

## POSITION PAPER on MIGRATION

### DEFINITIONS

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), migration is the movement of a person or a group of persons, either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons moving for other purposes, including family reunification.

The United Nations defines a migrant as an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate. The IOM provides the following distinctions between the many types of migrants.

- Economic migrant: a person leaving his or her habitual place of residence to settle outside his or her country of origin in order to improve his or her quality of life or for the purpose of employment. This term is often used to distinguish migrants from refugees fleeing persecution, and it is also used to refer to persons attempting to enter a country without legal permission.
- Documented migrant: a migrant who entered a country lawfully and remains in the country in accordance with his or her admission criteria.
- Irregular migrant: a person who, owing to unauthorized entry, breach of a condition of entry, or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country.
- Skilled migrant: a migrant worker who, because of his or her skills or acquired professional experience, is granted preferential treatment regarding admission to a host country and is therefore subject to fewer restrictions regarding length of stay, change of employment and family reunification.
- Temporary migrant worker: skilled, semi-skilled or untrained workers who remain in the destination country for definite periods of time as determined in a work contract with an individual worker or a service contract with an enterprise.

These categories can also include both asylum seekers and refugees, the difference being that asylum seekers do not expect to return to their country of origin, whereas refugees are often displaced and hope to return when conditions permit.

### BACKGROUND

According to the World Bank, in 2014, more than 250 million people lived and worked outside their countries of birth, and more than 750 million people migrated within their countries. Global remittance flows (money sent from migrants to their countries of origin) were an estimated US\$583

billion in 2014, including US\$436 billion to developing countries. Development experts agree that changing demographics, globalization and climate change will increase migration pressures both within and across borders in the coming years.

Women constitute approximately half of the 250 million migrants today and in some countries, as much as 70 or 80 percent, according to UNFPA. Whether migrating through regular or irregular migration channels, women migrants often face the risk of economic exploitation, as well as physical and sexual violence from intermediaries and employers with little access to legal protection or justice.

Forced labor is a risk for many women and men using irregular migration channels; however, migrant women are more susceptible to being trafficked for sexual exploitation, constituting 98 percent of all such victims, according to the International Labour Organization.

Women migrants can frequently be found in low-status, low-wage production and service jobs and unregulated sectors of the economy such as domestic care work where they face additional vulnerabilities and human rights abuses, including physical, psychological and sexual violence and/or excessive work hours without rest or additional pay. However, undocumented or irregular migrants are often afraid to seek help when their rights are violated for fear of arrest and repatriation. Limited access to health and education services and family separation can also have long-term negative effects on the health and well-being of women and their children while limited access to financial services and products in both their home and host countries, lack of financial literacy, and insufficient support for capacity building, investment or income diversification reduce women's ability to benefit from their earnings.

## **POSITION STATEMENT**

Zonta International is an organization empowering women at the global and local levels, and promoting justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Whether migrant women are fleeing their countries of origin to escape conflict, exploitation, the after effects of natural disasters or humanitarian crises, or migrating by choice in search of greater economic opportunities, women migrants face a multitude of risks.

As global migration continues to increase, Zonta International calls on all governments to address the threats to the human rights of women migrants and migrant workers and to:

- Commit the necessary support and resources to achieve the goals and targets laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal No. 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," which encompasses all aspects of women's human rights and women's empowerment and should be applied to migrant women. The vulnerability of women refugees who are pregnant and give birth must be recognized, and special efforts be made to give them protection and health services.
- Special attention should also be given to Goal 8, "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" and

Goal 10, “Reduce inequality among countries,” which include the following targets in respect to migration and migrant rights:

- To protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
- To facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
- Use existing international commitments to protect the rights of women migrants, including the:
  - UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, which is a key instrument for protecting migrants’ rights
  - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 26 on women migrant workers, which seeks to strengthen protection for women migrants in all situations, including those with irregular status.
  - International Labour Organization Convention 189, which promotes decent work for domestic workers.
- Monitor the results of any actions undertaken and report.
- Involve NGOs and civil society actors in the protection and promotion of migrants’ human rights.

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