

# POLICY BRIEF



InterAgency Institute  
BEYOND INSTITUTIONAL BOUNDARIES

## THE FEMINIZATION OF MIGRATORY FLOWS AND GENDER VULNERABILITIES

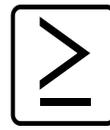
Author: Ana Paula M. Rodriguez Leite

### POLICY STATEMENT

International migrations have several fields of analysis because it is a multidisciplinary theme, so that contemporary studies should expand the scope of research considering multiple perspectives beyond data collection. Issues related to the problems of development and infrastructure in the countries and conflicts of different orders are the main factors of population repulsion. The nature of the flows currently operates in a south-north direction continuously, mainly to western countries. It is possible to observe a progressive increase in women among the displaced population, whose overlapping vulnerabilities condition a phenomenon that deserves different treatment. It is intended to look again at migratory movements, especially the flow of women for various reasons and their displacement by different routes. In their travels, they are vulnerable to gender-exclusive vulnerabilities that overlap with the condition of a migrant at the moment when the number of migrant women becomes more potent. The vulnerabilities present in the origin, transit, and destination are sheltered by patriarchal cultures, added to religious, ethnic, and economic issues that hinder access to recognition or inclusion policies. Migration theories that address only the issues of origin and destination are no longer effective in explaining these issues since traffic is constant or multiple and destinations are triangulated (PAUL, YEOH, 2021).

### BACKGROUND

According to the World Organization for Migration (IOM, 2014), the motivations of migrant women are influenced by negative factors present in different cultural contexts such as domestic violence, pressure for marriage, homophobia, and greater prospects for economic survival. It is necessary to evaluate contemporary migratory movements, both in quantitative terms and in the diversity of new flows and the demands for new legislation covering gender issues in a more targeted way. For Farley (2019), gender in migration has been addressed in several studies that report the growing trend of women who move internally or who cross borders, alone or accompanied by their family. These data are quite worrying, as women suffer from vulnerabilities that add to more than other certain groups. Schwinn (2019) is aware that women's human rights pay attention to the intersectionality of discrimination against them. Gender discrimination is associated with ethnicity, racial, cultural aspects, sexual orientation, and social class. For this reason, it is necessary to define the gender issue from a group of behaviors, identities, and cultural norms allied to sex (Boyd & Grieco apud Nyemba, 2020), which may include more than women as a biological definition. Thus, not only can the definition harbor groups in transit diverse, but it is worth considering the diversity of expectations and cultural functions that shelter them, but which may be different in the origin and destination of these groups.



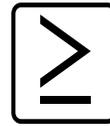
Among the overlapping vulnerabilities, we highlight that, as migrants, native economic, political, religious, and cultural issues are already inherent, to which the irregular status of destinations is added. In the woman's condition, the factors color, biological conditions such as pregnancy, age, and health are added, making them more susceptible to withdrawal and slowness when they migrate in groups. In this sense, the more vulnerabilities, the easier it is to recruit criminal networks on migratory routes. The issue of overlapping vulnerabilities points to challenges manifested in the economic and cultural issues present in the societies of origin. To this end, economic issues are affected both by relations of external economic dependence, relations of inequality, and the manifestation of power in the international environment (OSIRIM, 2018). On the other hand, economic motivators may not be the most important or present when women escape situations of violence, religious persecution, or marital obligations (OSIRIM, 2018, 776).

## CONCLUSIONS

The migratory studies do not privilege the different existing flows and their repercussions for the Global South. In addition, gender issues are increasingly important in studies since migration has been characterized by many women and children affected by successive internal crises, ethnic conflicts, and forced migrations. Public policies of different spectra should reach populations in transit, including through cooperation and international dealings. Other gender-related issues in which migrant women have affected the result in the perpetuation of poverty and exclusion. Since vulnerabilities affect children greatly, it makes it difficult, for example, to access the most basic services such as education and, in the future, the labor market.

## FINDINGS

We highlight the presence of women in migratory flows in different proportions than in previous historical contexts. Migrant populations, in themselves, are already endowed with vulnerabilities. When it comes to gender issues, women suffer from overlapping vulnerabilities, according to Danielle Annoni (2020). The author brings data from the 2019 International Migration Inventory, which currently corresponds to 48% of the flow of migrants worldwide, showing a feminization of migration. This proportion increases among refugee women in sub-Saharan Africa and reaches 52% (UNHCR, 2019, p. 61- 62). Assis (2003), Lisbon (2006), and Schwinn (2019) argue that the feminization of migration is a reflection of the feminization of poverty since, according to the UN, 70% of the world's poor represent women. Migration flows have always counted on the presence of women, but the approaches analyze them under secondary roles as wives and companions of their husbands. In addition to considering quantitative data, the change in perspective of studies that include the gender variable allows the visibility of migrant women from active roles and protagonists and the complexity "characterized by great social risk, considering that the fact of being a woman, a condition that puts her in a vulnerable situation" De Araújo and De Almeida (2019).



## SUGGESTIONS

The governance of flows must involve additional policies that guarantee the international protection of women on the move. In addition, there must be a greater commitment by countries by creating domestic laws that are consistent with international ones and that can comply with them. In this sense, studies that privilege gender issues are necessary for a new look at the issue, which must be addressed among the international regimes relevant to the routes of these same flows.

## REFERENCES

- ANNONI, Danielle. Mulheres migrantes e pandemia: vulnerabilidades sobrepostas diante da securitização internacional. *Migrações Internacionais e a Pandemia da Covid-19*, p. 323, 2020.
- DE ARAUJO, Krisley Amorim; DE ALMEIDA, Luciane Pinho. Gênero e migração: a dialética das migrações internacionais contemporâneas. 2019. Disponível em: <https://www.congressoservicosocialuel.com.br/trabalhos2019/assets/4604-230610-35691-2019-04-01-uel-krisley-pdf.pdf>. Acesso em 11/05/21
- FARLEY, Alex. South African Migration: A gendered analysis. *Policy Insights*. South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg, 70, p. 1-20, Jun. 2019.
- NYEMBA, Florence; CHITIYO, Rufaro (ed.). *Immigrant Women's Voices and Integrating Feminism Into Migration Theory*. IGI Global, 2020.
- OSIRIM, M. J. SWS Distinguished Feminist Lecture: Feminist Political Economy in a Globalized World: African Women Migrants in South Africa and the United States. *Gender & Society*, 32(6), 765–788, 2018.
- PAUL Anju Mary, and YEOH, Brenda S. "Studying multinational migrations, speaking back to migration theory." *Global Networks* 21.1 (2021): 3-17.
- SCHWINN, Simone Andrea. *Feminização das migrações internacionais e luta pelo reconhecimento como garantia da igualdade de gênero e direitos humanos das mulheres refugiadas no Brasil: contribuições da teoria de Axel Honneth*. 2019.
- UNHCR. *Global Trend. Forced Displacement in 2018*. 2019. Disponível em: <https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ee7.pdf>. Acesso em 20/04/2021.