Summary Report

Feminist Forum on Migration and Displacement

30 November and 1 December 2024

Bangkok, Thailand

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Executive Summary

The Feminist Forum on Migration and Displacement (FFMD) on 30 November and 1 December brought together 110 participants from over 35 countries. The forum explored the unique challenges faced by migrant and displaced women and gender-diverse people, developed strategies for advancing their rights, and contributed to shaping a bottom-up, intersectional feminist migration policy.

Through in-depth discussions across seven thematic sessions, participants addressed critical issues such as climate-induced migration, care work, securitization of borders, conflict, discrimination, pathways to legal migration, and political participation. The FFMD emphasized the importance of integrating women's rights into a human-rights based migration policy and advocating for migrant rights in feminist activism at local, regional, and global levels. The forum concluded with concrete recommendations and a collective commitment to building a more just and equitable future for all, with an emphasis on migrant women and gender-diverse people.

The FFMD was co-organized by the Women in Migration Network (WIMN); Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW); International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF); International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC); Migrant-Rights.org (GCC region); Solidarity Center; Trade Collective (South Africa); Unitarian Universalist Service Committee; and Wo-Mi Women Migrants (Denmark). This collaboration was crucial in shaping the forum's agenda, facilitating discussions, and ensuring a diverse representation of perspectives from different regions and sectors. Two virtual listening sessions were held prior to the event to enlist participants in shaping the agenda and stepping into leadership roles.

Introduction

The Feminist Forum on Migration and Displacement (FFMD) was convened to address the intersectional challenges faced by migrant and displaced women worldwide. By amplifying these voices and encouraging collaboration, the forum aimed to create strategies for systemic change that center lived experiences. Participants from over 35 countries discussed the root causes of migration and displacement, barriers to migrant rights and the potential for cross-regional and cross-sectoral solidarity. The forum centered on goals to advance women and gender-diverse people's rights in migration policy and to integrate migrant rights into feminist advocacy frameworks on local, regional, and international levels.

The FFMD was structured into three main sessions, each designed to build momentum toward actionable outcomes. The first session, *"Telling Our Stories, Building Analysis,"* explored participants' lived experiences and collective aspirations for justice. The second, *"Identifying Core Issues and Exploring Power Dynamics,"* included thematic group discussions about key challenges affecting migrant women. Finally, *"Affirming Our Organization and Shaping Our Demands"* focused on consolidating strategies and demands to drive feminist advocacy at all levels. The forum's participatory approach ensured that migrant women's and gender-diverse people's voices drove the conversations, creating a safe space for all to have substantive input and encouraging cross-sectoral solidarity.

Throughout the forum, *intersectional feminism* served as a foundational framework for addressing systemic inequalities. WIMN's approach has focused on addressing interconnected forms of oppression and structural causes of inequality and discrimination. Participants called for centering the voices of directly impacted women in all decision-making processes and ensuring that advocacy efforts reflect their lived experiences. Solidarity and collective action were emphasized as essential strategies for achieving systemic change.

Session I: Telling Our Stories, Building Analysis

The forum's first session focused on sharing personal experiences and collectively imagining a world where the rights and dignity of migrant women are fully recognized. Participants articulated a vision of safety, equal access to livelihoods, and justice for all migrant workers, particularly domestic workers. Key themes included the need to eliminate xenophobia, ensure equal rights for all migrants, and guarantee freedom of movement. Participants emphasized the importance of creating a world free from patriarchy, where women can express themselves without fear.

In visioning an inclusive feminist future, participants spoke to the need to abolish exploitative systems such as the Kafala system[i], ensuring social protection for all, and ending detention. They highlighted specific issues in conflict zones, such as Sudan, Palestine, Burma, and Ukraine, with calls for a just peace and access to justice for those affected. Participants voiced the desire for migration to be a choice, not a necessity, and advocated for an end to restrictive border controls.

Demands:

Several key slogans emerged from this session:

- "Gender justice for women in all their diversities, including farmers, migrant workers, fisherfolk, sex workers, and refugees."
- "We demand our dignity, equal rights for you and me! Raise your voice, stand tall—feminist power for one and all!"
- "All displaced and migrant women, regardless of their legal status, religion, or ethnicity, are entitled to social protection and access to essential services."

Session II: Identifying Core Issues and Exploring Power Dynamics

Following discussions at pre-forum gatherings with participants, the program team identified seven thematic sessions, each focusing on crucial aspects of migration.

Thematic Sessions: Key Discussions and Demands

1. Climate-Migration Nexus: Adapting to a Changing World

Climate change is increasingly driving forced displacement and migration, with existing national and international mechanisms failing to adequately address the rights and long-term solutions for displaced populations. The climate crisis and related environmental crisis–including loss of biodiversity, ecosystem restoration, and pollution–disproportionately impact women's bodies, health, livelihoods, and human rights, including food security, access to services, and housing. Participants noted that much of the discourse on migration and climate overlook gendered realities and multilateral action plans are underfunded. Women and gender-diverse migrants displaced due to climate are often excluded from decision-making processes.

The discussion highlighted specific examples of climate-induced migration, including Pakistan, where the gendered nature of flooding has forced mass displacement; and Nigeria, where drought is forcing people into dangerous

migration routes and increasing the risk of exploitation. In Indonesia, deforestation and changes in agriculture have displaced communities, while in Latin America, frequent environmental disasters continue to push populations into precarious conditions.

Gender-responsive climate policies supported by gender-disaggregated data and women-led programs are urgently needed. Leadership and resource allocation must prioritize the needs of displaced communities, ensuring that those most affected by the climate crisis are meaningfully included in climate-related decision-making processes.

Demands:

Participants highlighted the urgent need for climate policies that address the gendered impact of displacement and ensure equitable access to essential resources. Key demands included:

- Build community-specific solutions that address the unique needs of displaced populations.
- Leverage solidarity networks to strengthen migrant and climate justice movements.
- Ensure equitable access to critical resources such as water, land, and housing.
- Advocate for gender-responsive climate policies that center the experiences of displaced women.
- Collect gender-disaggregated data to better understand the gendered impact of climate change.
- Support women-led programs focused on climate adaptation and resilience.
- Guarantee access to resources that help affected women rebuild their lives.

2. Care Work and Temporary Labor: Rethinking Paid, Unpaid, and Contractual Systems

The systemic exploitation and undervaluation of migrant women's care work is particularly severe under arrangements like the Kafala system. These workers face extensive challenges that prevent them from exercising fundamental labor rights, including safe working conditions, wage protections, and the right to organize. Women migrant care workers are especially susceptible to abuse, including gender-based violence, discrimination, wage theft, passport confiscation, and

trauma–with those who are undocumented or employed in the informal care economy facing the greatest risks.

Migrant women across regions face numerous systemic challenges that expose them to exploitation and precarity. Participants described numerous country-specific challenges across regions and how women are impacted. At the institutional level, countries like Malaysia prohibit migrant workers from unionizing and provide minimal social protection, while a system of constantly changing contractors prevents workers from establishing labor rights. This institutional vulnerability is exacerbated by financial exploitation, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, where high recruitment fees and passport confiscation leave workers trapped in abusive situations. The exploitation is especially severe in domestic work, as evidenced in Kazakhstan, where workers (including minors) care for multiple children while managing household duties with limited support, and often facing harassment and sexual exploitation.

Across regions, domestic workers and nannies endure grueling conditions: extended work hours without holidays, lack of negotiating power, wage theft, discrimination, and sexual violence. Some face extreme forms of exploitation, including trafficking and "womb rental" practices. These challenges are compounded by documentation issues, with identity theft in the Philippines forcing women into high-risk migration. The situation is further complicated by circular migration systems that deliberately prevent workers from gaining long-term rights or protections.

Underlying these issues are deep-rooted structural barriers: patriarchal norms that devalue care work, leaving women underpaid or unpaid and pushing many into undocumented migration where abuse risks increase; and caste-based discrimination that excludes certain workers from social protections. In the Gulf, nationality-based wage discrimination is another systemic issue, with workers from Ethiopia and Southeast Asia often earning significantly less than their counterparts from Arab countries or the West for the same roles, as seen in sectors like domestic work and hospitality. Ultimately, persistent poverty, conflict, and war continue driving women into precarious labor markets, where legal and financial risks further entrench their vulnerability to exploitation.

Demands:

To address these challenges, participants called for urgent reforms to protect migrant workers' rights and ensure fair working conditions. Key demands included:

- Ratify and implement the International Labor Organization's Convention 189 to recognize domestic work as formal labor.

- Establish gender-sensitive, rights-based safe, regular, and well-regulated migration pathways.
- Abolish exploitative systems like Kafala that restrict migrant workers' rights.
- Implement strong anti-corruption measures targeting recruitment agencies.
- Ensure women migrant workers are actively involved in policy discussions.

3. Militarized Borders and Criminalization

The increased securitization and militarization of borders is heightening the risk to the lives and rights of migrants, particularly those using irregular pathways. Participants discussed the criminalization of migration and human rights abuses associated with militarized border enforcement and the impact on women's bodies and health. They shared accounts of arbitrary detention, massive deportations, and barriers to legal pathways for migration, with many migrants facing systemic exclusion from legal protections and essential services. In countries like Thailand and Mexico, complex documentation processes, high costs, and inconsistent enforcement of laws leave migrants, especially women, subject to abuse, exploitation, and deportation.

Participants noted that entities like Frontex (a European Union institution) enforce harsh border control measures through pushbacks, arbitrary arrests, and border externalization. This militarized approach has led to severe rights violations, including the detention of pregnant women, family separation, unsafe conditions for undocumented migrants, and limited access to public services and the justice system. Women and marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted, and neo-colonial power relationships and racial discrimination are reinforced.

Demands:

Participants emphasized the urgent need for migration policies prioritizing human rights, dignity, and justice. Key demands included:

- Decriminalize migration and establish rights-based regular pathways.
- Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families.
- Abolish militarized border regimes, including Frontex and the US-Mexico border enforcement system.

- Redirect resources from border enforcement to community-based migrant support services.
- Strengthen civil society organizing to hold governments accountable and advocate for humane migration policies.

4. Impacts of War and Conflict: Refugee Realities and Challenges of Occupation

War, conflict, intervention, and occupation are significant drivers of forced migration and displacement, disproportionately affecting migrant women and gender-diverse individuals. Women living in conflict zones face heightened risks of gender-based violence, trafficking, and exploitation and are at higher risk of GBV, human trafficking, and exclusion from humanitarian aid, including essential services such as food, shelter, and healthcare. The reality is particularly grim in places like Palestine, Lebanon, and Sudan where migrants and internally displaced people find themselves trapped in war-torn areas, abandoned by their employers, and excluded from humanitarian assistance. Many cannot access even basic necessities like food, shelter, and healthcare, while those who suffer physical and emotional trauma are left without support.

Issues affecting women and marginalized groups are often overlooked, while decision-making remains dominated by military actors. Migrants are frequently forced into armed conflicts or displacement and civil society organizations working to assist them face criminalization and restrictions. For instance, during the Israeli offensive on Lebanon that began in September 2024, migrant workers in Lebanon, primarily women employed as domestic workers, found themselves in precarious situations. Many were abandoned by their employers in conflict zones, particularly in the southern suburbs of Beirut, areas heavily targeted due to their association with Hezbollah. These workers, often bound by the restrictive Kafala system, faced significant challenges in seeking safety, with limited access to shelters and humanitarian assistance. Civil society organizations attempting to aid these migrants faced obstacles, as government-run shelters prioritized Lebanese citizens, leaving many migrants without support.

In the recent war in Gaza, the Israeli parliament passed a law in October 2024 banning the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) from operating inside Israel. Amnesty International labeled this legislation as effectively criminalizing humanitarian aid, as UNRWA has been instrumental in providing essential services such as food, water, medical aid, education, and shelter to nearly 2 million Palestinians in Gaza. The ban not only disrupts the delivery of critical assistance but also undermines the rights of

Palestinian refugees, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the region.

Demands:

Participants called for the enforcement of international standards, including UN resolutions, and emphasized the urgent need to prioritize the safety, rights, and dignity of migrant workers, particularly in crises. Protection mechanisms for activists, journalists, and frontline defenders are also needed. Key demands included:

- Halt the deployment of migrant workers to conflict zones to prevent further exploitation and harm.
- Protect domestic workers in Lebanon, ensuring their rights and safety amid ongoing instability.
- Prevent arbitrary detention of migrant workers and advocating for due process protections.
- Ensure accountability for war crimes, including through collective economic pressure on responsible actors.
- Protect Sudanese women from violence, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation.
- Implement the MICIC (Migrants in Countries in Crisis) Guidelines to enhance migrant protection in crises.
- Amplifying the voices of those directly affected and creating platforms for their advocacy and visibility.

5. Challenging Discrimination: Tackling Racism, Xenophobia, Gender-Based Violence, and Identity Bias

Participants noted the rising levels of violence and discrimination–fueled by xenophobia, racism, homophobia, transphobia, stigmatization, ableism, Islamophobia, and gender-based violence. They highlighted the systemic oppression faced by migrant women, LGBTQI+ communities, people with disabilities, and racialized groups in migration contexts. The discussions emphasized how multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination exclude people from economic opportunities, access to essential services, and legal protections. Harmful narratives portray migrants either as invaders or heroes.

For example, in Germany, whiteness and heteronormative family structures are prioritized in access to resources, marginalizing migrant families who do not fit this

model. In Thailand and Southeast Asia, the deportation policies against pregnant women force the separation of migrant families. Migrants with disabilities face additional layers of discrimination and may face heightened barriers to justice. Linguistic exclusion was a recurring theme, with male-dominated interpretation services posing further challenges for women survivors of gender-based violence. The sexualization and prejudice against Latina women, the dehumanization of migrants, and the failure to address gender-specific risks during deportations were also named.

Structural discrimination impacts women migrant workers in sectors like construction, where they are paid less than men. In Malaysia, restrictive temporary labor contracts prohibit migrant women workers from becoming pregnant. They can lose their jobs and face stigma in origin and destination countries if they do become pregnant (even if due to sexual violence.)

Demands:

Participants called for migration policies that acknowledge diverse identities and lived realities alongside increased investment in intersectional feminist programs and the promotion of language justice. Key demands included:

- Invest in intersectional feminist programs that address migrants' needs.
- Ensure inclusive services that promote social and economic inclusion for marginalized migrant communities.
- Promote language justice through interpretation services and inclusive policies.
- Build cross-border coalitions to strengthen solidarity and collective action.
- Strengthen legal advocacy by partnering with human rights organizations.
- Strengthen legal education and advocacy efforts to raise awareness of migrant rights.

6. Building Rights-based Regular Pathways: Addressing Migration Cycles, Family Unity and Labor Sector Formalization

In many parts of the world, women seek temporary work visas through recruiters in deeply unequal power relations. In other places, women seek visas to cross borders alone or with families, hoping to find work and/or safety in destination countries. In both cases there are barriers to rights-based regular pathways that include high fees; complex bureaucratic systems; and age, gender, and racial discrimination that leave women open to exploitation.

Without accessible regular pathways, many women migrants are forced into irregular migration where they face heightened risks, including trafficking, sexual violence, debt bondage, and wage theft. In countries like Thailand and the Dominican Republic, restrictive migration policies prevent workers from obtaining regular status, further limiting their access to services such as healthcare, social protection, and legal redress. In Nepal, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere there are cases of statelessness, where children born to undocumented women or born outside the country are denied nationality or citizenship, exacerbating intergenerational precarity and rights violations.

Recruitment bans, ostensibly aimed at protecting women, have unintended harmful consequences. In practice, such bans push women to migrate through irregular and more dangerous routes, exposing them to greater risks of abuse and exploitation. In both origin and destination countries, women migrants face severe restrictions on their freedom of movement and association, undermining their organizing and advocacy for their rights.

Demands:

Participants stressed the need for system reforms that ensure gender-responsive, rights-based, and accessible regular migration pathways. These reforms must include formalized labor migration processes that uphold family unity and long-term residency while guaranteeing robust protections for undocumented workers. Key demands included:

- Create pathways to citizenship to provide long-term security and inclusion for migrant workers.
- Repeal gender-discriminatory migration policies that disproportionately impact women and marginalized groups.
- Incorporate human rights protections into all bilateral labor agreements to safeguard migrant workers' rights.
- Establish effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with labor and human rights standards.
- Hold employers and recruitment agencies accountable for exploitation, wage theft, and abuse.

7. Empowering Migrants: Political Participation, Union Rights, and Freedom of Association

Migrant women are often excluded from civic engagement and denied the right to form and join labor unions or bargain collectively, leaving them with limited

avenues for claiming rights. In several contexts, their political rights are disregarded, further silencing their voices in decision-making processes. For example, in Cambodia, returned migrant women are stigmatized as "opposition voices", while in transit countries like Tunisia, the absence of legal frameworks recognizing migrants' political and civic rights exacerbates their exclusion from decision-making processes, labor protections, and community representation.

The failure to guarantee freedom of movement, safeguard against detention abuses and ensure civil rights protections leaves migrant women vulnerable to systemic oppression by states, corporations and households. Participants emphasized that distinctions between refugees and migrants, or between national and migrant workers can create artificial silos, weakening collective advocacy efforts for shared rights and protections. They also noted that leadership within trade unions remains highly gender-imbalanced, limiting opportunities for women to take on leadership roles and influence labor rights discussions.

Demands:

Participants called for greater access to political participation, freedom of association, and union rights to ensure migrant women can advocate for their rights and well-being. Key demands included:

- Guarantee the right to organize and participate in collective bargaining.
- Ensure access to social security and retirement benefits for all migrant workers.
- Provide non-discriminatory access to justice and legal protections.
- Expand affordable healthcare and ensure sexual and reproductive health rights.
- Recognize migrant women as workers, including domestic workers, with full labor rights.
- Ensure unrestricted access to information in native languages to support informed decision-making.
- Allow job mobility without penalty so workers can change employers freely.
- Establish rights-based bilateral and multilateral labor agreements to prevent wage suppression and rights violations.
- Strengthen coalitions between migrant and national workers to increase collective power.

- Increase flexible funding for women-led initiatives to support advocacy and services.
- Promote leadership development for directly impacted women through training and capacity-building programs.
- Strengthen safeguarding policies, clarify government responsibilities, and hold states and employers accountable.

Session III: Affirming Our Organization and Shaping Our Demands

Local, Regional, and International Advocacy Strategies

In advancing migrant women's rights and feminist perspectives on migration, advocacy efforts must operate at multiple levels—local, regional, and international. Participants affirmed that effective strategies require cross-movement collaboration, knowledge sharing, and coordinated actions across these levels. Connecting grassroots initiatives with national policymaking, fostering inter-regional alliances, and leveraging international mechanisms are important to promote a decolonial feminist agenda that uplifts the voices and experiences of migrant women. Key strategies and priorities were outlined for advocacy at local, regional, and international levels.

Local Level

Map grassroots efforts and identify key actors engaged in supporting migrant women. Approach unions and women's movements to create a cohesive national agenda that integrates the lived experiences of migrant women. Support migrant women to bring their experiences and demands to national advocacy spaces. Increase collaboration among local actors and ensure alignment with national efforts to strengthen advocacy campaigns and have greater impact.

Regional Level

Inter-regional collaboration is needed, particularly between Asia-Pacific and MENA regions. There is a need for cross-sharing of resources, expertise, and feminist frameworks. Create tools such as a feminist migration dictionary and multilingual databases to facilitate knowledge exchange and build stronger regional networks. Advocacy efforts should also focus on securing funding opportunities and promoting joint campaigns while maintaining digital security in inter-regional communication. Participants emphasized the need to center intersectional feminist concepts and practices in all regional collaboration efforts.

International Level

Participants highlighted upcoming advocacy windows such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69/Beijing +30, March 2025); the Global Forum on Migration and Development (Colombia, 2025; United Nations General Assembly International Migration Review Forum (2026); and the High-Level Political Forum (Agenda 2030/the Sustainable Development Goals). Advocacy should also leverage international human rights mechanisms including the Human Rights Council, CEDAW Committee, and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, to hold states accountable for their commitments to migrant rights.

Participants called for a decolonial agenda[ii] in global advocacy spaces and the ratification of international labor standards like the International Labor Organization's Convention 189 and Convention 190. Engaging in regional platforms such as ASEAN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, as well as ensuring complementarity between the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), will further bolster international advocacy efforts. Women in Migration Network and many participating organizations take on this work, and participants looked to broader engagement, more coordination, and deeper involvement of directly impacted women in migration.

Recommendations

The FFMD produced the following key recommendations:

- Develop accessible rights-based legal pathways for migration, including pathways to citizenship, family unity and protections for undocumented workers.
- Decriminalize migration and redirect funding from enforcement to community-based support systems.
- Address intersectional barriers faced by migrant women due to race/ethnicity/caste, class, country of origin, disability, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, and other factors.
- Center the leadership of migrant women in advocacy, policymaking, and implementation processes at all levels.
- Recognize and formalize care work through the ratification and implementation of the International Labor Organization's Convention 189 and Convention 190.
- Recognize the labor rights of all migrant women workers, regardless of status; implement ILO core labor standards including social protection, the right to collective bargain and freedom of association. This includes for all temporary migrant workers and those displaced due to climate.
- Advocate for climate policies that directly address the needs of displaced women and ensure equitable resource distribution.
- Enforce international standards in the context of war, conflict and occupation. Halt the deployment of migrant workers to conflict zones. Protect domestic workers in conflict zones, including protection against violence and trafficking and ensure access to humanitarian assistance.

The FFMD and WIMN at the AWID Forum

One goal of holding the Feminist Forum in Bangkok prior to the AWID Forum was to bring a large number of women in migration into this international feminist space and to bring the message that migration is a feminist issue and is part of all other feminist concerns.

The FFMD organizers worked in partnership with the AWID Forum to bring messages from the FFMD into the AWID Forum, and over 50 FFMD participants also strategized on how to have an impactful presence. Activities included:

- The FFMD issued a statement to the AWID Forum, calling on feminists to put migration on their agendas as a cross-cutting reality, and to lend solidarity to women in migration.
- AWID provided space for WIMN to report on the FFMD in the closing plenary of the Forum.
- Two FFMD members were also able to speak briefly about specific solidarity concerns in the closing plenary.
- WIMN hosted a booth.
- GAATW and Solidarity Center organized workshops.
- WIMN organized a workshop inviting participants to further build a feminist migration policy, articulating specific demands.
- FFMD participants decided to introduce themselves in diverse workshops, asking "Who are the migrants," and responding, "We are the migrants."
- Some 50 FFMD participants organized a lunchtime march through the AWID Forum at mid-week to make migrant concerns visible.
- Participants were active on social media.
- One participant created a migration circle on the AWID Forum app.

Next Steps

The FFMD succeeded in consolidating a broad range of demands and strategies aimed at advancing the rights of migrant and displaced women. Reflections highlighted the importance of sustained collaboration, cross-regional solidarity, and the integration of intersectional feminist approaches into all aspects of advocacy. Suggested next steps include developing regional action plans, leveraging international advocacy opportunities, and building feminist alliances to ensure the implementation of the forum's recommendations. Some specific next steps include:

- **The conversations at the FFMD can contribute to more inclusive and intersectional approaches within the global migration and anti-trafficking discourses.** There were several conversations about additional cross-movement dialogues as first steps. Participants were able to have conversations among groups working on migrant women workers, survivor networks and anti-trafficking work to explore common ground, with some interest expressed in having a deeper dialogue across these areas of work. Participants identified potential dialogues within regions, across regions in specific migration corridors, or in thematic conversations such as migration and LGBTQ people, migration and people with disabilities, and migration and climate.

- **WIMN will be gathering inputs from the FFMD to contribute to a bottom-up intersectional feminist migration policy agenda.** This will be vetted by participants before circulating publicly. This agenda will be adapted to meet national, regional, and global advocacy priorities. One immediate place for these messages will be the UN-CSW Beijing+30 in New York in March 2025.

- Numerous migrant rights organizations were introduced to the AWID Forum for the first time. **Strengthened relationships and shared analysis between migrant rights organizations and feminist organizations** about how multiple priority issues intersect (climate, trade, migration, extractivism, conflict, GBV…) will enable new collaborations. We will explore other forms of follow up with AWID.

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[i] The kafala, or sponsorship system, defines the relationship between foreign workers and their local sponsor, or kafeel, which is usually their employer. It has been used in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—as well as Jordan and Lebanon. Council on Foreign Relations, *What Is the Kafala System?*, last modified October 14, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-kafala-system.

[ii] Decolonial theory argues that the economic, political, cultural, and epistemic violence of colonialism has entrenched systems of racism, patriarchy, and economic extraction, which continue to uphold present-day inequalities; decolonial feminism, particularly in the Latin American context, challenges coloniality and asserts that gender itself is a colonial construct.

APPENDICES

Links

FFMD Website

- Feminist Forum on Migration & Displacement Website
- FFMD statement to the AWID Forum
- Presentation made at the AWID Forum closing plenary
- Summary of demands, as a work in progress, that WIMN brought to the AWID Workshop for further refinement (this was done prior to the Feminist forum-- it is not an outcome of the forum). Workshop participants added their perspectives to these demands here.
- Initial Concept Note for FFMD

Photos:

- https://womeninmigration.org/ffmd-2024-photo-gallery/

Videos:

Nalishha Mehta, Solidarity Center and WIMN Board member, AWID Closing Plenary panel

Miriam Gonzalez, IMUMI, AWID Closing Plenary

Ninaj Raoul, Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees, AWID

Closing Plenary Media:

- *Care Work at a Cost: The Plight of Migrant Domestic Workers,* FES, 12 Jan 2025 FFMD Press Release

Feminist Forum on Migration & Displacement – a Snapshot

Participation By Region

This reflects where people are currently located, not country of origin. The large numbers in Europe and the US reflect the central role they play as regions of destination. The large number from Asia reflects the fact that the event took place in that region, making it possible for many local grassroots migrant organizations to attend. This calculation does not include observers.

Latin America	9
Africa	9
Asia	39
Caribbean	1
Central Asia, Eastern Europe	4
Europe	9
Middle East, North Africa, West Asia	12
North America	14
Pacific	1
TOTAL	**98**

Participation by Country

2 Argentina
1 Brazil
1 Canada
1 Colombia
1 Denmark
1 DR
2 Ethiopia
1 Fiji
2 Germany
1 Hong Kong / China
3 India
9 Indonesia
1 Japan
1 Fiji
2 Germany
1 Hong Kong / China
3 India
9 Indonesia
1 Japan
1 Jordan
3 Kenya
1 Kuwait
1 Kyrgyzstan
1 Malawi
3 Malaysia
5 Mexico
4 Morocco
4 Nepal
1 Netherlands
2 Nigeria
1 Pakistan
3 Palestine
3 Philippines
1 Qatar
2 Russia
1 Sierra Leone
1 Slovenia
4 Spain
1 Switzerland
1 Taiwan / China
13 Thailand
2 Tunisia
13 US

Countries of Origin also Represented:

Barbados	Costa Rica	Haiti
Bolivia	Cuba	Jamaica
Burma	Ecuador	UK

Seven Languages:

Arabic	French	Thai
Bahasa	Russian	
English	Spanish	

Participants by Types of Engagement

Grassroots/ Directly Impacted/ Organizer	58
Feminist allies, NGO leaders, Allies	40
Donors and International Agency Observers	12

Thematic Areas

- Climate-Migration Nexus: Adapting to a Changing World
- Care Work and Temporary Labor: Rethinking Paid, Unpaid, and Contractual Systems
- Fortified Borders and Criminalization: Detention, Deportation, and Regularization for Undocumented Migrants
- Impacts of War and Conflict: Refugee Realities and Challenges of Occupation
- Challenging Discrimination: Tackling Racism, Xenophobia, Gender-Based Violence, and Identity Bias
- Building Regular Pathways: Addressing Migration Cycles, Family Unity, and Labor Sector Formalization
- Empowering Migrants: Political Participation, Union Rights, and Freedom of Association

Participant Representation

FFMD organizers worked to convene a group of participants reflecting a broad range of lived experience, not only across regions but also across multiple identities, experiences of migration realities and thematic interests. The success

of the FFMD was to a great extent because of this representation, which included:

- **Black and Indigenous women** and people marginalized due to ethnicity and caste. This included, for example, a native Fijian, a Dominican of Haitian descent, and a US Haitian-American.
- **Diasporas** – second generation people who are shaped by culture and community of both the country of their parent's origin and the country where they were born. We had many, including those linked back to Haiti, India, Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, and elsewhere.
- **LGBTQI+ people in migration** – We were happy to have two "Cuir" Latin American migrant organizations from Colombia and Mexico at the Forum, as well as Lesbian and Trans representation in the leadership.
- **Migrant women returnees** included several women from Sub-Saharan Africa who had labor contracts in the Gulf States and had returned to their home countries, often starting organizations to provide education and support for those dealing with the Kafala system. In addition, Otras Dream in Accion (Mexico) was part of the facilitation team. That group is made up of young people who grew up in the US but were returned to Mexico with their families.
- **Migrant women workers** were the largest group represented at the forum. They came through labor organizations (Solidarity Center, International Domestic Workers Federation, ITUC) as well as from NGOs working to address exploitative labor migration schemes. The large presence of participants from the Asia region were primarily migrant women workers, as well as a group of migrant women workers from the Philippines and several African countries, based in the Gulf states.
- **Stateless people** – One young participant from Nepal shared that only fathers, not mothers, can register their children. She is excluded from many aspects of Nepalese society because she is not formally registered.
- **Youth** – the event included participants in their twenties and thirties, including in leadership roles. We did not have representation from specific youth organizations.

Thematic areas:

- **Climate** – The event gathered feminists working on migration and migrant rights activists working on the connections between climate and migration, as well as trade unionists addressing these connections. This included the leader of a Brazilian climate justice organization, a Fijian Indigenous climate justice leader, and feminist climate justice activists from Barbados and the US (Jamaican-American).
- **Conflict/ Peacemaking** – There was a significant presence of participants from West Africa/ Middle East who brought perspectives regarding war in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Syria. Representatives from Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Europe shared realities regarding Ukraine, and conflict in Sudan was also highlighted.
- **Economic Justice** (Debt, Trade, Tax Justice, Care economy): WIMN is a member of the Gender & Trade Coalition, which held a meeting at the same time, limiting interaction we had hoped for on these issues that are key drivers of migration. However, there was a significant presence of migrant domestic workers, and the Care economy was a central part of the discussions.
- **Labor Rights** were central to the participation and the agenda. The Planning committee included Solidarity Center, the International Trade Union Confederation, GAATW and the International Domestic Workers Federation, who brought delegations to the event.

Areas where we need better outreach:

- Internally displaced women
- Women in migration with disabilities and activists in the disability rights movement
- More regionally diverse LGBTQI+ activists
- Francophone Africa
- Caribbean
- Pacific Islands

Comments from Participants

A highlight for me…

- We expressed our own voices as domestic workers and contributed to the discussion.
- This is an amazing space!
- Community and solidarity-building
- A space full of interactions that allowed us to build knowledge and connections
- Seeing everyone gives me hope
- I felt energetic and at home
- Participatory process

What excited me…

- What excited me the most was how well planned the forum was. Having group sessions instead of panel conversations provided the opportunity for everyone to actively participate and share their insights throughout.
- Everyone got a chance to contribute in their language and within their own context. This makes the outcomes inclusive and considerate of diversity.
- I met so many diverse people from different countries and contexts
- I was excited to connect with feminists working on gender justice and migration
- Important to have a space that addresses multiple intersections of feminism and migration
- This allowed us to bring our local realities to a global space
- Transnational solutions
- Peer learnings and the formulation of collective demands
- First time in an international space, I was excited about learning how other regions approach migration & feminism
- Amazed to see the points of convergence despite distinctively unique issues and challenges facing women and gender diverse migrants from around the world

- Sense of belonging and solidarity
- New perspective of displacement caused by climate and war

Organization of the Event

Forum Co-Sponsors:

- Women in Migration Network (WIMN)
- Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW)
- International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF)
- International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
- Migrant-Rights.org (GCC region)
- Solidarity Center
- Trade Collective (South Africa)
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. and
- Wo-Mi Women Migrants (Denmark).

Program Team (Facilitation)

- Bariyah – IDWF
- Carol Barton -- Secretariat
- Catherine Tactaquin -- Secretariat
- Chus Alvarez -- Secretariat
- Fish Ip -- IDWF
- June SaeTang -- Secretariat
- Leni Alvarez -- ODA
- Paola Cyment -- Secretariat
- Nalishha Mehta – Solidarity Center
- Raina Bhattacharya - IDWF
- Sara Khatib – Solidarity Center
- Vivian Cartagena – GAATW

Donors

- AWID
- Freedom Fund
- Fund for Global Human Rights
- Gender + Migration Hub/ Wilfrid Laurier University
- GIZ, German Corporation for International Cooperation
- Humanity United
- International Domestic Workers Federation
- MADRE
- Minderoo/ Walk Free Foundation
- Porticus Foundation
- Robert S. Bosch Foundation
- Solidarity Center
- UN Women
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- Women's Fund Asia