



GUIDELINES ON ASSISTANCE  
**AND PROTECTION**  
OF WOMEN IN CONTEXT  
**OF MIGRATION**

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<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>		
<b>II. Objectives</b>	<b>6</b>		
General objective	6		
Specific objectives	6		
<b>III. Guiding Principles</b>	<b>7</b>		
Equality and Non-discrimination against Women	7		
Confidentiality	7		
Non re-victimization	8		
Non refoulement	8		
Shared responsibility	9		
Multiculturalism and Diversity	9		
Best Interests of the Child	10		
Family Unity	10		
Presumption of Minority	11		
Non-detention of Boys, Girls and Adolescents	11		
<b>IV. Approaches</b>	<b>12</b>		
Human right approach	12		
Gender approach	12		
Intergenerational approach	13		
Intersectional approach	13		
		Contextual approach	13
		Intercultural approach	14
		Transnational approach	14
		Intersectoral approach	15
		Inclusive approach	15
		<b>V. Spheres Of Implementation</b>	<b>16</b>
		<b>VI. Recommendations for the Different Phases of the migration Process</b>	<b>17</b>
		6.1. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Origin, Transit, Destination and Return	17
		6.2. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection of Migrant Women in Countries of Origin	19
		6.3. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Transit and Destination	20
		6.4. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Destination	22
		6.5. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Return	23

Around 250 million people have crossed international borders. In this region, 52% are girls, female adolescents and women, according to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In line with current global trends, an increasing feminization of migration has been observed in Latin American countries.

Every day more women are pressured to leave their homes and, in some cases, to migrate in search of better opportunities. The reasons are diverse, including structural conditions in countries of origin, demographic characteristics, insufficient labour supply, economic disparities, family reunification, social and organized crime, natural disasters, climate change, gender-based violence and discrimination or simply the need to survive.

Despite the increasing feminization of migration, women as active subjects in migration processes continue to be invisible. This is based on prejudice, rules and practices that perpetuate female subordination and discrimination in all spheres of society, thus generating inequality.

Migration policies tend to ignore the impact of the gap of gender-based inequality, thereby disregarding situations of vulnerability that affect many migrant women. This means that migrant women experience limitations in being recognized as social actors and agents of their own development and that of their families and communities.

Therefore, interventions are required that recognize gender relations and their direct impact on those who migrate, on the causes that lead them to leave their communities of origin, the means by which they migrate and the conditions they face during the journey, in the country of destination or upon their return; without disregarding the fact that the challenge to be addressed is to provide assistance and protection to migrant women.

The term “migrant women” used throughout this document includes migrant adult women, girls and female adolescents.

In this context, the Member States of the Regional Conference on Migration – RCM (Belize, Canada, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States) have focused their efforts on the topic of Migrant Women, under the leadership of El Salvador in its

capacity as President pro tempore 2017. The efforts to address the issue at the regional level respond to the characteristics of the migration dynamics in the region and the actions to position the RCM as a regional reference process in regard to the protection and assistance of migrant women throughout the various stages of the migration cycle.

In November 2016, the Vice-Ministers of the region approved the Plan of Action of El Salvador as President pro tempore 2017. The main objective of the Plan of Action was to give relevance to the issue of migrant women at the regional level and thus, enable the generation of initiatives aimed at ensuring full respect of the human rights of migrant women and better harnessing the migration dynamics of this population group in order to promote the development of their families, communities and countries of origin and destination.

This document responds to the commitment of the 11 Member States to promote, protect and ensure the rights of migrant women in the region, in accordance with their international commitments. Countries of origin, transit, destination and return are joining efforts

in support of migrant women through this document<sup>1</sup>, which will serve as a reference for the development, design and implementation of actions at the national level in each of the 11 countries.

In addition to the support received from observer organizations of the RCM, the Member Countries of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) have set a precedent, through this document, to ensure that migration of women does not happen out of necessity and that it takes place with respect for their human rights, empowering them as agents of change for themselves, their families and their communities.

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<sup>1</sup> The document is based on other guidelines that have been adopted by the RCM Member Countries, including the following: Regional Guidelines for Special Protection in Cases of Repatriation of Child Victims of Trafficking (2007); Regional Guidelines for the Assistance to Unaccompanied Migrant Boys, Girls and Adolescents in Cases of Repatriation (2009); Regional Guidelines for the Preliminary Identification and Referral Mechanisms for Migrant Populations in Vulnerable Situations (2013); and Regional Guidelines for the Comprehensive Protection of Boys, Girls and Adolescents in the Context of Migration (2017).

## General Objective

- Establish lines of action for the provision of comprehensive assistance with a human rights approach to migrant women throughout the migration process, through effective measures that allow closing the gender gap in migration.



## Specific Objectives

- To contribute, as countries of origin, transit, destination and return, to the full realization of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrant women, as well as their empowerment, with a special focus on migrant women in vulnerable situations.
- To provide tools to the RCM Member Countries for the implementation of actions relating to gender, human rights, as well as assistance, protection and empowerment of migrant women.
- To strengthen coordination and cooperation between the RCM Member Countries, promoting the implementation of the present document in order to improve assistance and protection of migrant women.

Women, agents of their own development  
and that of their families and communities.





The following principles shall guide the work of relevant institutions, in accordance with international commitments<sup>2</sup>:

### Equality and Non-discrimination against Women

Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. This implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.

In this context and in accordance with international commitments, this document is aimed at the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The term “discrimination against women” means any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, States have the obligation to incorporate prohibitions against discriminatory practices into their legal system and to eliminate discriminatory regulations.

### Confidentiality

All personal data related to the sphere of protection of migrants who are victims of crimes shall be confidential. Therefore, its use should be reserved exclusively for the purposes of the investigation or the respective process. This obligation extends to all judicial and administrative bodies, both public and private.

States must protect the information about migrant women in vulnerable situations by ensuring that reasonable measures are taken, in accordance with national legislation, to guarantee the confidentiality and appropriate use of the information.

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<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the international commitments taken on by each RCM Member Country.

<sup>3</sup> Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Information shall be exchanged within the framework of national legislation with the sole purpose of providing protection and assistance to these women. In addition, the information shall be used and exchanged in an appropriate manner and with full respect for the obligations of States, in accordance with international human rights legislation.

### Non-revictimization

This principle aims to avoid experiences which have caused a person to be victimized twice or more times in their lives. States have the commitment to develop and implement tools or adopt approaches that are oriented towards preventing women victims from being exposed to tedious processes, repeated or unnecessary requests for information or non-facilitation of processes in gaining access to information, including access to justice.

The principle of non-victimization promotes the development and implementation by States of institutional, inter-institutional and bilateral instruments to avoid unnecessary and repeated requests for testimonies which affect migrant women and re-victimize them during return and reintegration.

### Non-refoulement

In accordance with international human rights law, the principle of non-refoulement guarantees that no one is returned to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that this person would be in danger of being subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other irreparable harm. This principle applies to all migrants at all times, regardless of their migration status. The principle of non-refoulement forms an essential protection under international human rights, refugee, humanitarian and customary law. It prohibits States from transferring or removing individuals from their jurisdiction or effective control when there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be at risk of irreparable harm upon return, including persecution, torture, ill-treatment or other serious human rights violations<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from the records of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

### Shared Responsibility

This principle is based on the consideration that State actions to address migration in all its dimensions are a responsibility that should be shared equally by countries of origin, transit and destination to protect the rights of migrant girls, female adolescents and adult women<sup>5</sup>.

### Multiculturalism and Diversity

This the recognition of the coexistence of different cultural groups within the same country. It also refers to the ideology and policy of respect for cultural diversity. It makes visible the power relations and recognition that have existed among different cultures throughout the history of humanity. In regard to human beings, diversity is a concept that refers to the quality of being different but with equal rights. Diversity thus alludes to the wide range of visible and non-visible differences that characterize women and men, but under the fundamental principle of equal rights, and therefore, prohibits any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference in the enjoyment or exercise of rights based

on age, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, marital or parental status, religion, political beliefs or class, among others.

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<sup>5</sup> Taken and adjusted from the Regional Guidelines for the Comprehensive Protection of Boys, Girls and Adolescents in the Context of Migration, 2016.

### Best Interests of the Child

This is the right of every girl, boy and adolescent to be taken into account, with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions or decisions concerning children, in the public as well as the private sphere. This is a threefold concept:

- a) A substantive right: The right of girls, boys and adolescents for their best interests to be a primary consideration which is assessed and taken into account in pondering different interests in order to make a decision on a matter discussed and ensure that this right will be respected always when a decision needs to be made which affects a child, a specific or generic group of children or children in general.
- b) A fundamental interpretative legal principle: If a legal provision admits more than one interpretation, that which meets the best interests of the child most effectively will be chosen.
- c) A rule of procedure: Whenever a decision needs to be made which affects a specific child, a specific group of children or children in general, the decision-making

process should include an assessment of the potential positive or negative repercussions of the decision on the child or children in question.

### Family Unity

This is the guiding principle aimed at protecting family, parent-child and marital ties or those arising from non-marital union and kinship, characterized by maintaining the strict integration of the family. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) establishes that it shall be ensured that a child “shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child”<sup>6</sup>. As established in international standards, every boy, girls and adolescent has the right to live with his or her family, which is called to satisfy their material, emotional and psychological needs.

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<sup>6</sup> Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Over 250 million people have crossed international borders. According to IOM data, 52% of international migrants in this region are girls and women.

Similar to the global trend, Latin American countries have experienced an increasing process of feminization of migration.



The right of everyone to receive protection against arbitrary or illegal interference within their family is an implicit part of the right to protection of the family and the boy, girl and adolescent, and also is expressly recognized in Article 12.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Presumption of Minority

This principle encourages States to presume that a person is under eighteen years of age in cases where there is doubt whether he or she is a minor or not, unless the contrary is proven. The above with the objective of providing the protection and assistance required by the boy, girl or adolescent during his or her migration process<sup>7</sup>.

### Non-detention of Boys, Girls and Adolescents

This principle means that detention of a boy, girl or adolescent, whether a migrant, asylum seeker or stateless person, should be considered as a measure of last resort which should only be applied when it has been determined that it is absolutely necessary<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from the Regional Guidelines for the Comprehensive Protection of Boys, Girls and Adolescents in the Context of Migration, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> For those States that have accepted the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the obligation under this principle is broader. This Court has indicated that “deprivation of liberty is inappropriate when children are unaccompanied or separated from their family, because in this situation, the State is obliged to give priority to facilitating the measures of special protection based on the principle of the best interest of the child, assuming its position as guarantor with the greatest care and responsibility”. Even when the boy, girl or adolescent is with his or her parents, “the child’s best interest requires keeping the family together, the imperative requirement not to deprive the child of liberty extends to her or his parents and obliges the authorities to choose alternative measures to detention for the family, which are appropriate to the needs of the children.” Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Advisory Opinion OC-21/14, Paragraphs 157-158.

The following approaches are recommended to appropriately guide the actions of relevant institutions:

### Human Rights Approach

The main focus of this approach is to recognize every person as a holder of human rights, which are universal and inalienable, interconnected, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. It involves protecting the human rights of women in migration processes, understanding that the well-being and human development of this population group are important elements of public policies and social actions<sup>9</sup>.

### Gender Approach

The term “gender approach” is a tool that allows observing and analysing the impact of gender on the opportunities, roles and social interactions of a person. Gender-based analysis facilitates the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into public programmes or policies or in an organization.

Gender mainstreaming is the chosen approach of the United Nations system and international community

toward realizing progress on women’s and girls’ rights, as a sub-set of human rights to which the United Nations dedicates itself. It is not a goal or objective on its own. It is a strategy for implementing greater equality for women and girls in relation to men and boys.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Taken from the Regional Guidelines for the Comprehensive Protection of Boys, Girls and Adolescents in the Context of Migration

<sup>10</sup> UN Women Training Centre eLearning Campus, “Gender Equality Glossary”. In: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=G&sortkey=&sortorder=&fullsearch=0&page=1>

### Intergenerational Approach

This approach recognizes that all actions relating to public policies or measures taken by different actors in a direct or indirect manner, as well as institutional practices and arrangements, should provide indications to build capacities aimed at strengthening the establishment of relations that are free of discrimination and optimizing the current potential of the collaborative relationships and intergenerational complementarity. In itself, this allows us to see and analyse the social reality, making visible the inequalities and discriminations that exist within generational groups and between generations<sup>11</sup>.

### Intersectional Approach

This approach is a tool for analysis, advocacy and policy-making which addresses multiple types of discrimination and helps to understand how different identities affect the access to rights and opportunities<sup>12</sup>.

### Contextual Approach

This approach proposes that every institutional and social intervention should take into account the historical conditions of each particular society as well as the family, community, institutional, economic-political and sociocultural context of migrant women, including those in crisis situations related to natural disasters or conflict<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> See Consejo Nacional para la Igualdad Intergeneracional, Documento Conceptual sobre el enfoque de Igualdad Generacional e Intergeneracional, Quito, 2015, pp. 42-43.

<sup>12</sup> Taken from AWID, Interseccionalidad: una herramienta para la justicia de género y la justicia económica, Derechos de las mujeres y cambio económico, No. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Taken and adapted from the Regional Guidelines for the Comprehensive Protection of Boys, Girls and Adolescents in the Context of Migration.



## Intercultural Approach

The intercultural approach seeks to reflect the relationships between the different cultural groups that coexist in the same social space. In addition, it not only recognizes the existence of cultural diversity, but also celebrates the encounter between cultures and promotes dialogue among them, which does not mean ignoring the unequal power relations on which many of the alleged cultural differences are built. In this sense, interventions based on an intercultural approach involve not only recognizing differences and promoting the encounter and coexistence between cultures, but also questioning the conditions through which many of these differences are constructed and ordered in a hierarchical manner, through a mono-cultural paradigm which – in western society – is strongly characterized by a white, male and hetero-normative identity<sup>14</sup>.

This approach is based on the philosophy of cultural pluralism and goes beyond the socio-cultural and political approach to multiculturalism, placing greater emphasis on “the intense interaction that actually exists between cultures. It takes into consideration not only the differences among persons and groups but also

the convergences between them, the links between acceptance of human rights, shared values, legitimated and accepted rules of coexistence, common interests in local development, national identity, in some cases, and other common points”. Interculturality is a dialogue between equals in a multilingual, multi-ethnic and pluricultural context<sup>15</sup>.

## Transnational Approach

The transnational approach focuses on new interregional social spaces that are part of the transnational social spaces which are constituted as a consequence of migration. This is important because these interregional social spaces, in which the networks are structured,

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<sup>14</sup> Taken from IOM, Migraciones e interculturalidad guía para el desarrollo y fortalecimiento de habilidades en comunicación intercultural.

<sup>15</sup> Taken from Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (2009): “Multiculturalidad e interculturalidad en el ámbito educativo. Experiencia de países latinoamericanos”, Agencia Sueca de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo, Embajada Real de Dinamarca y la real Embajada de Noruega, p. 18. In: [https://www.iidh.ed.cr/IIDH/media/1520/multiculturalidad\\_interculturalidad-2009.pdf](https://www.iidh.ed.cr/IIDH/media/1520/multiculturalidad_interculturalidad-2009.pdf)

Despite the growing feminization of migration, the invisibility of women as active participants in migration processes persists. This invisibility is based on prejudices, norms and practices that perpetuate the subordination and discrimination against women in all areas of society, which generates inequality.



enable establishing links - not only through means of communication and transport but also through intermediate territories - with the transnational social spaces that are not linked due to geographic proximity. The networks of migrants, social practices and channels and links between the places of destination of migrant populations should be taken into account<sup>16</sup>.

### Intersectoral Approach

This approach refers in the first instance to the relationship between different government sectors, based on the specialized knowledge expressed at the government level through the functional organization by sectors, such as education, health, labour, etc. Performance improvement in the provision of public services is sought, as well as solving the problems that need to be addressed. It should be noted that, if a problem has multiple causes, bringing together different sectors can help to address it in a comprehensive manner. This means that seeking comprehensiveness in addressing a given problem or social situation is what places the matter of the relationship between different government sectors at the centre<sup>17</sup>.

### Inclusive Approach

Social inclusion is related to the concepts of citizenship, status and rights. It is based on recognizing discrimination and social exclusion as a denial of citizenship, that is, as an impediment to the enjoyment of rights. In contrast with this, social inclusion is constituted in the process which ensures that those who are discriminated against, excluded or at risk of being excluded due to various situations or conditions have opportunities to fully participate in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the society in which they live. In this sense, social inclusion comprises recognition of and respect for differences and especially, equity and social justice.

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**16** Chapter I: El enfoque transnacional de la migración mexicana: su ... aproximación teórica y otros conceptos.

**17** Taken from Nuria Cunill-Grau, *La intersectorialidad en las nuevas políticas sociales: Un acercamiento analítico-conceptual*, Gest. polít. pública Vol. 23 No. 1, Mexico, January 2014, and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, "Convention of Belem do Pará".

The Regional Guidelines for Assistance and Protection of Women in Migratory Contexts, responds to the commitment made by the member countries of the Regional Conference on Migration to promote, protect, and guarantee migrant women's rights within the region, in accordance with their international commitments.



The main objective of this document is to establish lines of action for the provision of comprehensive assistance with a human rights approach to migrant women throughout the migration process, through effective measures that allow closing the gender gap in migration. Specific purposes emanate from this objective which are of a regional and at the same time, national nature; therefore, actions should be identified to achieve a balance between the regional and the national level and the responsibilities of countries of origin, transit, destination and return, taking into consideration that, while the RCM Member Countries face common challenges, each country also faces specific realities concerning female migration.

This document includes recommendations for the work of the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) in matters related to female migration which, in turn, could be translated into cooperation actions among RCM Member Countries and within each country, according to the reality and capacity of each of them. Therefore, the actions described below could be taken up by all institutions that are directly or indirectly addressing the matter.

Each country shall make the necessary coordination efforts at the national and regional level to implement this

document. In addition, the document shall be applied for all cases of migrant women in vulnerable situations or suffering discrimination, which could occur in countries of origin, transit, destination and return.

Migrants in vulnerable situations can be identified throughout the migration process: before leaving the country of origin or in the country of transit, destination or return. Therefore, it is important to appropriately identify persons in vulnerable situations in order to be able to provide comprehensive assistance and protection to these population groups, addressing their specific needs.

Moreover, based on the understanding that migrant women are agents of development, this document provides lines of action aimed at empowering them and potentiating the opportunities arising from their decision to migrate, in terms of rootedness.

Given that migrant women have different assistance and protection needs throughout the migration process, it has been considered appropriate to establish general and specific lines of action to address the complexity of female migration, to the maximum extent of available resources and in accordance with the international commitments taken on by each State, as well as national legislation.

Based on the above, the first section below includes general recommendations that could be followed by the RCM Member Countries to ensure assistance and protection for migrant women in the region, and the subsequent sections describe specific actions for each phase of the migration process.

The actions described below are a starting point for the establishment of specific actions aimed at benefiting migrant women, with a gender approach.

### 6.1. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Origin, Transit, Destination and Return

- a) Give relevance to the issue of gender and women's rights on the national agendas;
- b) Create or design, within each RCM Member

Country, a mechanism to help follow up on these recommendations in order to promote regular reporting about the status concerning assistance and protection for migrant women within the framework of the RCM;

- c) Follow up on the recommendations set forth in this document through the work plans of relevant institutions for each proposed line of action at the regional, national and local level;
- d) Improve systems and mechanisms to manage information about migrant populations, including data on sex, age, educational level, economic and social status, etc., with the aim of recording data to inform decision-making;
- e) Collect direct and indirect statistical data to enable measuring effective access to justice concerning, for example, crimes against migrant women, reports, resolutions, etc., and take positive actions to ensure the rights of migrant women;
- f) Ensure the provision of free legal aid to migrant women who have suffered violations of their rights in order to guarantee their access to justice;
- g) Promote the establishment of intra-regional agreements to ensure comprehensive assistance and

- protection for women victims of any type of violence, and exchange information about the prevalence of violence against women and the response by the institutions in charge of providing such assistance;
- h) Establish mechanisms that enable the identification of specific situations and needs in the areas with the highest incidence of migration in order to promote decision-making on migration with a gender approach;
  - i) Develop a map of key actors at the regional, national and local level that contribute to the implementation of this document;
  - j) Incorporate the recommendations set forth in this document into the work plans of relevant institutions for each of the proposed lines of action at the local, national and regional level;
  - k) Promote intra-regional agreements and cooperation agreements between countries in the region, with the aim of ensuring the strengthening of assistance services and protection mechanisms for migrant women, especially those in vulnerable situations, including comprehensive assistance and protection for women victims of any type of violence and exchange of information about the prevalence of violence against women and the response of the institutions in charge of providing such assistance;
  - l) Create a regional platform for exchange of information between consular authorities of the RCM Member Countries in order to coordinate joint actions for consular protection of migrant women, especially those who have been victims of any type of violence or crime as a result of their vulnerable situations;
  - m) Promote, within the RCM, the development of a phone application to enable women who speak indigenous languages and who therefore are in more vulnerable situations, to access long-distance language interpretation services in the spheres of 1) legal defence for civil, labour or criminal matters; 2) violence; and 3) trafficking in persons; urging the RCM Member Countries to contribute to this effort by providing access to official databases on existing trained interpreters;
  - n) Promote cooperation between key actors, such as international organizations, civil society etc.;
  - o) Train staff from institutions involved in providing assistance to migrant populations in topics related to gender, human rights, discrimination and vulnerable situations with the aim of ensuring that appropriate comprehensive assistance is provided to migrant women.

## 6.2. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection of Migrant Women in Countries of Origin

- a) Develop a catalogue of the different government/state programmes, projects or benefits that provide development opportunities, to the maximum extent of available resources, for women who speak national/indigenous languages and women with disabilities, including the following, among others:
- Employment opportunities;
  - Education (technical and specialized training, information and communication technology programmes, scholarships, education loans, subsidies and others to ensure the education of young people, citizen education on human rights and prevention of irregular migration);
  - Housing;
  - Health (sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial support);
  - Access to justice (including reporting and protection mechanisms);
  - Entrepreneurship (credit facilities for businesses);
  - Childcare for young children and other similar services;
  - Programmes for children and adolescents;
  - Preventing and addressing gender-based violence.

- b) Design information campaigns for social and printed media, television and radio about the catalogue described above under a), and regional and national prevention campaigns on the risks of irregular migration, also providing information on rights;
- c) Establish strategies to ensure effective access to justice for all women to enable them to fully enjoy their rights before the legal system, including indigenous and afro-descendant women; the strategies should take into account the approaches and principles described in this document;
- d) Establish and strengthen centres for immediate assistance in order to facilitate access to specialized services for migrant girls, female adolescents and women.

## 6.3. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Transit and Destination

- a) Provide information about the services that are available to migrant women, regardless of their migration status;
- b) Ensure the availability of language interpretation



- services in indigenous languages, considering cultural diversity, to address the needs of migrant women in legal proceedings;
- c) To strengthen the capacities for the identification and timely and comprehensive assistance of migrant women who have been victims of gender violence, specifically sexual violence during transit or in destination, including psychosocial care and prophylactic emergency care in accordance with the applicable regulations of each country. This may involve the revision of regulations, policies and protocols, as well as the training of personnel to ensure prophylaxis in relation to HIV, prevention of pregnancy, and forensic procedures. Particular consideration will be given to the principle of non-victimization.
  - d) Meet immediate needs such as food, health care (both physical and psychological), clothing and shelter for women seeking refuge, victims of crimes and women involved in administrative migration procedures, and their children;
  - e) Provide information and legal aid concerning their rights and ensure access to justice and due process for cases of violence or human rights violations, with inclusive, gender-sensitive strategies that promote the necessary conditions to guarantee access for indigenous and/or afro-descendant women and migrant women with disabilities;
  - f) Refer women who could be in need of international protection to relevant authorities in order to initiate the asylum and refuge procedures, and ensure access to legal aid for these procedures;
  - g) Seek family unity for women travelling with their children or other close family members;
  - h) Ensure access to health care for migrant women in emergency situations to address their physical and emotional needs; in addition, provide special assistance to women with disabilities;
  - i) Strengthen the consular networks in countries of transit and destination, including their technical capacities to provide assistance and protection to migrant women;
  - j) Provide training for consular officers, to the extent possible, on medical and psychological first aid as part of the protocol for assistance and further referral of migrant women;
  - k) Develop protocols on assistance for migrant women who are part of LGBTI populations, including respect for gender identity in shelters and appropriate protection actions (i.e. confidentiality, use of

- l) preferred name, appropriate health care, etc.);
- l) In that connection, to develop protocols for the assistance of migrant women that consider their specific needs in conformity with the principles of multiculturalism and diversity.
- m) Generate records and statistics on the provision of health services for migrant women victims of violence during the journey, recording the type of violence they experienced;
- n) Establish mechanisms to enable migrant girls, female adolescents and women to communicate with their families during administrative or legal migration procedures;
- o) Guarantee the rights of migrant girls, female adolescents or women who are pregnant or in vulnerable situations, ensuring that dignified shelter is provided for this population group;
- p) Activate protection mechanisms during transfer and exit from shelters and assess the security conditions of the shelters with the aim of safeguarding the protection of the persons assisted;
- q) Collaborate in the identification of the international protection needs of migrant girls, female adolescents and women in interviews prior to departure or in return processes, considering the best interests of girls and female adolescents;
- r) Strengthen and facilitate existing reporting and protection mechanisms for women in the context of migration who have been victims of crime or rights violations.

#### 6.4. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Destination

- a) Incorporate a gender perspective in the design of regularization programmes oriented toward migrant populations, taking into consideration the current legislation;
- b) Promote access of migrant women to legal aid and psychosocial support, where necessary;
- c) Promote, as appropriate, access of women to livelihoods and to adequate comprehensive development, taking into account their specific situations, age and other personal considerations, such as effective access to basic services (care, education, training, health, health care);
- d) Take appropriate actions to protect migrant women from any type of discrimination or gender-based violence and adopt effective measures to prevent these phenomena;

- e) Encourage affirmative actions to promote access to the banking system of each country, as well as housing and other services that enable migrant women to establish businesses and gain access to economic opportunities in conditions of equality;
- f) Establish strategic alliances with civil society organizations in the countries of destination and the diaspora, with leaders, and strengthen women's organizations involved in supporting migrant women;
- g) Develop assistance networks that enable migrant women and men to gain equal access to employment and education opportunities;
- h) Establish programmes aimed at training and accompanying migrant women to support their integration into the new society in terms of learning the new language, culture, traditions, etc.
- i) Provide all information about voluntary and assisted return and reintegration processes to migrant women, including information about their rights and the available support<sup>18</sup>;
- j) Promote training for staff from embassies and consulates on specialized assistance and protection for migrant women victims of violence or any type of violations of their human rights; report cases requiring special assistance to enable relevant authorities in

- the country of origin to develop mechanisms for the provision of timely and comprehensive assistance;
- k) Expedite actions concerning document issuance in matters related to consular assistance;
- l) Create a regional platform for information exchange among consular authorities from the RCM Member Countries in order to coordinate joint actions for consular protection of migrant women who have been victims of violence or crime as a result of their vulnerable situations<sup>19</sup>;
- m) Promote the establishment of networks of migrant women.

### 6.5. Recommendations on Assistance and Protection in Countries of Return

- a) Establish adequate physical spaces for the reception of migrant women victims of violence or violations of their rights, including all elements required to meet their basic needs (i.e. security, food, health care, psychological support, supplies for essential needs, communication with their families and shelter);

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<sup>18</sup> See the above-mentioned documents for cases of children and adolescents.

<sup>19</sup> See the above-mentioned documents for cases of children and adolescents.

- b) Establish and strengthen mechanisms for exchange of information between authorities in countries of transit and destination and with the corresponding consular authorities (upholding the principle of confidentiality and data protection), with the aim of preventing the revictimization of migrant women who have suffered any type of violation of their rights, ensuring the confidentiality of the information at all times and preventing the secondary victimization of women in reception processes;
- c) Develop a human rights and gender approach, in accordance with age, to provide comprehensive assistance to returned migrant women;
- d) Ensure the adoption of actions concerning security, protection of integrity and full reparation of the harm suffered by women victims of violence in countries of origin, transit or destination, as an essential requirement for an appropriate reintegration process;
- e) Develop campaigns to combat stigmatization and discrimination against returned migrant women;
- f) Develop programmes oriented toward the assessment, orientation and use of the acquired skills of returned migrant women;
- g) Establish processes for the accreditation of the education and skills of women returning to their countries of origin;
- h) Promote entrepreneurship opportunities for returned migrant women;
- i) Develop sustainable reintegration programmes involving communities, families and State and local institutions.
- j) Develop a model of comprehensive assistance for cases of returning migrant women who have been in vulnerable situations;
- k) Identify local institutions that could facilitate access to free legal aid and accompany returning migrant women.

