



RSMMS

Sub-Saharan Mediterranean Migrations Union Network
Rete sindacale migration Mediterranean and sub-Saharan
Mediterranean Sub-Saharan Migration Trade Union Network
Red Sindical Migration Mediterranean Sub-Saharan
الشبكة النقابية للهجرة ببلدان المتوسط وجنوب الصحراء



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

“Convergence of Stakeholders for a Safer Mobility of Women”

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COTONOU - BÉNIN
25-26 JUILLET 2024



CONVERGENCE DES ACTEURS POUR UNE MOBILITÉ PLUS SÛRE DES FEMMES



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Context

Women's mobility is an undeniable global reality that comes **with its own set of challenges**. According to recent data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), women make up just under half of the international migrant population with nearly 117 million women migrating around the world, ¹70 million of them for work. In most cases, these migrant women work in the informal sector, which exposes them to increased risks of exploitation and poor working conditions. **These figures show the importance of women in the dynamics of migration and challenge us to consider their vulnerability.**

Despite the growing proportion of women migrants, there is indeed a significant lack of information and data. A **limited understanding of the realities faced by migrant women and girls** therefore affects the ability of actors to formulate and implement gender-sensitive migration laws, policies and programmes throughout their journey. However, women's migration has the potential to contribute to reformulating gender roles and cultural norms, and can enhance women's autonomy, self-esteem and social position. In this sense, it is crucial to develop a better understanding of migration as a gender phenomenon to make it a lever for social progress.

While women and men decide to migrate for similar reasons, gender-specific social and cultural norms play a crucial role in the migration process and affect the experiences of migrant women and girls. Women's migration pathways are diverse and go beyond the stereotype of the woman following their husbands or joining them through family reunification. Today, an increasing number of women are moving on their own, mainly to find work. The feminisation of a certain number of employment sectors, in particular domestic work and care industries is a reality that poses complex challenges to these migrant women, who are too often trapped in underpaid, precarious jobs.

Globally, it is estimated that almost one in six domestic workers is an international migrant ², and two-thirds of workers in this sector are women. During the COVID-19 pandemic, migrant women were at increased risk of job loss due to their concentration in precarious sectors. Migrant domestic workers have been particularly affected, exposed to increased risk of infection, often losing their jobs, sometimes forced to return to their countries of origin, and facing challenges such as non-payment of wages, violence, and harassment in overcrowded homes.

This mobility of women around the world is also affected by the lack of regulation of recruitment agencies and exploitation in regular channels, despite being as a panacea by states. An intermediation process characterized by weak regulation and weak control of recruitment methods, which exposes many women to abuse at the hands of recruitment agencies and other unscrupulous private intermediaries who take advantage of the lack of information and awareness of candidates. Without relegating migrant women to the status of victim status, it is necessary to note that they **run a significant risk of being exposed to acts of violence, including gender-based violence, exploitation, trafficking, slavery and detention, during their transit or upon their arrival, and by officials, individuals or criminal gangs, whether these women migrate regularly or irregularly.** An accumulation of risks that

¹IOM: State of Migration in the World 2021

²<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-refugees-and-migrants#notes>

feeds on existing inequalities and discrimination and greatly increases the vulnerability of women on the move.

Current migration governance frameworks do not offer comprehensive solutions to these problems, often resulting in the creation of a subcategory of workers who are easily exploited. Inadequate national legislation, a lack of interest in social security agreements, the normalization of temporary status, and restrictions on access to citizenship create a complex and inhospitable environment that exacerbates the vulnerability of women throughout their migratory journey. These challenges are compounded by the fact that **most migrants are mobile within their own region; failing which their status as foreigners reinforces their exposure to patterns of inequality, discrimination and poverty.**

A new social contract is more urgent than ever to build more inclusive societies and economies, where migrants and their families can work and live in dignity. Addressing these challenges requires adopting a holistic and multi-actor approach, **both to improve the protection of rights and to address the root causes that force people to migrate.** Collaboration between governments, international organisations, civil society, trade unions, media, businesses, municipalities, and even representatives of the judiciary is essential to develop concrete and adapted solutions to create an environment conducive to safer and equitable mobility for all, and for women in particular.

Background

The RSMMS trade union collective has set up a working group on “Gender and Migration”, made up of trade unionists involved in the care and protection of the rights of migrant workers. With the support of the PROMIG programme of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the member organisations of the RSMMS have set themselves the goal of organising an international conference to promote the “Convergence of stakeholders for a safer mobility of women”.

This conference aims to create a space for dialogue by bringing together field players from Africa, Europe and Asia around the issue of women's mobility. It will focus on the specific challenges faced by migrant women, thus creating an environment conducive to understanding and addressing issues related to women's migration.

The conference will serve as a dynamic platform to bring the voice of migrant women to the very heart of the international trade union movement and to stimulate interactive and transnational dialogues, share knowledge and strengthen commitment to the rights of women on the move.

Overall objective

The main objective of the conference is to share the experience of trade unions and associations in Africa, Europe and Asia, in promoting a gendered approach to mobility.

Specific objectives

This overall objective is subdivided into the following specific objectives:

- To facilitate the exchange of relevant information in order to better understand and address the specific challenges faced by women on the move;
- To create a space for dialogue and convergence between feminist movements and trade union movements, particularly women trade unionists, on the rights of migrant women in general;
- Highlight the capacity of trade unions to respond to the challenges related to the situation of migrant women;
- Promote multi-actor dialogue by encouraging cooperation between trade unions, civil society organisations, governments and other stakeholders;
- Support the international campaign for the ratification of ILO Conventions 189 and 190.

Expected result

- Participants are better informed and understand the specific challenges that women on the move face, through an exchange of relevant information, thus promoting informed discussions on potential solutions.
- Collaboration between unions, civil society organizations, governments and other stakeholders is stimulated, leading to the identification of concrete actions for better protection of the rights of migrant women.
- Stakeholders are committing more strongly to the ratification of ILO Conventions 189 and 190, recognizing its central role in protecting the rights of migrant women.

Targets and participants

The conference will be attended by forty (40) participants including about fifteen international guests, ensuring a balanced representation of different stakeholders, such as associations and unions from Africa, Europe and Asia, international organisations (ILO, IOM, ECOWAS, ITUC-Africa, African Union, UN Women), as well as government representatives and institutions from Benin.

Methodological approach

The working methodology will include discussion panels, plenary conferences, round tables and 2 side-events in the form of a screening-debate and a dinner-debate.

The organisation of the conference is based on:

- A local organizing committee (Multi-actor Migration Platform in Benin, National Network of Domestic Workers of Benin and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation / Tunisia and Benin offices)

- An international steering committee (Gender and Migration working group of the RSMMS trade union collective).

Reflection axes

The conference programme will be structured around four axes:

- I. Mobility at the heart of development and social progress in Africa
- II. Assistance systems for migrant women, between complementarity and compartmentalisation of associative and trade union actors
- III. Legal corridors, orderly migration but not so secure
- IV. Mobility in Africa, between a stifled reality and the imperative to innovate, what are the contributions of the women's movement?

Programme

Arrival 23 & 24 July, 2024	
Welcome and accommodation of international participants	
Wednesday 24 July	
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Coordination meeting of the RSMMS Women & Migration group > Discussion group with migrants from Benin, PMB – Bourse du Travail
Evening	Side event - Debate screening: Kafala system & women domestic workers in Lebanon (45') – FENASOL/CCOO
Thursday 25 July	
	Welcome and registration
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Opening Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iris Nothofer - Resident Representative FES Benin - Sami Adouani - PROMIG Project FES Tunisia - Alejandra Ortega, CCOO Spain - Coordinator of the RSMMS Women & Migration Group - Anselme Coovi Amoussou, SGA ITUC Africa, Coordinator of the Multi-stakeholder Migration Platform in Benin - Dr Véronique Tognifodé, Minister for Social Affairs and Micro Finance (tbc) - Madam Mariam Chabi Talata, Vice-President of the Republic of Benin
10:30-11:00 a.m.	Coffee break & group photo
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Theme 1: Mobility at the heart of development and social progress in Africa State of play of the conditions of migrant women in Africa and outside Africa / Perspectives of the feminist and trade union movement <i>Chaired by: Sami Adouani, – PROMIG FES Project Tunisia</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminist perspective on mobility - Global Feminist Movement Coumba Touré, Pan -African feminist (video) • AU Representative ... • Challenges of integrating the feminist agenda in the trade union movement Dr Ghislaine Saizonou Broohm, Coordinator of the Social Protection and Equality programme, ITUC Africa
1:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.	Lunch break
2:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.	Theme 2: Assistance systems for migrant women, between complementarity and compartmentalisation of associative and trade union actors Example of an assistance and collaboration system at the local level / Experiences of assistance and support & unionization / political dialogue <i>Chaired by: Aissatou Garba Djibo, USTN - Niger</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unionization of female domestic workers, a point of convergence between the women's movement and the workers' union Farah Abdallah, FENASOL – Lebanon

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of the inclusion of migrant women in the social protection system in Senegal Assane Ndiaye, CSA/CARISM – Senegal • The multi-actor approach for better protection of women's rights Niama Kone Gnana, UNTM/ASNAM/Migrant Information and Orientation Center (CIOM) – Mali • Targeted integration of migrant communities and leaders Florent Zekpon, PMB-Benin • Experience of social inclusion of migrant women through trade union programmes in Morocco Saida Aziz, UMT - Morocco
7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.	<p style="text-align: center;">SIDE EVENT: Dinner debate</p> <p>Mobilization strategies around Conventions 189 - 190 for the effective protection of migrant women <i>Chaired by: Nouratou Zato, FES Benin</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrants' testimonies on the situation of female migrant domestic workers > Ms. Coulibaly Maimounatou , PMB - Benin > Joan Gloria, KUDHEIHA / IDWF – Kenya (EN) • Building alliances and societal processes in favor of women: Discussion of the ratification process of conventions 189 and 190 in Spain – Raquel Gomez Merayo & Alejandra Ortega, CCOO – Spain
Friday 26 July	
9:00-11:00 a.m.	<p>Theme 3: Regular migration, orderly migration but not so safe <i>Trends / Race to the bottom Africa Middle East agreements / deregulation / competition for the export of poverty / Abuses, testimonies, victims' associations / Dialogue and institutional context</i> <i>Chaired by: Fambaye Ndoye, Support network for women and children in migration – Senegal</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Africa – Middle East corridor, agreements without rights Representative of victims' association (tbc) • Challenges of supporting the diaspora in countries of origin: role and responsibilities of INCA Vanessa Marchese, INCA – Senegal • Intermediation, social dialogue and bilateral agreements: tools and action strategies for trade unions Hervé Sea, ILO-ACTRAV West Africa Region • The AU-Qatar process, the Asian model replicable in Africa? Dr Froilan Malit, Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population - GLMM, Saudi Arabia (EN, zoom)
11:00-11:30 a.m.	Coffee break
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.	Theme 4: Mobility in Africa, between a stifled reality and the imperative to innovate, what is the contribution of women's movement?

	<p><i>Group work</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Migrant communities at the heart of the challenge of good governance of migration policies <i>Contribution: Lamine Cissé, Deputy Coordinator of the PMB / Union of ECOWAS Nationals</i> <i>Chaired by: Zoubeida Nakib, UGTT - Tunisia</i> 2. The right not to migrate, between patriarchy and predatory economic system <i>Contribution: ...</i> <i>Chaired by: Niama Kone Gnana, UNTM - Mali</i> 3. The universal social protection floor and the transferability of social achievements, ambitions and conditions <i>Input: ...</i> <i>Chaired by: Diomande Gouely, UGTCI - Ivory Coast</i> 4. Digitalization, new forms of work, mobility and unionization <i>Contribution: Farah Abdallah, FENASOL - Lebanon</i> <i>Chaired by: Alejandra Ortega, CCOO - Spain</i> <p>Feedback</p>
1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.	Lunch break
2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m.	Continuation of the debate, recommendations, conclusions
3:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	Health break, city tour