



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

OF

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TO THE

REGIONAL DISCUSSION SESSION
OF THE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GENDER,
MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT
SEPTEMBER 25 2008
MANILA, PHILIPPINES

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As IOM has been working on gender and migration issues for almost ten years now, I am really glad to see that more and more partners are coming on board, bringing fresh knowledge and innovative perspectives from their different mandates. I am confident that this broad partnership will ensure greater policy coherence and a better coverage of gender and migration challenges particularly the protection of migrant women.

I also want to express my appreciation to the three organizations for their substantive work and for bringing the issue of children's rights and the issue of protection to the global debate on gender and migration. In particular, I am happy to see that, although the Convention on the Elimination of All Discriminations against Women does not have an article specifically dealing with migration this instrument appears to rightly address the gender specific pressures migration imposes on women.

In that perspective, I find it interesting to note that only 21 African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Discriminations against Women and I urge all African countries to sign and ratify this comprehensive instrument.

If you allow me, I would like to highlight a few points.

In Africa, women are often victimized at several levels. However, two elements are particularly relevant to our discussion as they impact on their vulnerability all along their migration process:

First, the **poor levels of health women enjoy**:

- ✱ The lack of access to health services as well as the persistence of traditional harmful practices negatively affects their level of health before departure.

- ✱ During the journey, women's lower levels of education and decision making power often deprive them of the possibility to access the right information and pursuing legal employment opportunities abroad making them more vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse as well as trafficking in their migration process.

- ✱ In the destination country, the low status of jobs available to migrant women deprives them from legal protection, access to health services and exposes them to exploitation, abuse and violence.

Second, the **security** women enjoy:

- ✱ In their communities, women should be better empowered to reduce their vulnerability to discrimination, gender based violence and trafficking. We have to remember that it is usually within their communities that women are first victims of violence, rape and at risk of trafficking.

- ✱ When migrating, policies should be enforced to guarantee a greater safety for women migrant in particular in shelters and detention centers.

- ✱ In the country of destination, efforts must be made to better guarantee the protection and safety of migrant workers in particular domestic workers

Therefore, the issue of the security of migrant women should be at the heart of migration policies. By this I don't refer to a top-down approach to human security but rather to a broader definition, such as the human security definition.

To better guarantee and promote this security in Africa, there is a need for **more bilateral agreements** between countries of origin and destination. These agreements are needed in order to ensure migrants' access to basic rights. And we need them not only on a North-South level but also, and particularly, on a South-South level, as much migration takes place between countries of the South. This is particularly relevant as the African continent is the one that experiences the highest intra-regional mobility. IOM estimates that migrants represent 14.5 million people in Sub Saharan Africa, 10 million of which migrate within the broader region (69%).

It needs to be evaluated if **regional integration and cooperation processes** are in fact effective and adequate. Do existing mechanisms help to protect women migrants' rights? How can Conventions be enforced on a regional level? These mechanisms should effectively monitor regional economic cooperation and harmonization processes and their responsiveness to migrants' rights, particularly women migrants.

To conclude, I would like to stress the fact that we need to look at migration in a comprehensive way, taking into consideration men's and women's needs at all stages of the migration process and assess whether we have the right mechanisms in place to address these needs.

Thus, policies and partnerships should adopt a long-term perspective which recognizes men and women migrants' contribution to development as well as supporting their political empowerment as an intrinsically linked component and prerequisite of development.

Background points drawn from the papers:

ILO Paper: "Migration, Gender Equality and Development"

- i. This paper is an excellent account of the contribution of migrant women workers to the economic development of their countries of destination and origin.
- ii. Africa is cruelly affected by the phenomenon of brain drain mostly in the sectors of Health, Education and Agricultural Engineering. The global care crisis also affects Africa as a significant number middle to highly skilled women, usually nurses, are leaving the continent to pursue better opportunities abroad.
- iii. This level of qualification is not entirely a loss but can serve as a solid foundation for sustainable development if the diaspora is offered the proper channels of communications with home country governments at the

ministerial level and proper coordination between the relevant ministries at both national and regional level is promoted by the heads of state.

- iv. The recommendations of this paper are extremely relevant to Africa's migration and development challenges. For instance, it is of utmost importance that African States and Regional institutions incorporate gender dimensions into migration policies and link those policies to employment and development policies in cooperation with countries of destination.
- v. Those policies in particular must recognize women migrants as "economic and social change agents" by fully empowering them and according them space to participate in decision-making processes in trade unions, at the workplace, and in society.

UNIFEM Paper: "Claim and Celebrate Migrant Women's Rights with CEDAW"

- i. The Convention on the Elimination of All Discriminations against Women does not have an article specifically dealing with migration. However this paper shows how useful and relevant this instrument is to address the gender specific pressures migration imposes on women.
- ii. The approach taken by this paper is noteworthy as it pulls together elements from the Convention to better protect women in the migration process. It shows all the gender based obstacles women are facing in the migration process and how those obstacles constitute violations to CEDAW. This approach should be applied to other conventions.

UNICEF Paper: "Gender, Migration and Children's Rights"

- i. The economic and psychosocial impact of migration on families left behind and children in particular in Africa is still under-researched.
- ii. More research must be undertaken to further explore the impact of migration of parents on the children's representation of gender roles. For instance the report mentions that the migration of mothers often has for consequence that the daughter will take on her nurturing and caring role, whereas the father's role remain on change.
- iii. In the African context, it would also be important to explore the impact of migration of one or both parents on children's vulnerability to abuse.
- iv. The paper urges countries of destination to ensure the access of children of migrant and migrant children to compulsory education irrespective of their parents' status. The issue of unaccompanied minors and the specific needs of those children is also a critical phenomenon in Africa.
- v. The paper also calls for countries of origin to ensure the access to health services to families left behind to ensure that basic health care services are provided to children.