



Forum on Women and Migration on 23 March 2018

Conclusions and recommendations

The following is a list of facts and recommendations drawn from all the interventions during the Forum and summarized at the end of the Forum by Valerie Bichelmeier, Main representative at the United Nations, Make Mothers Matter (MMM).

1) Address the root causes of migration

Migration can have many causes, the most obvious ones being wars/conflicts, natural disaster, climate change, as well as poverty and hunger. Other causes include the lack of political or religious freedom. The failures of democracies, poor governance and corruption, as well as deepening inequalities within and between countries are also indirectly at the origin of migration.

Migration can also simply be driven by work or the search for better economic opportunities (especially in the case of youth who are deeply effected by raising unemployment in their country). It is unfortunately often encouraged by the Diasporas, which give an idealized image of destination countries.

As shown by the example of Nepal, gender inequality and violence at home can also drive women abroad.

→ Creating stable political, economic, social environments in the countries of origin would allow their citizens, women in particular, to live in dignity with their families and remain in these countries. It is especially important for youth who should not want to flee their country, and who should believe in their own country. Gender equality and women's rights are worth investing in to contribute to sustainable development in the countries of origin and thus reduce emigration.

The 2030 Agenda provides a very relevant framework to address all these issues that send people on the move.

2) Educate and inform candidates for migration

Candidates for migration should be informed about the risks of migration and the realities of life in destination countries, including the difficulties of integration.

→ Educating migrants, especially women, and giving them the necessary skills (such as financial literacy) and information about their rights as migrant is essential to mitigate the risks of migration and help them find decent work.

3) Address irregularity

Irregular migration makes migrants vulnerable, notably to economic exploitation, trafficking as well as physical and sexual violence - with little access to legal protection or justice. Irregularity even makes migrants unnecessarily risk their lives.

→ Opening regular migration route - and getting people to use these legal channels - is key for facilitating a safe and responsible migration that benefits both migrants and host countries. Governments should help migrant to move from irregularity to regularity – instead of using coercive

measure such as imprisonment or forced repatriation.

4) Develop Statistics - gender disaggregated data

Data is important for policy development and monitoring. Regularising migration will also help to obtain reliable statistics. Data should be disaggregated by gender and age to support the implementation of targeted policies.

5) Partner with CSO to integrate migrants in host countries

It is time to move from « saving » lives to rehabilitating and empowering migrants to rebuild new lives in their destination country. And this includes dealing with trauma linked to all the violence and other difficulties they experienced.

Women face particular challenges, such as sexual violence and separation from family (they often leave their children behind) - that need to be specifically addressed.

Establishing partnerships between governments and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) is crucial: CSO work on the ground and often know the issues better than governments. In particular, they often have a better understanding of cultural differences. CSO also put the necessary pressure for governments to act.

→ Understanding how CSO look at the picture and using their expertise will help government develop relevant and effective policies.

6) Empower women migrants on labour markets

Female migrants often suffer 'triple discrimination' as women, as migrants, and as unprotected workers. Women migrant earn less than men, but remit a higher share of their revenues to their families in their country of origin.

Women migrants are often employed 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 abuses, such as physical, psychological and sexual violence and/or long work hours without rest or additional pay.

Empowering migrant women economically is about giving them the possibility to change their situation in the labour market. It means addressing the particular hurdles faced by migrant women:

- Non recognition of skills – which is especially a problem in lower skilled occupation
- De-skilling / over-qualification, which results in lower wages and reduced opportunities
- Ill treatment such as non payment of wages or ID retention
- Lack of social insurance, notably maternity protection.

→ Protecting labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, and in particular women migrants is essential. Working with trade unions could improve collective bargaining and give migrant women a voice and transform migration into a positive and empowering experience.

7) Use existing HR instruments and other instruments

Migrant women and CSOs supporting their integration in signatory countries should use Human Rights and other instruments to claim their rights. Such instruments include the Convention on migrant workers and the Convention on the Elimination of Discriminations (CEDAW), as well as ILO conventions that sets international labour standards, notably ILO Convention 97 on migration for

employment, ILO Convention 143 on migrant workers and ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. These conventions set the standards for decent living and decent work.

The same is true for policy frameworks like the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD).

→ Advocate for ratification by all States of ILO Convention 97 on migration for employment, ILO Convention 143 on migrant workers, ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, and the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

8) Re-establish the reality of migration in host countries: migration is good for host countries

The media nurtures wrong perceptions of migration. The reality is that migration is not new and an everyday reality in Europe, that 50-80% of all migration takes place within Regional Economic Communities (not South North), and that a large majority of migrants arrive through legal channels. Migrant women's labour force participation is higher than for native women. According to OECD 1 in 5 persons in the EU is a migrant or of immediate migrant origin, foreign born or with one or both parents foreign born, and they make up to 30% of the workforce. Migrant significantly contributes to the economy, in a context of population ageing and labour force decline.

→ Governments need to communicate on this reality and on the positive effects of migration, notably the important contribution of migrants to the economy. Migration is not a threat: the real threat is xenophobia.

The conclusion is a call for action:

"If you are not on the table, you are on the menu!": Women have a choice to either be a victim or a change maker...

→ ***"Be the change you want to see – no excuse!"***