

30 Years Since Beijing

Women in Migration still seek inclusion in the Equity & Equality Agenda

A briefing paper on the state
of women in migration
on the 30th anniversary
of the Beijing Platform for Action

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Executive Summary

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) (BPfA), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and endorsed by the UN General Assembly, was a milestone for women and girls across the globe. Ever since, feminist and civil society organizations have pushed the agenda further—bringing a critique of neo-liberal globalization; a feminist macro-economic policy approach; and an environmental justice lens to redress the existing inequalities.

While the platform acknowledged some challenges faced by migrant women, it lacked a comprehensive framework for addressing the systemic factors driving migration and its intersection with other forms of discrimination. Unfortunately, migration has remained a sparsely addressed area. Thirty years later and with nationalist populism on the rise, migration must take center-stage in collective multi-stakeholder work to advance the BPfA.

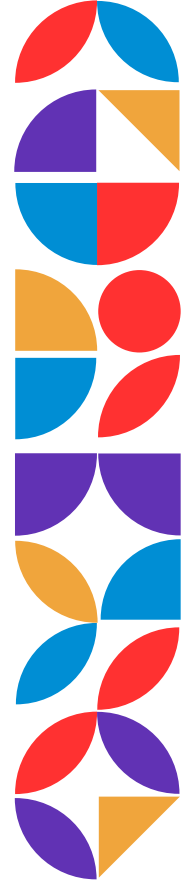
The Women in Migration Network’s (WIMN) program highlights the intersecting forms of oppression that women in migration face, including but not limited to gender, race, class, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion, ability, and nationality. In 2024, WIMN convened grassroots women from around the world to work towards an Intersectional Feminist Migration Policy that will affirm their rights and address their realities. This ongoing work takes place, amidst the socio-economic, climate and violent upheavals we are witnessing today.

This briefing paper brings together the voices of migrant women in the analysis of systemic conditions exacerbating the shrinkage of civic space and increased instability. This includes the impacts of neoliberal agendas, nationalist anti-migrant policies, climate change-induced disasters—such as droughts, floods, and extreme weather events—and wars and armed conflicts.

Collectively, we weave together the 12 areas of critical concern within the BPfA with the realities of migration that must be addressed. Proposing a set of recommendations for Member States and the Commission on the Status of Women, we argue that ignoring them will severely limit the effectiveness of efforts to achieve gender equity and equality. It is critical to integrate migration considerations into all aspects of the BPfA and to develop policies that not only deliver on the human rights of migrant women, but of all women, and subsequently the world.



Introduction



The year 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform of Action (BPfA). It coincides with a resurgence of authoritarianism and erosion of democratic norms. As military coups, violent wars, and human-induced climate disasters unfold—producing and increasing the displacement and dispossession of the global poor—we must name the systemic causes behind these realities. The Beijing+30 Review and CSW Revitalization provide moments to counter the backlash against women’s rights.

The five previous reviews of the BPfA, together with alternative spaces engaged in its promotion, archive a history of different approaches to policy making. The differences are expressed in terms of the tension between service-oriented remedies vs. systemic intersectional approaches, and a negotiation between state and non-state actors in shaping the global gender equity agenda.

Emerging from the 6th review on Beijing’s 30th anniversary, migration must be front and center of our demands, recognizing its urgent imperative and cross-cutting reality in all of the 12 critical areas of concern, while abandoning protectionist approaches of the past. Only such an approach can include all women in the commitment to universal human rights and build a united alliance to challenge the winds of the global rise of populism and regressive policies.



I. The Moment

The BPfA (1995) is a landmark document for gender equality and human rights. Yet, while migration is a central element in the achievement of rights for women and gender diverse people, the platform inconsistently tackles the issue and fails to address the factors driving migration.

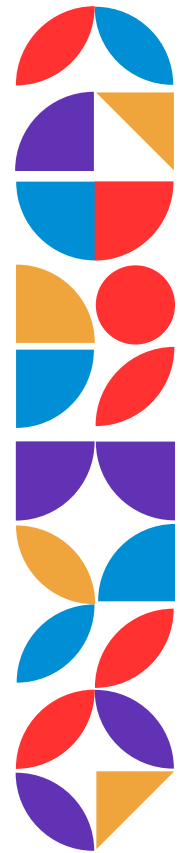
The Beijing +25 review (2020) reflected gender equity advocates' efforts to counter backlash, as well as changes in the global state of economy and labor, border regimes and health systems associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, the author and activist Arundhati Roy remarked that pandemics have historically forced people to imagine our world anew—that it was a portal we ought not to cross with the carcasses of prejudice and violence[i]. Yet, half a decade later with a lustrum of rollback on rights, the world continues to be burdened by avarice within its economy, hatred within policies, disenfranchisement of its societies, detention and deportation of its migrants, destabilization of its democracies, and criminalization of its poor.

On the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, human rights are on the decline—testifying that their ‘inalienable’ nature does not serve as a compass for political action and policy making. Also in decline are the power of the multilateral system and international law itself. The pandemic allowed several governments an opportunity to shrink the civil

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space, announce states of extreme emergency, and increase policing and surveillance. This phenomenon did not limit itself to national boundaries, but transcended them into international spaces, regional protocols, and transit territories. In particular, migrants found themselves stranded in borderlands





without redress and criminalized along with the civil society organizations coming to their support as policies on trafficking and smuggling were purposefully conflated.

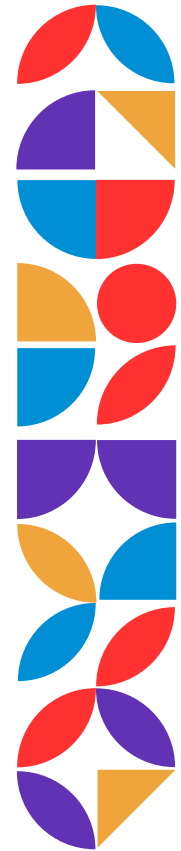
When the pandemic started to subside, numerous governments no longer hid behind the state of public health exception, revealing their repressive nature while many citizens responded to economic insecurity by embracing xenophobic and authoritarian responses. Extreme nativism, climate denial, increased xenophobia and anti-immigration policies, and conservatism around sexual and reproductive health and rights surfaced—alongside institutionalized misogyny, discrimination against Queer and Black and Indigenous People of Color, among other symptoms announcing the ascendancy of authoritarianism.

Using populist rhetoric, authoritarian governments claim to represent a “people” echoing historic precedents where economic grievances are weaponized for exclusion. Fabricating and reproducing antagonisms between “us and them”, citizen and migrant, neoliberalism and human rights, regimes attempt to delegitimize progressive feminist agendas, claiming they are not for the “average person” and are distant from the people. Populism has been mobilized utilizing anxiety, rooted in fear of economic instability and disintegration of the social fabric—allegedly brought about by immigrants.

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At the same time, the numbers of displaced people have increased around the world. The past few years have seen a disturbing global trend of democratic backsliding, marked by a surge in military coups[i], authoritarian power grabs, interventions, armed conflicts, and the erosion of civil liberties. From West Africa to Southeast Asia, military juntas have seized power, often violently suppressing dissent.

Simultaneously, elected leaders in various countries have consolidated their power through both democratic and undemocratic means—including undermining representativeness of democracies in favor of the political elite, gerrymandering, manipulating elections, suppressing opposition, and



dismantling democratic institutions. This erosion of democratic norms poses a significant threat to human life, global stability, and in particular, migrant rights.

Wars and armed conflict continue to cause devastating tolls on the lives of peoples, especially women, girls, migrants, and other demographics already suffering from disproportionate, systemic vulnerabilities of income, socio-economic status, and various forms of discrimination hindering access to life and livelihoods.

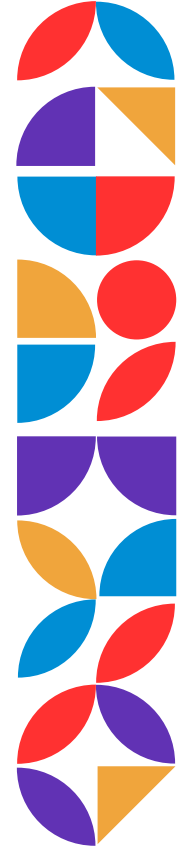
In addition to displacement created by wars and armed conflict, the surge in climate-related disasters—with several types of extreme events occurring across the globe—contributed to the precarity of low-income families, marginalized women and girls, and people of the Global South who bear disproportionate burdens in terms of climate impact.

Large-scale deforestation for agriculture, logging, and mining contributes to climate change by releasing carbon dioxide and disrupting rainfall patterns. It also leads to soil erosion, desertification, and loss of biodiversity, impacting

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local livelihoods and food security. Industrial pollution, particularly from fossil fuel industries, contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Air and water pollution also have direct and devastating impacts on human health and the environment in many parts of the world, with greater impact on the Global South, constantly disrupting lives and causing increased displacement.

Unsustainable water extraction for agriculture, industry, and urban consumption depletes groundwater reserves, leading to water scarcity, reduced agricultural productivity, and conflicts over water access. At the same time, a record-breaking heatwave in the Arctic in June 2020 led to rapid



ice melt and contributed to sea-level rise, threatening shoreline communities[i]. In 2023, a global heat wave affected many parts of the world, with numerous locations recording record-breaking temperatures. These man-made phenomena brought about destruction of homes and sources of livelihoods, leading to increased internal displacement and cross-border migration.

As climate skepticism denies these worrying human-made crises, it also denies their disproportionate impact on marginalized communities in the Global South, who often lack the resources to adapt and recover. Having contributed the least to this problem, these populations bear the brunt of its impacts. The same regimes that rose to power through populist discourses operate through denial: They deny the gendered impacts of crises on women and girls who take upon themselves the responsibility of food insecurity, armed conflicts, and wars. They deny the interconnectedness of the climate crisis to extractive, colonial, and patriarchal systems of governance and production and their responsibility in fostering conflict abroad. They deny access to refuge, to decent work, to equality-promoting public services, to decent life and to dignified migration pathways to the growing numbers of displaced people. Worse, they utilize the very disasters they manufactured and to call on citizens to “rally ‘round the flag.” The response has been the roll back on rights. Among these, the privatization of public services has placed a greater burden on women to provide unpaid care work in the home and community and has weakened their labor rights in the paid Care sector.

This current reality is sobering but must not become impairing. This reality is being met by social movements and civil society’s incessant work against the backlash.



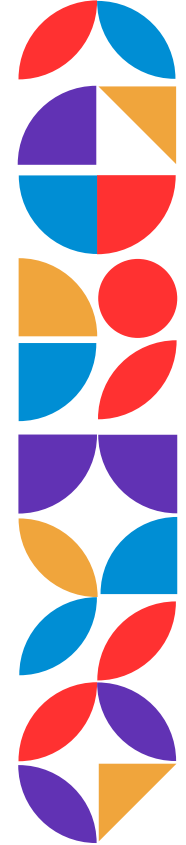
II. Background

Migration in the Beijing Platform for Action

Women migrant workers appeared in the [Beijing Platform for Action \(1995\)](#) (BPfA) document through only a brief mention of particular internal and external migration issues that significantly impact women and girls, often exacerbating their already existing inequalities. In particular, the [Platform](#) references the protection of women against exploitation and violence, their access to education and employment, and the elimination of discriminatory practices, recognizing the connection of migration with other critical areas of concern such as poverty, health, and violence against women[i]. The document missed out on addressing the driving factors of migration, including structural adjustment policies, neoliberal market economies, and country-of-origin supported agendas to foster the growth of remittances, among other factors defining the infrastructure through which women, girls, and their families migrate. Instead, the document referenced women migrants, refugees, and trafficked peoples through the language of protection and arguing for a gender-sensitive policy.

While calls for “gender-sensitive” approaches to policy might have been groundbreaking at the time, overlooking the power dynamics and structures producing and sustaining such vulnerabilities, such as neoliberal labor markets and the politics of criminalization within migration, left a wide gap. **The approach of protecting women, left women migrants wanting more: not only their individual protection, but the promotion of their rights.**

[The Beijing+5 Outcome Document \(2000\)](#) acknowledged challenges for women's rights that were formerly absent, especially with regards to women's access to decision-making spaces, the need for a gender analysis of macroeconomic policy, and needed commitments in light of technological advancement. This 2000 Outcome Document reflected the HIV crisis, the intensification of neo-liberal globalization on the Global South—including the debt crisis, structural adjustment programs of the IMF--deregulation, public sector budget cuts and export-oriented development policies—and a push for trade liberalization following the creation of the World Trade Organization in 1995. A powerful drive by some Global South governments and civil society allies succeeded in including important references to the negative impact of “globalization,” advancing a valuable call for feminist macroeconomic policy. While these are all important drivers of migration, the document did not explicitly mention migration in this context.





A significant advance in the 2000 Outcome Document is the recognition of multiple forms of discrimination. This was an early marker towards intersectional feminist approaches, which recognize the diversity of women’s experience and the multiple oppressions women live from a systemic perspective. This has been a reference point for feminists building on years of prior organizing efforts.

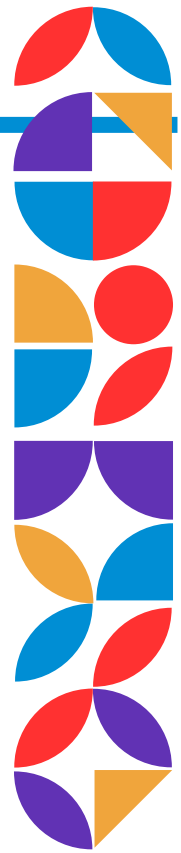
*The Platform for Action recognizes that women face barriers to full equality and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability, because they are indigenous women or of other status. Many women encounter specific obstacles related to their family status, particularly as single parents, and to their socio-economic status, including their living conditions in rural, isolated or impoverished areas. Additional barriers also exist for **refugee women, other displaced women, including internally displaced women, as well as for immigrant women and migrant women, including women migrant workers.** Many women are also particularly affected by environmental disasters, serious and infectious diseases, and various forms of violence against women[i].*

Another note-worthy development was the General Assembly reflection on the progress of women’s increased participation in labor markets[i] as a false indicator which hid the persistence of the gender divide and predominance of informal and unpaid work for women.

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At the same time, the Outcome Document fell short in meeting a number of key priorities of women’s rights organizations:

- First, the attempts to strengthen women's sexual and reproductive rights, particularly regarding abortion, were fiercely opposed by conservative



governments and led to no change, although the final document eventually reaffirmed existing language on women's human rights including their right to control their sexuality, and it recognized the significant impact of HIV/AIDS on women.[ii]

- **Second, building on the BPfA's effort to briefly address migration, language was added upholding human rights for women including their right to freedom of movement, protection from exploitation and violence, and access to justice** in their local contexts and throughout the migration cycle, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation.[i] Beijing +5 had viewed migration in the context of labor rights and emphasized the exploitation of migrant women in the informal economy such as the domestic work sector. A reference to migration in the recommendations affirms the rights of all migrant women, but only calls for policies “to address the specific needs of documented migrant women.”[i]

The 2000 Outcome Document also called for the integration of migrant women into the social, economic, and cultural life of their host countries, while respecting their cultural and religious identities. The cultural references were flagged by feminist organizers as a double-edged sword: while commitment to cultural integration of migrants promises greater access to spaces of life, work and recreation within countries of destination, the language on cultural identities risked strengthening stereotypes and binaries between the self and the other, or the national and migrant.

- **Third and perhaps most important, women's movements and civil society organizations demanded the commitment of financial resources** to time-bound targets, indicators, and concrete milestones in order to move the agreement from paper to reality.[i] However, the push to move non-binding international agreements towards policy action within a concrete timeline was largely unmet.

Little progress was made on migration in the [Beijing +10 \(2005\) review](#). The document acknowledged trafficking and forced labor, with special emphasis on informal employment and informal channels of migration. Moreover, the tendency to think of the protection of women rather than their rights or the systemic causes of their situation made a strong comeback.



The Beijing +15 (2010) Review made brief reference to the “disproportionate struggles facing vulnerable groups including migrant women” such as increased poverty, access to legal literacy, the unaffordability of legal redress, and lack of access to ICT. It noted that several countries had amended laws to provide routes to residence for survivors of trafficking, improved data collection on migration, disproportionate violence against women migrant workers, the creation of gender-sensitive asylum procedures, and the need for stronger measures against violence faced by women migrant domestic workers. It stressed the fundamental freedoms of women migrants, and called for a framework of integration for refugees.

The Beijing+20 (2015) Political Declaration (2015) does not mention migration but references rights for “all women and girls.” The General Secretary’s Report (2015) merely notes the need for quality services for migrant women and refers to national efforts on migrant inclusion—totaling two mentions of migration!

The Beijing +25 (2020) review finally made a paradigmatic shift in discourse by introducing the language of intersectionality, rather than gender and cultural sensitivity. With the new decade, links among climate change, environmental degradation, displacement, and women’s rights were elaborated.[i]

Role of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The Beijing Platform for Action is a cornerstone document for the promotion and achievement of women’s rights world-wide and is utilized in advocacy across multiple organizations. Among these, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) remains the most influential global platform for women's rights policy, although its impact has diminished. In the past, civil society played a key role in advancing the role of the CSW in shaping groundbreaking agreements like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including its optional protocol. But during the 20th and 25th anniversary reviews of the BPfA, civil society's participation was significantly curtailed[i]. **Beijing+5 was the last**



BPfA review that produced a negotiated outcome document; the subsequent reviews were relegated to summaries of national and regional progress.

This has been coupled with intense backlash by government members of the CSW regarding core elements of the Beijing Platform and the overall advancement of women’s rights—turning the Commission into a battleground with intense efforts just to hold the line regarding commitments made in Beijing. These factors contributed to CSW Agreed Conclusions and Review year political declarations that lacked genuine commitment or momentum—a stark contrast to the achievements of the 1995 Beijing Conference.

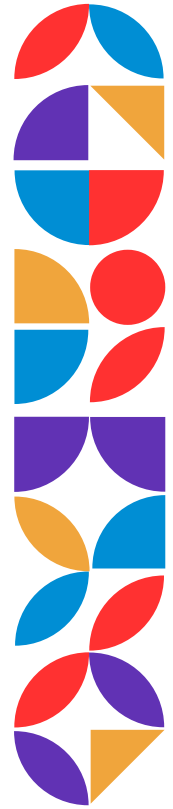
The Generation Equality Forum (GE), convened by UN Women in 2021, stated that “too little has changed”[ii] since the Beijing Platform for Action. To provide an additional space for transformative action, Generation Equality invited governments, businesses, and civil societies to become commitment-makers.

Through their Global Acceleration Plan for gender equality, GE proposed six areas to drive the action of the coalition:

- gender-based violence
- economic justice and rights
- bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights
- feminist action for climate justice
- technology and innovation for gender equality
- feminist movement and leadership

These categories echoed and condensed the twelve areas of action outlined in Beijing while recognizing the need to respond to a new context and to re-energize the process. Most of the 12 areas and these six themes interact with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all UN Member States in 2015. The SDGs include but are not limited to:

- ending poverty (SDG 1);
- improving health, including universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare (SDG 3);
- equal access to education and training (SDG 4);



- gender equality (SDG 5);
- decent work and economic growth (8);
- reduced inequalities where migration is formally housed (10);
- climate action (13);
- and equal access to justice (SDG 16).

The **Gender Equality initiative**, which continues, also brought financial resources and a mobilized civil society towards advancing the BPfA. In late 2024 the UN Pact for the Future created a process for CSW Revitalization, focused on policy relevance, effectiveness, and multi-stakeholder participation. This process will culminate in a plan brought to the 2025 General Assembly. At the same time, in March the CSW will shape its program of action for the next five years.

Today, the world is witnessing rapid change that merits urgent intervention. The 30 years of review and advocacy around the Beijing Platform of Action have been unsteady. Echoing the words of feminist and poet, Audre Lorde, that “there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives,” we recognize that sporadic mentions of migration are insufficient, for women’s rights cannot be achieved without also addressing migrant justice.



Migration as a Key Determinant of Progress towards Equity and Equality

While migration is periodically referenced within some of 12 Critical Areas of Concern in the BPfA, it neither holds independent status nor is mainstreamed within the totality of the vision for achieving women’s rights. **Migration, its conditions, and its driving factors must not be afterthoughts. Instead, they should be addressed within the context of each of the 12 areas of the BPfA and in the intersecting vulnerabilities created by factors such race, ethnicity, national origin, ability, and migrant status.** This would help to spotlight the barriers to women's rights for migrant women and the need to encompass full labour rights for all women migrant workers.

Female migrants comprised almost half of global international migrants[i] – some 135 million in 2020, including 70 million women migrant workers in low-waged jobs[ii]. Providing statistics on irregular migration can be challenging, but the “cautious” estimate was 58 million migrants in 2021[iii].

Migrant women and their families face precarious situations throughout their migration journey. Their realities are named in both the BPfA and the SDGs– from the economy and access to quality public services to decent work and the safeguarding of the environment. Researchers have sounded the alarm that women’s conditions could be worse in 2030 than in 2015.[iv] It is impossible to conceive of a way forward for women in poverty without addressing migration. As women migrate for multiple reasons, including the search of economic opportunity or accompanying their husband into the country of his employment, they face a triple precarity:

- **a life of poverty in their new country of residence**, at times exacerbated by debt bondage induced by the cost of migration;
- **precarity within feminized fields of employment** such as hospitality, service work, self-employment, and other informal sectors; and
- **the added burden of unpaid labor.** If migrating alone, in many cases they are heads of households. In the United States, for example, over one third of immigrant mothers are the breadwinner for their families[i]. The number increases when disaggregated by race. If migrating with their male counterparts, they are likely to engage in both unpaid and informal jobs.



Migration is a cross-cutting issue across the 12 thematic areas of the BPfA:

Women and the Economy: Addressing economic justice for women entails reflection on feminized labor. Often dubbed “Dirty, Dangerous, and Demeaning,” [i] [‘3D jobs’] informal jobs are unattractive to local populations who have more employment opportunities and protections. In addition to their frequent informality and the discrimination, racism, and xenophobia facing migrant women, such 3D jobs disproportionately employ and undervalue migrant women. On a macro level, neoliberalism has been central to undermining economies of the Global South, with specific harms for women and poor people, who constitute most of the migrant worker population.

Achieving equity for women through neoliberal economic policies is a contradictory endeavor as it is the very same economy that produces intensification of exploitation. Fleeing economic crises in their home communities induced by foreign debt, environmental degradation and historic colonial inequalities, they endure economic dispossession, forced to work low paid and insecure jobs. Simultaneously, as oligarchies rise to power, the political elites at times opt for nationalist closed economies. Whether through neoliberal globalized or separatist economic policies, the poor in the Global North and the people of the Global South suffer alike.

Education and Training of Women: Education alone is insufficient for redressing the challenges facing migrant women, for it is not a matter of knowledge and awareness as much as one of class, racial/ethnic and other discriminations, and restrictive policy. Low-paid migrant women, for example, work jobs that tend not to have an official accreditation by being informal. Many were unable to access formal education due to poverty, thus disqualifying them from certain jobs. Women who work these jobs are not low-skilled, but low-waged, making discourses about education as the “Great Equalizer” fall short of improving their situation.

Even in the context of a migrant or refugee of a higher socio-economic status, countries within the Global North might prevent the transfer of credits and obtainment of equivalence, while multiple countries in the South have made certain professions accessible to citizens only. Irrespective of their education status, undocumented migrants are excluded from formal employment, largely relegating them to menial and underpaid jobs.



Women and Health: Women compose a key demographic employed in care. They are both providers and recipients of health services. During any health crisis, women are most affected due to the increased care labor and among them, migrant women face additional hurdles. This divide in access to food and healthcare was most recently exposed as millions of informal workers walked thousands of miles to return to their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, with women and children being most affected. At the same time, wealthy countries increased work visas for skilled healthcare professionals during the pandemic, draining Global South economies of healthcare workers[i]. With privatized healthcare systems, health staff are underpaid, informal workers may lack basic protective tools, and migrant women have no social security or health insurance.

Migration status becomes a barrier in accessing the right to health, with undocumented women migrants unable to access essential public healthcare services due to discriminatory and racist policies and anti-immigrant restrictions imposed by governments. Reproductive health becomes an afterthought in policy for migrant women unless designed to deny such a right. Migrant women may be subject to forced sterilizations[ii], lack access to reproductive health services, and may be subjected to regular pregnancy testing by employers without their consent. Migrant women workers are often criminalized for maternity and for abortion in their contexts of migration due to their migration status, even where abortion is legal.[iii]

Violence against Women: Obstetric violence[i] is but one form of violence against women. Migrant, refugee, and displaced women are exposed to disproportionate danger, whether intimate partner-violence, domestic-violence, violence at the hands of state enforcement agents in transit or detention, or work-place violence that has no redress, especially if they are undocumented or racialized. For example, migrant domestic workers under national labor policies that do not recognize domestic work as work have no recourse to report violence within their workplace, simply because it is not considered a workplace. In addition, they may be excluded from laws banning domestic violence. Not only is the legislative framework lacking and access to justice difficult, but so are the opportunities to report such violence.



Women and Armed Conflict: The extensive list of ongoing wars and coups makes women, peace and security an urgent priority. It is no secret that women are the first victims of such conflict with their bodies becoming battlefields, with many stranded in borderlands, or applying for visas and seeking refugee or asylum status. Women also take on the role of caring for children, the elderly, the wounded, and others within their community, thus requiring higher levels of support. In health emergencies in conflict zones, female health care workers face the high risk of insecurity and violence, yet they continue to provide life-saving health care for the population. If applying for a humanitarian visa or seeking asylum, their countries of origin—often red-flagged because of armed conflict—are cause for the rejection of their application. Many cannot even apply when embassies and consular services are being shut down and their mobility is hindered. Likewise, during wars and conflict, citizens flee to safety and migrant domestic and agricultural workers may be left behind to fend for themselves with no protections.

Women and the Environment: Women’s mobility is also induced and hindered by the climate crisis, elevating the need for additional attention to women as they are displaced internally and when they cross borders. Displacement may be due to destruction of agricultural lands, from erosion, deforestation, drought, rising water, forest fires and floods, and to other climate and environmental disasters. Without the forms of sustenance they had previously, they may seek employment in the city or migrate abroad. They are at times trafficked against their will, choosing between the known evil and the evil unknown. Women migrating from the Global South where the greatest impact of climate change is felt, may take upon themselves the role of food-rationing during drought, famine, and the migration journey. Yet, they bring with them astute knowledge of adaptation to environmental change, and their local and accumulated knowledge.

Migrant Women in the Media: The racialized representation of migrant women in the mainstream media is most often based on sob-stories that center victimhood and savior approaches, inducing sentiments of pity instead of solidarity and replicating the trope of protecting women, not their rights. In rare cases these portrayals opt for individual success stories where the migrant woman pulls herself up by her bootstraps to access a decent life, while the flip side is blaming migrants who fail to do this for their own misery. With the rise of xenophobia, this portrayal frequently uses racial stereotyping of migrant women as culturally inferior or incapable of caring for their own children.



Policies that depict migrants as inferior (including those policies allegedly seeking to ‘protect’ them from such practices as female genital mutilation) also question their parenting skills—putting any child, including the Girl Child, at risk of separation from their family if they are taken by child services or their migrant mother is imprisoned or deported. Furthermore, children born to migrant women in countries where nationality is established through the male parent and/or in countries where women migrants are informal and/or where intimate relations are disallowed for migrants, are predisposed to the risk of statelessness, in turn creating an additional migration-related vulnerability[i].

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women: Such State mechanisms are lacking when it comes to migration. The governmental institutions which have the mandate to work on migration are associated with national security and foreign threat, not gender equity and human rights. They treat migrants as an endogenous shock to the nation. Several countries which have enthusiastically adopted Feminist Foreign Policies have separated these policies from migration, trade and finance, and national security policies. Government bodies specifically mandated to advance gender equity and equality must include all women migrants, regardless of status, in their work and decision-making processes. Far reaching national gender equality legislation that does not explicitly include undocumented migrant women, for example, leave them behind. Systems of financial and technical assistance to women should not discriminate between local and migrant, documented and undocumented. They must actively expand their outreach activities to be comprehensive, accessible, and risk-free.

Power and Decision Making: Migrants as a whole lack consistent representation in decision-making spaces in origin and destination countries as they often already come from marginalized communities due to their gender, class, caste, race, ethnicity, disability etc. More layers of vulnerability are added upon arrival to the destination country where they navigate their newly acquired migrant status, institutional barriers, lack of access to information and decreased access to justice. Migrant women are unable to access trade unions due to their precarious and temporary employment and visa status, such as in the case of employer-tied visas or kafala system. In many countries, migrant workers are deprived of their fundamental labour rights, in particular, the right to freedom of association and to collective bargaining. Organizing women migrant workers and encouraging their leadership within unions remains a challenge that needs to be addressed.

The situation is worse for national decision-making institutions, as they are conceived to foster citizen participation. On the rare occasion that a migrant voice is heard on such a platform, it is heard as a case example, not as an authority. When it comes to international decision-making spaces, such as the review of the BPfA, migrant women consistently face barriers to access the spaces hosting such reviews due to visa requirements, lack of access to formal credentials and prohibitive costs. Furthermore, the topic, ‘migration’ itself does not receive the ample space it deserves.

Human Rights of Women: The human rights of migrant women are being undermined. Their particular realities must be addressed in law and policy for their rights to be fulfilled. This includes all migrant women regardless of migration status. “Human Rights” may be used as a euphemism for citizen rights, for there are endless structural requirements necessary to take back, obtain, and maintain these rights. Migrant Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD) face threats and breaches to their own rights as they defend the rights of their communities. As a crosscutting issue for these 12 areas, migration must serve as a litmus test in evaluating the progress made on the Beijing Platform of Action and the expansion beyond it.





III. The Way Forward

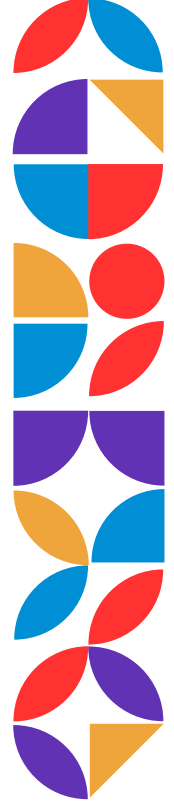
The Beijing+30 review comes at a time of growing displacement accompanied by growing hostility towards migrants and securitization of migration. Citizens' response to decades of austerity and their experience of deep economic insecurity is often exploited by politicians, blaming migrants for this situation as a tool to usher in repressive governments. This puts

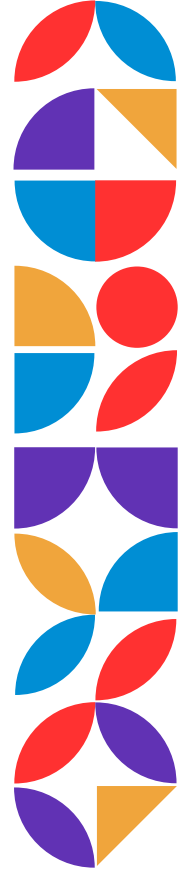
Feminist and civil society intervention to center migration, along with cross-sectoral feminist solidarity that recognizes the inter-related nature of our issues, is indispensable if we are to end the backlash and advance all women's rights.

women migrants, gender-diverse people and their families at greater risk of harm, including vulnerability to trafficking, separation from family and children, criminalization and incarceration and generational impoverishment. Feminist and civil society intervention to center migration, along with cross-sectoral feminist solidarity that recognizes the inter-related nature of our issues, is indispensable if we are to end the backlash and advance all women's rights.

In this context the Women in Migration Network (WIMN), convened member organizations, grassroots women in migration leaders and feminist allies from across multiple sectors for a Feminist Forum on Migration and Displacement (FFMD) in December 2024, to advance a bottom up Intersectional Feminist Migration Policy Agenda.

The demands that emerged from the FFMD are a tool against authoritarianism, grounded in the ability to build community and solidarity that involves all – both nationals and all migrants.





We call on Governments to:

Migration Cycle

Adopt a human-rights-based approach to migration across all stages – origin, transit, destination, and return. Carry out international cooperation, address root causes of migration and ensure dignified conditions for migrants, including access to justice, livelihoods, and protection from violence.

Criminalization, Detention, and Violence

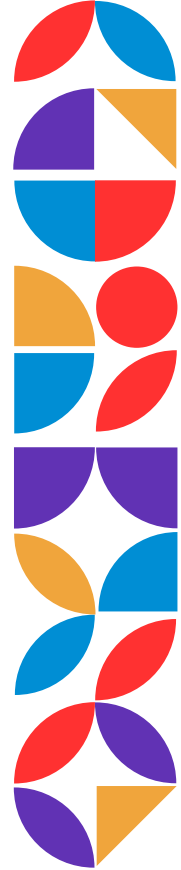
End the criminalization and stigmatization of migrants along with the elimination of detention, violence, and abuse within the migration system. Combat xenophobia and protect migrants from all forms of violence, including gender-based violence.

Regularization and Regular Pathways

Establish safe, human rights-based pathways for migration. Ensure and protect family unity and access to rights-based documentation for all migrants.

Missing Migrants

Urgently address the issue of missing migrants by establishing mechanisms for families to seek justice, improving data-sharing between countries, and conducting thorough investigations into missing persons cases.



Labor Rights

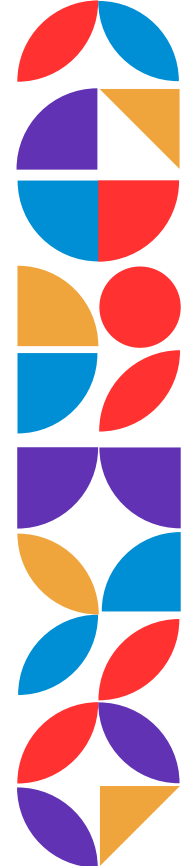
Ensure fundamental labour rights and decent working conditions for all migrants, including living wages, social protection, safe working environments and protection from exploitation. End exploitative temporary labor contracts that do not offer rights-based migration including family unity, labor rights and pathways to permanent status. Recognize the social and economic value of care work and the human right to care, based on a [5R Framework](#) to rebuild the social organization of care.

Access to Services, Social Protections and Justice

Guarantee access to essential public services, social protections, and portable justice for all migrants, regardless of their immigration status. This includes safe and non-discriminatory access to healthcare, education, housing, and legal assistance, while ensuring that the use of these essential services does not pose a threat of deportation and that delivery of these services does not lead to sanctions on public service workers who are providing them.

Right to Family Unity

Adopt and implement policies that support migrant parents and their children. Ensure such policies emphasize the best interests of the child, the importance of family reunification, and the need to address the specific needs of migrant children and adolescents.



War, conflict, intervention, and occupation

Enforce international standards, including UN resolutions. Establish protection mechanisms for activists, journalists, healthcare workers, first responders and frontline defenders. Halt the deployment of migrant workers to conflict zones. Guarantee the rights and safety of migrant workers in conflict zones, including their protection against violence and trafficking and ensure access to humanitarian assistance. End arbitrary detention.

Political Participation

Facilitate migrant women's participation in decision-making processes by including their voices in policy development, ensuring their fundamental labour rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining and granting migrant communities' accessible education and leadership development opportunities.

Narratives

Challenge harmful narratives that criminalize, stigmatize, and dehumanize migrants. Particularly challenge racist narratives. Recognize the agency of migrant women and gender-diverse people and address the gendered dimensions of migration.

Climate Change

Recognize the impact of climate change on migration, promote climate justice, just and equitable transition and implement human-rights-based responses to climate-induced displacement. Challenge temporary work permits for those displaced due to climate, which undermine labor rights and migrant rights. Address the root causes of climate change, hold polluters accountable, promote quality public services to support adaptation and resilience, and protect the rights of displaced communities.

We urge the UN Commission on the Status of Women to:

Center Migration

Center migration as a critical emerging priority for the achievement of gender equity and equality as well as a cross-cutting element of all 12 Critical Areas of Concern. Make migration a theme in the next five-year agenda.

Center Civil Society Representation

Ensure civil society's access to the BPfA review processes and the Commission on the Status of Women, especially grassroots and smaller organizations, and migrant women's organizations. This includes credentials, visas, language accessibility and funding. Facilitate their participation within government and side events.

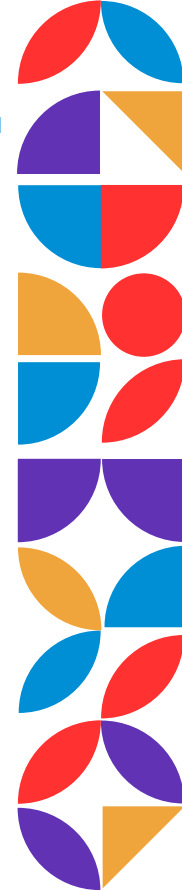


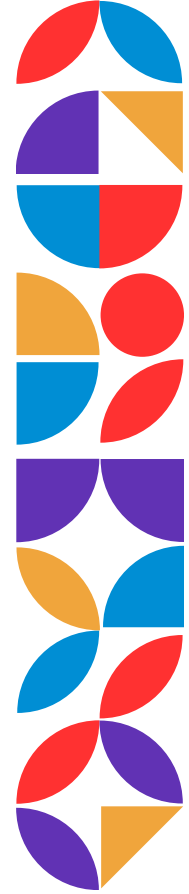
Conclusion

Migrant Rights are Women and Human Rights, present in every facet of policymaking and life, and therefore must be addressed in the full context of the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN gender equality agenda. Authoritarian governments antagonistic to civil liberties have gained power by exploiting public anxieties to fuel xenophobia while criminalizing and dehumanizing migrants. This not only violates the human rights of migrants but also undermines democratic principles, women's rights, and social and economic gains for all. Issues are multiple and diverse, but the solution is common: solidarity in every cause and every space--not forgoing migrants, but centering their justice in every political demand. An Intersectional Feminist Migration Policy is not just for migrants, it is crucial for countering the tide of authoritarianism and building a more just and equitable world for all.

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