



► Central American migrant women in Mexico: Informality in recruitment and employment

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For Central American migrant women in Mexico, informal recruitment processes contribute to systemic gaps in employment and access to rights in ways that exceed that of their male counterparts. This brief summarizes the current state of recruitment practices for Central American migrant women, focusing on four key sectors including agriculture and animal husbandry, domestic work, sex work and street vending, and focuses on migrants from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, placing specific emphasis on Guatemala. The report finds that informality is a widespread feature of recruitment and employment practices for women migrant workers specifically, including procedures to obtain migration documents, access to social security, and workplace conditions, even in sectors that are

characterized by a higher degree of formality, such as the agricultural sector. The report finds that often this informality is the result of a failure of implementation of migration and labour laws rather than the laws themselves.

This brief summarizes key findings from research undertaken by the ILO Global Action to Improve the Recruitment Framework of Labour Migration (REFRAME) project in 2018 (unpublished), with recent data included where available. The brief concludes with specific recommendations on how to improve conditions for this population to support the activities of the REFRAME project and the ILO Decent Work Agenda.



Labour migration from Central America to Mexico

- ▶ Chiapas (the Southern Mexican state bordering Guatemala) is the state with the largest proportion of Central American migrants. In 2010, the national census data in Mexico estimated that there are 32,880 migrant women from Central America living in Mexico. Among them, 50 per cent live in the state of Chiapas; and out of the group 66 per cent are Guatemalan migrant women, 39 per cent are Honduran women and 21 per cent are El Salvadoran women. Due to their high rate of migration, the study focuses on these three countries, with special focus on Guatemalan and indigenous women (ONU Mujeres, 2017).
- ▶ The Survey on Migration at Mexico's Southern Border (Emif Sur) 2019 survey¹ registered 296,000 border crossings between Mexico and Guatemala. From the total number of crossings, 15 per cent were women and 39 per cent spoke an indigenous language (as their first language). In 2019, 84 per cent of the migrants returning from Mexico to Guatemala had some type of immigration document attesting to their regular status. The most common document (60 per cent) was the Regional Visitor Card (TVR), which does not allow migrants to perform income-generating activities; while 37 per cent presented a Border Worker Visitor Card (TVTF) upon entry. However it is estimated that 92 per cent of those holding a TVTF are men and only eight per cent are women (Emif Sur, 2019). Given that such large numbers of migrant women are working in Chiapas, this suggests that many are working in an irregular situation and highlights a significant gap in the extent to which the current labour migration regulatory framework is accessible to women migrants.
- ▶ Regarding duration of stay, according to the results of the 2019 Emif Sur survey, there are great differences in terms of men and women. While half of the crossings made by men were for more than 30 days, most of the women crossed as “*transfronterizo*” or “*transborder workers*” (69 per cent). This is explained, to a large extent, by the differentiated sectors of work between Guatemalan men and women in the Chiapas labour market: among the men surveyed, more than half (58 per cent) worked in the agricultural sector, which involves both short stays and long stays in Mexico. While the majority of women surveyed worked in domestic services (43 per cent) and commerce (32 per cent), which usually involve stays of less than 24 hours (Emif Sur, 2019).

- ▶ The reasons for labour migration are complex. The work environment in Chiapas does not necessarily offer better job opportunities or high wages than in countries of origin. Studies suggest that structural violence and instability experienced in the homeland communities often play into the decision to migrate elsewhere (ONU Mujeres y El Colegio de México, 2017).

Gaps in legal compliance: Key findings of the study

Mexico's regulatory framework categorizes migrant women as a “vulnerable population”, in both the federal migration and labour laws. In addition, the country's migration law states that migrant women should be subject to the rights stipulated in federal laws and in international conventions that have been ratified by Mexico, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), regardless of their migratory status. Systemic gaps in compliance with Mexico's legal and regulatory framework has presented the largest obstacle to securing rights for Central American migrant women during the recruitment process as well as in the workplace. In order to improve compliance with the regulatory framework, Mexico must adopt a gender-based approach in the design and implementation of public policies.

- ▶ Migrant women are particularly vulnerable to discrimination and violence, especially sexual harassment and assault by employers when they are in an irregular migration situation, as well as by informal brokers (*engachadores*) in recruitment and transit. This vulnerability is exacerbated by the fear of recourse or contract termination and by the lack of oversight and complaint mechanisms. Many women migrant workers also have a limited awareness about their human and labour rights.
- ▶ *Engachadores* (informal recruiters) play an important role in the recruitment of Central American women to Mexico. While *engachadores* may offer support and facilitate the formal process, as well as become the first line of response in case of problems or conflict between the worker and the employer, they can also be a source of abuse. Commonly reported practices include providing false information about wages or working conditions and retention of workers' migration documents and identity cards as a guarantee that they will remain with the employer. The overall lack of regulation and oversight to monitor the activities of this key actor leads to diverse and, oftentimes, unfavourable experiences in the recruitment process for Central American migrant women.

¹ Note that the Emif Sur survey only records migration movements associated with employment, and therefore does not consider migration for other purposes.

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- In all the sectors that employ Central American women, women with irregular migration statuses have reported explicit threats by their employers or other supervisors. For example, threatening to alert immigration authorities if the worker fails to comply with requests, increasing the risk of labour exploitation, forced labour or violence and harassment. Although the risk is present in all sectors, it is most prevalent in domestic work and sex work, sectors which are poorly regulated and where enforcement is weak. Women migrant workers may be unaware of procedures available to file complaints or receive support.
- Although Mexico's regulatory framework is characterized by laws that affirm the rights of women migrants, institutions at the local, state and federal level lack the capacity and allocation of resources (both human and financial) to ensure that they are implemented properly.
- For a gender-based approach to be institutionalized, specific measures need to be taken to address the needs of women migrant workers within relevant government institutions such as the Mexican Secretary of the Interior (SEGOB). These measures need to account for the higher levels of invisibility and informality that characterize the recruitment and employment practices that migrant women experience in comparison to migrant men.

Box 1. Regulating recruitment agencies and recruitment fees and costs in Mexico

Activities of private employment agencies are regulated by the Secretary of Labour and Social Security (Art. 539, Labour Law) and by the Workers Placement Agencies Regulation (RACT), and are monitored by the Public Employment Service. Mexico does not have a fully-fledged licensing model for recruitment agencies but rather a registration model with some licensing elements. For example, recruitment agencies are obligated to submit reports on their participation in the labour market and the numbers of Mexican workers placed abroad. As per the regulation, the charging of fees in any form to job-seekers for job placement services is prohibited for both national and international recruitment.

Box 1. Regulating recruitment agencies and recruitment fees and costs in Mexico (continued)

Workers must also be provided with transportation, accommodation and food free of charge if their place of work is more than 100 km away from their habitual place of residence. Recruitment agencies must present a bond/deposit to cover workers' repatriation expenses, should employers fail to comply with their contractual obligations. Violations of the provisions of the employment agency regulation carry fines up to 5,000 times the general minimum wage and the possibility of loss of registration.

The relevant legislation is:

- Federal Labour Law (DOF: 22/06/2018)
- Workers Placement Agencies Regulation (RACT) (DOF: 03/03/2006), as amended (2014).

To gather further evidence on the issue of recruitment fees and related costs, the ILO introduced a module on recruitment costs in the Southern Border Migration Survey 2019 (EMIF Sur 2019) carried out by the College of the Northern Border in Mexico. The Survey was answered mostly by Guatemalan workers in Mexico. Although the results are still preliminary, there are several relevant findings:²

- A quarter of workers surveyed reported zero costs incurred during their migration to Mexico. Nevertheless, the survey identified that many workers did pay for preparation of paperwork, assistance with job placement, or costs charged by the employer as recruitment costs. The costs most commonly reported were the costs of traveling (transportation and lodging). Transportation constituted the highest cost, but still a small cost.
- Based on the information provided by Guatemalan migrants, their total recruitment costs to Mexico amounted to around two per cent of their total yearly earnings in Mexico, being slightly higher for men than for women. Men and women who worked in services and sales reported highest averaged total costs, of USD15.

Barriers to regularizing Central American women migrant workers in Mexico

Informality and temporality remain a prevalent feature of mobility across the Guatemalan and Mexican borders, with workers traditionally migrating back and forth according to seasonal labour needs.

In addition to the historic dimension of the informality of the migration patterns – and the historic porosity of the border – the irregular nature of the migration may be further explained by the significant informality of the Mexican labour market. This is the case in particular in the sectors employing migrant workers such as small trade, construction and domestic work, and to a lesser extent agriculture (primarily the smallholder farms). Due to the lack of available information on formal recruitment processes, the complexity of the work permit process and its cost, both migrant workers and employers default to irregular migration and employment (ILO, 2018a). This situation has an impact upon the working conditions and may increase migrant workers' vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, in particular for women migrant workers who are overrepresented in the domestic work and services sectors.

While irregularity of migration remains significant in the region and recruitment processes are predominantly facilitated by informal agents or family networks, the issuance of temporary work-related documentation to residents of the border region in Guatemala has enabled greater regulation.³

Weak recruitment regulation and abuse at the recruitment stage

The Guatemala to Mexico corridor is characterized by weak recruitment regulation. Although public and private recruitment agencies exist and a regulation on employment agencies was enacted in Mexico in 2006, the majority of Guatemalan workers do not migrate through formal recruitment agency services (ILO, 2018a; ILO, 2016a). Rather, recruitment is arranged directly by employers or facilitated by other informal contractors or intermediaries (including family networks, acquaintances, or recruiters often referred to as *enganchadores*) who usually operate outside of the existing legal and regulatory framework. Weak regulation of these actors coupled with migrant workers' lack of access to knowledge and information

about recruitment and rights at work feed the irregular migration flows as well as increase the vulnerability of the migrant workers (ILO, 2019a).

With a view to better governing labour migration and protecting migrant workers, the Mexican government has introduced two key worker permits: the Border Worker Visitor Card (TVTF) and the Regional Visitor Card (TVR). The TVTF provides Guatemalan and Belizean nationals with the opportunity to work in the Mexican southern border states (including Campeche, Chiapas, Tabasco and Quintana Roo), provided that they have a written employment offer prior to departure. The TVR entitles the holder to multiple entrances to and from Mexico for the purpose of visiting for a period of three days, but does not allow the holder to work (ILO, 2019a).

A relatively low number of workers are employed through the TVTF program in comparison with the annual migration flows (ILO, 2018a; ILO, 2018d). A recent study suggests that this low number may be related to several factors such as the requirement to provide a written employment offer which guarantees the right to the minimum wage, the associated fees and costs of obtaining the permit, the low wages, and the depreciated value of the Mexico peso (ILO, 2018d). Furthermore, a number of workers continue to prefer migrating without documentation through irregular channels. Although it is difficult to quantify as a whole, the last survey in 2016 registered 123,463 migrants who crossed the border without migration documents (which amounts to 17.7 per cent of officially recorded inflows, a number which increased to 22.4 per cent in 2017) (COLEF, 2017 and 2018).

Low level of registered and protected women

The Mexican authorities issued 16,658 TVTF in 2015 and 15,139 in 2016; and issued 114,217 and 89,816 TVF in 2015 and 2016 respectively (ILO, 2018a). A very small percentage of all TVTF permits are issued to Central American Women (only 1.6 per cent in 2016 and 1.3 per cent in 2017). A higher percentage of migrant women receive the TVR, which accounted for 32 per cent of all migration documents issued to migrant women in 2017 (Unidad de Política Migratoria, 2018). Within this category of cross-border workers who are legally authorized to work, it is estimated that 92 per cent of recipients are men, while only 8 per cent are women (Unidad de Política Migratoria, 2018).

³ The Governments of Mexico and Guatemala have progressively implemented a policy framework aiming to regulate labour migration. The establishment of the Guatemalan 2016 Código de Migración (Migration Code) and the enactment of the 2008 Mexican Ley de Migración (Migration Law) and accompanying regulation represent significant developments. These national policy frameworks are strengthened by increased bilateral cooperation which led to the signature of bilateral agreements on labour migration in 2014 and 2018. While these agreements attest to the commitment to cooperate and coordinate, practical implementation and effective monitoring remain relatively weak. Similarly, differing positions and interests of both parties with regards to a labour migration governance system require further inter-institutional and bilateral exchanges, information sharing and coordination (ILO, 2019a).

To secure the TVTF, a formal job offer from a registered employer is required in advance. The written job offer letter must be submitted to the National Migration Institute (INM) and the SEGOB when processing a visa request. The employer and their business must be registered formally with the INM to join the national employment system.⁴

This requirement creates particularly challenging obstacles that block access to the right to work for Central American migrant women in sectors where they tend to concentrate, including domestic work, sex work and street vending. In each of these sectors, employers are not formally registered with the INM or there are no employers at all, which means that a job offer letter may not be granted. Another consequence of this requirement is that the migrant worker is legally bound to the employer to be able to process their migration paperwork, which can contribute to a series of workplace discriminations and abuse, including sexual assault and harassment that persists due to fears of recourse or deportation. As of March 2020, there is currently a proposal before the Senate to amend this requirement for the domestic work sector.

Recruitment practices in four key sectors

The main sectors that employ Central American migrant women are domestic work, agriculture and animal husbandry, street vending, and sex work. In each of the sectors, recruitment practices are characterized by informal networks through which migrant women obtain information about employment opportunities. These networks often include husbands, relatives or acquaintances and, in the case of the agricultural sector, domestic and sex work, extend to recruitment practices in public parks and towns in their countries of origin and, at times, in destination countries. In addition, women are more likely to be hired as “accompanying family members” and hence do not have a work permit of their own. This may increase their vulnerabilities to exploitation as these women are not only in an irregular status but dependent upon a family member for employment (ILO 2018d).

Furthermore, employers also face challenges in the regular recruitment and employment of migrant workers. On the one hand, like migrants, employers lack information on existing regulations (such as the TVTF), and the necessary requirements to formally employ a migrant worker. On the other hand, the formal process (including submission of required documents, processing of paperwork etc.) may seem particularly burdensome given the often temporary and seasonal nature of the work (ILO, 2018a).

The informal nature of the recruitment represents just one dimension of the informality that the population experiences and indicates that the current recruitment and employment frameworks are not adequately regulating the sectors that predominately employ migrant women (ILO, 2019a). The following sections highlight other dimensions of informality that are present within the key sectors that employ Central American migrant women.

Domestic work

Domestic work is defined as “work performed in or for a household or households” (ILO Convention No. 189). Broadly speaking, domestic workers provide personal and household care. An estimated 17,483 Guatemalan women in Mexico (37 per cent of all Guatemalan women on Mexico) are employed in domestic work, followed by 5,393 Honduran women (10.6 per cent), and 5,222 Salvadoran women (33.8 per cent) (ONU Mujeres and IMUMI, 2017). Over 93.5 per cent of women employed in domestic work speak indigenous languages (as their first language), which further contributes to discrimination during recruitment and in the workplace (STPS, 2016). Young girls and women ranging from ages of 12 to 25 are often preferred by employers given the perception that it is “easier” to train them to meet the demands of the head of household, according to civil society organizations that monitor the sector.⁵

⁴ The business must provide quarterly information regarding their participation in the national labour market or in the placement of Mexican workers for a specific job abroad. Reports must be submitted to the Secretariat within the first five days of the months of January, April, July and October, as appropriate (DOF, 2015).

⁵ In-person interview conducted by the author in October 2018.

Box 2. Domestic workers rights enshrined in new law

In May 2019, the Mexican Congress passed an amendment to the Federal Labor Law and the Social Security Law to guarantee the rights of domestic workers. The regulations set a minimum age (15 years), require written contracts, paid annual level and set weekly and daily rest periods. The law also requires registration of domestic workers with the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS). A National Minimum Wages Commission will set wage levels.

In December 2018, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation declared that it was discriminatory for domestic workers not to be obligatorily affiliated with the social security system (IMSS) like other workers. In April 2019, a voluntary affiliation pilot program was launched to gradually incorporate domestic workers into the IMSS, through a digital platform. In May 2019, Congress approved reforms. Furthering progress, in July 2020 Mexico ratified the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). The Convention entered into force on 3 July 2020.

In spite of recent legislative reforms that aim at extending protection of domestic workers' rights, an estimated 91 per cent of all domestic workers in Mexico remain informally employed and their employers not registered with the INM and the SEGOB. Employment usually occurs privately and in the absence of key Mexican institutions, such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (STPS), and the Ministry of Labor (MINSTRAB) in Guatemala, which makes workers more vulnerable to violence and hinders the exercise of their human and labour rights (ILO, 2019a).

As a result, domestic workers, and migrant women in particular because of their lack of information about rights and increased dependency on the employer, can be subject to poor work conditions and receive no benefits, lack health insurance, paid leave, and fixed working hours, all of which is reinforced by the absence of mechanisms to regulate, monitor and inspect work conditions (OIT, ONU Mujeres, CONAPRED, 2011).

In this sector the prevailing recruitment mode hence remains largely informal and typically occurs by word of mouth among family members or acquaintances in countries or origin, transit and in Mexico. Recruitment may also take place in public squares of border cities in Southern Mexico. In many cases, recruitment may also be facilitated by the informal broker or *enganchador*,

who would facilitate the process in exchange for a fee from the workers or employer. The *enganchador* is often also acting as interpreter between the employer and the indigenous migrant worker. This combination of factors, the characteristics of the population employed, the lack of contracts, and the absence of oversight mechanisms, create ample conditions for discrimination and exploitation to occur during recruitment and in the workplace.

Agricultural sector

The agriculture sector remains an important economic sector in Mexico. The National Survey of Occupation and Employment (ENOE) estimates that the sector employs 3 million workers, of which 88 per cent are men and 12 per cent are women – although as discussed below women's work in the sector has historically been uncoun- ted and unrecognized.

Compared to other sectors reviewed in this brief, the agriculture sector has a more organized and formalized recruitment process. This is due to the key fact that business and employers in agriculture can register more easily to the national labour system. Despite this higher level of formality, two key issues present challenges for upholding the rights of Central American women workers in the Mexican agriculture sector: the role of the *enganchador* as discussed above, and the issue of being registered as "accompanying persons" or "accompanying family members".

Women migrant workers employed in agricultural work experience informality as a result of the way that migration documents and the work contract are assigned. There is a prevailing trend to employ entire migrant families/parts of family units. When a family is hired under the TVTF, the eldest man is normally attributed to the head of household role. Women registered as "accompanying persons" are not offered an individual contract in their name. By not having an individual contract, the women migrant worker does not have the same access to legal rights that a work contract confers to her male counterpart and, furthermore, a situation of dependency on her male companion is created. However it must be noted that since 2015 there has been an increase in the number of migrant women being registered as heads of households.

Given the high degree of mobility of the population and the attribution of women to the contracts of male companions, available statistics on women employed in the sector do not fully represent reality. Regarding working conditions, 68 per cent of agricultural workers are in the category of "subordinate and paid" – meaning in an employment relationship, while two per cent were classified as "unpaid workers" – that is, those who work their own land/are self employed. If this information is disaggregated by gender, the difference

is notable since 74 per cent of men work in a subordinate and paid manner and 26 per cent do not receive any remuneration; while 31 per cent of women are subordinate and paid and 69 per cent do not receive any payment (La Jornada del Campo, 2019). It is estimated that 49 per cent of women working in the agriculture sector receive between one to two minimum wages⁶ while an estimated 38 per cent receives up to one minimum wage (an income of 88 Mexican pesos (equivalent to USD 4.60 per day, at the time of this study). Only seven per cent of women working in the agriculture sector receive benefits (such as bonuses, paid holidays and access to health facilities) and four per cent receive health coverage (INEGI, 2016).

Street vending

Street vending is a recognized and regulated sector in Chiapas. As part of the local regulations, street vendors must obtain an official sales permit from the Municipal Authority, which grants them the right to occupy or roam public thoroughfares and perform commercial activities. Licensed street vendors are also subject to monitoring by the municipal police. Nevertheless, most Central American migrant women engaged in street vending are self-employed as itinerant street vendors and work without a license. The division of labour of street vending is marked by gender. Female vendors generally carry out activities deemed “appropriate for women”, such as preparing food, selling handicrafts and chewing gum, while the men are often shoe shiners and car washers.

Among the population in Chiapas, Guatemalan migrant workers in street vending are classified as “*transfronterizo*” or “transborder workers” if their stay is less than 24 hours, and “temporal workers” if they spend more than 24 hours and possess a license. In the street vending sector, 65 per cent of Central America women are “transborder workers”, and eight per cent are temporal workers (ONU Mujeres, 2015a). Many women who work as “transborder workers” chose this model as it allows them return to their communities to visit family, divide their earnings with family members or dependents and then cross the border once again. Due to the high level of mobility, it is difficult to track the number of women employed in the sector.

An informal recruitment process has been observed by civil society organizations in which female workers access the sector accompanied by a family member who shares tacit skills on where to buy goods, where to sell to maximize income, and dangerous locations to avoid. Most migrant vendors working along the southern border come from indigenous communities in the north of Guatemala, meaning that language barriers can contribute to discrimination by the public with no means of prevention in place by authorities or civil society.

Sex work

Mexico has adopted an abolitionist position towards sex work. As a result, the country’s labour regulatory framework seeks to exclude from law all references to sex work. The only reference to sex work appears in the federal criminal code, which provides guidelines on crimes that may occur in the sex trade, rather than regulating sex work as an occupation. Consequently, the regulatory framework fails to mention the regulation of employment and the protection of the human and labour rights of sex workers. Furthermore, there are no official monitoring or data collection mechanisms to indicate how many women migrants are employed in the sex work sector or the working conditions they experience.

However insights may be gained into recruitment and working conditions based on related industries in which sex work may take place. There are several types of businesses that contract sex workers, including *botaneros*, *cantinas* (bars) and nightclubs. Each type of business is characterized by a different set of recruitment and workplace practices, some with more standardized practices than others. Employers often prohibit the selling sex on the premises of *botaneros* and *cantinas*, and women, normally engaged as waitresses, are required to leave the establishment to interact with the client. As a result, migrant women are more vulnerable vis-à-vis the authorities and abuse or violence that might arise with the client, while the employer avoids all responsibility. In nightclubs dedicated to the sex trade, such as those that allow stripteases and private dances, women sex workers remain on their premises while they interact with their clients. In addition, many women employed in the sector work on the streets, which also increases their exposure to risks.

Recruitment in *botaneros* and *cantinas* is generally informal, taking place through word-of-mouth or through recruitment in public spaces (like parks), while recruitment in the nightclub sector tends to be more formal, and may include an employment contract.

Recommendations and conclusions

To uphold and reinforce implementation of Mexico’s regulatory framework, a gender-based approach is necessary to address the various forms of informality and employment gaps that Central American women workers experience during recruitment and in the workplace, and to reduce discrimination. The following recommendations provide a synthesis of those detailed in the full report (unpublished), and address specific legal provisions, regulation and enforcement mechanisms, and awareness raising programmes that can be implemented to reduce gender-based inequality and discriminations among the population.

⁶ Double the minimum wage.

- ▶ **Address discrimination against women migrant workers.** Migrant women experience various forms of discrimination during recruitment and in the workplace due to their sex, ethnicity, language ability, sexual preference, and migrant status, among other factors. To reduce systemic discrimination, Mexico should fully align its federal regulatory framework and implementation mechanisms with the principles and guidelines of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- ▶ **Recognize and formalize the domestic work sector.** For Central American migrant women employed in domestic work, their labour is particularly invisible and undervalued because it is performed in the private sphere, rendering them subject to still more acute forms of discrimination during recruitment, in addition to violence and harsh conditions in the workplace. Having now ratified C189, Mexico must undertake the required legislative reforms to align with international standards, and ensure effective enforcement of the new domestic worker regulations.
- ▶ **Develop and implement more awareness raising programs about available complaint and remedy mechanisms.** Many migrant women are unfamiliar with measures they can take to report violence or discrimination, which is often reinforced by fear of the authorities. It is advised that Mexico undertake awareness raising programmes leveraging diverse media platforms to share information on the mechanisms and institutions in place to file a report when subjected to any form of discrimination or violence, including sexual assault and harassment at all stages of the migration cycle (recruitment, transport, employment, return). As part of the strategy, Mexico may also expand existing inter-institutional initiatives that raise awareness around human and labour rights in workplaces and public venues. Likewise, Mexico should institutionalize due diligence in all cases of discrimination and violence reported by alleged victims.
- ▶ **Promote a universal standard labour contract.** Employers often do not offer work contracts to women migrant workers, save for certain exceptions in the agricultural sector. Mexico should promote a universal standard labour contract for migrant workers, or sector-specific standard contracts in agriculture, domestic and sex work, supplying all relevant information on the employment offer, including remuneration, work conditions and employment benefits. Written employment contracts must be in a language that the worker understands.
- ▶ **Delink the work permit from a single employer.** When the work is tied to one employer, it places the worker in a vulnerable position. For example, if the worker faces abuse, they may be unwilling to seek recourse to justice or to leave the employment relationship, as it may place them in an irregular situation and make them subject to deportation. Rather, workers should be granted independent or sector-specific work permits that are not tied to one employer. Furthermore, if a worker loses or leaves their job, they should be granted sufficient time in which to find another employer.
- ▶ **Delink the 'family visa system' and allow dependents to have independent visas, and not be tied to the primary holder of the work permit.** Women in particular may be vulnerable to abuse (including domestic violence) by the primary visa holder. Allowing each worker to have an independent visa will prevent abuses that could stem from this dependence.
- ▶ **Recognise the role of the *enganchador* in the regulatory framework.** Mexico's regulatory framework renders invisible the activities of the informal recruiter, who is central to the recruitment and employment of many Central American migrant women. By recognizing the *enganchador* in the country's regulatory framework governing labour and migration, it would be possible to establish mechanisms to better track and regulate their recruitment practices.
- ▶ **Develop strategic and tailored measures for labour inspections** in sectors where women migrant workers are employed.
- ▶ **Incorporate a specific category for sex work into the regulatory framework governing labour.** This would contribute to the creation of mechanisms and the allocation of resources to better monitor and protect the population.
- ▶ **Raise awareness and build capacity among trade unions** in order to broaden their range of activities to include the sectors that employ Central American migrant women. Including through awareness-raising campaigns on labour rights for migrant women, highlighting the importance of trade unionism for their protection, to strengthen this population's participation and inclusion in trade unions.
- ▶ **Develop suitable mechanisms to collect disaggregated data based on gender, sex and indigenous population,** from the Survey on Migration in the Southern Border (Emif Sur), the Population and Housing Census, the Census and Intercensal Historical Series, the National Survey on Discrimination, the National Migration Studies and others developed by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), the Migration Policy Unit (UPM) and the National Confederation of Professionals and Young People of Mexico (CONAPRED).

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Contact details

ILO Office for Mexico and Cuba
Comte 35 Colonia Anzures
11590, México, D. F.
México

T: +5255 52503224
E: mexico@ilo.org