

Local Approaches towards the Protection and Inclusion of Migrant Women in Cities

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Gender is one of the factors defining migration¹, both as a global phenomenon and as a personal experience. The challenges faced by young girls and women on the move, or in the places where they settle are often overlooked and insufficiently targeted in local and global policies. Migration happens mostly towards cities and as first respondents, local governments, in collaboration with civil society and other local actors, are often involved in addressing migrant women's needs, from access to social protection to long-term inclusion.

This year, on the occasion of International Women's Day, and as part of the [feminist municipalism movement programme](#) calling for inclusive recovery, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) released a report towards gendered approaches to local migration governance, titled '[Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Migrant Women in Cities](#)' within the framework of the [Mediterranean City to City Migration \(MC2CM\) project](#).

The report summarises the lessons learnt last September 2020, during the interactive session on migrant women co-organised by the UCLG World Secretariat and the UCLG Committee of Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights (UCLG-CSIPDHR), under the MC2CM project.



¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, 'The impact of migration on migrant women and girls: a gender perspective' (A/HRC/41/38 2019): <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/41/38>.

More than 20 cities from the Euro-Mediterranean region and Latin America participated in this collective brainstorming exercise to explore gender-sensitive approaches to local migration governance, together with international organisations, city networks, CSOs, migrant women associations and academia, sharing global and territorial insights into the challenges faced by migrant women and identifying barriers and opportunities for local action. Following an introductory panel by [UCLG](#), [UN Women](#) and [New Women Connectors](#), political representatives from Sousse, São Paulo and Turin shared their experiences in gender-specific issues.

Here are some key [takeaways from the session](#):

- Violence and insecurity are some of the most pressing challenges for women throughout all phases of migratory processes, comprising human trafficking and exploitation, domestic violence and insecurity in accessing public space, among others.
- For local and regional governments (LRGs), limited mandates and capacities, as well as lack of dedicated resources, remain strong barriers to address these realities on the ground.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these existing challenges, with a major brunt of them being borne by migrant girls and women and has heightened the structural barriers faced by LRGs in addressing them.
- Migrant women, particularly those who cannot return home owing to travel bans and border controls to contain the coronavirus, are facing income loss and higher risks of abuse and exploitation.
- Other challenges for migrant women, amidst the pandemic, include unsafe working conditions with major exposure to the virus, barriers in accessing care services and benefits put in place during the COVID-19 crisis and increasing domestic violence, racism and xenophobia.
- To effectively address the needs of migrant women, cross-cutting approaches, tackling together gender, accessibility, protection and inclusion, must be locally employed.

Some of the aforementioned impacts of COVID-19 on gender and migration and positive local practices to address them are also reflected in the UCLG [#BeyondTheOutbreak Live Learning Experiences knowledge hub](#) and the UCLG - MC2CM [Policy study on migrant and refugee sensitive local responses to COVID-19](#).

Contemplating the challenges faced by migrant women in host territories as well as by stakeholders addressing them from different areas, this exploratory multi-stakeholder conversation placed particular emphasis on the role of local governments in coordinating and strengthening these gender-sensitive efforts. Aligned to the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches promoted by the global agendas on migration, this first MC2CM Dialogue on Women and Migration provided a space for local governments to identify ways to enhance women protection and inclusion, while fostering multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation.

UCLG and the MC2CM project will continue promoting good practices related to gender perspectives on urban migration governance and advocacy. These practices will be aligned with the SDG framework and showcased as part of the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) through the participation of UCLG and its network of local governments as a stakeholder at the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) in 2022 and other dedicated spaces.

The [Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Migrant Women in Cities](#) report stands to become an asset resource towards strengthening gender-sensitive policy-making and urban planning in the Mediterranean and globally, in cooperation with States and stakeholders, comprising migrants, civil society, academia and the private sector. These takeaways will feed into the ongoing process of consultation and co-creation comprising all the parts of the UCLG network towards the launch of the Lampedusa Charter, a global call by local and regional governments for a new narrative on human mobility that promotes dignity, protects human rights and celebrates diversity. This collective shift of the municipal narrative on migration is a key element of the [Pact for the Future](#) that UCLG has been mandated to develop to ensure that the renewal of the social contract is made with all of our communities in mind.

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