

## WHERE WE STAND

### WOMEN AND GIRL REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

#### Where Things Stand

**Women and girls** are forced to migrate for the same reasons that men and boys do - poverty, economic inequalities, oppression, conflict, war, disasters and the impact of climate change. However, women and girls face additional factors compelling them to leave their homes, and they face additional challenges along migration routes.

**Violence.** Domestic and other forms of violence forced and early marriage, or female genital mutilation may force women to flee their countries of origin. They may run from war or conflict to avoid being raped or being sold into sexual slavery, but then meet with violence on the migration route, and in the countries of destination. Some women and girls may be forced or defrauded into being trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation. The vast majority of those trafficked for sexual exploitation are female. Women and girls also comprise 35% of those trafficked for forced labour.

**Discrimination.** Women continue to experience disproportionately gender-biased structural inequalities, laws, cultural norms and discrimination on the basis of sex creating barriers to education, skills training, life-long learning, health care, including reproductive health care, and decent work for women and girls. Millions of women and girls migrate largely into the informal sector of employment, and thus are not covered by any labour legislation or social protections and encourage exploitation. All of these limitations restrict their ability to participate fully in economic, social and political life.

**Refugees.** Refugees and migrants are entitled to the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, which must be respected, protected and fulfilled at all times. However, refugees have been entitled to specific protections since 1951 under the UN "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees," also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention. In 2018 the UN passed the Global Compact on Refugees. [www.unhcr.org/uk/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html](http://www.unhcr.org/uk/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html)

The following will therefore focus mainly on migrants.

**UN Global Compact for Migration.** The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is the first comprehensive, intergovernmentally negotiated global document on migration. It was approved in Morocco by Heads of State, and formally endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in New York, on December 19, 2018. [www.iom.int/global-compact-migration](http://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration)

We are now in the implementation stage of the GCM.

The GCM acknowledges that no State can address migration alone. The GCM aims to mitigate the factors and drivers that prevent people from achieving sustainable livelihoods in their countries of origin. It is a non-legally binding cooperative framework that fosters international cooperation. It upholds the sovereignty of States and their obligations under international law.

Fundamental to the GCM are respect for the rule of law, due process and access to justice. It is rooted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 2030) and upholds the principle of the best interests of the child at all times. It mainstreams a gender perspective and promotes gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The GCM also references the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and many other relevant compacts, treaties and similar documents.

The GCM lays out a framework of 23 cross-cutting Objectives for safe, orderly and regular migration. Objectives relating to women and girls include: seeking through gender equality and empowerment of women and girls to improve conditions so they may not have to migrate; equal pay for work of equal value; giving support to women at risk and victims of violence and trafficking in persons, as well as domestic workers; providing access to healthcare, equitable quality education for migrant children and youth, and facilitating lifelong learning opportunities; promoting migrant women's leadership and full free and equal participation in society and the economy.

## **And Where Things Need To Go**

### **Fundamental Action**

SI will take action to seek implementation of the GCM at national, regional and local levels by:

- contacting our own national governments to urge action on implementation
- working with regional entities, as well as local governments -- who provide many of the essential basic services to migrants.
- collaborating with other civil society organizations and relevant stakeholders

## **Where Soroptimist International Stands**

**These are the principles that Soroptimist International strongly supports and will advocate for on behalf of Women and Girl Migrants:**

- Member States should sign, ratify and implement the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration as well as all other international agreements that protect the rights of migrants.
- Member States should protect the human rights and dignity of all migrants, regardless of status, including vulnerable migrant populations, particularly women and children. Access to justice for migrants is essential.
- National policies should recognize the root causes of migration by women and girls and eliminate the policies, practices and social norms that drive female migrants to leave their home countries.
- Member States must strongly condemn racism, sexism and xenophobia directed at migrants.