GRASSROOTS TO GLOBAL

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FEMIG WORKSHOP REPORT: MEXICO

Building Feminist Migration Policy for Gender Equality from Grassroots to Global

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WIMN Women in Migration Network

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INTRODUCTION AND WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

FeMig (Building a Feminist Migration Policy for Gender Equality, from Grassroots to Global) is an initiative led by the Gender+Migration Hub at the International Migration Research Centre, Wilfrid Laurier University, in partnership with the Women in Migration Network and the International Detention Coalition (IDC) and funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

The FeMig initiative responds to the reality that migration, when shaped by structural inequality, gendered labor markets, racial hierarchies, and restrictive governance regimes, does not automatically lead to empowerment or gender equality. Instead, women, gender-diverse, and racialized migrants, particularly those concentrated in feminized, undervalued, and informal sectors such as domestic and care work, are systematically exposed to precarity, violence, and rights violations across the migration cycle. These harms are not incidental, but are produced through policy choices, labor recruitment systems, border regimes, and social norms that devalue women's labor and constrain their mobility.

FeMig seeks to disrupt these dynamics by grounding migration governance in feminist, rights-based, and intersectional approaches developed from the lived experiences, organizing practices, and policy expertise of grassroots civil society organizations (CSOs). Central to FeMig is the recognition that civil society actors are not merely service providers or policy stakeholders, but key agents of migration governance. Working directly with migrant communities, CSOs document gender-based violence (GBV), labor exploitation, and systemic exclusion; provide legal, psychosocial, and humanitarian support; and advance advocacy and accountability efforts at local, national, regional, and global levels.

As part of this initiative, participatory workshops are being conducted in multiple countries, including Thailand, Mexico, Ethiopia, Colombia, Ecuador, Nepal and Albania.

These workshops are designed to promote meaningful civil society participation in migration governance, to surface feminist analyses rooted in everyday realities, and to ensure that global migration debates are informed by the knowledge and leadership of those most affected by gendered migration regimes. These workshops are designed to promote meaningful civil society participation in migration governance and to ensure that feminist perspectives inform regional and global migration debates and policy processes.

The FeMig Mexico workshop was held in Mexico City on Friday, March 18, 2025, in partnership with the Center for Research on North America, from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (CISAN-UNAM in Spanish) a leading university in Latin America. The workshop brought together civil society organizations working on issues affecting Mexican and Latin American women and LGBTIQ+ individuals across the migration cycle from pre-departure, transit, arrival and return.

The workshop was led by Dr. Jenna Hennebry (Co-Director, International Migration Research Centre; Founder and Project Lead, Gender + Migration Hub) and Dr. Aaraón Diaz Mendiburo (CISAN-UNAM).

The overall objective of the Mexico workshop was to:

- Identify and connect CSOs working with women migrants and LGBTIQ+ migrants in transit or looking to settle in Mexico.
- Create a safe, feminist, and participatory space for shared reflection and learning;
- Generate grounded analysis and policy recommendations for feminist migration governance;
- Contribute Mexico-specific insights to the global FeMig process, including surveys, indicators, and identifying best practices in the country.

COUNTRY CONTEXT: GENDER AND MIGRATION

Historically, Mexico has been primarily a country of origin, transit, and destination in the Latin American region. In recent years, transit migration, particularly of women, unaccompanied children and LGBTIQ+ individuals has been increasing, both from within Mexico, or from Central and South America looking to resettle in the United States. However, with how immigration policies have become more restrictive globally, the country is now facing high levels of return migration as well.

Mexico is one of three countries in Latin America that has implemented a feminist foreign policy. The fundamental pillars of the policy are: foreign policy with a gender perspective and a feminist agenda; a Ministry of Foreign Affairs with gender parity; a Ministry of Foreign Affairs free of violence and safe for all; and equality that is visible. It aims to highlight the contributions of women to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to foreign policy in general; every aspect of Mexico's foreign policy will be guided by the principle of feminism. The pillars are unclear on how this policy supports women and LGBT populations in the context of migration.

Civil society organizations are very active throughout the country, focusing primarily on providing housing services through "Casas de Migrantes" located in states that are key transit points for migrants seeking to travel to the United States. In recent years, there has been an increase in demand for services along the northern border, resulting from the cancellation of CBP One, which has left thousands of people stranded, and in need social and health services.

Organized crime groups pose one of the greatest threats to women and LGBTIQ+ individuals in migration contexts. Of the more than 100,000 missing persons, estimates as of 2025 indicated that between hundreds and thousands of the missing persons could be migrants. Women and LGBTIQ+ individuals face differentiated risks due to the high levels of gender-based violence in the country.

WORKSHOP DESIGN AND PARTICIPANTS

Participants

The workshop brought together 38 participants from organizations led by women—some of them led by transgender women—that have extensive experience in legal representation, research, housing assistance, labor rights, advocacy, family reunification, LGBTIQ+ migrants' support and temporary labour migration.

The diversity of the participants facilitated intersectional dialogue and the exchange of best practices in providing support to the various groups of people passing through Mexico as part of their migration journey. In addition, participants shared the challenges their organizations have faced in their daily work supporting and assisting migrants.

The participant organizations are as follows: Colectivo Migrante Monseñor Oscár Arnulfo Romero, Mex Migrantes, Albergue Casa Peñas, Casa de las muñecas Tiresias, Poch@ House, Casa Fuentes, Comisión de derechos humanos y laborales del Valle de Tehuacán, Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados, Scalabrinianas Misión con Migrantes y Refugiados, Albergue Constitución, Primeros Auxilios Psicológicos para personas Migrantes, Refugiados y Desplazados, Comunidad en Retorno, Sin Fronteras IAP, Casa de Acogida, Formación y Empoderamiento para Mujeres y Familias Migrantes y Refugiadas en México, Colectiva la Jauría Trans, Instituto para las Mujeres en la Migración, AC., Fundación Arcoíris, Poesía Pintada and Migrantes en México.

Workshop Design & Process

The FeMig Mexico workshop was structured as a full-day participatory process, designed for collective analysis, feminist knowledge production and exchange of gender-responsive practices to better support migrants. The agenda was intentionally designed to reflect feminist principles of inclusivity, co-creation, multiple ways of thinking and intersectionality.

Participant registration and informal networking were the first items of the agenda, followed by a performance on the experience of women in seasonal agricultural work in Canada. Participants received the workshop materials, including information on accessing the FeMig Global CSO Survey (via QR code).

On the open discussion portion of the workshop, CSOs' representatives exchanged the issues facing Mexican and Latin American Women Migrants in the country.

- Gender-based violence
- Difficulties accessing regular migration pathways
- Discrimination against women and LGBTIQ+ migrants
- Difficulties accessing rights and services
- Trafficking and human trafficking rights violations
- Exclusionary practices in accessing programs for irregular migrants and irregular return migrants.

Participants in the workshop identified that civil society is already training regularly in human rights protection and advocacy mechanisms in their states; and visibilizing and supporting migrants victims of violence, trafficking and discrimination. However, they also noted that a large part of their work involves providing services, when that task should actually be the responsibility of the government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Protection and Recognition**
    - Ensure that policies designed for migrant women and LGBTIQ+ migrants recognize individuals' unique experiences, regardless of their immigration status
    - Guarantee access to rights, public and mental health services.
    - Supporting the creation of infrastructure so irregular migrants and irregular return migrants can regularize their status.
    - Facilitating the regularization of migrants.
2. **Strengthening CSOs networks and collaboration**
    - Develop a national and regional working group to better identify the needs of migrants and programs or policies that support them in their mobility process.
    - Exchange best practices and protocols in support of migrants and their intersectionalities.
3. **Creation and participation in government advisory mechanisms**
    - Enable civil society to play a formal role in informing, monitoring and evaluating policies.
    - Advising in the data base creation process, particularly on the desegregation of data by gender identity and sexual orientation.

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