

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL'S

STATEMENT ON WOMEN MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Approved by the Zonta International Board May 2022



ZONTA
INTERNATIONAL

BUILD A BETTER WORLD
FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

WWW.ZONTA.ORG



Migration: an opportunity or an escape



Migration impacts nearly all of our societies, be it as country of origin or as a destination. For some, it is a huge opportunity or an escape from unbearable circumstances; for others, it is more a threat, fearing that an incoming greater group of foreigners could cause deep changes in their personal life or their society as a whole.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines migrant as a person “who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is.”

2020 WORLD MIGRATION



281 million
migrants
globally



3.6% of
the world's
population



of which
135 million
are female





Risk Factors

According to the World Bank Identification for Development (ID4D) initiative, every second woman in low-income countries has no personal ID. The ownership of official personal documents is crucial not only for legal, voluntary migration, but also necessary to gain access to education, health systems, political participation, financial transactions and even SIM cards for mobiles at home and abroad. The lack of personal documents forces people ready to move into illegal migration with increased risks as mentioned below.

Life skills training and reliable information about risks and opportunities of migration and personal rights could help mitigate those risks and achieve the desired outcome.



ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN TO:

- Take measures to follow SDG 16.9: “By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration and provide easy access to personal IDs, visas and documents for women and girls without consent of male family members.”

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON ITS MEMBERS TO:

- Support life skills training and provide general information about the risks and opportunities of migration
- Advocate for SDG 16.9.



Voluntary Internal Migration

Adolescent girls in developing countries tend to voluntarily migrate to or between urban areas as they lack opportunities in their rural hometowns to learn, gain skills and resources, and work. Their move, despite all possible risks, lets them escape from poverty, harmful practices or dangerous cultural norms and can unlock opportunities and chances to reach their full potential. Girls' migration for school or work may be seen as a socially acceptable alternative to marriage in many settings.

Even though marriage might also be the reason to migrate, this movement exposes the girls to social risks of losing peer networks and makes them more vulnerable to gender-based violence when protection from family and friends is missing. Today social networks may be strengthened by the use of electronic devices if access is possible.

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS TO

- Sign, ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).
- Prohibit child marriage and harmful practices like female genital mutilation.

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON ITS MEMBERSHIP IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN TO

- Inform adolescent girls and their parents on opportunities and risks.
- Inform and advocate against child marriage and female genital mutilation.





Forced or Involuntary Migration

In cases when many people want to escape their country of origin due to natural disaster, conflict or poverty, organized migrant smugglers often seem to be the only opportunity to cross borders, albeit illegally, and reach the country of destination. Despite the risks on those hazardous journeys, the high costs make the migrants, particularly women and girls, vulnerable to trafficking, abuse and exploitation. (See: [ZI Statement on Trafficking in Persons](#))

But even legal transportation within a country and stays in unsecure settings can put mainly adolescent girls at risk.

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS TO:

- Sign, ratify and implement the “UN Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration” (2018) and the “UN protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air” (2000).
- Implement policies to follow SDG 10.7 “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”
- Provide safe travel opportunities and safe places for adolescent girls to stay with peers.

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON ITS MEMBERSHIP IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN TO:

- Raise awareness and ask government or local authorities to secure safe travel and safe stays for women and girls.





Voluntary migration for work

Nearly two thirds (62%) of international migrants are migrant workers, mainly heading for higher income countries and with a decreasing share of females (41.5 %) according to 2019 statistics from the IOM. In destinations like the Arab states and southern Asia, there is a huge imbalance with four times more male migrants than females. Men are more likely to work in the construction business, compared to women in care work or household support. Both carry risks of low wages or even exploitation or modern forms of slavery. Nevertheless, even those jobs can lead to an improvement of skills which migrants can use when returning home. Industrialized countries of today often look for skilled workers abroad as their demographic development leads to a shortage of the workforce in special fields.

The main driver to endure difficult labor circumstances is the desire to send money home and support the family. According to the World Bank (Nov. 2021), the projected remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries of US\$589 billion will surpass the sum of foreign direct investment and overseas development assistance. This direct help for families in the countries of origin often covers costs for food, health and the education of siblings, and enhances the economic recovery from the pandemic.



ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS TO:

- Sign, ratify and implement CEDAW and General Recommendation 26 on women migrant workers and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- Implement Policies to achieve SDG 8.8 “Protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.”
- Implement policies to reach SDG 10.c “By 2030, reduce to less than 3% the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5%.”

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON ITS MEMBERSHIP IN COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION TO:

- Advocate for women migrants in precarious employment.



Women in Countries of Origin

Evaluating the effects of migration will be incomplete without looking at the women who stay at home. When their spouses migrate, they alone carry the burden for the household and other family members. Or they take care of the children of migrated daughters or sisters. Often, they have problems receiving remittances sent home as they are not familiar with financial operations.

Women migrants returning home sometimes need support to be reintegrated. With the knowledge and skills that they learned abroad, they can also act as agents of change of cultural norms or even prepare to start a business on their own.

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON ITS MEMBERSHIP IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN TO:

- Provide life skills training.
- Create an agents of change network.
- Start a mentoring program for entrepreneurs.

Refugees and Involuntary Migrants without Refugee Status

The term refugee refers to a precise legal definition that comes under international law. Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as “a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

CAUSES

Continuous conflicts, terrorism, persecution, political and economic crisis, gender discrimination, famine, climate change, droughts and natural disasters are continuous causes for migration and forced displacement. It is a fact that women and girls are more vulnerable than men because of the various discriminations women face.





SETTINGS

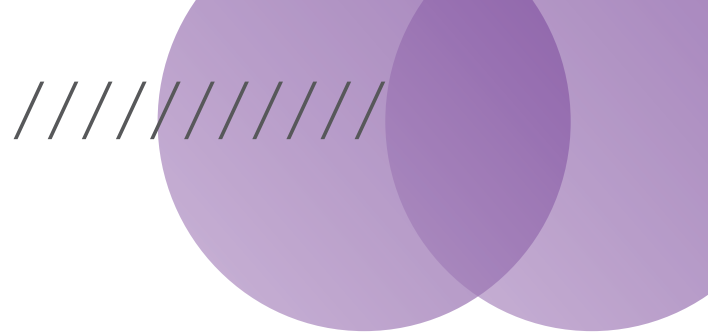
In the crowded camps where refugees and migrant people live, there is no place for social distancing and with poor hygiene and sanitary conditions, disorganized humanitarian aid, fragile health conditions, little resources, women and girls face greater challenges and risks including family separation, psychosocial stress and trauma, gender-based violence, health complications, particularly for pregnant women, physical harm and injury, including sexual exploitation, trafficking and violence. Women and girls account for 71% of all human trafficking victims, according to a 2016 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Trafficked women and girls often think they will work in legitimate occupations but find themselves trapped into forced prostitution, marriage, domestic work or other forms of exploitation that are similar to slavery.

CONSEQUENCES

Women and girls also face additional vulnerabilities when they are displaced by conflict or natural disasters.

- The breakdown of protection systems mean perpetrators can abuse with impunity.
- Lack of shelter, overcrowding in camps and poorly lit public toilets all increase the risk of gender-based violence, including sexual violence.
- In these camps, due to poverty and lack of income, girls and women are at high risk of becoming victims of kidnapping, trafficking, forced marriage and child marriage.
- Girls are not able to continue their education as they move away from school or it is too dangerous to travel.
- Racism and xenophobia are serious concerns wherever large-scale migration takes place, and anti-immigrant sentiment is increasing in many countries.
- A great number of female migrants are likely to be pregnant or to become pregnant. While travelling, or in the chaos of displacement, women may lose access to sexual and reproductive health care, antenatal services and safe childbirth care. They face significantly higher risks of maternal injury and death and also higher risks of HIV infection, trauma and violence. If the births are not officially recorded, the children are deprived of a proof of legal identity crucial for the protection of their rights and for access to justice and social services.



ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS TO:

- Sign, ratify and implement the Council of Europe Recommendation R (79) 10, Resolution 2159 (2017), Resolution 2244 (2018).
- Ensure at all stages, the human rights, safety and dignity of refugees and migrants.
- Provide protection from violence, discrimination, harassment, trafficking and other forms of exploitation and abuse.
- Ensure that gender-based violence-specific services and sex-segregated shelters are safe and available on all transit sites and in all accommodation centers.
- Ensure sufficient access to medical and psychological help in order to improve the recovery from traumatic experience.
- Define threats of gender-based persecution as acts of persecution, considered as sufficient grounds for obtaining a right to asylum.
- Define sexual violence committed outside countries of origin and throughout the journey as a persecution and sufficient grounds for international protection. Those acts of violence should not be considered as simple acts of violence.

ZONTA INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON ITS MEMBERS IN COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION TO:

- Advocate to ensure that migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women have access to their human and social rights in relation to individual freedom, employment, housing, health, education, social protection and welfare, where applicable, and inform them about their rights.
- Inform, support and mentor refugee women to better integrate, achieve basic language skills and adapt to cultural specifics.

