

GEN-MIGRA: Gender, mobilities and migration during and post COVID-19 pandemic-vulnerability, resilience and renewal

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a major global health challenge with economic and social consequences for individuals, families and communities worldwide. Evidence shows that its impacts have significantly affected women through rising inequalities. For many women, migration is an adaptive response to social risks and inequalities. During the pandemic, mobility and economic restrictions have posed severe challenges to migrant women's labour, care obligations, safety and well-being. Many migrant women work in essential sectors that were the hardest hit, also low paid, precarious and informal. Lockdowns, border closures and increasing police controls have provided contexts for rising gender-based violence and exploitation, especially for women with insecure legal status or limited resources.

GEN-MIGRA is a ground-breaking project that transforms our knowledge about the vulnerabilities experienced by women engaged in international mobilities and their resilience strategies. It will adopt a transnational, intersectional and comparative approach to explore how the global nature of the pandemic has impacted transnational patterns of female mobility, in the context of varied national responses to the crisis. Its analytical approach focuses on intersecting vulnerabilities, the agency and resources women mobilised to navigate the crisis.

Our aim is to explore how migrant women have faced those challenges and produced movements of resistance and renewal, strategizing and repositioning themselves in the labour market and the implications of these decisions for family life. GEN-MIGRA will investigate this through an innovative analysis in countries with diverse social protection policies, namely Brazil, UK, Germany, Poland, Spain and Portugal. Documenting the international mobilities of women in these countries, we will produce empirically grounded and theoretically driven knowledge on the impact of national policies, communities and kinship support on migrant women.

GEN-MIGRA will use an intersectional perspective to explore migrant women's experiences of the pandemic and the possibilities for renewal and regeneration, answering two key research questions:

1. *What inequalities have emerged or worsened for women engaged in international mobilities during the pandemic and what role have state policies and community and kinship networks played in mitigating or increasing these inequalities?*
2. *What are evidence-based gender-responsive policy solutions to support women involved in international mobilities long-term, especially those most vulnerable, through sustainable state interventions of labour market (re)insertion and social protection?*

The outputs from the project will benefit the wider social sciences scholarly community through development of new theoretical framework, as well as a unique dataset reflecting migrant women's direct experiences consisting of in-depth interviews with 130+ migrant women. Importantly, the multi-country study of migration and social protection policies post-pandemic will have an impact in policy development. Our project will help policy makers improve their understanding of challenges facing migrant women in low paid, precarious work and their families, which will have a significant impact on the development of local, national and international gender policies. Lastly, the research will impact migrant women in low paid, precarious work and immigration situations as we will be working with migrant organisations across the four countries to raise awareness of project findings.