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FEMIG CAPACITY-BUILDING RESOURCE

MAKING MIGRATION FEMINIST

GUIDANCE FROM CIVIL SOCIETY

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WHY THIS RESOURCE?

Gender-responsive migration governance requires policies and programmes to recognize and address gender inequalities while advancing rights, agency and structural change. This resource builds on that foundation by bringing together feminist guidance generated through FeMig civil society consultations.

Across different migration contexts, participants asked not only how migration systems could respond better to gender inequality, but how power, mobility, labour, care, protection and decision-making are organized, and what would need to change to create more just migration systems.

CORE MESSAGE

Making migration feminist means moving beyond one-off consultation and narrow ideas of vulnerability. It means changing the policies, institutions and power relations that shape who can move, who can access rights, who carries risk and care, and who has a voice in migration governance.

How to use this resource:

Use the six guidance areas as a prompt when designing, reviewing or implementing migration policy and programming. Each section distils recurring messages from FeMig consultations and translates them into practical actions.



1. SHARE POWER, NOT JUST CONSULTATION

Feminist migration governance treats migrants and migrant-led organizations as producers of knowledge and participants in decision-making, not simply as beneficiaries or consultation subjects.

Civil society guidance

□ Involve migrant women, gender-diverse people and migrant-led organizations before policy priorities are finalized.
□ Include affected communities in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
□ Recognize lived experience as expertise and create sustained participation mechanisms, not one-off consultations.
□ Resource participation through interpretation, childcare, accessibility support, transport and compensation where appropriate.
□ Show how civil society recommendations influenced final decisions.

WHAT WE HEARD THROUGH FEMIG

Colombia emphasized co-creation and formal participation in policy design and monitoring. Albania emphasized women's and civil society participation throughout policy development and implementation. The global consultation called for migrant women's and gender-diverse people's leadership to be institutionalized.



Drawing made during a workshop in Colombia.

2. PROTECT AUTONOMY AS WELL AS SAFETY

Measures introduced in the name of protection can sometimes restrict mobility, deepen dependency or push people toward less safe routes. A feminist approach protects people without taking away their agency.

Civil society guidance

□ Review migration restrictions that apply differently to women or particular groups of workers.
□ Expand safe and regular pathways and regularization schemes rather than relying on restrictive or punitive approaches.
□ Avoid migration arrangements that make status dependent on an employer, recruiter, partner or sponsor.
□ Ensure protection, justice and essential services are available regardless of migration status.
□ Assess whether border, visa and enforcement rules create additional risks for people experiencing violence or exploitation.
□ Protect family unity, recognizing families in their diverse forms.

WHAT WE HEARD THROUGH FEMIG

Nepal participants warned that "protective" migration bans can push women toward unsafe routes and into irregularized situations, greater exposure to trafficking and abuse. The global consultation similarly called for rights-based pathways, family unity and a move away from detention- and enforcement-based governance.



Picture taken during Bangkok workshop.

3. CHANGE THE CONDITIONS THAT PRODUCE VULNERABILITY

Feminist migration governance asks how migration systems create or intensify risk rather than treating vulnerability as an inherent characteristic of migrant women or gender-diverse people.

Civil society guidance

□ Assess how temporary status, employer-tied permits and restrictions on job mobility distribute risk and dependency.

□ Examine recruitment systems, intermediary fees and sponsorship arrangements for gendered harms.

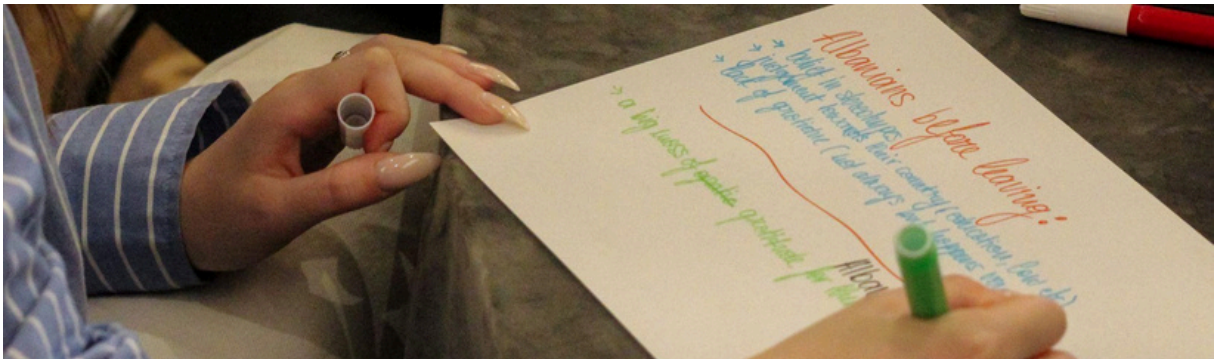
□ Identify racialized and gendered labour-market segmentation and barriers created by documentation rules.

□ Review apparently gender-neutral policies for unequal impacts in practice.

□ Shift attention from managing vulnerable groups toward changing the structures that produce insecurity.

WHAT WE HEARD THROUGH FEMIG

The global consultation identified temporary, employer-tied and sector-segregated migration regimes as mechanisms that can normalize exploitation and precarity. Ecuador likewise showed how gender shapes the full migration cycle, from reasons for leaving to transit, labour-market integration and return.



4. MAKE CARE AND LABOUR VISIBLE

Care is not a private issue outside migration governance. Paid and unpaid care shape who can migrate, how people participate in labour markets, and whose work remains undervalued or unprotected.

Civil society guidance

□ Guarantee labour rights and social protection for domestic and care workers, regardless of status.
□ Strengthen oversight of recruiters, employers and intermediaries and ensure accessible redress.
□ Address deskilling and barriers to recognition of qualifications.
□ Consider unpaid care responsibilities in settlement, training, employment and participation programmes.
□ Ratify and implement ILO Conventions No. 189 and No. 190
□ Measure migration outcomes beyond employment and remittances, including dignity, safety and well-being.

WHAT WE HEARD THROUGH FEMIG

Colombia called for recognition and redistribution of paid and unpaid care. Ecuador highlighted the economic, physical and emotional burden of care across the migration journey. Nepal emphasized recognition of domestic work as dignified labour and stronger accountability for employers and recruiters.



Picture taken during Ecuador Workshop

5. MAKE RIGHTS USABLE IN PRACTICE

Formal rights are not enough if people cannot safely use them. A feminist approach examines whether legal protections, services and complaint mechanisms are accessible in everyday life.

Civil society guidance

□ Establish firewalls between services, labour inspection and immigration enforcement so people can report violence and exploitation without risking their status

□ Ensure LGBTQ+ migrants can safely access shelters, healthcare and protection services.

□ Integrate language access, disability inclusion and sexual and reproductive health into migration-related services.

□ Collect disaggregated data carefully enough to reveal unequal outcomes while protecting privacy and safety.

□ Build survivor-centred pathways to justice and review whether implementation matches formal legal protections.

WHAT WE HEARD THROUGH FEMIG

Ecuador called for safe reporting routes, LGBTQ+ inclusive services, disaggregated data and mechanisms allowing survivors of gender-based violence to regularize status without dependence on an abuser. Albania emphasized indicators that measure safety, dignity, rights protection and inclusion, not only economic outcomes.



Picture taken during workshop in Albania

6. RESOURCE CIVIL SOCIETY AS PART OF MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Civil society organizations are already providing protection, documenting harms, supporting survivors, creating safe spaces and generating policy knowledge. Feminist governance should recognize this role without offloading state responsibilities onto under-resourced organizations.

Civil society guidance

□ Provide sustained and flexible funding for migrant-led, women-led and feminist organizations.

□ Compensate organizations for expertise and participation in policy processes.

□ Give civil society formal roles in monitoring, evaluation and accountability.

□ Protect civic space and the ability of organizations and human rights defenders to criticize policy, including protection from criminalization of humanitarian assistance and solidarity with migrants.

□ Ensure public institutions retain responsibility for rights protection rather than relying on civil society to fill permanent service gaps.

WHAT WE HEARD THROUGH FEMIG

Colombia highlighted civil society's roles in advocacy, service provision, education and monitoring. Ecuador called for long-term public funding for organizations providing protection the state does not cover. Nepal documented how organizations are expected to manage crisis response and long-term advocacy without adequate resources.



Picture taken during a workshop in Nepal

MAKING MIGRATION FEMINIST: QUICK CHECK

Use these questions as a rapid review when developing or assessing a migration policy, programme or service.

Power and participation

□ Were migrant women, gender-diverse people and migrant-led organizations involved in defining the problem?
□ Were affected communities involved before key decisions were made?
□ Are affected communities involved in implementation, monitoring and evaluation?

Rights and autonomy

□ Does the policy expand autonomy rather than deepen dependence on an employer, partner, recruiter or status category?
□ Can people access protection, justice and essential services regardless of migration status?
□ Could a restriction intended to protect people instead increase irregularity or risk?

Structures, work and care

□ Does the policy examine how status, recruitment, borders or employer dependency create vulnerability?
□ Are domestic and care workers fully protected by labour law and social protection?
□ Are unpaid care responsibilities taken into account in programme design and participation?

Protection and intersectionality

□ Can migrants report violence without risking immigration consequences?
□ Does the policy consider gender alongside race, sexuality, disability, class, age, nationality and status?
□ Are services accessible across language, disability and documentation barriers?

Accountability

□ Are migrant-led and feminist civil society organizations adequately resourced?
□ Do affected communities have a formal role in monitoring outcomes?
□ Does evaluation measure dignity, safety, rights and inclusion, and not only numbers, employment or economic contribution?

A FINAL QUESTION

If the policy works exactly as designed, who gains greater power, security and freedom, and who still carries the risk, cost or care?



Picture taken during a workshop in Ecuador

ABOUT THIS GUIDANCE

This working draft synthesizes recurring civil society guidance generated through the FeMig initiative — Building a Feminist Migration Policy for Gender Equality from the Grassroots to the Global Level.

Source consultations

- Albania workshop, Tirana (14–15 May 2026)
- Nepal workshop, Kathmandu (5 December 2025)
- Ecuador workshop, Quito (26 November 2025)
- Colombia workshop, Bogotá (9–10 July 2025)
- Mexico workshop, Mexico City (18 March 2025)
- Feminist Forum on Migration and Displacement, Bangkok (30 November–1 December 2024), a global consultation bringing together participants from multiple regions.

How this resource relates to existing Hub tools

The Gender+Migration Hub already provides a Gender-Responsive Migration Governance Checklist and related capacity-building tools. This FeMig resource is intended to complement that work by foregrounding what civil society consultations add: shared power, migrant agency, attention to the structures that produce vulnerability, the centrality of care and labour, practical access to rights, and sustained support for civil society as part of migration governance.

FeMig partners

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