

**Thematic Meeting 3:
Recognizing the contributions of women migrants to economic and social development in
countries of origin and destination and addressing their specific needs.**

Co-convenors: Philippines and Jamaica

8 September 2015, Geneva

CONCEPT NOTE¹

Women constitute approximately half of the 247 million people who work outside their countries of birth.² In recent years there has been an increase in the autonomous migration of women for work, particularly in feminized labour sectors. This is in part due to a lack of decent work for women in developing countries, coupled with a rising demand for reproductive labour in developed countries.³

The feminization of labour migration has drawn the attention of governments, international and civil society organizations, all cognizant of the potential for women migrant workers to contribute to the economic development of home and host countries.⁴ Women migrants are more likely to send home a higher proportion of their wages on a more regular basis and their remittances are more likely to be spent on health, education, family and community development.⁵ Moreover, women's migration can inform and change cultural and political norms and can influence positive social and economic change across households and communities in sending and destination countries.⁶ Indeed, both sending and destination countries benefit from skills transfer and human capital development. Additionally, migrant women contribute significantly to destination country economies, through enhancing labour market flexibility and boosting the working-age population in feminized sectors, in particular, female labour migrants increasingly fill care deficits in wealthier countries.⁷

Despite these important contributions, migrant women's potential to enhance development is constrained by their heightened vulnerability to precarious employment with insufficient levels of social protection. While forced labour is a risk for many individuals using irregular channels, migrant women are more susceptible to being trafficked for sexual exploitation, constituting 98% of all such victims.^{8,9}

Yet an important set of international commitments exist that can enhance the development contributions of migrants and particularly migrant women. The UN International Convention on the

¹ For more detail, see the Background Note

² See <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1288990760745/MigrationandDevelopmentBrief24.pdf>

³ See <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/12/gender-on-the-move>, p. 38

⁴ See <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/12/gender-on-the-move>, p. 35

⁵ See

<http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/~media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2013/managing%20labour%20migration%20in%20asean%20concerns%20for%20women%20migrant%20workers.pdf>, p.8

⁶ See

<http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/~media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2013/policy%20paper%20for%20the%20pregfmd%20vi%20high%20level%20regional%20meeting%20on%20migrant%20domestic%20workers.pdf> p.23

⁷ *Ibid* p.33

⁸ See, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_182004.pdf

⁹ See, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-work-ga.htm#traf>

Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families (**ICRMW**) is a key instrument for the protection of migrants' rights. The Convention on the Elimination of The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) General Recommendation No. 26 seeks to strengthen protections for women migrants in all situations, including those with irregular status. A number of ILO Conventions also respond to the situation of migrant women, the most recent of which is the ILO Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 and its supplementing Recommendation No. 201, which has sought to extend basic labour rights to all domestic workers.

The contribution of women migrant workers to the social and economic development of countries of origin and destination was firmly recognized at the 2013 High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development.¹⁰ The development potential of migration was also underscored in the post-2015 development agenda articulated at the GFMD in Stockholm (2014).

To further this discussion, and address the challenges faced by *women* migrant workers, specifically, the third GFMD 2014-2015 thematic meeting is being convened by the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of Jamaica in cooperation with the Turkish GFMD Chair, with support from UN Women¹¹ to:

1. Highlight the economic and social contributions that women migrant workers make in sending and destination countries, and,
2. Contextualize this development potential in light of the human rights challenges and the gendered vulnerabilities women face – distilling lessons learned and highlighting best practices.

The meeting will be structured around two moderated semi-structured panel sessions. Each panel session will include short introductory statements from the panellists, followed by a common question posed to the panellists; a question specific to each of the panellists; and then a moderated interactive session with questions from the floor. Below are some of the areas that the panels will address.

Panel 1: Exploring the Contribution of Women Migrant Workers to Development – Beyond Economic Remittances.

- Women's contributions to development in sending and destination countries – economic, political and social remittances;
- Women's contribution to development in labour importing economies- filling care deficits, skills/labour transfers, human capital and economic benefits;
- Reducing migration costs, including remittance costs, and enhancing the potential of financial and non-financial remittances;
- Enhancing the recognition of women's contribution to development - Post-2015 SDGs.

Panel 2: Understanding the Challenges and Vulnerabilities of Women Migrant Workers –How are they Navigated?

- Challenges facing women accessing decent work – migration restrictions, recruitment concerns;
- Continuum of vulnerabilities in migration– factors across macro, meso and micro levels;
- Realities of transnational motherhood – mitigating impacts on children and families;
- Policy and protection – addressing governance gaps and barriers to exercising rights;
- Creativity and resilience: how women migrant workers engage and organize across borders.

¹⁰ See [A/69/207](#)

¹¹ This thematic meeting has also benefitted from the contributions of the ILO, IOM and PICUM.