



# REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

## The Gendered Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees and Migrants and Building Back Better

### CONCEPT NOTE

#### Background and rationale

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The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, widened gender gaps and caused both high- and low-skilled migrant and refugee women to lose employment at considerably higher rates than men<sup>[1]</sup>. Women are frontline workers and respondents to the pandemic, yet they also face unique challenges and vulnerabilities due to gender expectations and increased burdens of domestic work and unpaid care.

Given the increasing number of women migrating independently for work, education and as heads of households, and considering the gendered impacts of COVID-19, the need for gender-sensitive and gender-responsive migration strategies is more important than ever. The Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees mainstream a gender perspective, promote gender equality and equal access to services and opportunities, ensure the rights and needs of women and girls are respected at all stages of migration, and recognize them as empowered agents of change – while acknowledging migrant and refugee women’s independence, agency and leadership.

There have been several initiatives aimed at supporting and empowering refugee and migrant women workers affected by COVID-19 in the region, which recognize their key role for a prompt and sustainable recovery and their invaluable contributions to development efforts.

Therefore, while acknowledging the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women, this side event will highlight concrete examples of how, when women are empowered – particularly in the pandemic context – they represent an important accelerator to building back better, playing a key role in development initiatives and policies, while advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

[1] Fasani, F., Mazza, J. (2020) *Being on the Frontline? Immigrant Workers in Europe and the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Bonn, Germany: Institute of Labor Economics -IZA), <https://www.iza.org/publications/dp/13963/being-on-the-frontline-immigrant-workers-in-europe-and-the-covid-19-pandemic>

Gelatt, J., Batalova, J., Capps, R. (2020) *An early Readout on the Economic Effects of the COVID-19 Crisis: Immigrant Women Have the Highest Unemployment* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/early-readout-economic-effects-covid-19-crisis-immigrant-women>

Hari, A., Nardon, L. (2020). Carleton University Survey [Carleton Newsroom]. <https://newsroom.carleton.ca/story/immigrant-women-pandemic-impact/>

OECD (2020), *What is the Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and their children?* (Paris, France: OECD) <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/what-is-the-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-immigrants-and-their-children-e7cbb7de/?search=author#contactinfo-d7e2917>

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For additional information, please read here:

IOM (2021) COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot #72: Gender dimensions, Understanding the migration & mobility implications of COVID-19. Available at: [https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/covid-19\\_analytical\\_snapshot\\_72- gender\\_dimensions\\_updated\\_0.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_72- gender_dimensions_updated_0.pdf)

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## Session objectives and expected outcomes

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Held at the time of unprecedented pandemic of COVID-19, the event has the objective to explore the implications for gender equality during the pandemic and beyond, notably how to tackle its disproportionate negative effect on refugee and migrant women and girls, and to look at the global trends and efforts to address the gender gap. Panellists will bring an array of perspectives and insights on policies, practices and solutions that carry potential in triggering the transformative changes needed and scaling best practices of refugee and migrant women impactful contribution to recovery efforts. Ultimately, the event aims to advance the debate on the importance of gender equality in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including in discussing ways to include more refugee and migrant women in shaping the design, development and delivery of recovery efforts at all levels.

### Expected outcomes:

1. Identified various opportunities and gaps, and way how to promote change for women in migration under GCM and GCR.
2. Higher awareness among participants on challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the key role women have, and can, play in building back better while advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE Region.

3. Mapped best practices in developing and implementing gender-responsive strategies, policies and plans at the country level, that have the potential to advance gender equality in the longer term.
4. Identified main challenges faced by governments, stakeholders and migrant/refugee groups with regards to women socio-economic contributions.
5. Mapped the most effective policies and programmes to promote full empowerment of refugee and migrant women and girls in their host communities.
6. Recommendations to national/local governments on strengthening their role in ensuring an effective and sustainable empowerment of refugee and migrants' women and girls to become a constructive force and play a more active role in their host communities, while also focusing on inhibited or regressed gender equality and what can be done differently.

## Organizers

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**Lead organizers:** Co-chairs of the Regional Issue-Based Coalition on Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience and the Issue-Based Coalition on Gender Equality

**Contributors:** IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, UN Women, FAO, UNFPA

**Focal points:** Peter Broomfield (IOM Vienna Regional Office)

**E-Mail:** pbroomfield@iom.int

## Agenda and Structure

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1. Opening remarks
2. Migration and refugee outlook in the region – leave no one behind and solutions for the gender responsive recovery
3. Systemic and new emerging challenges and opportunities for labour migration and sustainable recovery in ECA region – how to ensure gender responsive and inclusive labour migration management
4. Gender representation in development
5. Closing remarks

## List of Panellists

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**Opening remarks:** Alia El-Yassir, UN Women Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia

**Moderator:** Amr Taha, IOM, co-chair, IBC Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience

**Panellists:**

7. Nodira Abdulaeva, Human Rights Defender, Member of Human Rights Centre's Board, Tajikistan  
– *leave no one behind, emerging challenges and opportunities for labour migration and gender responsive and inclusive recovery*
8. Yerbolat Abulhatin, Deputy Chairman of the Committee of Labour, Social Protection and Migration of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
– *gender responsive migration policies during the pandemic in Kazakhstan*
9. Aml Samer, a refugee, now residing in Georgia  
– *the lived experience during COVID-19*
10. Lejla Ramić Mesihović – Assistant Professor, International Burch University, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
– *gender equality and sustainable development*

**Audience Q&A and interventions from the floor**

**Closing points and key takeaways:** Nicolas Brass, UNHCR, co-chair, IBC Large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience