

Migration Network Hub

Repository of practices
Dialogue spaces on assistance
needs for migrant women



**United Nations
Network on Migration**

Working Better Together



Conferencia Regional sobre Migración
Regional Conference on Migration



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Dialogue spaces on assistance needs for migrant women



Title of the Initiative

Dialogue spaces on assistance needs for migrant women and the implementation of the “Guidelines for the Assistance and Protection of Women in the context of Migration.”

Geographic scope

Regional. RCM Country Members: Belize; Canada; Costa Rica; El Salvador; United States of America; Guatemala; Honduras; Mexico; Nicaragua; Panama; The Dominican Republic

Partners involved

International Organization for Migration (IOM), rosanjose@iom.int

Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), crmst@iom.int

United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UN Women

Donor (s) and / or other resources

Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (2019 – 2021)

IOM Development Fund (2018)

Type of practice

Partnership / Multistakeholder initiative

Objectives of the Global Compact for Migration



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Short description



Image for illustration purposes only

Development of this practice began within an RCM scope of action in November 2018 when the RCM held the First Congress on Migrant Women which was promoted by the Presidency Pro-Tempore of El Salvador. After that, the Congress was repeated each year. To date, three regional congresses on Migrant Women have been held and Congress IV is in the development process.

The purpose of these regional congresses is to promote safe migration for migrant women, with a focus on their human rights and to empower them as agents of change for themselves, their families, and their communities. The first three congresses revolved around high-priority issues for women in the context of migration, specifically, issues related to gender equality, human rights, and autonomy. The different versions of the Congress have been organized directly by the RCM Presidency Pro-Tempore and the RCM Executive Secretariat. Additionally, they are included in the RCM's annual planning.

The congresses have provided a space for thematic issues, working groups, and panels where the RCM Member Countries, United Nations System observer organizations and civil society organizations showcase their good practices, success stories, and existing regulations and policies. These spaces effectively encourage dialogue and debate. They help to identify challenges and progress

made on women's issues in the regional migratory context. As a backup, new thematic areas and work plans have been established. They distribute fact sheets, text, research, technical tools, and other relevant materials and use the "Guidelines for the Assistance and Protection of Women in the Context of Migration" as a reference.

The conclusions and lines of work of the first three annual Congresses have served as a major source of input for creating and adopting gender-focused operational instruments within the RCM. The development of the "Guidelines for the Assistance and Protection of Women in the Context of Migration" was a direct result of these dialogue processes. This is in response to the commitment by the 11 RCM Country Members to protect, promote, and guarantee migrant women's rights in the region, in line with its international commitments. Considering that these countries can be origin, transit, destination and return countries that often jointly manage migratory movements, this process has contributed to countries joining efforts for the benefit of migrant women, with regard to the development and implementation of actions at the national and regional levels. This contributes to a better mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the RCM Member Country agendas.

Dates of implementation

2018, end year/not applicable

Key benefit and impact

A key benefit is the expanded use of the gender perspective by government stakeholders. This ranges from a focus on security matters to approaches to attend to the multiple needs related to assistance, protection, and development factors. It is also related to empowering migrant women for the benefit of themselves, their families, and their countries of origin, transit and destination. To best mainstream the gender perspective and jointly coordinate specific actions, the RCM has brought new stakeholders into these discussions, including the different national mechanisms that serve women.



The congresses involve multiple work tables and intersectoral working groups from each RCM Member Country. Therefore, this space is commonly used as a public policy planning mechanism for gender related matters at the national and regional levels. It draws on good practices, expert discussions, observer organization recommendations, and gender related legislative initiatives. As a result, each work table in the different congresses submit a work plan for its specific thematic area, which is then validated by the RCM. Thus, a general work plan is generated that mainstreams gender in the agenda approved by the RCM itself.

Congress III, held in 2021, innovated by designing an activity and planning monitoring matrix. The participants are able to report on developments in the regulatory framework using the matrix. They are also able to submit progress, good practices, and success stories related to protecting and assisting migrant women, including on research, campaigns, journeys, etc. Thus, the RCM obtains and distributes important information for possible future synergies between national initiatives and promote possible follow-up processes among its Country Members that deal with the different approaches to the gender perspective in migration.

This process has also generated multiple training opportunities on women in the context of migration for RCM Country Members. These include topics such as preventing sexual abuse and exploitation, workplace violence and harassment and gender-based violence. The switch to virtual channels in capacity-building processes has been very useful to ensure continuation of technical training during the COVID-19 pandemic. Plus, it has made it possible to reach a larger number of participants, including new staff in each country.

Key lessons learned

The first regional Congress on Migrant Women in 2019 showed a trend in the RCM Member Countries' commitment to implement pertinent actions and address the gender perspective. The Congress contributed to making the role and different experiences of women throughout the migration process visible, using a human rights-based approach. Likewise, it highlighted women's contributions to the development of the communities of origin, transit, and destination.

Holding congresses on the needs and interests of migrant women has also contributed to developing specific guidelines for migrant women protection and assistance, in addition to creating synergies related to a comprehensive approach to migration.

A decision was made between the second and third congresses to include a webinar as a preparatory meeting. Participation in this meeting includes RCM Member Countries, women's organizations, key institutions, RCM observers, and special guests. This made it possible to discuss the Congress preparatory agenda and define the priority issues based on the regional context.

Periodic webinars have also been held to follow up on the agreements and activities planned with the relevant staff in the Member Countries. Therefore, the RCM has been able to stay in touch with the staff responsible for managing mechanisms that address gender and migration in the RCM Member Countries (ministries and several institutions). This contributes to mitigating the consequences of high staff turnover in public offices.

Finally, the coordination of multiple initiatives contributes to achieving the established plan goals. For example, the resources from a project on the social inclusion of migrant women in society funded by the Duchy of Luxembourg have been leveraged to nurture this practice.

Recommendations

Include a specific space at the next annual regional congress where the RCM working groups will be able to review progress made on the implementation of the Guidelines for the Assistance and Protection of Women in the Context of Migration. This way, at the end of the Congress, the RCM will have systematized the main findings and recommended priority actions related to gender issues.

With regard to the previous recommendation, it is also recommended to periodically review the “Guidelines for the Assistance and Protection of Women in the Context of Migration.” This is to determine if they adapt to new challenges and emerging adverse factors, for example, migration as a result of health emergencies and climate change, as well as increasing regional human mobility situations and the dynamics of forced displacement of women in need of international protection.

Attempt to mainstream the gender approach in all RCM spaces and working groups. This would help to raise awareness, better coordinate the development of an activity work plan and agenda, and to generate greater commitment from the stakeholders. For example, the RCM's regional diploma course on trafficking in persons addressed the link between trafficking and gender-based violence.

Constantly distribute and provide online training on the “Guidelines for the Assistance and Protection of Women in the Context of Migration” for the staff of institutions in charge of both migration management and gender issues in the RCM Country Members. This is important to mitigate staff turnover in public institutions and also to keep these issues present in national planning.

Planning of activities and events must be timely and limited so they will not overlap with other working groups' activities. The same is true for distributing stakeholder roles and participation involved in the different addressed topics.

Website

- [Dialogue spaces on assistance needs for migrant women and the implementation of the “Guidelines for the Assistance and Protection of Women in the context of Migration”](#) (link to this practice published on the Repository of the United Nations Migration Network, available only in Spanish)

Innovation

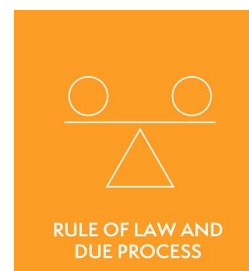
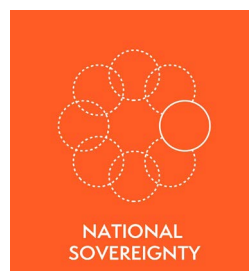
Thanks to the annual congresses on migrant women and refugees, the RCM has made progress from its previous stance on migration and security and has managed to take major strides towards gender mainstreaming in all the processes involved, including migration situations. The congresses' multidisciplinary approach makes it possible to address the issue of women in migration from different points of view. This has contributed to a greater awareness in the Country Members related to the specific needs, interests, and potential of migrant women in the countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Awareness has been raised since the congresses about the assistance, protection and economic empowerment of migrant women. It has reached the point that the RCM working groups have been focused on achieving a more robust gender mainstreaming in all their strategic planning for years to come. Therefore, this practice enables the RCM to strengthen its actions to empower women and eliminate gender-based violence. It also fosters leadership of migrant women in their migratory or forced displacement cycle.

Through the dialogue spaces promoted by the Congress, the RCM has been willing to strengthen relationships with other regional bodies and mechanisms. These include the Organization of American States (OAS), the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Central

American Commission of Directors of Migration (OCAM -- an acronym that arose from its first meetings when it was named the Central American Organization of Migration), the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), civil society organizations and RCM observer agencies. This has brought about increased cooperation and participation on supporting migrant women by these stakeholders. Regional actions aimed at strengthening strategic alliances have made it possible to find solutions to the migration challenges in the region that are based on the Guidelines approved by the RCM in 2018.

GCM Guiding Principles





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