



Socialist International Women

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN

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International Migrants Day

STATEMENT

Over 214 million human beings have migrated from their homeland to another country. Many experienced distressing, physically demanding and extremely dangerous journeys. It is concerning that the number of women migrants has been increasing rapidly from some areas, with a current estimated total of 111 million. It is imperative that the human rights of these women are protected both during their migration journeys and within their destination countries.

Poverty remains the primary reason for migration globally, but women can also have other specific contributing factors. War, conflict, lack of opportunities, discrimination in the workplace, lack of rights to property and other assets and social norms which engender violence against women are all issues which force women to migrate. Their hope is to find safety and improve their lives.

The reality for far too many women migrants is distressingly different, particularly for the increasing number of women who are migrating alone with no-one to protect them. They are more likely to suffer violence from other migrants, smugglers and officials. They are also at risk of being raped or forced into exchanging sex for transport, accommodation or food. Some are tricked into believing they will easily find well-paid work, when the truth is they are victims of human trafficking being set up to be exploited as domestic slaves and sex workers.

Many women migrants who manage to enter the regular job market experience xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes which result in only low paid jobs with limited prospects being available to them. Once in work, even in countries where legislation protects the rights of working women, the protection of rights may not apply to those of migrant status. The economic contribution of women migrants is also often under-estimated, particularly the labour of domestic and other low-wage workers who perform essential but largely 'invisible' functions. However, there are also many success stories worldwide. Millions of women migrants now enjoy considerable improvements in their lifestyle, education and health and migrant entrepreneurs help create wealth and jobs which wouldn't exist without them. These successes prove that mutually beneficial outcomes are achievable where there are supportive policies which embrace them.

Protection of the human rights of women migrants is a global concern. To be effective, the development of migration policies must take into consideration the issues of vulnerability and marginalisation of migrants and focus on areas specifically afflicting women. It is vital that member states promote initiatives and policies to improve labour market conditions and protect the rights of women migrants in the workplace. Increasing international intervention to halt human trafficking is also urgent and critical.

International Migrants Day is a reminder of the plight of many migrants and an opportunity to recommit to taking action to develop and implement national and international solutions which will end suffering and the violation of migrants' human rights.

