

GENDER,
MIGRATION
AND SECURITY



MIGRATION POLICIES MUST
EMPOWER WOMEN AND MEN

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PER CONCORDIAM ILLUSTRATION

Sex is defined by biological differences between men and women. Gender refers to the roles, personality traits and behaviors that society ascribes to men and women, as well as the different power relations between them. Gender mainstreaming recognizes the role of gender integration in all aspects of peace and security, as well as the understanding of differences that policies and programs might have on men and women. It means identifying the different insecurities facing men, women, girls and boys and the way in which gender relations and power inequalities fuel insecurity. Understanding gender leads to better policies and outcomes. It is key to the effectiveness and accountability of the security sector and is necessary to comply with international and regional laws. The ultimate goal is to promote gender equality in society by ensuring that both men and women are represented in all processes and that all programs integrate the human rights of everyone.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Conflict is no longer merely about securing borders and maintaining sovereignty; it is also about human security. Nations cannot be secure if their people are insecure. Where there is inequality and discrimination, violence, poverty, lack of education and economic opportunity, political oppression and other destabilizing factors, there is risk of conflict. Security, development and human rights are interrelated and critical for establishing lasting peace and resilient societies.

Migration has become a normal pattern in today's globalized society and can offer opportunities for growth and development for individuals and societies. Migrant workers contribute to the economies of their host countries, and the financial remittances that they send home help boost the economies of their countries of origin. On the other hand, migration can be an indicator of human insecurity because migrants often seek opportunities to escape poverty, as in the case of labor migration, or to flee persecution or conflict, as in the case of refugees and internally displaced people. In addition, it can lead to increased national, regional and global instability. The influx of refugees from Syria and Iraq into Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Europe is drastically increasing national populations, straining resources and overwhelming social support systems, creating tension between countries and increasing xenophobia.

To understand patterns of migration, normalize it and increase human security, it is critical to understand the root causes of migration as well as its impact, taking into account all groups. Men and women have different experiences and are affected differently. Gender roles and cultural traditions greatly influence the migration process, especially for women.

In 2013, the United Nations announced that the number of international migrants had reached a

historic 232 million, with the largest numbers residing in Europe (72 million) and Asia (71 million). According to the International Labour Organization, about half of migrants globally are workers. Forty-eight percent of the migrant population consists of women. According to U.N. Women, during 2014 approximately 59.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations — the highest figure on record. Eighty percent of those are women, children and young people.

The world is experiencing a migrant and refugee crisis. Over 1 million migrants entered Europe in 2015. The number of migrants that arrived by sea in the month of October 2015 alone was roughly the amount that entered in all of 2014. More than 3,600 have died during the treacherous sea voyage. Most are fleeing wars in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as conflicts in Africa. The flow of refugees into Europe, however, is still small compared to the numbers in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, which have taken in millions of Syrian refugees.

Governments are obligated to international human rights frameworks that protect migrants, trafficked people, refugees and displaced people, as well as women-specific frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, U.N. Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Effective policies and security operations establish a safe and secure environment that is conducive to economic development, education and health care, and the growth of a vibrant civil society. These goals can only be achieved if women and men are equally involved in shaping policies and programs. Gender and human rights must be mainstreamed into all migration interventions.

There is growing recognition that migration stems from both economic and sociocultural factors. The gendered dimensions of the migratory process reflect roles in society. People's experiences of gender are central to the patterns, causes and impacts of migration. Migration can also change traditional gender roles. It can lead to a greater degree of economic and/or social autonomy for women, and the opportunity to challenge traditional or restrictive gender roles. Women who migrate, either with or without family, may move into new roles as workers and breadwinners — roles not allowed in their home countries. Both men and women may develop skills or earn higher wages. Men left behind when their wives migrate may need to take on more caretaker duties for the family, roles often traditionally left to women. Sons who have left dominant patriarchal families may return with more skills and independence. Roles and relationships within families may change.

However, migration can also entrench restrictive gender stereotypes of female dependency and lack of decision-making power. Gender also affects how migrants

contribute to, and benefit from, their destination communities, and thus the role they play in achieving social and economic development goals.

FEMALE MIGRANTS

A record number of women are migrating to seek work and better lives. For some, migration yields these benefits, and for others, it carries dangerous risks such as exploitation in domestic jobs and vulnerability to violence and human trafficking.

Patriarchal power structures, which give men preferential access to the resources available in society, affect women's ability to migrate, when to migrate and where they will go. In many countries, women do not have equal rights to own land, have limited access to credit, face barriers to education and adequate health care, are excluded or marginalized from political life, and subjected to exploitation and violence. Single, divorced and widowed women have few safety nets. Women may wish to migrate for better opportunities or to escape abusive relationships. However, a woman's ability to migrate may be affected by individual and family factors such as age, birth order, race/ethnicity, urban/rural origins, marital and parental status, role in the family, education and occupational skills. Community norms and values also come into play.

National policies of origin countries can influence who migrates through prohibitive, selective or permissive rules of exit that may affect men and women differently. Such policies are frequently conditioned by the status and roles of men and women in society. For example, some countries have implemented policies to protect women from exploitation that effectively prevent them from participating in labor migration.

The immigration policies of receiving countries affect men and women differently. Women are often classified by their relation to men, e.g., wife or daughter, and therefore considered "dependent" while men are "independent." This can place them in a "family role" rather than a market role, separating their immigration status from their work status. For instance, some countries allow women to enter as dependent family members but do not give them authorization to work. They also may have less access to social rights and entitlements than the men upon whom they are dependent, such as language and job training, income security programs and legal citizenship. The opposite can be true when men are classified as dependents, following their wives; however, this is much less common.

Where immigration status is based on marriage to a citizen, most countries require the marriage to be validated after what is usually a multiyear probationary period. Although this may at first glance seem a fair requirement, such policies can have a gendered impact, leading women to stay in abusive relationships to obtain immigration status.

Ironically, immigration laws that purport to be concerned with the protection of borders and "national security" may increase insecurity by making migrants, especially women, more vulnerable. In addition, as a result of rigid immigration

and visa policies, undocumented migration, often involving smuggling or trafficking, has increased.

When female migrants are allowed to work, gender-based hierarchies in the destination country often influence incorporation of men and women into the labor force. While women are increasingly well-educated, worldwide labor markets still channel them disproportionately into what are considered traditional female occupations, such as domestic work, child care or garment manufacturing. Even in professions considered skilled, relatively few women reach upper-level positions in management and leadership. This is despite clear indicators that when women participate equally in public and private life, everyone benefits. A recent study by McKinsey & Company shows that as much as \$28 trillion, or 26 percent, could be added to the global annual gross domestic product by 2025 if women participated equally in labor markets.

Once in destination countries, migrants, whether workers or refugees, often face discriminatory employment practices and social attitudes. There are common problems that affect both male and female migrants such as low wages, unfair dismissal, bondage (withholding of travel documents and/or imposition of loans or fees that must be repaid through work), long work hours and dangerous work conditions. Migrants overall, especially irregular migrants or those in lower skilled professions, are susceptible to exploitation. Women and children, because of their positions in society and the labor market, are especially vulnerable to abuses, including harassment, sexual violence and human trafficking.

In displacement situations, where people have been forced to leave their homes as a result of armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or natural or human-made disasters, and either go to other countries (refugees) or migrate within their own countries (internally displaced people, or IDPs), women and girls face heightened risks from the breakdown of normal protection and support. Within refugee or IDP camps, women and girls are exposed to abuse and sexual violence as they struggle to take care of themselves and provide for their families. They often are abducted, raped and assaulted by soldiers and individuals within the camps. Outside of the camps, refugees must find safety and security living in a foreign society.

In 2015, Germany took the lead in responding to Europe's refugee crisis. Nonetheless, the response is severely lacking when it comes to protecting women. Refugee camps offer few guarantees for women. There is no law assuring the safety of women refugees, and no clear standards for how refugee camps should handle cases of abuse or assault, whether by partners or strangers. Furthermore, there is no agreement on who is ultimately responsible for women's security. State and local governments point to private companies contracted to run refugee centers, and those companies throw responsibility back on the government.

MALE MIGRANTS

It is important to consider the impact of migration on men



A migrant mother and her children approach a Serbian village after crossing the border from Macedonia on foot in October 2015. Women and children face special challenges on migratory routes. **REUTERS**



"Right to housing? From shantytown to closed camp? No borders or prisons," reads a banner in a migrant camp in Calais, France, in November 2015. A French court ordered the state to improve conditions at the giant "New Jungle" migrant camp after human rights activists complained. **AFF/GETTY IMAGES**

and boys. Men, although generally in a stronger societal position than women, have their own reasons for migrating. Some, as heads of households, seek work and greater economic opportunity, either with or without their families. Others may be escaping political or ethnic persecution. Today, many men and young boys are fleeing compulsory conscription into the militaries of autocratic regimes, such as in Eritrea, or recruitment by extremist groups, such as the self-proclaimed Islamic State or Boko Haram. Some young men migrate to challenge patriarchal systems, where sons are subordinate to the wishes of their fathers. If they return home, they often do so with more life experience and personal resources, enabling them to act more independently.

Men also face challenges and vulnerabilities when migrating. Often, men cannot assume the same responsibilities that they did previously in their communities and must accept lower skilled and/or lower paying jobs. This may be due to

crisis situations, discrimination or prejudicial policies in the destination country. There is often a devaluation of education credentials with discriminatory results when foreign degrees are not recognized as equivalent to those obtained within the country. For instance, in the U.S., medical and legal degrees from other countries are generally not recognized, and immigrants often must either obtain a new degree, which is economically prohibitive for many, or seek other, generally lower, positions. Though this can apply to both men and women, men have been affected in greater numbers because they are often better educated in their countries of origin.

These changes in professional and social status can present economic and psychological challenges for men. They may feel shame or lack confidence when losing their jobs or working in lower positions. When men have left their families behind, they may experience a decrease in status in their destination countries, while family members at home enjoy an



A migrant child plays in front of an immigrant detention center in Bela-Jezova, Czech Republic, in November 2015. In response to United Nations criticism, Czech authorities moved immigrants to better living quarters. REUTERS

increase in status due to the remittances they are receiving. When families migrate, roles may reverse, with men spending more time at home, while women find work.

These challenges can exacerbate already difficult situations and lead to increased domestic violence rooted in men's experience of social downward mobility, lack of status and socioeconomic pressures. For instance, in some cases women have reported an increase in abuse from their husbands as families languish in refugee camps. One Syrian woman in a German refugee center described being beaten and nearly strangled by her husband. Although he had been abusive in Syria, it was worse in the camp. According to her, in Syria her husband had a job and friends and spent time outside the home, but in the camp he had little to do but drink and become violent.


These are indicative of the many ways that the trauma of migration, especially in crisis situations, affects individuals. Psycho-social support receives little attention, but to stabilize and secure societies — including migrant societies — it is critical to recognize the different types of trauma that men, women, boys and girls experience.

Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, male Muslims have faced increased discrimination in the U.S. and around the world. This discrimination is increasing again with the spread of the Islamic State and extremist attacks in Paris, Beirut and Afghanistan, among others during the writing of this article, and the refugee crisis in Europe. The marginalization of many migrant communities, especially of Muslim youth in the West, not only inhibits development as they are excluded from economic and social opportunities, but also increases the risk of radicalization.

Moreover, in a reversal of roles, refugee women and children are sometimes regarded as harmless while men are viewed as dangerous and potential terrorists. Some in Europe and the U.S. would ban refugees from the Middle East altogether, leaving millions of people to suffer.

MIGRATION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY

The human rights of migrants are at risk in their countries of origin, during transit and at their destinations. General gender discrimination and the resultant weaker position of



Around the world, more people are on the move than ever before. Many of them are seeking new opportunities and a better life for themselves and their families. Others are forced to move due to disaster or conflict. Gender is central to any discussion of the causes and consequences of regular and irregular migration and forced displacement.

It is now understood that a person's sex, gender identity and sexual orientation shape every stage of the migration experience. Gender affects reasons for migrating, who will migrate, the social networks migrants use to move, integration experiences and labor opportunities at destination, and relations with the country of origin. The expectations, relationships and power dynamics associated with being a man, woman, boy or girl, and whether one identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex can significantly affect all aspects of this process.

– International Organization for Migration

many women in most societies are often the root cause for women migrants' greater vulnerability at all stages of the migration process.

Respecting human rights principles and international norms is critical to establishing sustainable peace and security. The 2014 U.N. secretary-general's report on "International Migration and Development" (A/69/207) emphasized the need for a comprehensive, rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive approach. The benefits of migration can be fully realized only

when migrants are protected from discrimination, abuse and exploitation during every step of the process.

When designing policies, governments should ensure that the vulnerabilities of migrants, in particular the most vulnerable groups, are taken into account and ensure equal access for all migrants to education, health care, housing, social protection and justice, as well as equal pay and the right to join trade unions. Governments, international agencies and nongovernmental organizations must promote the rights of migrants throughout the process, including providing pre-departure information on legal rights, facilitating remittances, ensuring access to basic services and supporting solidarity between different migrant groups to address issues of exclusion and isolation.

Immigration and emigration policies should enable women, as well as men, to take advantage of opportunities that safe and regular migration may offer and foster the positive impacts of migration for the social and economic development of migrants, as well as the receiving and sending countries. This would include measures to ensure regular channels for women's entry to avoid more risky irregular

channels and agreements between sending and receiving areas that protect women's rights.

The different needs and experiences of men and women must also be considered in refugee and IDP policies and humanitarian interventions. This includes taking into account the particular needs of women and girls in the design of camps and settlements, such as the need for separate facilities; providing access to legal documents and services, especially for victims of abuse; including women in planning; and training peacekeeping personnel to respect the rights of women.

States must support implementation of international rights frameworks that offer protection for female migrants. This includes not only those relating to migrants, trafficked peoples, refugees and displaced persons, but also women-specific frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, U.N. Resolution 1325 and the Beijing Platform for Action.

It is important to highlight the role of women as proponents of change and contributors to society, not just victims. Female migrants contribute significantly to the economic and social development of countries of origin and destination.

Ambassador William Lacy Swing, director general of the International Organization for Migration, has highlighted four key challenges the world faces. These include the crucial need for coordinated and efficient response mechanisms and innovative solutions to address the challenges posed by increased humanitarian crises that lead to migration; urgent action to reduce the rising number of migrant fatalities along the migratory route; the need to change public perceptions of migration and encourage political accountability; and the opportunity to integrate migration into the post-2015 development agenda laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

If these challenges are to be overcome, and if women, men, girls and boys are to benefit from the empowering and development potential of migration, there must be a shift to a gendered human rights approach to migration. □