



Socialist International Women

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

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MIGRATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE – WOMEN’S CONTRIBUTION TO LIVING TOGETHER

DECLARATION

In 2013, an estimated 232 million people migrated from their country or region of origin. Almost half of the world’s migrants are women and girl children, with female migrants being as high as 70 or 80 percent of the total in some countries. There can be many possible reasons for migrating, including seeking improved socioeconomic opportunities, escaping religious or gender-based persecution, escaping war zones, and being forced to flee by violent aggressors. In addition, the detrimental effect of climate change in some areas is becoming an increasingly urgent and significant reason for human migration.

Climate changes are significantly affecting regions in the form of catastrophic events, such as flash flooding and earthquakes, as well as more gradual degradations of the environment, such as rising sea-levels, soil erosion and the leeching of essential nutrients from previously fertile land. The impact of these changes affects the ability of smaller communities to grow sufficient food to eat or sell, source clean water, or find secure areas to build homes. Transport and industry infra-structures can also be severely affected by climate change, to the extent that economies become strained, or completely collapse.

Women farmers are prolific in many developing countries. Depending on the region, women produce between 45-80 percent of all foods grown. This means many women depend on the land for their sustenance and livelihoods and suffer acutely from changes in climate. In rural communities, women may also have the responsibility of collecting water, food and fuel for cooking and heating. This is usually in addition to being the primary care givers in child-rearing, family social care and food preparation. As natural food and fuel resources become scarce, or require longer journeys to locate them, this too has a debilitating impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of women. With limited mobility, decision-making rights and access to resources, many women are suffering disproportionately from the impacts of climate change. Further, many women are prevented from contributing their knowledge, experience or ideas on possible solutions due to sociocultural, religious, or politically imposed limitations.

Where climate change forces migration, women and girl children are more vulnerable to harm than their male counterparts. Physical and sexual violence, human trafficking for sexual exploitation and the denial of basic human rights are more likely to be experienced by female migrants on their migration journey and at their final destination. Migrant shelters can also be over-crowded and intimidating for women, forcing female migrants to seek shelter elsewhere in the often mistaken belief that they will be safer.

The SIW is deeply concerned that millions of women and girl migrants are denied a voice in making decisions concerning their communities, regions and countries. The SIW is also deeply saddened that women migrants continue to be violated, harmed and exploited. The

SIW calls for urgent action to protect the human rights, health, safety and wellbeing of all vulnerable women and girl migrants.

The SIW supports the UN High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, October 2013 and the UN Secretary-General's eight-point agenda for action on migration. The SIW particularly notes the call for "protecting the human rights of all migrants", "eliminating migrant exploitation, including human trafficking" and "enhancing migration partnerships and cooperation". The SIW also expresses support for the work of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in raising awareness, understanding and action on the links between migration and climate change. The SIW specifically notes the initiatives of the 20th Conference of the Parties (COP20) United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), December 2014 and the IOM's stated commitment to: "Advocacy: Giving a voice to environmental migrants and adopting rights based approaches".

The SIW notes with pleasure the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21/CMP11), to be held in Paris, France in November and December 2015. COP21 will focus on achieving a new international agreement on climate change, applicable to all countries. The SIW strongly supports the principle aim of this agreement, which is to keep global warming below 2°C. The SIW is also looking forward to the outcome of the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP22) to the UNFCCC which will take place in Marrakesh, Morocco in November 2016.

The SIW strongly believes it is urgent and critical that discussions on policies and actions regarding migration and climate change include the knowledge, skills and perspectives of women. The participation of women is vital to ensure the development of gender sensitive policies, gender-equal access to technologies and the development of initiatives which accommodate and support the needs of migrant women and girl children. The inclusion of women in the formulation and administration of migration policies and practices will help ensure gender sensitivity and equality in terms of access to financial, technical and social resources, as well as healthcare and education.

The SIW asserts that the active participation and contribution of women in decision-making processes is essential to assist migrant men and women in adapting and thriving in their new communities. Gender inclusive policies encourage the use of collective community knowledge, skills and opinions. The SIW's core belief is that gender inclusiveness in decision-making benefits all citizens of the world, and nurtures the desire and intention to live in harmony together.

The Socialist International Women (SIW) calls on all Governments, Member Parties of the Socialist International and NGOs with beliefs and core values similar to the SIW, to encourage and support the participation of women in the decision making processes of nations, and regions, on policies and actions regarding migration necessitated by climate change.

The SIW calls for urgent action to:

- *Promote* the inclusion and development of gender-sensitive policies regarding political participation in local and national manifestos and literature.

- *Encourage* the active participation of women in local and national decision-making processes.
- *Implement* policies aimed at changing the perception of the participation of women in high-level and local community discussions, particularly on energy, agriculture, climate change and migration issues.
- *Challenge* gender biased and gender discriminatory practices within local communities and national governance, particularly regarding discussion on energy, agriculture, climate change and migration issues.
- *Ensure* women have access to information, technologies, financial and social resources which enable the expression of opinions and sharing of knowledge, skills and experience.
- *Create* gender equal partnerships and alliances with local and national groups and NGOs to discuss ideas and share knowledge, skills and resources.
- *Support* gender equality in the appointment of leadership positions in local communities and companies, government bodies and organisations.
