

# NO BORDERS TO EQUALITY

## GLOBAL MAPPING OF ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON GENDER AND MIGRATION

A publication by  
**Women in Migration Network (WIMN) &**  
**Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)**

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# FOREWORD

Rising inequalities around the world, now exacerbated by the global coronavirus pandemic, heighten the need for strong, independent civil society-driven efforts to ensure rights based and gender responsive national and regional migration policies. To begin addressing this challenge, the **Women in Migration Network (WIMN)** partnered with the **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)** to globally map organizations addressing the intersection of gender and migration. As a network of migrant rights, feminist, labor, and faith organizations and activists from around the world, WIMN has a nine-year history of bringing an intersectional feminist lens to global migration policy, drawing on international developments and trends as well as the regional specificities of our members and partners.

This mapping project aims to identify and learn from the work of those organizations addressing the intersection of gender and migration through front-line response, research, advocacy, and mobilization. The project focuses on a mapping survey of more than three hundred organizations and networks and includes interviews with nineteen key movement

leaders and organizations addressing the rights of women in migration at the local, national, regional, and global levels. Beyond the valuable information revealed through this process, the project provides important foundations for strengthening connections among organizations working for migrant rights with a gender perspective—and bringing a migrant rights perspective to those groups working in other sectors, including women's rights, labor rights, climate justice, development, and democratization.

We hope this report will contribute to stronger analyses and more effective sectoral and cross-sectoral alliances and advocacy for the human rights of women in migration at multiple levels—in communities and cities, countries and regions, in international forums such as the United Nations Global Compact for Migration (GCM),<sup>1</sup> as well as in the fights for worker and climate justice, LGBTIQ+<sup>2</sup> rights, and other key arenas.

—Women in Migration Network (WIMN) and  
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)

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1 The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is the first intergovernmental negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

2 See glossary.

# NO BORDERS TO EQUALITY: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## REALITIES OF WOMEN IN MIGRATION

- » Women in migration's **access to services**—including housing, health care, and education—is the top priority for respondents.
- » **Violence against women** is a major concern for women in migration. Almost 60 percent of the organizations surveyed work with survivors of violence.
- » Black and Indigenous women migrants face particular challenges. The surveyed organizations saw **multiple discriminations** as a top concern for women in migration.
- » The organizations surveyed work mostly with **undocumented migrant women**. Irregular status keeps migrant women in fear, living and working in precarious circumstances, limiting their access to jobs, services, safety, and justice.
- » Women migrant workers are highly concentrated in **domestic work**, while also participating in services, agriculture, and manufacturing, according to those surveyed.
- » **Climate change** is an emerging issue driving migration, noted by respondents in several regions.
- » **COVID-19** has meant a loss of livelihoods, intensification of poverty and hunger, and the rise of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence for women in migration, according to those surveyed.
- » Most of the organizations surveyed are aware of the **UN Global Compact for Safe, Regular**

**and Orderly Migration (GCM)**, though few are working on implementation of the compact.

## TAKING STOCK

Based on survey data, WIMN and FES have made the following assessments:

### Challenges Faced by Civil Society Organizations:

- » **Limited resources and lack of capacity** make it hard for the organizations surveyed to go beyond addressing immediate needs.
- » **Feminist movements** have only begun to put migration on their policy agenda. More can be done to make migrant women's voices heard within feminist networks and organizations.
- » **LGBTIQ+ migrants' issues** are not on the agendas of most mainstream migrant civil society organizations. Specific organizations that defend and promote the rights of LGBTIQ+ migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees at national levels, along with international LGBTIQ+ rights organizations, have begun to change this.
- » The report also assesses **public policy challenges** affecting the lives of women in migration based on the responses of the organizations surveyed and makes recommendations for governments in this sense (see Taking Stock chapter).

### Moving Forward: Recommendations for Strategy and Organizing

- » Build **cross-sectoral alliances** based on the multiple identities of women in migration as

- well as their diverse locations and concerns to bridge feminist, labor, migrant, climate justice, economic justice, and other sectors.
- » Integrate **LGBTIQ+** migrant's, asylum seeker's, and refugee's concerns into both migrant and feminist organizational agendas and spaces and recognize the leadership of LGBTIQ+ people on the move.
  - » Recognize and address the **particular realities of Black and Indigenous migrants**, beginning with deliberate, inclusive outreach and alliance building with Black and Indigenous migrant organizations.
  - » Create spaces for dialogue among grassroots migrant women's organizations and **feminist movements** within countries.
  - » Recognize women's **urgent survival needs** while also supporting migrant women leaders in roles of organizing and advocacy to claim rights.
  - » Make use of the **Global Compact for Migration's Whole-of-Society Approach** to advocate for the rights of women in migration by documenting women's lived experiences and building a common advocacy agenda led by women in migration.
  - » Utilize **ILO Conventions 189** (Domestic Workers) and **190** (Gender-Based Violence in the World of Work) in global campaigns that center women in migration and build cross-sectoral alliances.

# IGUALDAD SIN FRONTERAS: RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

## REALIDADES DE LAS MUJERES EN LA MIGRACIÓN

- » La prioridad principal para las organizaciones encuestadas es el **acceso a los servicios** de las mujeres en la migración, incluidas la vivienda, el acceso a la salud y la educación.
- » **La violencia contra las mujeres** es una de las principales preocupaciones de las mujeres en la migración. Casi un 60 por ciento de las organizaciones encuestadas trabaja con sobrevivientes de violencia.
- » Las mujeres migrantes negras e indígenas enfrentan ciertos desafíos específicos. Las organizaciones encuestadas observaron que una de las preocupaciones principales son las **múltiples discriminaciones** que sufren las mujeres en la migración.
- » Las organizaciones encuestadas trabajan principalmente con **mujeres migrantes indocumentadas**. La situación irregular de las mujeres migrantes las mantiene con miedo, viviendo y trabajando en circunstancias precarias, limitando su acceso a empleos, servicios, seguridad y justicia.
- » Las trabajadoras migrantes están altamente concentradas en el sector del **trabajo doméstico**, mientras que también participan en otros sectores como servicios, agricultura y manufactura, según los resultados de la encuesta.
- » Las organizaciones encuestadas de varias regiones señalaron que el **cambio climático** es un problema emergente como causa estructural de la migración.

- » El **COVID-19** ha significado la pérdida de fuentes de ingreso, la intensificación de la pobreza y el hambre para las mujeres migrantes y sus familias; también ha provocado un aumento de la violencia doméstica y otras formas de violencia de género para las mujeres en la migración, según los resultados de la encuesta.
- » La mayoría de las organizaciones encuestadas conocen el **Pacto Mundial de las Naciones Unidas para una Migración Segura, Ordenada y Regular (PMM)**, aunque pocas señalaron que están trabajando en la implementación de dicho pacto.

## CONCLUSIONES

Con base en los datos de las encuestas, WIMN y FES han alcanzado las siguientes conclusiones:

### Desafíos que enfrentan las organizaciones de la sociedad civil:

- » Los **recursos limitados y la falta de capacidades** dificultan a las organizaciones encuestadas poder abordar otras cosas que no sean las necesidades inmediatas de las mujeres en la migración.
- » Los **movimientos feministas** apenas han comenzado a incluir la migración en su agenda política. Se puede hacer más para que las voces de las mujeres migrantes se escuchen dentro de las redes y organizaciones feministas.
- » Los problemas de las **personas migrantes LGBTIQ+** no están en las agendas de la mayoría de las organizaciones que trabajan la temática de la migración. Esta tendencia ha comenzado a

cambiar gracias a organizaciones dedicadas a la defensa y promoción de los derechos de las personas migrantes, solicitantes de asilo y refugiadas LGBTIQ+ a nivel nacional, junto con organizaciones internacionales de derechos LGBTIQ+.

- » El informe también evalúa los **desafíos de las políticas públicas** que afectan la vida de las mujeres en la migración con base en las respuestas de las organizaciones encuestadas y hace recomendaciones para los gobiernos en este sentido (ver capítulo de Conclusiones).

## Para seguir avanzando: recomendaciones para la estrategia y la organización

- » Construir **alianzas intersectoriales** basadas en las múltiples identidades de las mujeres en la migración, así como en sus diversas localizaciones y necesidades específicas, para tender puentes entre los sectores feminista, laboral, migrante, climático, económico, de justicia, entre otros.
- » Integrar las preocupaciones de las personas migrantes, solicitantes de asilo y refugiadas **LGBTIQ+** en las agendas y espacios organizativos de migrantes y feministas y reconocer el liderazgo de las personas LGBTIQ+ en movimiento.
- » Reconocer y abordar las **realidades particulares de las migrantes negras e indígenas**, comenzando con una participación deliberada e inclusiva y la construcción de alianzas con organizaciones de personas migrantes negras e indígenas.
- » Crear espacios de diálogo entre las organizaciones de base de mujeres migrantes y los **movimientos feministas** a nivel nacional, regional y global.
- » Reconocer las **necesidades urgentes de supervivencia** de las mujeres en la migración y, al mismo tiempo, apoyar a las mujeres migrantes líderes para organizarse y reclamar derechos.
- » Hacer uso del **Pacto Mundial sobre Migración** para defender los derechos de las mujeres en la migración mediante la documentación de las experiencias vividas por las mujeres y la construcción de una agenda común de incidencia política liderada por mujeres migrantes.
- » Utilizar el **Convenio 189** (Trabajadoras y trabajadores domésticos) y el **Convenio 190** (Violencia de género en el mundo del trabajo) **de la OIT** en campañas globales que centren a las mujeres en la migración y formen alianzas intersectoriales.

# PAS DE FRONTIÈRES POUR L'ÉGALITÉ: RÉSUMÉ OPÉRATIONNEL

## LA RÉALITÉ DES FEMMES DANS LA MIGRATION

- » **L'accès** des femmes migrantes **aux services**, y compris le logement, les soins de santé et l'éducation, est la priorité absolue des répondants.
- » La **violence à l'égard des femmes** est l'une des principales préoccupations des femmes migrantes. Près de 60% des organisations interrogées travaillent avec des survivants de violence.
- » Les femmes migrantes noires et autochtones font face à des défis particuliers. Les organisations interrogées considèrent les **discriminations multiples** comme une préoccupation majeure pour les femmes migrantes.
- » Les organisations interrogées travaillent principalement avec des **femmes migrantes sans papiers**. La situation irrégulière des femmes migrantes les maintient dans la peur, vivant et travaillant dans des conditions précaires, limitant leur accès à l'emploi, aux services, à la sécurité et à la justice.
- » Les travailleuses migrantes sont fortement concentrées dans le **travail domestique**, tout en participant également aux services, à l'agriculture et au secteur manufacturier, selon les organisations interrogées.
- » Le **changeement climatique** est un problème émergent à l'origine de la migration, ont noté les organisations répondants dans plusieurs régions.
- » Le **COVID-19** a signifié pour les femmes migrantes une perte de moyens de subsistance,

une intensification de la pauvreté et de la faim, et la montée de la violence domestique et d'autres formes de violence sexiste, selon les organisations interrogées.

- » La plupart des organisations interrogées connaissent le **Pacte Mondial des Nations Unies pour des Migrations Sûres, Ordonnées et Régulières (PMM)**, bien que peu ont travaillé à la mise en œuvre du pacte.

## CONCLUSIONS

Sur la base des données d'enquête, WIMN et FES ont effectué les observations suivantes :

### Défis auxquels sont confrontées les organisations de la société civile :

- » Les **ressources limitées et le manque de capacités** font qu'il est difficile pour les organisations interrogées d'aller au-delà de la réponse aux besoins immédiats des femmes dans la migration.
- » Les **mouvements féministes** commencent à peine à inclure la migration dans leur agenda politique. On peut faire davantage pour faire entendre la voix des femmes migrantes au sein des réseaux et organisations féministes.
- » Les problèmes des **personnes migrantes LGBTQI+** ne figurent pas à l'ordre du jour de la plupart des organisations des migrants de la société civile. Des organisations spécifiques qui défendent et promeuvent les droits des personnes migrantes, demandeuses d'asile et réfugiées LGBTQI+ au niveau national, ainsi que

- des organisations internationales de défense des droits LGBTQI+, ont commencé à changer cela.
- » Le rapport évalue également les **défis de politique publique** qui affectent la vie des femmes migrantes sur la base des réponses des organisations interrogées et formule des recommandations aux gouvernements à cet égard (voir le chapitre Conclusions).

## Allez de l'avant : Recommandations pour la stratégie et l'organisation

- » Construire des **alliances intersectorielles** basées sur les identités multiples des femmes migrantes, ainsi que sur leurs divers emplacements et préoccupations pour jeter des ponts entre le secteur féministe, du travail, des migrants, de la justice climatique, de la justice économique, entre autres.
- » Intégrer les préoccupations des personnes migrantes, demandeuses d'asile et réfugiées **LGBTQI+** dans les agendas et espaces organisationnels des migrants et des féministes et reconnaître le leadership des personnes LGBTQI+ en mouvement.
- » Reconnaître et aborder les **réalités particulières des personnes migrantes Noires et autochtones**, en commençant par une participation délibérée et inclusive et la construction d'alliances avec les organisations de personnes migrantes Noires et autochtones.
- » Créer des espaces de dialogue entre les organisations de base de femmes migrantes et les **mouvements féministes** au sein des pays, à niveaux régional et global.
- » Reconnaître les **besoins urgents de survie** des femmes, tout en soutenant les femmes migrantes dirigeantes dans des rôles d'organisation et de plaidoyer pour revendiquer leurs droits.
- » Utiliser le **Pacte mondial sur les migrations** pour défendre les droits des femmes migrantes en documentant les expériences vécues par les femmes et en élaborant un programme de plaidoyer commun mené par les femmes migrantes.
- » Utiliser la **Conventions 189** (Travailleuses et travailleurs domestiques) et la **Convention 190** (Violence sexiste dans le monde du travail) **de l'OIT** dans les campagnes mondiales qui centrent les femmes dans la migration et créent des alliances intersectorielles.

# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

In recent years, women in migration have been deeply impacted by the securitization of borders, the criminalization of undocumented migration, and the global sexual division of labor in which they are typically constrained to precarious, low wage, and informal jobs. Moreover, they face multiple forms of discrimination based on their gender, migration status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and class.

Women in migration are not only those who are on the move, but all women who are affected by migration, including those who have been deported or have returned to their countries of origin, and those who have not migrated, even if someone in their family has. This report aims to capture the concerns and specific needs of women in migration, but also to underscore their roles as agents of change, who mobilize to defend their own rights, fight for the safety and economic security of themselves and their families, and actively participate in civil society.

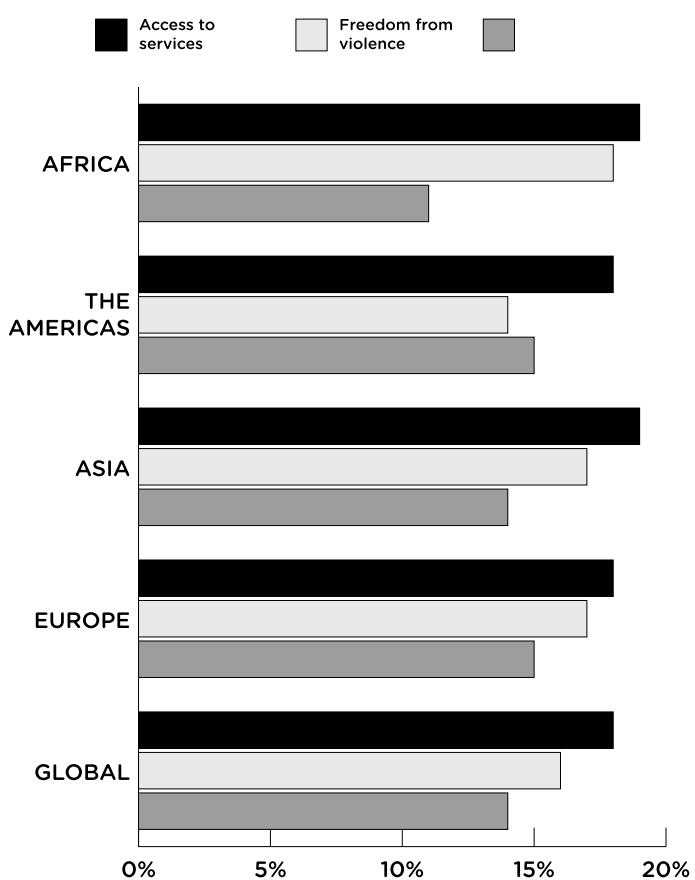
## KEY GLOBAL FINDINGS

### 1. Priorities and Concerns

#### Access to Services

Survey respondents globally and in each region (Africa, Asia and Pacific, Americas, and Europe) identified **access to public services** as a top priority for women in migration. Most service provision activities focus on helping women in migration navigate access to a range of public services, including legal assistance.

Top 3 priorities of women in migration



Source: Survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

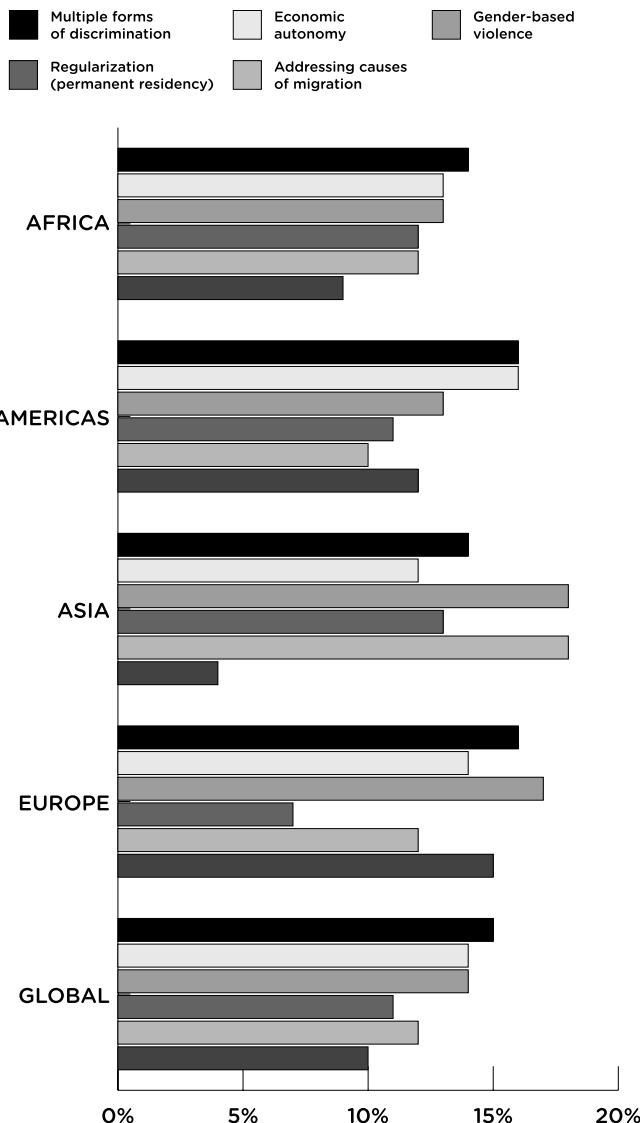
#### Freedom from Gender-Based Violence

Almost 60 percent of the organizations surveyed work with survivors of violence—doing awareness-raising and providing services including legal aid, mental health, support groups, and more.

## Multiple Forms of Discrimination

Addressing **multiple forms of discrimination** (gender, racial and ethnic, religious, class, etc.) rose to the top of long-term priorities for women in migration—reflecting the many ways in which their lives are affected by various policies and cultural and socioeconomic factors, often in ways that intersect.

### Longer term top 6 priorities of women in migration



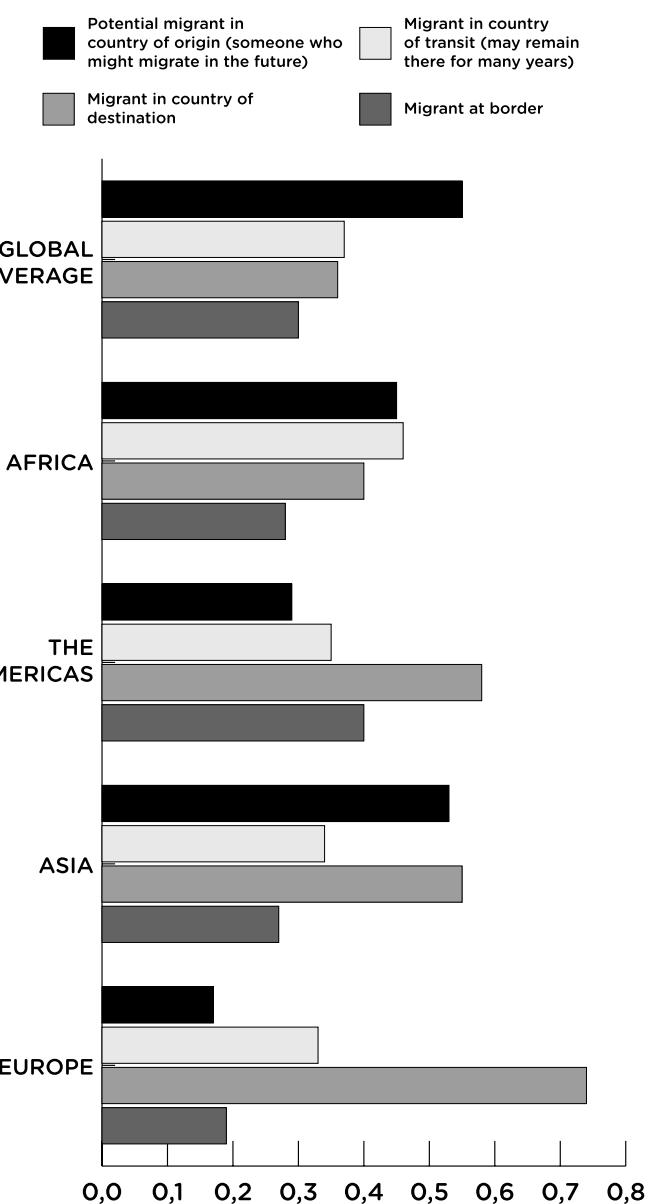
Source: Survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

## 2. Profiles of Women in Migration

### Gender-Related Aspects at All Stages of the Migration Cycle

The organizations surveyed work on gender-related aspects in all stages of the **migration cycle**<sup>1</sup>, and the profiles of the women they work with vary among regions.

### Where women are in the migration cycle



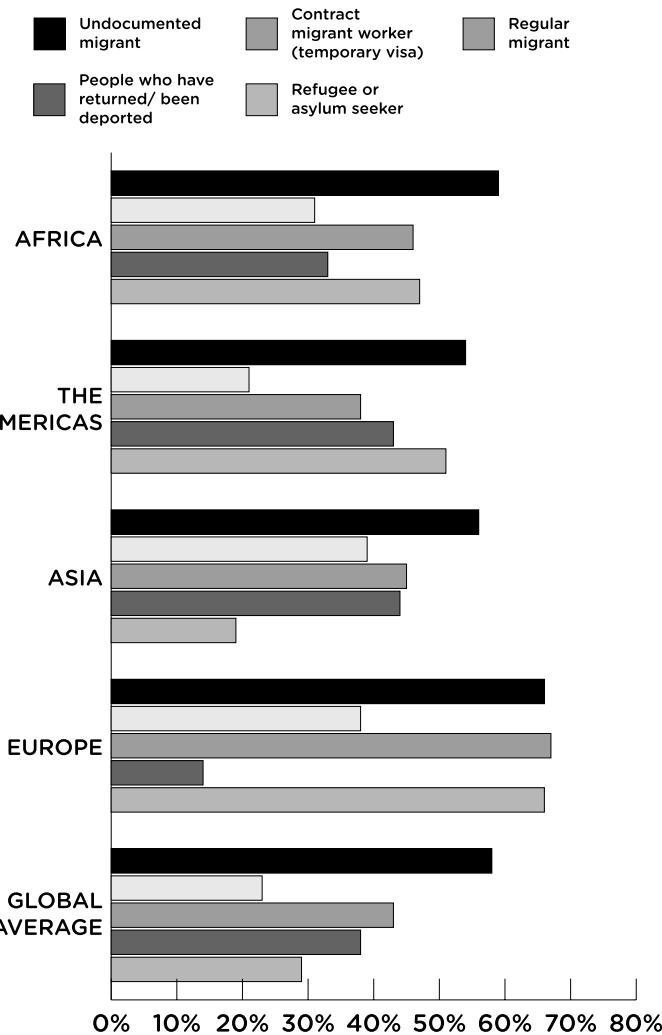
Source: Survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

1 See glossary.

## Undocumented Migrant Women

On the whole, the organizations surveyed work mostly with **undocumented migrant women**, followed by work with refugees and asylum seekers, as well as regular migrants. This is especially true for Europe and the Americas; in the case of Africa and Asia, deportees or returned migrants compose the third most served group, after undocumented and refugee/asylum women.

### Migration status of women



Source: Survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

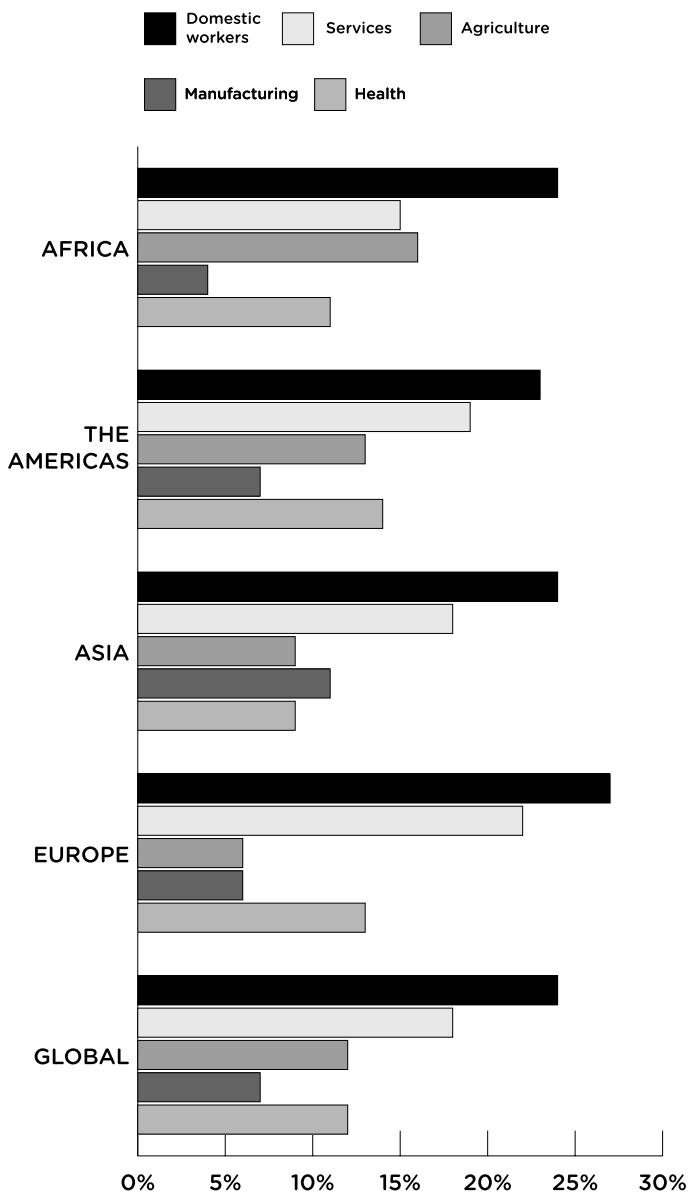
## Migrant Women as Care Workers

According to survey respondents in all regions, a majority of female migrant workers that organizations are engaged with are highly concentrated in care work, particularly in the domestic sphere. Services is the second largest sector in which women migrant workers

concentrate. This is of particular interest during the COVID-19 pandemic, since many “essential” workers come from either the care or the service sectors.

Other employment areas emerge in some regions. For example, agriculture is the second largest employment sector for women migrant workers in Africa, with work in manufacturing important in both Asia and Europe.

### Labor sectors where migrant women work



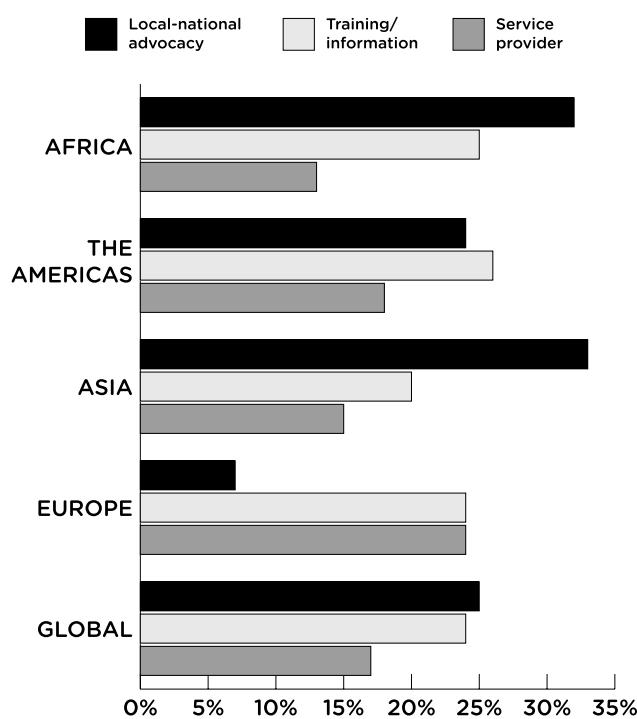
Source: Survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

### 3. Organization Programs and Activities

#### Local/National Advocacy a Top Strategy of Surveyed Organizations

Through local or national advocacy, information services, and/or training, most of the organizations surveyed put the rights of women in migration at the center of their work. Europe is the only region where direct service provision (pro bono legal aid, domestic violence response, income programs, etc.) and training/information sharing emerged as the main areas of focus.

#### Top 3 strategies of organizations regarding women in migration



Source: survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

### The Impact of COVID-19

The emergence and course of the COVID-19 pandemic raises a number of critical concerns in relation to the lives of women in migration, who experience the **loss of livelihoods**, the intensification of **poverty and hunger**, and the rise of **domestic violence** and other forms of **gender-based violence**, according to the organizations surveyed.

#### The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)

Three-quarters of the groups surveyed are aware of the United Nations **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)**, approved in December 2018. However, the figures plummet when it comes to organizational **implementation** of the Compact: of the organizations surveyed, only 60 percent in Asia, 56 percent in Africa, 43 percent in the Americas, and 29 percent in Europe reported to be implementing the Compact. GCM implementation has also been impacted by the pandemic.

# REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS



# REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

In the following section, the report describes the most salient realities in each regionhighlighting the different issues and factors that impact the lives of women in migration, based on survey findings and consultations with regional experts.

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN REGIONAL REALITIES

Women compose 47.5 percent of international migrants in Africa (UNDESA, 2019). Although this figure is lower than the share of female migrants in other regions, feminization of migration in sub-Saharan Africa has gradually increased in recent years. Moreover, in a region that has historically been male dominated in terms of human mobility,<sup>2</sup> women are increasingly migrating alone as heads of households<sup>3</sup> (UNCTAD, 2018; WHO, 2018 and Ncube, 2020).

### Precarious Jobs and Irregular Status

Most migrant women migrate regionally within sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>4</sup> They are concentrated in informal and low-skilled activities such as cross-border and street trading, services (e.g., hairstyling), hospitality, agriculture, and sex work. As migration typically occurs within geographic regions on the continent, most African women are able to make use

of regional migration protocols<sup>5</sup> to enter countries legally.<sup>6</sup> However, the sexual division of labor often pushes them into informal, low-skilled occupations and limits their ability to formalize their residency and employment. Those with irregular status encounter barriers to health care, including sexual and reproductive health, and to education—and become targets of exploitation and abuse.

### De-Skilling

Those sub-Saharan women who migrate overseas by regular channels are usually higher-skilled (with academic or technical degrees), but they end up being pushed into lower-skilled, less formal sectors in order to fill the gaps that rich economies have in relation to caregiving. Despite their credentials, they become domestic workers, elder-care providers, and so forth when they travel abroad to destinations such as North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand (places often related to former colonial ties).

### Care Work Pathways

The Middle East, especially the Gulf countries, is also a major destination, with domestic workers from countries such as Ethiopia going there since the 1980s. More recently, care labor for the Middle East has emerged from other African countries. (UNCTAD, 2018 and D'Cunha, 2020). In an attempt to prevent exploitation and human rights abuses, some countries have issued bans on the migration of domestic workers, but this has proved ineffective, resulting in restrictions on women's freedom of movement. To reverse this trend and promote decent work, the

2 Accommodation for temporary migrants in receiving countries is not prepared for this shift. For example, in South Africa, where men traditionally used to migrate to work in the mining sector from other countries in Africa, there are single-sex dormitories where women cannot be accommodated (Ncube, 2020).

3 An increase in access to education for women and girls has allowed women to enter the labor market more pervasively (Ncube, 2020).

4 The majority of African migration occurs within the continent and particularly between neighboring countries. In 2019, 72 percent (18 .31 million) of the 23.57 million Africa-born migrants lived within Africa (UNDESA, 2019).

5 There are various migration policy frameworks and regimes on the African continent. These include policies developed by the African Union (AU) and diverse free circulation protocols based on the various regional economic communities including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the Southern African Development Community (SADC); the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); the East African Community (EAC); and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

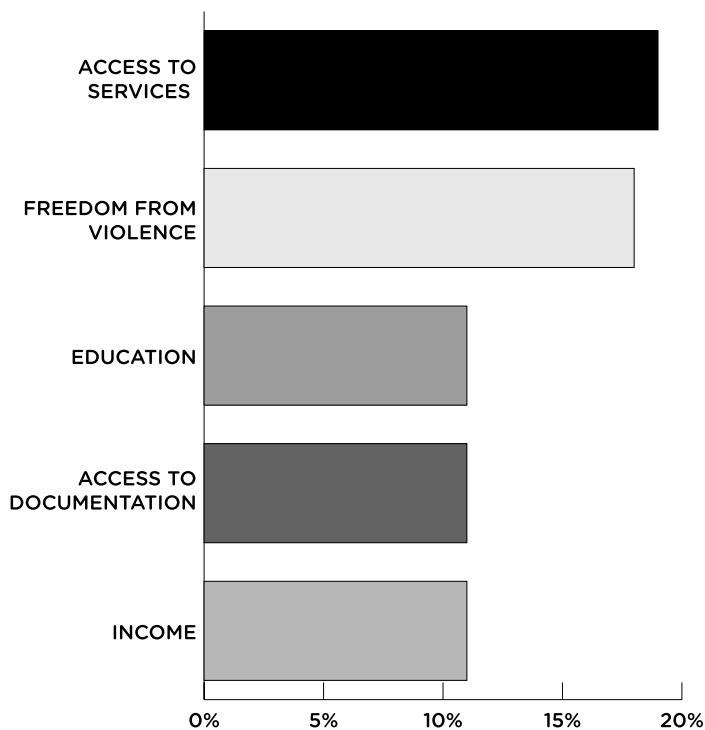
6 Regional protocols are not always respected by states in practice. For example, there was a massive expulsion of Cameroonian women from Equatorial Guinea in 2014 (CONATT).

International Labour Organization (ILO) and anti-trafficking networks have advocated for the ratification of ILO Domestic Workers Convention No. 189.

## Violence Against Migrant Women

Female migrants in Africa become vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation in a number of ways at various stages of the migration process, including in transit, at borders, in destination countries, and upon return. According to the survey, freedom from violence is one of the top concerns of women in migration in sub-Saharan Africa, together with access to services (including education, health, and housing).

### Priorities of Migrant Women in Sub-Saharan Africa From the Perspective of Surveyed Organizations



Source: survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

Violence in the workplace is an emerging critical issue in destination countries. In the case of domestic workers and hospitality workers, migrant women not only face labor exploitation but also sexual assaults (CONATT, 2020 and UFF, 2020). To help address this major problem, many international networks advocate for the ratification of ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).

## Conflict-Driven Migration and Mixed Flows

Most African organizations working on gender and migration tend to work with both migrant and refugee women (mixed flows), since people are forced to flee from conflict zones in different parts of the continent where both endemic and escalating violence occur. Four million people have been displaced in the Sahel because of armed conflict. Other long-standing conflicts have also been a source of major displacement across borders, including South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the Central African Republic (UNHCR, 2019). At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa hosts the second largest number of refugees and asylum seekers in the world as of 2019 (5.9 million) (UNDESA, 2019).

Women's organizations working on conflict prevention are also concerned about violence—including war and conflict, but also state and extra-state armed conflict—as a major cause of human mobility. Many of the organizations working on gender and migration in Africa are also involved in peace and post-conflict efforts.

## Externalization of European Borders and Returns

“Fortress Europe” has extended the militarization of its migration policy further down the Mediterranean into the African region in recent years. North African governments are increasingly involved in securitization<sup>7</sup> of human mobility. The Sahel has become a “hot spot” where many potential migrants are being detained and forcibly deported from countries such as Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Gambia (Diplo, 2020). In countries such as Cameroon, the deportees are mostly women.

7 See glossary

## Hotlines for Cameroonian Migrant Women Stranded in North Africa

The Coalition Nationale des Associations de Lutte contre la Traite et le Trafic des Personnes/ National Coalition of Organizations Fighting Against Human Trafficking (CONATT), based in Cameroon, hosts a hotline for Cameroonian migrant women stranded in countries such as Nigeria or Libya, and who experience exploitation and sexual assault while in transit. Through the hotline, women can seek support from migrant rights organizations.

"Women trapped in severe circumstances even had to use a cell phone they stole to let it be known that they were in a very advanced situation of distress and that we had to intervene on their behalf," Christian Rim, the coordinator of CONATT, told WIMN. "We must address the migration issue by taking into account this situation of high vulnerability. Women will continue to migrate using irregular channels unless regular pathways are opened."

## Effects of Climate Change

The expansion of drought areas, periodic floods, and other natural disasters increasingly shape human mobility in Africa. Women are particularly impacted by climate change since more than 60 percent of all working women in sub-Saharan Africa work in agriculture, often concentrated in labor-intensive activities that are unpaid or poorly remunerated (ILO, 2016). They first tend to migrate internally or across neighboring borders from rural to urban areas, where they seek survival strategies in the informal economy as street vendors or in other precarious jobs (Ncube, 2020 and UFF, 2020). Many become international migrants as they move farther across the region. Those who are able to raise enough money to take the route (usually through unsafe, irregular channels) start an arduous and risky journey overseas to richer countries. That journey can take many years of their lives—often with traumatic consequences (CONATT, 2020 and UFF, 2020).

Many of the organizations working on gender and migration in Africa also work in the areas of development and risk management. They promote sustainable local livelihood strategies for women, support their economic autonomy, and diversify their sources of income to increase their resilience (for example, the efficient use of water and other natural resources such as wood for cooking) to mitigate the consequences of climate change.

## Impact of COVID-19

Africa reacted promptly to the COVID-19 threat by closing borders and restricting movement broadly.

Consequently, people on the move found themselves blocked at places of transit such as Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali (Diplo, 2020). In destination countries within the region, COVID-19 economic closures also strongly impacted migrant women, many of whose livelihoods are based on what they sell each day in the informal economy. These vendors saw their incomes disappear overnight.<sup>8</sup> Others working in the formal economy were dismissed without benefits or social protections. Moreover, confinement put some of them in risky situations of domestic violence with no channels to report the abuse or ways to resort to family or social networks. Further, for migrant women with irregular status, lack of access to health services and shelters has become a heightened concern (CONATT, 2020 and Ncube, 2020).

Simultaneously, deportations and forced returns continued despite the pandemic, which put local communities in countries of origin under stress. Moreover, returning migrant women were stigmatized as sources of contagion (UFF, 2020). In fact, in destination countries, such as South Africa or Benin, xenophobia increased as migrants were blamed for the pandemic (Ncube, 2020 and UFF, 2020).

Based on responses to the survey, most civil society groups have focused on raising awareness about the pandemic through door-to-door visits, community radio, and social networks. They have been attending to essential needs by providing direct assistance, such as food packages and hygiene kits for migrant women, since migrants were not included in government emergency aid packages, even when available. The lockdown that has seriously impacted economies has

<sup>8</sup> Some organizations are helping migrant women who work as street vendors make face masks to sell.

also hit hard on those families in countries of origin that depend on remittances to survive.

## Global Compact for Migration

Almost half of the organizations surveyed in this region (48 percent) said they are aware of the existence of the GCM. They consider the GCM a useful advocacy tool since its whole-of-society approach

has promoted dialogue among civil society groups and national governments.

Organizations also pointed out the importance of implementation of the Compact at the local level, where communities and authorities can work to integrate the GCM into development plans—at the level of municipalities—and to promote the participation of migrant women in the places where they reside (UFF, 2020 and CONATT, 2020).

## Profile of Organizations Surveyed

More than 80 percent of the groups surveyed are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in local development at the community level, and half of them include climate change in their focus areas (most of them take part in the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction [[GNDR](#)]). Other organizations include both secular and religious NGOs; global trade unions; and national human rights groups.

Most African organizations surveyed work at the local or national level and take part in national, subregional, regional, and global networks. Their main activity is to provide training and information for women affected by migration.

More than 60 percent of the women's rights organizations surveyed focus their work primarily on peace

and post-conflict issues. Many of them are part of FemWise-Africa, a network under the Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union (APSA).

Very few formally self-organized migrant women's organizations were reached by the survey. These groups tend to build informal solidarity networks both in countries of origin, in the case of potential migrants, and among fellow nationals in countries of destination.

The organizations surveyed work with women who are potential migrants in countries of origin, but also with women who are on the move—those in transit—and with migrants in countries of destination within the region. The majority of women they assist are migrants with irregular status, followed by refugees or asylum seekers and, as a third category, deportees/returnees.

## Methodological Note

Fifty-three African organizations participated in this Gender and Migration survey: 50 percent are from West Africa, 20 percent from East Africa, 16 percent from Central Africa, and 14 percent from Southern Africa.

# MAGHREB AND MIDDLE EASTERN REGIONAL REALITIES

The Maghreb (North Africa) is traditionally an area of origin of women who migrate both to Europe (predominately to France, Spain) and within the region, mainly to rich economies in the Gulf States. However, in recent decades the Maghreb has also become a major route of transit for sub-Saharan African migrants who then cross the Mediterranean to Europe. This is currently one of the world's hot spots for migrants due to Europe's externalization of border policies, which is causing major human rights violations (including detention, torture, and forced work).

## Violence Against Migrant Women in Transit

High levels of sexual violence against migrant women have emerged with the focus on migration enforcement in the Maghreb region. Many sub-Saharan African women get stranded on their way to Europe. Some of them are detained and deported to their countries of origin while others spend years living in limbo in countries of transit, with no resident status, and facing extremely marginal and inhumane conditions (no access to health care, housing, education, formal jobs, etc.) (CONNAT, 2020).

## Most Women Migrate to the Middle East as Domestic Workers

The Middle East region constitutes a major destination for international migrants, mainly from South and Southeast Asia<sup>9</sup> and from within the region. They represent two-fifths of the total workforce in the Arab world (ESCWA and IOM, 2019). Although migrant women compose only 35.5 percent of total

international migrants in the region, they are a growing workforce. More than 60 percent of migrant women here are domestic workers, and they make up half of the world's migrant domestic workers (D'Cunha, 2020 and ILO, 2016).

International and local migrant rights and human rights organizations have helped spotlight the labor and human rights violations against migrant domestic workers in the Arab region—particularly in countries of the Gulf subregion as well as Jordan and Lebanon. As a result, some destination countries have begun to introduce reforms such as Qatar's recent abolition of the kafala (sponsorship) system<sup>10</sup> and the introduction of a minimum wage for all migrant workers, including domestic workers (ILO, 2020). While these reforms provide some protection, in practice there are still many breaches of international labor and human rights standards (D'Cunha, 2020 and MFA, 2020).

Some women migrant workers' organizations exist in the Middle East, but they are not officially registered because of existing barriers. Many are volunteer-based organizations working broadly on migrant rights, not only on domestic workers or migrant women's rights in particular (MFA, 2020).

## Home to the World's Largest Refugee and Internally Displaced Population

The Middle East region has also experienced massive armed conflicts and international military interventions in recent years. As a result, the area is home to the largest refugee population,<sup>11</sup> mostly fleeing from neighboring countries. For example, 900,000 Syrian refugees are living in Lebanon and 600,000 are living in Jordan (UNHCR, 2019). Half of the organizations in the survey either work with mixed migration flows or refugees specifically.

A number of organizations—both humanitarian and women's rights—work with internally displaced persons (IDPs), mostly in Iraq where there are 1.5

<sup>9</sup> Main countries of origin of migrants and refugees in the Arab region, 2017: India (8.9 million), Bangladesh (3.1 million), Pakistan (3.1 million), Palestine (3.7 million), Syria (3.2 million), rest of Arab region (7.1 million). Source: ESCWA and IOM, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> The kafala, or sponsorship system, requires all unskilled laborers to have an in-country sponsor, usually their employer, who is responsible for their visa and legal status. This practice has been criticized by human rights organizations for creating easy opportunities for the exploitation of workers, as many employers take away passports and abuse their workers with few legal repercussions.

<sup>11</sup> In 2017, 46 percent of refugees and asylum seekers lived in northern Africa and western Asia, 13.1 million (UNDESA, 2019).

million IDPs.<sup>12</sup> Half of the IDPs in the world are women (UNHCR, 2019).

## Impact of COVID-19

Women in migration in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region have suffered from the consequences of the pandemic in multiple ways. Those in transit in the Maghreb area have been deported from detention centers back to countries of origin without adequate pandemic measures in place. In North Africa, xenophobia has increased as migrant women are perceived as carriers of the disease. In Middle Eastern countries, many domestic and hospitality workers have lost their jobs without any or reduced entitlements" (D'Cunha, 2020).

Due to a lack of humanitarian assistance for migrants during the pandemic, civil society organizations have responded by providing food aid, cash, hygiene resources, and medicine, as well as access to personal protective equipment. They also provide shelters and translate health safety information into multiple languages. Organizations have also increased monitoring of gender-based violence.

Mental health is also a major concern of some direct aid organizations who work with survivors of gender-based

violence, refugees, and internally displaced women. Increased domestic violence and the need for psychiatric care were clearly identified as effects of the financial distress caused by the lockdown. Organizations warned that there is a high risk of deterioration in the already fragile mental health of the population they serve due to the acute stress caused by the pandemic. These organizations are focusing on reducing stress levels and maintaining mental resilience.

## Global Compact for Migration

Most organizations working on gender and migration in the region are aware of the GCM and half of them consider themselves to be contributing to its implementation. Some organizations participated in the negotiations for the compact and have worked to disseminate the compact among migrant groups.

Civil society organizations were involved in the elaboration of a parallel report on the implementation of the compact for the Arab regional review of the GCM. That regional consultation was coordinated by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), the Arab League, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the Issue-Based Coalition on Migration in the Arab Region and the UN Network on Migration.

<sup>12</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC): <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/iraq> (checked on September 15, 2020).

## Profile of Organizations Surveyed

Organizations in the Maghreb and Middle East region are focused on direct assistance to women in migration, most of them working with both refugees and migrants, many of whom are survivors of domestic violence (51 percent). Service provisions mostly focus on mental health and legal aid.

Migrant domestic workers also represent an important sector of women in migration in the region, with 48 percent of organizations working with this group. Although migrant workers' self-organization is highly constrained for those migrant domestic

workers, trade unions are starting to emerge in countries such as Bahrain, Lebanon, and Morocco.

Women in transit also constitute a major group in the region (48 percent). In Morocco they are self-organized in the Collectif des Femmes Migrants au Maroc (Collective of Migrant Women in Morocco).

Women's rights groups represent 62 percent of the surveyed organizations working on gender and migration, including women's organizations working on peace and security (55 percent) and pan-Arab regional networks.

## Methodological Note

A total of twenty-seven organizations from the Maghreb and the Middle East<sup>13</sup> participated in the Gender and Migration survey, of which 63 percent are from the Middle East and 37 percent from the Maghreb.

<sup>13</sup> Since the Maghreb is also part of Africa, we cannot speak of it as a separate region in geopolitical terms. However, we decided to combine it with the Middle East because of shared realities.

# ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGIONAL REALITIES

Almost half of international migrants in the Asia-Pacific region are women, the majority of whom migrate interregionally or cross-regionally to work in undervalued and unprotected sectors of the economy. Most commonly, women migrate to engage in domestic work, as well as other jobs in the care economy such as in health or home care. They also participate in hospitality, manufacturing, agriculture, sex work, and other sectors.

## Temporary Labor Schemes

Temporary labor migration contracts are prominent for women leaving the region. These contracts are promoted as beneficial (by origin and destination governments and the private sector) in the “migration-development nexus” discourse that highlights the economic contributions of migrants (Piper, 2020). For women who migrate with temporary visas, the process, although regulated by governments, is mainly carried out by private recruitment and employment agencies. Since this model is based on memorandums of understanding or bilateral agreements between origin and destination countries, there is not a common legal framework for negotiations on wages, working conditions, and other terms of employment, which tend to be obscure and without input from migrant workers (IDWF, 2020).

Migrant women workers are instrumentalized as export commodities by both governments and the private sector, with human rights and labor rights violations and abuses taking place in all stages of migration. The inability of migrant women to obtain decent working conditions and to organize and bargain collectively has been used as a competitive advantage in global supply chains (APWLD, 2020).

## Debt Bondage

Debt bondage to recruiting agencies is a major issue for migrant women workers in the region, many of whom suffer exploitation in their destination countries. They often choose not to report their employers’ abuses since they cannot afford to lose their jobs if they are to

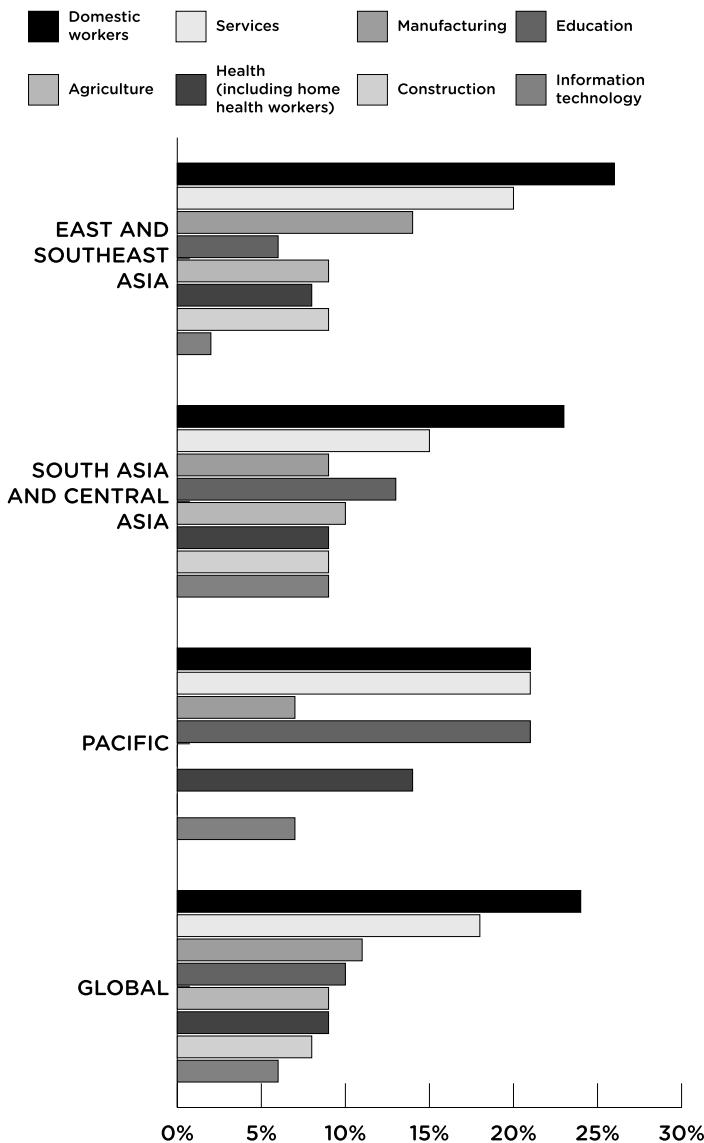
repay their debts to recruiting agencies. This situation puts them at risk of human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence (IDWF, 2020). Moreover, migrants who suffer human rights violations often do not have access to justice, especially the right to redress and compensation (APWLD, 2020).

## Domestic Workers

One-third (22.3 million) of the 67 million domestic workers are in the Asia-Pacific region. Of these, an estimated 3.34 million (15 percent) are migrants (ILO, 2016). Domestic workers migrate to places within the region (Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand are major destinations), as well as to wealthy countries in the Middle East such as the Gulf States.

Despite making up a significant workforce, domestic work has long been considered an extension of household chores and has been confined to the private sphere and the unregulated sector (APWLD, 2020). In the absence of regulations of domestic work in both countries of origin and destination, most migrant domestic workers lack the right to form unions (with the exception of Hong Kong and Taiwan). They earn salaries far below a living wage, and many work seven days a week for long hours (IDWF, 2020). Furthermore, they do not have access to basic health care including sexual and reproductive health and rights; they also face mental health issues due to exploitative working conditions (POURAKHI, 2020).

## Labor sectors - Asia and the Pacific



Source: survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

Since migrant workers are frequently unable to access justice, many organizations have put into place hotlines or social media channels where migrant domestic workers can report abuses and access information and assistance.

Many of the regional organizations surveyed are prioritizing ratification of ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers in both countries of origin and destination, as well as ratification of ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. They promote self-organizing in solidarity networks for domestic workers in destination countries.

## Boomerang on Migration Bans

Several countries of origin in the region have responded to human rights abuses against migrant women workers by adopting restrictions to women's freedom of movement. For example, the Philippine government banned the deployment of women migrant domestic workers to Kuwait. In South Asia, both Nepal and Sri Lanka ordered bans on domestic workers traveling to certain countries based on gender and age, stating that women with children of a certain age are not allowed to migrate (MFA, 2020). In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, several bans were put in place for certain periods in the past decade by both countries of origin and destination. Some of these bans were lifted after the establishment of memorandums of understanding between countries of origin and destination (ILO 2017).

Where bans exist, they fail to protect women, since many women must then migrate through informal channels to access job opportunities, thereby facing greater risk of exploitation. In Nepal, in order to avoid the ban to work in the Middle East as domestic workers, women cross the open border to India by land and become migrants with irregular status (POURAKHI, 2020). Organizations in the Philippines and Bangladesh are advocating against the bans, warning that these measures actually endanger women more because they become undocumented, without protection of labor laws and with restricted access to justice (MFA, 2020).

## Climate Change and Other Intertwined Root Causes of Migration

In the Asia-Pacific region, climate change profoundly impacts women and girls, due to unequal power and access to resources and the distribution of caregiving. Whether they are displaced because of extreme weather events or slow onset climate change, many climate-displaced women and girls are at high risk for sexual assault or other forms of gender-based violence and harassment when on the move (APWLD, 2020).

Climate change is one factor pushing women to migrate, especially in rural areas with low-lying coasts and mega deltas in countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam, where women no longer have soil to plant crops and

contend with daily threats to both their livelihood and safety. In the Pacific, as threats to people's lives and livelihoods on the islands increase, local communities are using various adaptation strategies including temporary labor migration (APWLD, 2015 and 2020). Some Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face planned relocations as measures of last resort.

According to the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), climate-related displacement is interwoven with other drivers of migration in the region including natural resource conflicts, land-grabbing, and increasing poverty levels due to neoliberal policies being implemented by both countries of origin and destination (APWLD, 2020). The Pacific Island organizations surveyed are focused on emergency preparedness, response, and recovery, reflecting the pressing need for action on the looming threat of climate change migration in this subregion (Piper, 2020).

## Looking at the Big Picture

APWLD organized grassroots women who had migrated from the Asia-Pacific region due to the climate crisis to advocate during the negotiations that led to the Paris Agreement (APWLD, 2015). As a Nepalese Indigenous woman expressed at the UN Climate Summit (New York, 2014): "I was fearful that our Indigenous communities are destined to lose their lands to landslides, that our crops will continually fail, that women will continually feel forced to migrate as domestic workers" (APWLD, 2015).

## Impact of COVID-19

The pandemic has impacted migrant women in different ways: some have lost their livelihoods but could not leave the country of destination; others have an increased work burden and face greater discrimination; and others have suffered from wage theft and stigmatization when returning to their countries of origin.

The situation of undocumented migrant women was particularly dangerous in Malaysia, where the government carried out crackdowns against migrants to "reduce COVID spread." Undocumented domestic workers immediately lost their jobs and could not move around because of government raids against migrant workers (IDWF, 2020 and BBC, 2020). In countries where migrant domestic workers retained their jobs, some had to deal with outrageous demands from

employers. For example, in Hong Kong, an Indonesian domestic worker said her employer asked her to wash the toilet fifteen times a day (IDWF, 2020).

In countries of origin such as Nepal and Bangladesh, migrant women who returned from the Middle East due to the pandemic faced growing difficulties in accessing decent work in the local job market. Those who had contracts to migrate were not able to leave because of travel restrictions. Many had taken loans or paid recruitment fees, putting them in greater financial distress because they could no longer migrate (ILO, 2020 and Bhuyan, 2020). This has also impacted families that depend on remittances.

In places where there is a government-sponsored safety net (Philippines, India, Bangladesh), the organizations surveyed noted that they are helping returnees navigate the system, including providing legal counsel in cases of wage theft. In most instances, migrant women are left out of emergency response policies, and the civil society organizations surveyed are raising solidarity funds to provide cash transfers and/or food aid, basic health services, and hygiene tool kits.

Informal solidarity networks among migrant women are also being supported. An organization in Thailand said it is using social media networks to communicate among migrant women leaders to provide assistance. Some organizations are offering hotlines or have open office hours to assist survivors of violence.

The organizations surveyed are calling for the recognition of migrants' rights in the pandemic and beyond. However, as economies reopen, the ongoing economic downturn or recession may become an additional driving force for women in countries of origin to migrate and for the authorities in countries of destination to continue to seek cheap sources of labor. As some countries in the region saw after the SARS pandemic, the demand for domestic work increased but workers' wages were reduced (IDWF, 2020).

## Global Compact for Migration

Among civil society groups in the Asia-Pacific region, which has a high level of organization, there are diverse political approaches to the GCM. Some organizations are members of global and regional networks that are critical of government-led institutional processes of global migration governance such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and the GCM. Others prefer to prioritize binding instruments such as ILO Conventions 189 and 190, the Convention on the

Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and support dialogues between trade unions and governments. This approach has strengthened coalition-building among women's groups. A third grouping of surveyed organizations is more involved in international governance arenas and/or dialogue with national authorities. They see the

GCM as an advocacy tool to persuade governments to make legal and policy changes.

During 2019, there were a number of consultations about GCM implementation at the national level (Indonesia, Philippines, and Republic of Korea) with the participation of civil society. In Bangladesh and Nepal, organizations are involved in dialogue with the government to develop national plans to implement the GCM as well as UN Agenda 2030.

## Profile of Organizations Surveyed

Most organizations work at the national level on advocacy issues, and 60 percent work with migrant women who are survivors of violence. Southeast Asia stands out for promoting self-organizing among women migrant workers, including returnees and deportees, and for delivering services, mostly legal aid and help navigating access to public services. Sixty percent of organizations work with women migrant workers, of which 74 percent are domestic workers, followed by the service sector and education (in South/Central Asia and the Pacific) or manufacturing (East and Southeast Asia).

Among the groups surveyed, freedom from violence is the main concern for women in migration in East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific, while in South Asia access to services tops the list of concerns. Ending gender-based violence and enabling access to labor rights are the top long-term priorities in all three subregions. Although it was not included as one of the options in the survey, marriage migration was also mentioned as a key concern for organizations, linking it to an increased risk of trafficking as well as to domestic violence.

This region is characterized by a high level of association among migrants and of alliance building among organizations: 92 percent of the organizations surveyed are part of networks (national, regional, and/or international). Prominent regional networks include the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA); APWLD; the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN); the Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility (CARAM Asia); and the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM). Memberships among these regional networks frequently overlap.

Organizations working on gender and migration have built cross-sectoral alliances with other global social movements including labor justice groups (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing [WIEGO]; the Council of Global Unions [CGU]; Alliance 8.7) and anti-trafficking networks (the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women [GAATW]); feminist groups such as the Feminist Alliance for Rights (FAR) and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID); as well as regional networks on sexual and reproductive rights like the Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (APA).

### Methodological Note

Sixty-two organizations from Asia and the Pacific region participated in the Gender and Migration survey, of which 49 percent are from East and Southeast Asia, 45 percent from South and Central Asia, and 6 percent from the Pacific.

# THE AMERICAS

## REGIONAL REALITIES

The route from Latin America and the Caribbean to North America was the second largest migration corridor in the world in 2019, with 26.6 million international migrants (ILO, 2019). Historically, most of this migration has occurred between the United States and Mexico. Political instability, insecurity, and economic hardship in Central America's Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador) due to civil wars, political conflicts, gang- and drug-related violence, and natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes have also spurred migration from Central America northward (MPI, 2018).<sup>14</sup>

To a lesser extent, people move interregionally across Latin America (12 million migrants) (ILO, 2019). In South America, migration has been mainly intra-regional, between neighboring countries. Middle-income economies such as Argentina, Chile, and Brazil are destination countries. Other important cross-border migration spots in Latin America include migration flows from Nicaragua to Costa Rica, and from Haiti to the Dominican Republic.

Most recently, traditional migration dynamics in South America were transformed by the emergence of the Venezuelan crisis, with more than 4.7 million people fleeing the country between 2015 and 2019 (IOM, 2020). Approximately 42 percent of them are women (UNFPA, 2020). Eighty-five percent of these refugees have remained on the continent, mostly in Colombia, which received 1.8 million Venezuelans. Many Venezuelans also fled to Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Argentina (IOM, 2020). While migratory flows from Venezuela early in the crisis consisted largely of men and professionals with the skills and funds to support themselves, in recent years more Venezuelan women and girls have migrated. For example, in

2019, 55 percent of registered Venezuelans entering Ecuador were women (Care, 2020).

### Exposure to Different Forms of Violence

Women in the region have their own particular migration strategies. Many tend to move forward gradually, taking a longer time to reach their final destination. This is because they are exposed to greater risks when they are on the move, including sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence (Rojas, 2020).

The Central America-Mexico-US corridor is characterized by high levels of violence against migrants including sexual violence, kidnapping, extortion, and forced disappearances. Women are particularly exposed to these forms of violence, perpetuated by transnational organized crime as well as by border authorities and police (Rojas 2020, and NNIRR, 2020). Organizations defending the rights of migrants in two of the hottest spots of this migration route—the Guatemala-Mexico and Mexico-United States borders—assert that the heightened levels of violence have been exacerbated by changes to US migration policy focused on the militarization and externalization of borders and the criminalization of migrants. Strategic US policies of a militarized “war on drugs” and on the hyper-exploitation of low-skilled workers in the *maquiladora*<sup>15</sup> factories on the Mexico side of the US-Mexico border had already led to entrenched violence, including violence against women and femicide. Violence against migrants in the region has since accelerated, with organized crime now also using existing violent practices such as kidnapping, disappearances, and extortions against migrants (NNIRR, 2020).

At the Colombia-Venezuela border, gender-based violence and sexual assaults are ubiquitous, with Venezuelan women forced to use irregular paths for leaving the country and for returning due to the COVID-19 crisis. There is a flourishing transactional sex economy based on the survival needs of Venezuelan women in transit or in countries of destination (Uniandes, 2020).

14 While the majority of migrants come from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras [<https://apnews.com/article/cbba8ede5436460ab4f792f981ee32e2>], as well as Mexico, there is a growing number of “extra continental” migrants coming from Africa and Asia seeking to cross into the United States: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/extracontinental-migrants-latin-america>. Arriving in Ecuador, Brazil, or Guyana, they travel through Colombia, Honduras, and/or Panama and cross Mexico to reach the US border. With increasing restrictions on asylum by the United States, this has added to tent cities of migrants seeking asylum in the United States: <https://qz.com/africa/1882848/african-refugees-take-latin-american-human-smugglers-route-to-us/>. Other migrants arriving at the US border include Cubans, Haitians, and South Americans.

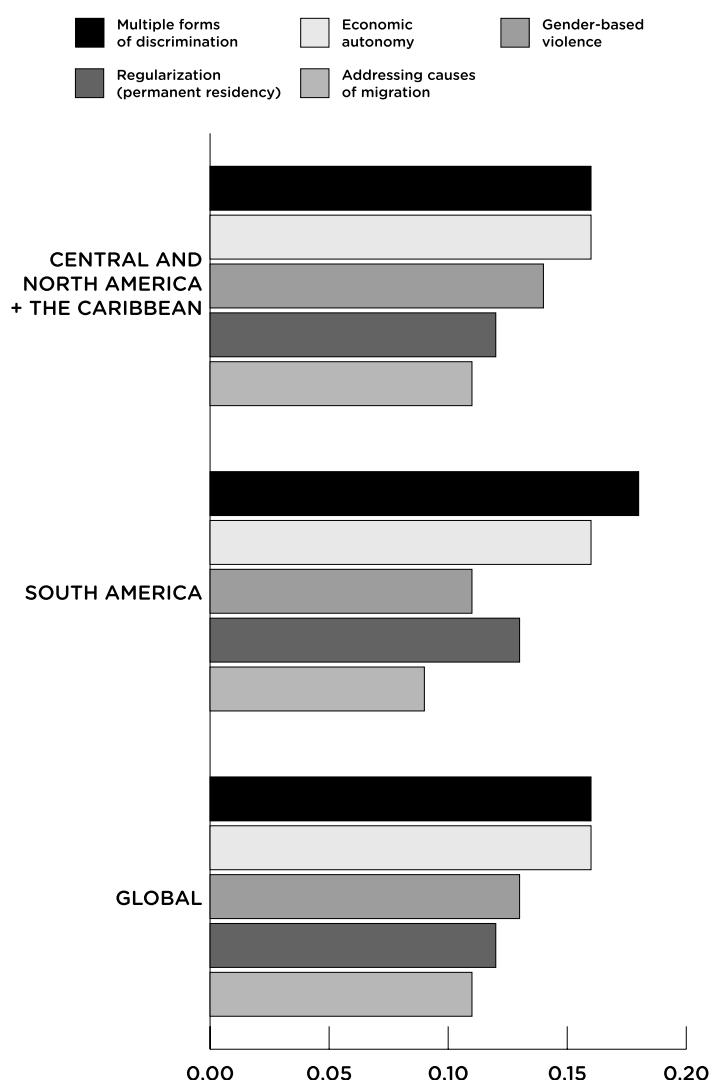
15 Maquiladoras are foreign-owned factory in Mexico and Central America at which imported parts are assembled by lower-paid workers, mostly female, into products for export.

Women may decide to migrate not only to flee from domestic violence, but also the increasing presence of organized crime and state violence in their countries of origin. Academic researchers on the ground have found that, whatever the dangers ahead, many women willingly pay the price (including exchanging sex for survival or agreeing to smuggle drugs) in order to be able to send money to their children back home (Rojas, 2020).

## Discrimination Multiplied

Women of color and Indigenous women face multiple types of discrimination and are disproportionately exposed to different forms of violence and exclusion. Thus, an intersectional approach is needed in order to better understand migration trends affecting women in the Americas. For example, according to the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), border enforcement policies along the US-Mexico border reflect institutionalized white supremacy and a history of violence against people of color that dates back to colonization on both sides of the border (NNIRR, 2020). Racial and ethnic discrimination is not limited to this border—racist and patriarchal stereotypes are pervasive across the continent. Many Black migrant women of Venezuelan, Haitian, Dominican, and Cuban origin are pushed into sex work, since Black bodies are sexualized across Latin America and Black women are often denied access to other jobs. Indigenous women are most frequently forced into domestic work, building on stereotypes that they are “submissive” (Rojas, 2020).

### Longer term top 5 priorities of women in migration



Source: survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

## Black Women's Lives Matter

Self-organized women have responded with agency to prevalent forms of discrimination. In the United States, in the context of the Black Lives Matter social movement, the National Domestic Workers Alliance launched a campaign called “Unbossed” to value Black women’s labor, sharing the personal experiences and leadership of Black undocumented migrant domestic workers.

## Indigenous Women's Leadership

Indigenous women from Mayan communities in Central America and Mexico and from Aymaran and Quechuan communities in the Andes have promoted a new approach known as “community feminism,” which combines ancient Indigenous beliefs with the fight for women’s autonomy and a fierce critique of prevailing colonialist and patriarchal structures (Korol, 2019 and NNIRR, 2020). Although these approaches have not been incorporated into mainstream migrant rights’ organizations, feminist, Indigenous, and migrant women’s grassroots

organizations are starting to build this analysis and practice collectively. [The World Social Forum on Migration/Latin America 2020](#) hosted online workshops on both gender and migration and intersectionality and migration, reflecting these critiques and convergences. Indigenous women are also the human rights defenders on the frontlines against extractivism and natural resource despoliment, drawing a relationship between internal and cross-border migration and the denial of women’s human, Indigenous, and land rights.

## Spotlight on Families

While not all migrating women are mothers, women in migration are affected by several issues related to their roles in the family. They include mothers of disappeared migrants, deported mothers whose children are still living in the country of destination, and domestic workers who have migrated alone to provide for their children who remain in their home countries, among others. Thus, researchers and networks emphasize the importance of family dynamics to women in migration (Rojas, 2020 and NNIRR, 2020).

## Stateless Children of Haitian-Dominican Women

Dominicans of Haitian descent constitute a significant minority in the Dominican Republic (DR) and have historically faced profound exclusion and racism. Their situation became markedly worse in 2013 when Constitutional Court Sentence 168-13 retroactively stripped tens of thousands of people of their Dominican nationality (from as far back as 1929). In 2014, the introduction of Naturalisation Law 169-14 restored some identity documentation, although the process has been slow and complicated (Minority Rights, 2018). The lack of access to legal identity has particularly impacted women of Haitian descent born in the DR as well as their children. These women historically feared deportation when they sought nationality documents for their children born in the DR when there was a *jus soli* regime in place, which was a cumbersome process, especially in rural areas. This is one cause of the critical lack of documentation among Haitian and Dominican-Haitian communities in the DR, which are hence marginalized from all social protection systems (Llavaneras Blanco, 2020).

## Impact of COVID-19

Organizations working with women in migration in the Americas assert that the pandemic has resulted not only in a health crisis but also in a crisis of physical and emotional insecurity for migrant women, who have experienced higher levels of violence and lack of adequate protection. As the pandemic progressed, the Trump administration stepped up deportations, bypassing due process, and deporting people who had not been tested for COVID-19. Migrants and asylum seekers were flown to countries of origin or third countries even when they had the virus.

Within the United States, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the Latinx population, particularly among migrants, including regular, undocumented, and contract migrants in the agricultural sector—groups that already faced economic and health disparities. Because migrant women workers in the United States are concentrated in low-income sectors, such as home health care, hospital jobs, meatpacking and farm workers, many had to continue working during the pandemic because they were deemed “essential workers.” Yet in most cases they were not provided with personal protective gear, adequate work site safety precautions, health insurance, or paid sick leave. Many also fear accessing medical services if they are undocumented (NNIRR, 2020).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations in the Americas working on gender and migration have increased the use of virtual technologies, hotlines (some functioning 24-7), and radio programs for counseling (including mental health, violence against women assistance, and legal aid), and

community-building virtual spaces. Within the region migrant women with irregular status have largely been excluded from governmental emergency aid and have relied upon informal mutual-aid networks to meet their material needs. Organizations and informal community networks mobilized resources to provide food, shelter, cash assistance, medicine, and hygiene kits. In Central America some organizations promoted family gardens to provide food security for deported and returning migrants. In Mexico, organizations support migrant women to make and sell face masks as a way to ease the economic impact of the pandemic.

## Global Compact for Migration

Although some countries of the Americas region have pulled out of the GCM (United States, Brazil, Chile), there

is a high level of awareness of this mechanism among civil society, with organizations using the Compact as an advocacy strategy both at the local and national level.

In countries such as Costa Rica, Peru, Canada, and Mexico, organizations said they are engaged in dialogue with national authorities in order to implement the GCM. Moreover, civil society is organized in networks such as Bloque Latinoamericano and Alianza Americas to have greater leverage in the regional and global spaces dealing with implementation, follow-up, and review of the Compact. Organizations are also carrying out research and dissemination of the Compact at the national level in the United States, Canada, the Central America region, and Mexico. In South America, civil society is organizing to carry out joint actions at the regional level.

## Profile of Organizations Surveyed

Violence against women was identified as a major concern, with 52 percent of the organizations surveyed working with survivors of violence. Domestic violence response was also identified as one of the most common services provided by organizations giving direct assistance. In work with migrant women, the organizations surveyed primarily serve undocumented migrants (69 percent), followed by refugees and asylum seekers (56 percent).

The organizations surveyed work mostly with migrant women in countries of destination (65 percent), followed by migrants at borders (45 percent) and in transit (39 percent). Among civil society organizations in the region, most local groups surveyed organize through national and subregional networks (82 percent of organizations from the Americas take part in networks). There are numerous coalitions among migrant rights' organizations including

Mexican and Central American organizations and more specifically, among those from the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador).

Migrant rights and migrant service organizations in the region, perhaps because of intense demands and limited capacity, have not been able to integrate other major concerns impacting migration into their agendas. These include issues of extractivism and dispossession, which are a high priority for Indigenous and Black women. These economic struggles, together with climate change, have not yet been integrated into the work of most local organizations working on the ground with migrant women in the region. The urgent need for responses to humanitarian crises and human rights violations (violence against women [VAW], detention, shelters, access to documents, family separation, deportees, etc.) has limited the scope of their work.

## Methodological Note

One hundred thirteen organizations from the Americas participated in the Gender and Migration survey—74 percent from Central and North America, 24 percent from South America, and 2 percent from the Caribbean.

# EUROPEAN REGIONAL REALITIES

Along with North America, Europe is one of the regions where migration is more feminized, with women composing 51.4 percent of total migrant population; in other regions of the globe women represent slightly less than 50 percent of total international migrants (GMDAC, 2020). In a region with an aging population and care needs within families, many migrant women work as caregivers or domestic workers and in other low-skilled and low-paid jobs in the service and health sectors.

Even though the demand for low-paid, unregulated care labor is on the rise, the EU has maintained a strong stance against irregular migration. Such migration has grown since the first EU common migration and asylum policy was adopted in 1999 and has intensified in recent years. Undocumented women experience isolation, social exclusion, and risk of exploitation, and the criminalization of irregular migration has increased discrimination and gender-based violence. Fearing detention and deportation, migrant women often desperately accept any labor conditions, leading to widespread exploitation (PICUM, 2020).

The focus on punitive migration enforcement and the criminalization of migrants risks being reinforced by the newest European policy framework, the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration. The pact proposes measures that could lead to an increase of deportations and further externalization of border management to third-party countries outside Europe. According to some migrant rights organizations, the new pact dangerously deepens the EU's turn toward a full security-based approach (EuroMed Rights, 2020).

## Gender-Based Violence and Criminalization of Irregular Migration

Many migrant women in Europe are survivors of some sort of gender-based violence either in their countries of origin and/or during transit, including sexual violence or other forms of control of their bodies and sexuality (AGISRA, 2020). Once they arrive at their final destination, they continue to experience gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination (racial, ethnic, religious, migratory status, age, class,

sexual orientation, among others). This situation is underscored by some local authorities that depict migrant women as intrinsically vulnerable. Advocates argue that “vulnerability” should not be attributed to any essential gendered characteristics, but is a situation produced by structural and systemic factors including migration and refugee policies, structures of economic inequality, and so forth (Freedman, 2019).

The cultural realities of forced marriage and female genital mutilation in some countries of origin take on problematic connotations for migrants once in the EU, by governments and civil society. According to some academics, there is a tendency to equate migrants with gender-based violence, abstracting from the realities of gender-based violence within destination countries as well. This contributes to the othering of migrant communities, viewing them as intrinsically different from the majority population (Sahraoui, 2020). It may also lead to a patronizing “protection” of migrant women and the racialized demonization of migrant men.

The extreme difficulty in regularizing migration status leaves migrant women in a very vulnerable situation. Migrant women with irregular status are most exposed to different forms of violence, not only in the private sphere but also at the workplace and from state actors—and they have little or no access to justice.

## Step Up! Campaign

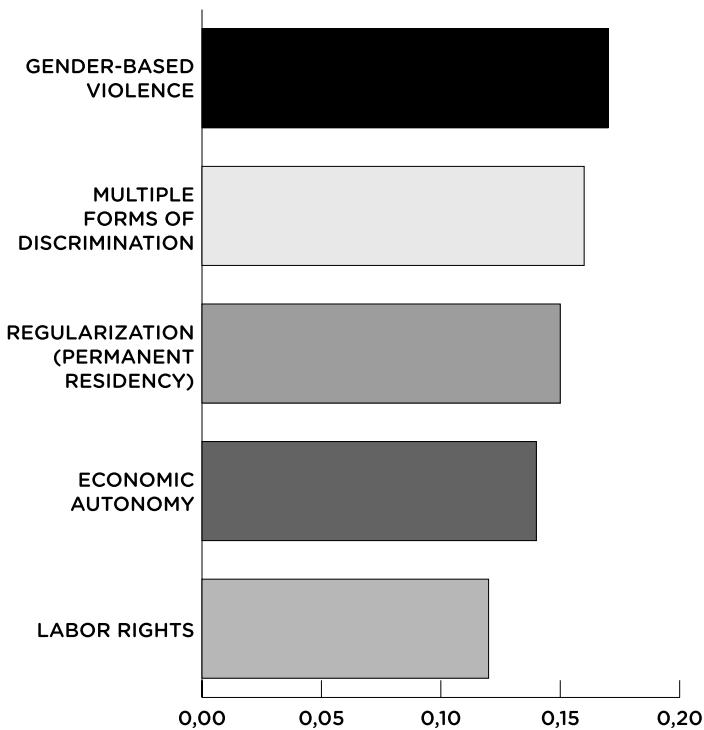
Migrant rights and women's rights organizations in the United Kingdom (UK) have come together in the [Step Up! Campaign](#) to demand access to essential services and justice for migrant women survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The campaign demands the establishment of safe reporting mechanisms as an essential step forward to improve crime reporting both in the interest of the public and community safety, as well as greater access to justice for victims.

The initiative grows out of the reality that undocumented migrant women hesitate to report experiences of gender-based violence for fear of deportation. While police policy is to support migrant women regardless of their migration status, violence survivors worry that the police might inform immigration authorities (LAWRS, 2020).

Some immigration policies may trap migrant women in domestic violence situations. In the Netherlands and Germany, organizations are fighting to end dependent residency policies that force spouses to stay in the same house with an abuser for periods of three to five years in order to maintain their migration status.

For all the situations mentioned above, access to a permanent regular status is key for migrant women in Europe. In many countries, residence permits determine access to all other rights such as social security, formal jobs, schools, accommodation, child care, battered women's shelters, libraries, even political agency (AGISRA, 2020). Networks such as the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) advocate for "firewalls" between service delivery including health and education, and migration enforcement, to ensure that service providers will not disclose information to migration officials. Such firewalls enable undocumented migrants to access needed services and claim their social and economic rights without fear of detention or deportation.

#### Longer term top 5 priorities of women in migration



Source: survey conducted by WIMN, 2020

## Impact of COVID-19

Many organizations reported that during the pandemic migrant women were not going to the hospital because it is riskier to be detained and deported than to be sick. In the UK, "The hostile environment", policy that the government adopted in recent years, criminalizing irregular migrants, has permeated all social services. Undocumented migrants seeking medical treatments risk being accused of criminal acts and being deported (LAWRS, 2020).

Another concern among European organizations is the digital divide that exists among citizens and migrants, which is more pronounced in the case of migrant women. Many migrant women do not have access to the Internet or computers and could not easily access information about safety measures during the pandemic, nor enable their children to engage in distance learning during school lockdowns. This has led to further isolation, separating them from all sources of information (PICUM, 2020).

Many migrant women working in unregulated sectors of the economy were laid off when the lockdowns began and did not receive any social or unemployment benefits, often losing their housing. They were not included in public emergency responses, such as government cash transfers to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic. In Spain, migrant women in the informal sector with temporary citizenship status were excluded from the basic income scheme established by the central government. In Sweden, migrant women had additional barriers to accessing medical care, while in Italy, access to sexual and reproductive health care was reduced due to the pandemic, making it more difficult for women to get abortions during lockdown (WIDE+, 2020).

Others kept their jobs as so-called "essential workers", but faced further exploitation such as cuts in their salaries or longer hours without overtime pay (PICUM and LAWRS, 2020). In the care sector, some migrant domestic workers in Spain were forced to live and work in their employers' homes during lockdown under threat of being fired (WIDE+, 2020).

Organizations are responding to the pandemic in several ways: some are collecting data and promoting empirically based research to support advocacy efforts. Others are translating public health information and relevant preventive measures into several languages so that migrants are aware of their rights.

Some organizations are offering hotlines and online services, including mental health services and assistance to VAW survivors. Yet others support community care networks among migrant women. They also provide direct assistance in the form of food or financial support, as well as sexual health and hygiene products and shelter.

## Global Compact for Migration

Follow-up and implementation of the GCM has been mixed among European organizations working on gender and migration. Some European networks such as PICUM and Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) are actively involved in the process and keep their members informed. Civil society in different parts of Europe has some level of dialogue with governments concerning follow-up and implementation of the GCM. For example, civil society has worked with the government of Portugal<sup>16</sup> on a national plan for implementation of the GCM. In Spain, a governmental working group for the implementation of the GCM has included civil society, but the group has not been active during the pandemic. In Cyprus, organizations are carrying out advocacy actions toward the national government regarding implementation.

Although the GCM was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations, which encompasses all UN member states, numerous European countries have opted out of the compact (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia), while Switzerland delayed its support until after a vote in parliament (European Parliament, 2019).

## Profile of Organizations Surveyed

Europe is the only region of those surveyed where the majority of organizations are frontline service providers in comparison to other regions of the world where national advocacy and training prevailed. European organizations mostly help migrant women navigate access to public services, provide pro bono legal aid, and assist domestic violence survivors.

Sixty-eight percent of the organizations surveyed work with migrant women in the country of destination, including regular and undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and refugee women. Half of the migrant women in these groups assist are survivors of violence.

Those organizations surveyed noted that the majority of women migrant workers in the European region are domestic workers, followed by those working in the service and health sectors.

European organizations surveyed identified five key priorities concerning migrant women: access to services; access to legal status; freedom from violence; freedom from both multiple forms of discrimination and gender-based violence.

The nexus between gender and migration is well-established in Europe, where there are regional networks of self-organized migrant women such as the European Network of Migrant Women (ENoMW) and the European-Wide Network of Migrant Domestic Workers Self-Organisations and Supporters (RESPECT), as well as feminist organizations working on migrant women's issues such as Women in Development Europe (WIDE+). Migrant rights networks such as PICUM work closely with feminist networks like WAVE and the European Women's Lobby (EWL). The EuroMed Rights network covers issues of women's rights and gender justice.

## Methodological Note

Fifty-eight European organizations participated in the survey, 85 percent of them from European Union member countries.

<sup>16</sup> As of 2020, Portugal was the only EU country to join the United Network on Migration Champion Countries initiative for the Global Compact of Migration

## LGBTIQ+<sup>17</sup> Migrants: In Search of Visibility and Protection

In 2019, 68 UN member states still criminalized same-sex relations, which is punishable by death in some countries. Sexual orientation and gender identity have motivated people to migrate for quite some time. Yet in a global society that continues to see sexuality and identity as taboo subjects, lack of awareness, prejudices, and institutionalized exclusion have led many to be invisible and subsumed as economic migrants, participating in labor migration channels or as irregular migrants. For reasons of shame and fear, some migrants do not claim sexual orientation and gender identity as decision-making factors for migrating.

Others who face repressive laws and policies that criminalize sexual orientation and gender identity in their countries of origin<sup>18</sup> have sought refugee status in certain destination countries that recognize LGBTIQ+ people's ability to make refugee claims as "members of a particular social group" or based on fear of persecution or one's political opinions. Currently South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and the European Union grant asylum to people persecuted on the grounds of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2020).

In recent years, with the increase of forced migration of LGBTIQ+ and gender-nonconforming people fleeing persecution and violence, LGBTIQ+ groups in different regions of the world have increasingly focused on those seeking asylum or granted refugee status.<sup>19</sup> For example, in South Africa—where the constitution bans discrimination based on sexual orientation<sup>20</sup>—the organization People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) advocates for the rights of LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees, assists them with

paralegal advice, and helps them build support networks. However, despite South Africa's official position, the asylum application process is fraught with problems and a lack of transparency, and many LGBTIQ+ refugees are being unjustly turned away. According to PASSOP, from a baseline of a hundred asylum seekers, only four achieved refugee status under Section 4 (renewable every two to four years) and 40 percent were given asylum status under Section 22 (requiring them to renew their staying permit every month). Moreover, those who are granted status still often face discrimination and harassment in their new communities in South Africa (PASSOP, 2020).

When xenophobia is compounded with homophobia, it leaves many gay and transgender migrants in conditions not unlike those in the countries they fled in the first place. In addition to continued discrimination in daily life, LGBTIQ+ migrants in countries of destination often face new forms of discrimination based on nationality, migration status, race, xenophobia, gender, language, and other factors. Some face stigmatization by their peer networks of other migrants (UN Women, 2016).

LGBTIQ+ migrant issues continue to be marginalized from the agenda of most mainstream migrant civil society organizations. They are seen as a minority within a minority. On the other hand, new networks have been created to promote and defend the rights of this group, such as the [Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration \(ORAM\)](#) at the global level and [Red Regional de Protección de Personas LGBTI+ refugiadas, solicitantes de asilo y migrantes/Regional Network for the Protection of LGBTI+ migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Latin America](#). These organizations support

17 See glossary.

18 In 2019, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) detailed that 68 out of 193 United Nations member states (35 percent) criminalized consensual sexual relations among same-sex adult persons, and in eight of them the death penalty is in effect (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2020).

19 Criteria for claiming asylum can be based on the Yogyakarta Principles. In 2006, in response to well-documented patterns of abuse, a distinguished group of international human rights experts met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, to outline a nonbinding set of international principles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).

20 On May 8, 1996, South Africa became the first country in the world to constitutionally prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. The new South African Constitution protects people from discrimination on the basis of "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth."

LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees through training, education, legal assistance, livelihoods projects, and public awareness campaigns.

Furthermore, some international LGBTIQ+ rights organizations are starting to incorporate the particular concerns of LGBTIQ+ migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees into their work. In Europe, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe) works toward full implementation and strengthening of European and international standards relating to asylum in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. This is a challenge at the national level, since asylum legislation and policies in some European countries can pose specific problems for LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers. Moreover, the authorities' lack of experience and professionalism in dealing with such refugee status<sup>21</sup> applications can bring additional problems (ILGA-Europe, 2020).

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, LGBTIQ+ individuals seeking asylum have been affected

by the crisis more negatively than others due to systemic and institutionalized LGBTIQ+-phobia (ILGA-Europe, 2020). Those who needed to relocate to escape life-endangering environments and had made arrangements suddenly found borders closed, requiring them to return to unsafe living conditions with no possible route to safety. Others have suffered from a lack of safe spaces, exacerbating their social isolation and risk of violence.

It is a welcome sign that the rights of LGBTIQ+ people are now being addressed within the UN Human Rights System (Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, 2019; OHCHR, 2017, and UN Women, 2016). However, there is a long way to go within both the UN system<sup>22</sup> and civil society. A high priority is integrating LGBTIQ+ migrant and refugees' concerns into both migrant and feminist organizational agendas and spaces and recognizing the leadership of LGBTIQ+ migrants.

21 The European Commission presented the first-ever EU Strategy for LGBTIQ equality on November 2020. Under this strategy, the EU will support actions for LGBTIQ equality under the Asylum and Migration Fund.

22 In this regard, the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) fails to specifically address the needs LGBTIQ+ migrants.

# TAKING STOCK



# TAKING STOCK

This Gender and Migration Mapping project has surveyed current realities and organizational profiles with the goal of building and strengthening alliances, exploring common agendas, and creating a more effective joint advocacy strategy within civil society to enhance the human rights of women in migration. In conclusion, WIMN and FES reflect on the implications of the data, assessing civil society's organizational needs, policy requirements, and alliance possibilities. This is not a summary of the survey data itself.

## 1. CHALLENGES

### Organizational Challenges Within Civil Society:

- » **Limited Resources Limit Scope and Reach:** The limited resources available to many of the organizations surveyed means that they do not have the capacity to go beyond supporting the immediate needs of migrants to take a more analytical approach and engage in policy advocacy at regional and international forums though most organizations surveyed indicated that advocacy is their main program strategy. At a practical level, limited resources make it difficult to connect issues and to address the situations of women in migration in a holistic way. This has especially been the case during the global pandemic. Urgent responses to migrant women's needs often take priority over the time and resources to focus on drivers of migration such as climate change; inequality; harmful economic policies; extractive industries and gentrification causing displacement; violence and harassment, including gender-based violence; other types of violence including state violence; and additional factors that force many women to migrate.
- » **Climate, Gender, and Migration:** The organizations surveyed are increasingly aware of how climate-related displacement impacts the lives of women, often pushing them to move within and across borders. Yet there is too little research documenting climate change, internal

displacement, and international migration with a gender approach. Most surveyed organizations do not work on climate change as a root cause of migration—even though they may recognize its significance—but instead focus on addressing immediate needs.

- » **Expanding Feminist Spaces:** Feminist movements have only begun to put migration on their policy agendas. There is still a lack of visibility of migrant women's voices within feminist networks and organizations. Most migration-related organizations surveyed are not part of global feminist networks, although some of them participate in women's networks at national or regional levels. There is a need to create spaces for dialogue between autonomous migrant women's organizations and feminist movements within countries.
- » **Regional Organizational Disparities:** We noted the many ways that groups organize in different regions and disparities in levels of civil society organization related to migration among regions. (For example, Asia has many strong regional migrant organizations, while in Africa migrants are less organized regionally. In Europe, there is a strong level of migrant women self-organizing at the national level and in the Americas there are subregional groups based on migration corridors, etc.). This reflects larger global inequalities within and across regions. Civil society organizations and networks should continue to discuss how regional organizing, networks, and alliances can be strengthened to overcome historic limitations due to colonialism, militarism, and economics.
- » **LGBTIQ+ migrant issues** continue to be marginalized by most migrant civil society organizations. In a global society that continues to see sexual orientation and gender identity as taboo subjects, lack of awareness, prejudices, and institutionalized exclusion may lead migrant groups to avoid addressing LGBTIQ+ migrant concerns, often with dire consequences. On the other hand, some national organizations and international LGBTIQ+ rights organizations are starting to incorporate

the particular concerns of LGBTIQ+ migrants and asylum seekers (see box). A high priority is integrating LGBTIQ+ migrant concerns into both migrant and feminist organizational agendas and spaces and recognizing the leadership of LGBTIQ+ migrants.

» **Black and Indigenous women migrants** have faced particular intersectional discrimination in their countries of origin and then face ongoing and new forms of discrimination in countries of destination. Many are targets of displacement due to land-grabbing, extractivism, oil and gas pipelines, and more at home. Others are consistently excluded from jobs, housing, and education due to racism. When they migrate, they face xenophobia, gender discrimination, and racial and ethnic exclusion and animosity. This impacts their access to jobs, housing, services, justice, and freedom from violence and discrimination. Most surveyed organizations have considered multiple discriminations as a top concern for women in migration. Recognizing and addressing the particular realities of Black, Indigenous, and other oppressed groups who migrate will be necessary in order to leave no one behind. Important first steps include deliberate, inclusive outreach and alliance building with Black and Indigenous migrant organizations.

## Policy Challenges:

- » **Gaps Between Words and Realities:** Despite major gains in affirming human rights-based and gender-responsive migration policy through the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants and the GCM, at many borders and in many areas of the world, migration is becoming more treacherous, particularly for women. Flagrant violations of international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law take place daily in numerous regions. It is urgent that whole-of-society partnerships address the crises that women in migration currently face around the world, focusing on long-term solutions.
- » **Real Action on Centering Gender:** While the attention to “gender-responsive migration policy” in global migration policy spaces is welcome, in reality it is little understood, much less implemented. Global, regional, and national migration policies often lack a gender analysis emerging from the experiences and expertise of migrant
- » women themselves, creating a large disconnect between policy makers and migrant women.
- » **Temporary labor schemes** are touted by many states as a primary form of “regular” migration. Yet these schemes, which prioritize migrant domestic worker contracts, reinforce gendered labor segmentation, particularly in care work. Migrant women are relegated to underpaid and highly exploitative work. The notion of “win-win” bilateral migrant labor contracts hides the reality that many countries of origin export workers as a “development” strategy reliant on remittances, while countries of destination profit by importing low-wage workers to fill labor gaps and undermine local labor rights. The survey revealed a lot about the impact of these labor contracts on women’s lives. While reforms in the model are urgently needed, states need to address sustainable development goals at home that enable workers to opt to remain, and to ensure decent work and wages in destination countries, with a pathway to citizenship and family unity for migrant workers.
- » **ILO Convention 190 on Gender-Based Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (GBVH)**, the outcome of massive labor, feminist, and migrant women mobilization, needs to be translated into state ratifications and real implementation in national law. GBVH was among the highest concerns for women in migration in all regions, from the home to the workplace, from the street to state officials and security forces. Ending GBVH must become an urgent policy priority.
- » **LGBTIQ+ migrants** have particular needs and experience certain forms of intersectional discrimination. These must be addressed in policy that protects and promotes their human rights.
- » The **intersection of multiple oppressions** that women in migration face emerged as a major concern in the survey. Migration policies and programs must intentionally address women at the intersections of gender, race, class, migratory status, sexual orientation, disability, age, and other identities—or these groups of women will be left out.
- » Both research and policy must consider the nexus of **climate, gender, and migration**. States should address climate drivers of migration through gendered mitigation and adaptation

policies. Migrants fleeing climate-related displacement need special regular status to enable them to thrive in new circumstances.

- » **The securitization of migration policy** has had dire effects on women in migration with the increased militarization of borders, criminalization of migrants, detention, deportation, family separation, and tragic loss of life. This is a growing trend in recent decades, which was not always the case and does not need to be the case. The affirmation of migrant human rights in international documents must be played out in national policies and at international borders by shifting from migration enforcement to migrant rights.
- » **Regularization** of migrant status is an urgent priority to secure migrant women's human rights. This was very evident in identifying the priorities of organizations surveyed in all regions. Irregular status keeps migrant women in fear, living and working in precarious circumstances, limiting their access to jobs, services, safety, and justice.
- » **A just end to war and conflict** is necessary if women are to be able to choose to remain safely at home. The survey found that some groups working with refugees are also working on the issues of women, peace, and security. States should address the **gendered nature of war and conflict**, of refugee status, and of peacemaking, implementing Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and advancing the effective participation of women in peacemaking and conflict prevention while linking this to migration.
- » **No More Business as Usual in COVID-19 Response and Beyond:** Migrant women must be made visible in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, whether they are in situations of pre-departure (but stranded), on-site (precarious job situation or living conditions), stranded in countries of destination, or returned women migrant workers (unable to work as well as unable to access government programs and services during the pandemic). Their labor has either been deemed disposable or "essential," with deep consequences in each case. During the pandemic and in the post-COVID-19 period, migrant women, regardless of migration status, need to be included in emergency economic and health assistance. Women camped on borders require access to asylum processes, humanitarian relief,

and health and safety measures. In a post-pandemic future, migrant women need permanent solutions, including labor rights, freedom of association, and the right to bargain collectively for decent work, freedom from violence and xenophobia, no restrictions on movement based on COVID-19 antibodies, and access to free vaccination regardless of migration status.

## Where We Go from Here: Recommendations for Strategy and Organizing

- » **Let Women in Migration Lead:** Women in migration are effective advocates who can influence policies and practices that relate to their rights over land, resources, decent work, family life, peace, and democratic participation. Non-tokenistic participation of women in migration at policy decision-making levels is essential. Migrant women need to be included in decision-making processes regarding migration at local, national, regional, and global levels, and women's diverse voices—including Black, Indigenous, and other migrant women of color—must be heard in spheres of power.
- » **Intersectional Organizing and Policy Demands:** Build cross-sectoral alliances based on the multiple identities of women in migration. The concerns of migrant women connect with other marginalized groups including rural women, Indigenous women, urban poor women, women workers, and so on.
- » **Alliance Building:** Build transnational and cross-sectoral alliances to collaborate on, support, and amplify the different issues experienced by women in migration. Beyond the identity intersections noted above, such alliances can bridge feminist, labor, migrant, climate justice, economic justice, and other sectors with a lens on women in migration.
- » **Organizing That Connects Origin and Destination:** Civil society organizations from both countries of origin and destination can create coordinated responses to address violations of rights of women in migration. For example, in the case of migrant domestic workers, the organizations surveyed from countries of origin in Asia expressed the need to strengthen

coordination with peer organizations in countries of destination such as the Arab states.<sup>23</sup>

- » **Bridge Service and Advocacy:** Mobilize resources to directly support organizations led by and/or serving women at all stages of migration. Recognize the urgent survival needs, including shelter, protection from violence, post-violence support, food, legal aid, mental health, know-your-rights, and more. Particularly support the informal migrant-women-led associations providing mutual aid and services for their community. At the same time, support women's leadership development training and provide resources to undergird emerging migrant women leaders in roles of organizing and advocacy to claim rights at the community, national, regional, and global level.
- » **Use International Policy Instruments and Forums:** Organizations can make use of the GCM's whole-of-society approach to advocate for the rights of women in migration. This can be combined with advocacy on ILO Conventions 189 (Domestic Workers) and 190 (Gender-Based Violence in the World of Work), CEDAW and CEDAW General Recommendation 26 on women migrant workers, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their families, among other human rights instruments. In order to do so, the experiences of women in migration must be documented and raised

in a common advocacy agenda that becomes central to migration policy forums, not merely tokenistic. Notably, feminist, labor, and migrant rights groups in multiple regions are campaigning for ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions 189 and 190, an important entry point for intersectional organizing. In addition, the UN International Migration Review Forum in 2022 offers an opportunity for intersectional feminist shadow reports and the development of an advocacy agenda reflecting the lived experiences of women in migration.

- » **It is possible to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis stronger, more just, and more equal.** The crisis exposes systemic problems that migrant women have long understood— informality in our economy, weak health care systems, lack of social safety nets, structural racism, gender discrimination, and inhumane migration regimes. Indeed, globalization and harsh market orthodoxy have generated the precarity, low wages, and unprotected working conditions that are key drivers forcing women to migrate across borders and regions as a means of survival. Now is the time to address these core failures, not merely restore flawed systems. The Women in Migration Network (WIMN), demands<sup>24</sup> an inclusive, transformational agenda that restructures health care and economic and migration systems to be gender responsive, put people first, and value all people equally.

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23 As a response to such demand, a consortium of several migration professionals across the Asia and MENA region was created in 2019 with the support of the Cross-Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM) and Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA).

24 See WIMN's statement on COVID 19 crisis at <http://womeninmigration.org/2020/04/wimns-statement-on-the-covid-crisis/>

# ANNEXES



# METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study involved identifying some five hundred organizations working on women and international migration around the world (grouped in the following regions: Africa and MENA, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the Americas) and conducting a broad online survey in 2020, in which **315 organizations** participated. The survey aimed to assess the profile of the organizations (self-organized and grassroots organizations, NGOs, networks, etc.); their sector (migration rights, labor, women's rights, climate change, etc.); their priorities and the needs of the women and girls in the context of migration. This includes the most urgent needs due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and how they are responding to the pandemic. The survey also included questions on the added value that an umbrella organization such as WIMN could bring to their work and about their involvement in the national implementation of the GCM. Secondly, a round of nineteen in-depth interviews, evenly distributed among regions, was conducted, in order to complement the assessment of the different regional realities identified by the survey. Finally, the information gathered in both the online survey and the in-depth interviews was systematized and analyzed in order to elaborate this study. Conclusions represent WIMN and FES's assessment of the data and recommendations—not a summary of the data itself.

# GLOSSARY OF CONCEPTS RELATED TO GENDER AND MIGRATION

**GLOBAL CARE CHAIN:** A migrant woman assuming paid work in child care (or other care) in her country of destination may directly and indirectly impact upon the role of nonmigrant women in her country of origin, sometimes including those who care for her own children back home, creating transnational communities. This process relating to international migration in which responsibility for the labor of caregiving passes from one woman to another, and the various linkages that exist between people who are engaged in paid or unpaid caregiving across interregional contexts, is known as the global care chain.

**INTERNATIONAL SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOR:** Not only does the sexual division of labor organize households and national labor markets, it has also become internationalized. Thus, the global labor market has generated niches of labor insertion for women (i.e., factory assembly work in export processing zones, domestic, and other care work), which increasingly rely upon migrant women's labor.

**LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS, NON-BINARY, INTERSEX, QUEER PLUS (LGBTQ+):** This is an inclusive acronym encompassing all minority sexual and gender identities, as well as atypical biological sex or intersex. Trans is inclusive of all transgender persons from transsexuals to transvestites, some of whom may identify as binary male or female, irrespective of biological/body sex and others as outside the binary of just two genders. Q+ includes all other identities including asexual, pansexual, genderqueer, nonbinary, questioning, and so on. People whose gender is nonconforming may also identify as an LGB or another minority sexual identity, or they may identify as heterosexual. No disrespect or erasure is intended in not using one of the longer LGBTIQ2SA-type initialisms or terms appropriate to different languages and cultures. There is no international agreement on how to extend LGBT to be more inclusive of all gender and sexual diversities.

## MULTIPLE AND INTERSECTING FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

**DISCRIMINATION:** Intersectionality is an analytic tool emerging from Black feminists for studying, understanding, and responding to the ways in which gender intersects with other identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of oppression and privilege. While all women are in some ways subject to gender discrimination, other factors including race and skin color, caste, age, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, migration status, marital status, disability, and national origin, impact on access to rights and opportunities. Women experience the impacts of migration in multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Policies that ignore these intersecting exclusions will fail women who experience multiple oppressions.

**STAGES OF MIGRATION CYCLE:** In order to capture all dimensions of a complex phenomenon such as international migration, the whole migration cycle has to be incorporated in the analysis, including places of origin, transit, destination, and return (whether forced or voluntary).

**SECURITIZATION OF MIGRATION:** The process in which migration discourse and policy shifts toward an emphasis on security has been referred to as the securitization of migration. Securitization is defined as a process of social construction that pushes an area of regular politics, such as asylum, into an area of national security.

**WOMEN IN MIGRATION:** The concept of "women in migration" goes beyond migrant women workers to include women and girls who may be neither workers nor migrants but are directly affected by migration. The idea includes women seeking to remain at home, women in transit, women who remain behind when spouses migrate, and migrant women who have been deported. It also includes LGBTIQ+ women and girls in these contexts.

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