



Climate, Gender & Migration:

**Moving forward from COP26, integrate human mobility
and migrant women's human rights
in all climate deliberations and action plans**

Inaction on the Climate Crisis has Dire Consequences

#COP26Glasgow is taking place during an extraordinary period, in which the world is reeling from the effects and tasks associated with the global pandemic, and the urgency to address the multiple climate crises—the loss of biodiversity and degradation of environment, food sovereignty, desertification and more—is ever more pressing. So far, prospects are very dim that governments meeting in COP26 will yet take the kind of bold steps needed to mitigate the rapid deterioration of the earth's habitat due to climate change. Increased funding and support for implementation of strong adaptation measures are needed, along with clear deadlines and dedicated funding for loss and damage for countries and their people—women, men and children--most deeply affected by climate change.

The consequences of this inaction for forced migrants, particularly for those displaced due to climate-related factors, are increasingly dire, and even more so for women and girls in migration. The Women in Migration Network (WIMN) described such concerns in our [April 2020 statement on COVID-19](#) in which we noted that migrant women, in particular, straddle worlds but are too often exempt from human rights protections and benefits. Many migrant women are further constrained by the lack of documentation that hampers their ability to generate income, limits their access to social protections, and even restricts their freedom of movement, particularly in the context of increased militarization of our societies.

“Despite these stark realities,” we commented, “migrant women are leading with resilience to engage in mutual aid and front-line emergency responses, creating models of solidarity that hold important lessons for societies more broadly...We call on governments not only to protect and sustain all women in migration—in countries of origin, transit, destination and return—but also to engage them as vital change agents.”

Migrant, women, and human rights-centered responses

Whether in combatting the pandemic, or in addressing climate change, gender and migration must be included as essential, cross-cutting elements in strategy, policy development and action planning. WIMN joins with our partners, colleagues, and communities in urging COP26 to:

- Bring human mobility, human rights, and protections to all COP26 deliberations on mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and financing—urging attention to those at risk for displacement, already displaced, to be relocated, and in vulnerable situations-- and with a consistent gender lens throughout.
- Be especially mindful and inclusive of those put in precarious situations due to poverty, various forms of discrimination, residence and work in areas affected by or vulnerable to climate-related factors and events—such as sudden onset disasters or slow onset changes like sea level rise—and who may be affected by migration status, including the stateless.
- Ensure that across adaptation and loss and damage measures, policies to avert, minimize and address displacement are operationalized in a way that is gender-responsive, inclusive, and contributes to building resilience among affected populations.
- Where displacement has already occurred, internally or across international borders, ensure immediate action for relief, safety, and access to services for all—include options for international protections, as well as forward-looking access to safe, orderly and regular migration; decent work; social protections; and opportunities for durable solutions, including permanent residency.

Address intersecting race, gender, and climate inequities

As with the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate crisis has further revealed and exacerbated social and related racial inequities within and among countries. Strategies to address the climate crisis must acknowledge the interconnection of gender, racial and climate injustice, and avoid further marginalising racialised communities—including migrants, disabled, Queer, indigenous, low-income, rural populations, and those who work in the informal economy and are excluded from most labour law protections. These communities are most often on the frontlines to the severe and devastating impacts of the climate crisis and yet have fewer resources, equities, and capacities to sustain themselves and their families. Loss of land, jobs, housing, access to health care, food insecurity--these are just some of the issues experienced by communities already living under unstable and dangerous conditions.

Among those crossing international borders for safety and survival, we recognize that migrating women, often responsible for the health and wellbeing of not just themselves but of their families, are placed in even more vulnerable situations—including potential for increased sexual and gender-based violence—while in transit, at borders and in countries of destination.

A focus must be brought to the gendered impacts and consequences of climate change, including consideration in the planning and impact of mitigation, adaptation strategies and funding for loss and damage. Gender cannot simply be an add-on issue.

Meaningfully engage affected groups, including women

We need to urgently transition to just, safe, equitable, environmentally sound, zero-carbon economies that are intersectional, inclusive, allow for the full exercise of international human rights law and core labour standards, and meet the differentiated needs of diverse populations. States and COP financial mechanisms should engage affected populations in all stages of policy development and implementation; support the resilience and adaptive capacities of all women and girls; and strengthen women and girls' economic agency and access to sustainable livelihoods, along with that of racialised and other marginalised populations.

Climate-related displacement

As has been echoed throughout global migration advocacy—migration should be a choice, and not an act of desperation for survival. A strong and proactive agenda of climate justice and gender justice that addresses all aspects of climate change, interconnected with the loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation, among others, can undercut those conditions that force population displacement and distress migration. Internally displaced populations are at serious risk of being forced to move across borders in countries and regions that have already experienced devastating losses to lands and to their overall economies due to climate-related factors. For some people living in low coastal areas, relocation is already unavoidable.

Ensuring economic and social viability for climate-impacted populations will require strong commitments to finance loss and damage, and operationalization of the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage. Additionally, loss and damage must be established as a permanent, stand-alone agenda item in climate action deliberations. Developed countries must deliver on financing for loss and damage for developing countries that are shouldering the brunt of climate change's traumatic impact. Those countries most responsible for climate-heating emissions must increase and deliver on funds—*grants, not loans*—for those countries most impacted. This should include measures to address human mobility, provide economic and social support for displaced peoples, including migrants, and access for safe migration and stay. In situations where planned relocations are a measure of last resort, they should be voluntary and gender-responsive; grounded in human rights; and with meaningful participation of those who are in moving and receiving communities.

Ecological debt cancellation

The crises of COVID and climate have increased the debt vulnerabilities of many developing countries, all the while further hindering their capacities to deal with the pandemic, carry out climate-related mitigation and adaptation measures, or compensate for loss and damages due

to climate change impacts. Debt cancellation must be on the agenda as a key element of transitions to just and sustainable economies. Debt cancellation is a form of “reparation” for the historical ecological damage wreaked by those countries hugely responsible for contributions to the world’s carbon and other greenhouse emissions and is a critical form of financing for debt-burdened and climate-vulnerable countries. ***There can be no climate justice, or gender justice, without economic and debt justice.***

International migration can be an adaptation strategy, and government commitments from COP26 must go together with commitments to international cooperation to extend regular migration pathways to people affected by slow or sudden onset climate impacts. Displacement and migration-related proposals and policies emanating in the climate change space must be consistent with rights and protections in international human rights law and established labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Challenging racism & xenophobia in climate discourse

Importantly, at a time when policies addressing climate-affected human mobility are yet evolving, these commitments must also acknowledge and push back against hostile, racist and xenophobic reactions to climate-displaced people.

Finally, at this pivotal time worldwide, this COP has been one of the most inaccessible global gatherings. This is unacceptable. Whether at this global level or at regional and national levels, deliberations on climate change must encourage and welcome civil society representation and engagement. Migration and gender are essential cross-cutting lenses and frameworks, and issues, institutions and representatives need to be acknowledged and meaningfully engaged to contribute to successful climate change policies and action.

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Women in Migration Network (WIMN) is an intersectional feminist human rights network that promotes women’s human rights at the center of all migration and development policy and migrants’ rights in feminist advocacy. WIMN convenes organizations and activists to expand rights-centered policies that prioritize the interests of women in all their diversity and those of their families, in their various forms, who are affected by migration around the world.

wimninfo@womeninmigration.org
www.womeninmigration.org