lack of visa portability.

The pandemic has exposed the structural and institutional failures that women migrant workers face. This also presents an opportunity for women migrant workers and the organizations that represent them to advocate for and organize around improved migration governance systems and better working conditions.

I'll focus on two key issues.

1. Trade unions as an essential force to combat gender-based violence, racism, and other forms of discrimination:

Millions of women migrant workers are subjected to abuse and exploitation in countries with rising xenophobia and nationalist sentiment.

Trade unions are engaging in migration policy discussions to ensure that migrant workers are guaranteed full labor rights, including in the informal economy and in sectors such as agriculture. Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are tools that can effectively support women migrants.

Women migrants should have the benefit of decent work and full protection of core international labor standards, as codified by the International Labor Organization Conventions. Collective bargaining agreements provide women migrants with the ability to earn a decent wage, can be used to lower the costs of recruitment, provide migrant workers with more safe and secure ways to remit their earnings back home, provide access to justice, and also protect from gender-based violence, racism, and other forms of discrimination in the workplace.

2. Women migrants as advocates for their rights and agents of change: We must recognize women in migration are not "vulnerable", in need of "rescue", they are advocates for their rights and agents of change. Current migration policies create the contexts of exclusion, inequality and rights violations that put women at risk and in a situation of vulnerability. The migration discourse should not be about "protecting women" but about protecting women's rights. Migration policy must recognize the rights and agency of women rather than reinforcing gendered power relations.

Worker rights are human rights and these rights are universal. You don't leave them at the border.

Thank you.

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