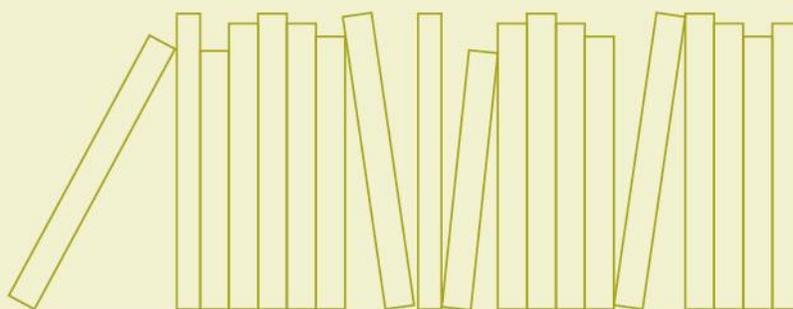


Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

# ECLAC SUBREGIONAL HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CARIBBEAN



## **Caribbean seminar on women's empowerment and migration in the Caribbean**



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Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean  
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

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Caribbean seminar on women's empowerment  
and migration in the Caribbean  
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**REPORT OF THE CARIBBEAN SEMINAR ON  
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND MIGRATION  
IN THE CARIBBEAN**

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## CONTENTS

A. MAIN CONCLUSIONS .....	2
B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK.....	2
1. Place and date .....	2
2. Attendance .....	2
3. Agenda.....	3
C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS.....	3
1. Welcome remarks .....	3
2. Plenary session: Women’s empowerment and migration in the Caribbean .....	6
3. Thematic open discussion.....	12
4. Closing remarks .....	13
Annex I List of participants .....	14
Annex II Programme .....	16
Annex III List of documents.....	17

## **A. MAIN CONCLUSIONS**

1. The Caribbean region is behind in conducting systematic and regular data collection and analysis on the interrelationship between development, migration and women's empowerment. Such systematic data collection and analysis could enhance gender equality in the subregion and should include data disaggregated by age, gender, migratory status, geographic location, disability and ethnicity, in compliance with international standards on data protection.
2. It is important to adopt a human rights-based approach when discussing migration. Migrant women and girls are rights-holders and should be able to exercise their human rights in any circumstances. Therefore, migration laws and policies have to include gender and rights-based approaches that considers the specific needs of women migrants and girls at all stages of the migration process.
3. The right to a nationality is of paramount importance to the realization of other human rights and needs to be addressed in the context of female deportation and statelessness of women and girls.
4. Additional research is needed to better understand the impact of migration on areas such as the sustainability of social protection schemes in countries of origin; the implications of migrants returning to their countries of origin, including the social, economic and family dynamics of reunification; and the role being played by new social media platforms on women and girls on the move.
5. Banking systems in the Caribbean need to be enhanced in order to make better use of remittances in the region.

## **B. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK**

### **1. Place and date**

6. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters for the Caribbean and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), convened a half-day seminar to discuss the issue of women's empowerment and migration in the Caribbean. The seminar was held on 25 October 2016 in Montevideo, Uruguay, at the margins of the Thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **2. Attendance**

7. The meeting brought together ministers and senior officials from the national machineries with responsibility for programmes supporting women's advancement and the promotion of gender equality in countries of the Caribbean. The following ECLAC Member States were represented: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname. Turks and Caicos Islands, an associate member of ECLAC was also represented at the seminar. The following organizations and agencies also participated: UNFPA, UN-Women and IOM.

### **3. Agenda**

1. Welcome remarks
2. Plenary session: Women's empowerment and migration in the Caribbean
3. Thematic open discussions
4. Closing remarks

## **C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

### **1. Welcome remarks**

8. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean welcomed all participants to the seminar. She expressed her satisfaction that the seminar, focused on addressing one of the pressing global issues of migration and the role of women in the migratory process, was taking place just before the start of the Thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

9. She stated that women's empowerment and migration was of special interest to ECLAC. The significance of migration trends in Latin America and the Caribbean had been addressed in previous meetings and remained an integral part of the Regional Agenda on Gender. On several occasions, ECLAC recalled the obligations of states to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all migrants, as well as the importance of addressing the challenges they face in order to fully exercise and enjoy those rights.

10. The adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was the first global development framework that explicitly considered migration. The framework underscored that well-managed migration was crucial to sustainable development. It acknowledged the contribution of migrants to innovation, and growth, to slowing population ageing and promoting sustainable development in receiving countries. In addition, the importance of adopting a gender perspective to migration was included in the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including target 8.8 calling for action to protect labour rights and to promote decent work and secure working environments for all workers, including migrants, particularly migrant women and those in precarious employment.

11. The Director emphasized that the Caribbean as a whole is described as a migrant society. Historically, economic and social development in this subregion had been influenced by migration and this was reflected in the richness of the cultural diversity present in all countries. Therefore, a discussion on the interrelationship between migration and women's empowerment in the Caribbean was both relevant and timely in the broader context of advancing gender equality and women's autonomy in the region.

12. She highlighted that almost half of all migrants from the Caribbean were women and that the use of informal channels for migration presented many challenges to the security and empowerment of Caribbean women. Migrant women were often subject to abuse and discriminatory practices, which were almost, absent or mitigated in the case of men. She mentioned that Caribbean women face differential pay for the same levels of skills and experience compared to men. She also mentioned the impact of female migration on the households left behind. Despite these challenges, migration presented a variety of opportunities for women to improve their living standards and well-being, and those of their families.

Migrant remittances provide a powerful mechanism for levelling income and consumption in many Caribbean countries.

13. The Director encouraged participants to address both sides of the phenomenon of migration in order to ensure that migrant women receive a fair opportunity to improve their lives and that of their families, by placing them as right-holders at the core of the debate and by identifying states as the guarantors of those rights.

14. The Director concluded by underscoring how pleased she was that the seminar would present an opportunity to solicit ideas and perspectives of the Member States and organizations to identify the common challenges faced by migrant women and identify good practices that could be replicated in other countries.

15. In her remarks, the Director of UNFPA Caribbean Subregional Office welcomed all participants and reiterated the importance of addressing both the opportunities and the challenges of migration. From the negative perspective, women migrants tend to end up in low-status, low-wage production and service jobs and often work in gender segregated and unregulated sectors of the economy, which put them more at risk of illegal and forced migration, exploitation, violence and abuse, and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. These women are exposed to sexual violence and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and they lack access to health care and legal services.

16. She mentioned three main levels of migration and their impact on the economy of the Caribbean countries. The micro level includes individual choice and the freedom to make choices related to migration. At this level, there is a high cost in terms of educated and skilled workers and the pressure on the health and social service systems, as the Caribbean has, for instance, the highest rate of migration of nurses. The meso level focuses on the social network and ties that the movers and 'stayers' have in both the sending and receiving countries. At this level, she highlighted the gender dynamic shift, since almost half of all migrants are women and most of them are of the reproductive age, as well as the consequences of migration by only female heads of household and the impact on their children who grow up separated from their mothers. At the macro level, which focuses on the analysis at the level of the state, she reminded states of their international obligation to eliminate gender-based violence, discrimination and trafficking against women and girls.

17. For UNFPA, international migration is an important force for sustainable development as migrants make important contributions to the economic prosperity of their host countries, and the flow of financial, technological, social and human capital back to their countries of origin helps to reduce poverty and stimulate economic development there as well.

18. The Director argued for better migration data, including gender-specific data, to inform policies and promote the incorporation of migration into national development plans. In addition, she highlighted the situation of those in emergency settings, and the importance of addressing the specific concerns of refugee women and internally displaced women in order to meet their emergency reproductive health needs. Due to insecurity, lawlessness and the destruction of health facilities and other infrastructures, women are often prevented from accessing life-saving health services in emergency situations, and it is therefore crucial to pay particular attention to them and provide quality, accessible sexual and reproductive health services in crisis settings.

19. She concluded by highlighting that migrants are not only agents of sustainable development, but they are human beings with rights. It was therefore important to empower women migrants in order to allow them to fully enjoy their human rights.

20. The Regional Director for the Americas and the Caribbean UN-Women Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean welcomed all participants and endorsed the joint initiative of the symposium. She mentioned that migration was a critical issue for the Caribbean, a space created by forced and vulnerable migration, and a space where almost 70 per cent of the most educated migrate and almost 50 per cent of all documented migrants from the Caribbean were women.

21. She stated that the Caribbean faces the same trends of forced and voluntary migration that created it. However, instead of the historical immigration patterns, the current trends showed emigration patterns of people leaving the region. This had resulted in brain drain, when the most educated leave, and in increased social vulnerabilities, when women and men leave families and communities. These vulnerabilities have a direct impact on citizen security.

22. UN-Women's work in the Caribbean focuses on creating empowering spaces within the Caribbean to support women and their families, to ensure people do not feel that they have to leave and that there are social safety nets for their families if and when they do. In addition, UN-Women and UNICEF collaborated on programmes in the Eastern Caribbean starting in Saint Lucia and continued in Antigua and Barbuda to support the social protection programmes to become more gender and child responsive. Furthermore, UN-Women is working regionally with CARICOM and nationally in Dominica, Jamaica, Suriname and Grenada to support gender statistics. She highlighted that more needs to be done to know the status of women and men in the region so that interventions can be better targeted to meet their needs to create an enabling environment for them to be able to thrive within their own communities. Along this line, she referred to the work being done by the International Meeting on Gender Statistics in Aguascalientes (Mexico).

23. UN-Women has also collaborated with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to better equip police, immigration officers and other key stakeholders to better address issues of forced migration, specifically human trafficking.

24. The Regional Director ended her presentation by stating that the SDGs provided a prime opportunity for Member States to promote women's empowerment, including during the migration cycle, as it was premised on existing commitments to gender equality, such as those contained in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and create enabling spaces to ensure women want to stay and contribute to the sustainable development of their countries. Lastly, she concluded that more needs to be done to know about those who are forced into migration. There is a need to continue supporting governments in creating the ultimate 'pull' factors so that Caribbean citizens feel empowered to remain in their countries and contribute to sustainable development in spaces where gender equality is a substantive reality.

25. The Regional Director for South America of the IOM, in his remarks, highlighted the fact that the formal integration of the organization into the United Nations system reflected the global importance of migration and the need to better link human mobility with related policy agendas, including in the humanitarian, development, human rights, climate change and peace and security domains.

26. He stated that migration was and has always been one of the most powerful and immediate strategies for poverty reduction. It has the power to transform societies by helping to meet labour needs and boosting the vibrancy of economies and societies. Nevertheless, he recognized that the interrelationships between migration and development are very complex. Migration can simultaneously lead to an increase in, and a deterioration of a person's opportunities, freedoms, and empowerment, depending on how mobility occurs. He emphasized the need to improve the common understanding of the factors that foster the positive impact of migration on the well-being of migrant women and men, as well

as societies at origin and destination, and to place the debate on migration in the context of development as a subject of shared responsibility; the rights framework may enable migrant women and men to benefit from and participate in development.

27. The Regional Director stated that a person's sex, gender identity and sexual orientation shaped every stage of the migration experience. Gender affects the reasons for migrating, who will migrate, the social networks migrants use to move, integration experiences and labour opportunities at destination, and relations with the country of origin.

28. He highlighted that migration is relevant to all three pillars of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental. This had been reflected in the SDGs, including target 10.7 "to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies". Hence, migration and migrant rights are cross-cutting in the Agenda 2030, and relevant to several goals, including Goal 5 on gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Some of the targets underpinning the achievement of that goal refer to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including human trafficking and other types of exploitation, as well as recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work.

29. He made reference to the recent United Nations New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, which urged United Nations Member States to ensure that the "responses to large movements of refugees and migrants mainstream a gender perspective, promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and fully respect and protect the human rights of women and girls". This Declaration also commits Member States to take into consideration the different needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of women, girls, boys and men, and to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against refugee and migrant women and girls. It also recognizes the contribution of women in refugee and migrant communities, and the need to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the development of local solutions and opportunities.

30. The Regional Director emphasized that a gender-sensitive approach in policymaking on migration and development should be developed. In fact, crucial evidence is often missing or does not go beyond the presentation of sex-disaggregated statistics and therefore the essential role of gender relations in the migration context for each mobility corridor is not fully understood. As a result, migration is assumed to have the same impact in different societies, without placing it properly in the context of related structural inequalities, power relations and household and community organization.

31. Noting that IOM's mandate includes improving the understanding of how migration influences gender roles and gender equality to enable safe, humane and orderly migration for all. The Regional Director concluded by expressing the hope that the meeting would serve as an important starting point in developing an improved understanding of the links between women's empowerment, migration and development, and pave the way towards working together on concrete policies and practices that will serve the needs of women on the move and women that stay behind in migrant-sending households.

## **2. Plenary session: Women's empowerment and migration in the Caribbean**

32. The Senior Regional Specialist, Labour Migration and Human Development, IOM Regional Office for Central and North America and the Caribbean presented a research paper prepared by the IOM in collaboration with ECLAC on women's empowerment and migration in the Caribbean (Platonova, Anna (2016), "Draft Background Paper on Women's Empowerment and Migration in the Caribbean"). She defined the key concept of women's empowerment. She highlighted that empowerment was a challenging concept to define, contextualize and measure, including for the purpose of assessing the

impact of migration. According to the United Nations, women's empowerment has five components: (i) women's sense of self-worth; (ii) their right to have and to determine choices; (iii) their right to have access to opportunities and resources; (iv) their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside their home and (v) their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

33. She complemented this definition with ECLAC's description of women's empowerment, which deems women's autonomy as fundamental to ensuring that they can exercise and enjoy the full spectrum of their human rights under conditions of full equality, and identifies three pillars of empowerment, including: (i) women's control over their own bodies (physical autonomy), (ii) income generation and ownership of their personal and financial resources (economic autonomy), and (iii) full participation in decision-making that affect their lives, individually and as a group (autonomy in decision-making).

34. She highlighted that there is a lack of relevant longitudinal studies on female migrants, and gaps persist in sex and age-disaggregated data collection in countries of origin, transit and destination on various aspects of social, economic and political participation of women and men.

35. Depending on the individual characteristics and conditions that shape women's lives in the countries of origin, transit and destination, and the nature of the migration process, she mentioned that migration can range from the positive, including higher income, asset ownership, self-esteem, and decision-making power, to a negative scenario of further disempowerment and increased vulnerability in conditions of multiple forms of discrimination, exploitation, de-skilling and stigmatization. Therefore, gender norms, prevalent in all countries, create vulnerabilities and are the root causes of the gendered division of labour, violence against women and girls, and women's lack of decision-making power, which have an impact on those on the move.

36. Key data on migration in the Caribbean showed a feminization of migration in the Caribbean, which resulted not only in increased numbers of women on the move, but also in higher levels of independent female migration in search of employment rather than for family reunification. These could be explained by factors such as the increased demand for less expensive caregivers and health workers, increased inequalities in wealth and opportunities between countries, and aggressive policies of private recruitment agencies. The situation is aggravated in the Caribbean due to the geographical proximity to North America and post-colonial ties with some European countries, as well as the linguistic compatibility with destination countries. In fact, the United States of America is the main destination for Caribbean emigrants worldwide, followed by Canada, the Dominican Republic and Spain. Notwithstanding, she highlighted that recent data on intraregional migration in the Caribbean were difficult to obtain for comparison purposes in situations where the results of the latest censuses have not been published.

37. Addressing the different ways to migrate, she mentioned that there are regular forms facilitated by the Caribbean community to facilitate the mobility of some professionals, including nurses, teachers, as well as domestic workers. She reported other forms, including circular migration depending on seasons, as well as student mobility. However, she underscored that irregular migration was important in the Caribbean and more research was needed to assess the situation in the region.

38. The Senior Regional Specialist also highlighted the different drivers of global migration: demography; demand for labour and segmentation of this demand by gender; distance shrinking transportation; digital revolution; degradation of the environment; desperation of persons fleeing abject poverty, political persecution and hopelessness; disparities such as socioeconomic inequalities within and

between countries, including gender inequalities; and natural disasters, armed conflict, internal turmoil and political instability. In the Caribbean, it is reported that the presence of women in the labour market is relatively strong, albeit largely at the lower end of labour market hierarchy and without realizing their full entrepreneurial potential. In fact, they are often providers of unpaid domestic and caregiving work. In addition, according to the country poverty assessments in the Caribbean, households headed by women were more likely to be susceptible to poverty and to have a higher dependency ratios.

39. She explained that gender inequality in the Caribbean is exacerbated by the unequal sharing of reproductive work between women and men in the care economy and the fact that there has been a high incidence of single female-headed households, which implied that women also have to meet the needs of immediate and extended family members. In addition, they face obstacles to access financial capital and appropriate education that make female entrepreneurship more difficult. Therefore, she concluded that the current socioeconomic position of women in the region may make many potential female migrants vulnerable before they even start the journey. Rural women living in remote and isolated areas may not even have information on the migration process and employment opportunities and therefore will not have the opportunity to migrate or will be more at risk for irregular and exploitative situations.

40. The Senior Regional Specialist emphasized that there was a lack of awareness raising regarding the gender implications of migration, as migration policies were often gender-blind in language. This was exacerbated by the fact that there was gendered labour market segmentation and the differences in skill development opportunities in the national labour market also played a role in defining legal migration opportunities for female and male workers. It was reported that in migrant selection and admission conducted by immigration channels, they were perpetuating de facto the so-called “masculine” (construction, agriculture) and “feminine” (caregiving, domestic work) occupations in lower skilled jobs.

41. She further explained the different formal and informal recruitment practices in the region, including temporary admission schemes for low-skilled workers in the United States of America and Canada, including H1A and H2B visa programmes and the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. International recruitment is thus often the first step in the labour migration process for either higher or lower skilled workers. Many challenges however still remain, including a lack of recruitment regulations, inadequate enforcement of existing laws, inconsistency among legal frameworks, and jurisdictional gaps due to the cross-border nature of international recruitment activities that create “loopholes” in regulatory systems.

42. Despite those formal channels, informal recruitment schemes still persist which put women and girls at risk of human trafficking, exploitation, discrimination, violence and abuse in the region. She explained that this was mainly due to the high global demand for domestic servants, agricultural labourers, sex workers, and factory labour; political, social, or economic crises, as well as natural disasters; lingering machismo that tends to lead to discrimination against women and girls; existence of established trafficking networks with sophisticated recruitment methods; public corruption, especially complicity between law enforcement and border agents with traffickers and smugglers; restrictive immigration policies in some destination countries that have limited the opportunities for legal migration flows to occur; government disinterest in the issue of human trafficking; and limited economic opportunities for women in the region.

43. In the country of destination, Caribbean women are often acquiring new layers of discrimination, especially when continuing their labour market incorporation in the low-paid jobs with hard working conditions where jobs are often tied to the specific employer. Some Caribbean countries were making efforts to provide their nationals with internationally portable education and training, especially in healthcare occupations, but challenges still remain, including lack of access to legal redress mechanisms,

social protection, health care services, fear of not having the contract renewed if they complain, all of which increase women migrant vulnerabilities, especially when they are in irregular employment situations in the hosting country.

44. Despite these setbacks, migration could bring positive changes to the household decision-making role between men and women, and the flow of remittances is a powerful tool for this to happen. She made reference to World Bank reports that suggest that remittances sent and/or received by females can have a positive effect on health, education and the mortality of children.

45. She concluded her presentation by mentioning that beyond the personal characteristics, the impact of migration depends on the structural conditions and societal organization in the country of origin that pre-determine the motivations and conditions of migration and return, and their positive and/or negative consequences for female and male migrants, their household members and their communities. She encouraged the conduct of studies on what happens in households after women leave, as well as the changes in the domestic gender relations and role upon their return, and the situation of transnational families and the impact on children.

46. The Social Development Officer, Statistics and Social Development Unit, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean highlighted that gender is a cross-cutting issue, with many of the SDGs emphasizing the importance of women's equality and empowerment as both an objective and as part of the solution for achieving sustainable development. Even though SDG 5 is the stand-alone gender goal dedicated to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the overall 2030 Agenda represents a significant step forward as it recognizes that women's empowerment is a pre-requisite for ending poverty and it includes migration-related targets, including target 10.7 "to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies".

47. She added that migration and migrant rights were relevant to several goals, including Goal 8 on growth and decent work, Goal 10 on reducing inequalities, Goal 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies and access to justice for all, and Goal 17 on global partnership on sustainable development, which includes improving data collection. Goal 5 on gender equality and empowering all women and girls included targets of particular importance to female migrants: Target 5.2 "Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking including sexual and other types of exploitation"; Target 5.3 "Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation"; and Target 5.4 "Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate". Gender equality and the empowerment of women have thus been recognized in Agenda 2030 as catalysts for accelerating the achievement of SDGs and multiplying their impact.

48. She made reference to a recent ECLAC study she authored on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Economic Empowerment of Women in the Caribbean subregion, in which she mentioned that economic empowerment can only happen when both women and men have the ability to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that not only recognize but value their contributions. This is also valid during the migration cycle, meaning equal access to economic and other opportunities; the power to make and influence decisions; and the ability to advance and succeed economically in the country of destination. When women are empowered, their access to resources and opportunities such as jobs, financial services, education and skill development, property and other productive assets is increased. She added that when women are economically empowered the impact spreads to their family members and to their immediate communities because women are more likely than men to invest their earnings in the health and education of family members, especially children in the

household, as well as in community projects. Studies have found that whenever women control a greater share of household income, spending patterns change in ways that benefit children. As a result, children are healthier, better educated and better prepared for the future. Not only do women benefit from their economic empowerment but also men, children and the society as a whole.

49. She acknowledged, however, that gender inequality still exists and is very prevalent in almost all societies including those in the Caribbean. According to a study done by the Caribbean Development Bank, Caribbean women continue to experience the highest incidence of poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, while women are not necessarily excluded from the workplace, cultural beliefs continue to underlie unconscious biases and assumptions, which serve to limit female participation at all levels of the labour market. In fact, women experience a lack of economic empowerment due to their lower participation in paid employment, unequal sharing of reproductive work between women and men in the care economy, a high incidence of single female-headed households which place women at a significant disadvantage since they have to spend their income on members of the immediate and extended family, as well as lower wages and less associated benefits in comparison to men, which impacts on their access to social security and protection benefits. This has been exacerbated by the negative impacts of the global crisis that has led to higher public deficits, austerity measures, weak private investment and cuts in employment as the public and private sectors adjust to worsening economic and financial conditions.

50. She also highlighted that women in the Caribbean subregion were concentrated mostly in the services sector, in low status, low paid, precarious jobs, and continued to earn lower wages than men even though they worked longer hours and there were great disparities in access and opportunities for male and female entrepreneurs. Many females faced numerous challenges such as lack of access to credit and other financial services, therefore she recommended that more should be done to develop new sources of financing to assist in the development of micro and small businesses, as well as to reduce the costs of transferring remittances in order to improve the means to generate income and enable them to better manage their economic situation.

51. The Social Development Officer emphasized that the realization of the economic empowerment of women in the Caribbean can only become a reality if Caribbean governments together with other major stakeholders take the necessary actions to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all of the 17 sustainable development goals and targets in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This will require a systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective into national development planning and migration policies.

52. She concluded her presentation on a personal note by mentioning that being herself a member of a transnational family; she was able to highlight the positive impact of migration on children, in particular in terms of access to education. She also underscored the need to conduct more studies in the region and enhance data collection in order to have a situational analysis of the situation of transnational families in the Caribbean.

## **Plenary discussion**

### **Human rights**

53. It was highlighted that migration policies and regulations have to be in full compliance with a state's obligations regarding the international and regional human rights instruments and standards, as well as the 2030 Agenda and the Regional Agenda on Gender.

54. Women and girl migrants are rights-holders and should be able to exercise their human rights in any circumstances and regardless of their migratory status. Therefore, migration laws and policies have to

include a gender and rights-based approaches that considers the specific needs of women migrants and girls at all stages of the migration process.

### **Access to justice and remedies**

55. Due to their migratory status, migrant women often do not have access to the justice system in the country of destination, which increases their vulnerability. It was recommended that states ensure access to effective remedies from the competent national tribunals when rights have been violated, which includes access to legal assistance and accessible dispute resolution mechanisms without fear of reprisals.

### **Deportation**

56. The situation of women deportees was highlighted as one of the major concerns in the region, based on the example provided that 40 per cent of Jamaican migrants are deported. This brought to light the need for further data and research on the current situation of women deportees in the Caribbean.

57. In the context of deportation, the meeting underscored the importance of respecting the right to nationality and to consider the situation of statelessness in the Caribbean.

58. In this context, diplomatic and consular protection must be strengthened in order to provide assistance to those facing deportation.

59. Deportation may have significant impact on the structure of families and more data are needed to assess the situation of women deportees upon their return to the country of origin.

### **Social protection**

60. The meeting noted that women often migrate when they are at a reproductive age and return to their country of origin when they retire, thus creating serious implications for the sustainability of social protection schemes in the country of origin; a situation that is aggravated by the demographic transition and ageing of the population in the region. More studies are therefore needed to pinpoint the trends and challenges faced by countries in this respect.

### **Economic empowerment of women**

61. The lack of access to credit and other financial sources was one of the main barriers faced by women to become entrepreneurs in their country of origin. It was suggested that Member States explore more options for extending greater financial support to women to promote their economic empowerment and autonomy.

62. Remittances are important tools for women's empowerment in the country of origin and destination, thus it was recommended that Member States improve access to financial services, reduce transfer fees for remittances and improve financial literacy.

63. It was proposed that the banking system in the Caribbean be strengthened in order to make better use of remittances in the region.

### **New technologies**

64. The use of new technology and social media platforms should be evaluated in order to assess their impact on transnational families and their mitigation effect on children whose parents live abroad.

65. Social media platforms and dating websites can also be factors that increase women and girls vulnerabilities and it is important to conduct research on their implications in the migration process in the Caribbean.

### **Research and data**

66. There is a substantial lack of research, longitudinal studies, and qualitative analysis on the interrelationship between development, migration and women's empowerment in the Caribbean subregion, and more work in this area needs to be done to help identify where gaps exist and consequently inform the types of actions and interventions that should be developed in response.

67. Specific comprehensive research/studies are needed on the impact of return by women migrants following their return to their country of origin, including the social, economic and family aspects of reunification.

68. Specific comprehensive research/studies are required regarding the situation of transnational families in the Caribbean and the impact of migration on children.

69. It was strongly recommended that systematic and regular data collection and analysis, disaggregated by age, gender, migratory status, geographic location, disability, and ethnicity, in compliance with international standards on data protection and the right to privacy be conducted.

## **3. Thematic open discussion**

### **Recruitment practices in the Caribbean**

70. Migration is one of the main priorities of the Caribbean and it is at the core of current debates, from the United States of America presidential election to Brexit. Nevertheless, much more needs to be done to develop public information to bring about a change in attitudes towards migrant women and girls and raise awareness of their rights and duties. Efforts must be made to sensitize populations on the positive contributions of migrant women in the countries of origin and destination in order to combat all forms of discrimination against them.

71. In addition, there is a lack of data and research on the different recruitment practices in the Caribbean subregion. This prevents having a comprehensive assessment of the existing practices that identify the different actors involved in formal and informal patterns of recruitment, including the recruiters, employers, family members and/or other intermediary actors. In this assessment, it is important to identify the practices that directly or indirectly discriminate against women on the basis of their age, disability status, health condition, marital status or maternity status. States have to ensure that recruitment processes are managed in a way that does not discriminate against women and girls. For this to happen, cooperation within the subregion and among key stakeholders is crucial to better understand and identify the main common challenges faced by governments and to develop specific migration policies aimed at improving the well-being of the different groups of migrants at all stages of the migration process.

72. Particular focus should be given to areas such as unpaid work, low-skilled temporary workers and the right to family reunification.

### **Impact of migration on transnational families**

73. An important consideration in the Caribbean is the impact of migration of mothers on the household that is left behind. Stepwise migration, where one or both parents migrate, but the children remain behind often leads to so-called ‘barrel children’ who depend on migrant parents for goods and services from abroad, usually in North America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Given the heavy role of Caribbean women in the burden of care for children, children left behind often feel particularly abandoned when women migrate. Often this leads some children to become rebellious, dysfunctional and to a life of crime. To address this problem, there is a need for improved social protection systems to enable female household members to remain with their children during their formative years or mechanisms to facilitate the migration process for both parents and children at the same time.

74. Another critical gender dimension of migration in the Caribbean is the sex work industry. This includes both ‘voluntary’ workers in the industry and trafficked females. The growth of the tourism sector in the Caribbean has contributed to a booming ‘sex work sector’, which contributes to the abuse and dehumanization of poor and vulnerable women and girls. This also has an international counterpart in the migration of women to North America and Europe to participate in the sex work industry. Women in this sector are therefore often subject to serious abuse, including physical abuse, rape and torture. Moreover, in most societies, the sector operates ‘underground’ away from the basic protections of the law, and it is difficult to obtain information about their current situation.

75. Extensive research is needed about the changing patterns of migration from the banana companies. It is important to investigate the impact of banana industries on the rural communities and what the ‘push’ factors are in the rural and remote areas.

76. There is a lack of data regarding the push factors associated with gender-based violence in the country of origin that force women to migrate.

77. The brain drain may not be having the negative impact that is currently assumed. More research/studies are needed to assess this phenomenon. It is also important to question what kinds of policies are needed to empower migrant women, including the role of remittances in this process. In fact for many families, access to decent education, health care, nutrition and recreational activities would not have been possible, but for steady receipts of remittances. It is also important to work on the safety of the banking system in the Caribbean and assess the practices of remittances by age groups in order to identify their potential positive impact on women’s empowerment at the individual and community level.

### **4. Closing remarks**

78. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean gave a vote of thanks, expressing appreciation to the participants for their substantial contributions to the seminar and for the recommendations. She emphasized that the main take home message for Member States and organizations was to find productive ways to use the SDGs and the Regional Agenda on Gender as frameworks to promote women’s empowerment in the context of migration. One way is to improve data collection, analysis and availability, which could enhance gender equality solutions in the subregion. Another is the need for country cooperation to ensure that migrant women receive equal pay for equal work. This should include the development of comparable non-wage benefits, which requires further cooperation between countries of origin and destination to improve working conditions for women migrant. Finally, governments and other stakeholders may have to consider redoubling their efforts to reduce the costs of transferring remittances flows and rebuild trust in the banking facilities in the Caribbean.

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Annex II**PROGRAMME**

- 10.00 - 10.30                   **Welcome remarks**
- Mrs. Diane Quarless, Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
  - Ms. Luiza Carvalho, Regional Director for Latin America Caribbean, UN-Women Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
  - Ms. Sheila Roseau, Director/Representative, UNFPA Caribbean Sub-Regional Office
  - Mr. Diego Beltrand, Regional Director for South America, IOM
- 10.30 - 10.50                   **Plenary session: Women’s empowerment and migration in the Caribbean**
- Presentation of the IOM-ECLAC Background paper, Ms. Anna Platonova, Senior Regional Specialist, Labour Migration and Human Development, Regional Office for Central and North America and the Caribbean, IOM
  - Discussant Ms. Sheila Stuart, Social Development Officer, Statistics and Social Development Unit, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
- 10:50 - 11:30                   • Plenary discussion
- 11.30 - 12.30                   **Thematic open discussions**
- Recruitment practices in the Caribbean. Introduction by Hon. Hazel Brandy-Williams, Minister of Social Development, Community Development, Youth and Sports. Nevis Island Administration, Saint Kitts and Nevis
  - Impact of migration on transnational families. Introduction by Hon. Gale Rigobert, Minister of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and Sustainable Development, Saint Lucia
- 12.30 - 13.00                   **Closing remarks**

Annex III

**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

**Document symbol**

**Document title**

Programme

Draft background paper on “ Women’s Empowerment and Migration in the Caribbean”



Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)  
Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL)  
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