



BOĞAZIÇIMUN 2026

UNWOMEN STUDY GUIDE

Agenda Items:

- 1)** Rising Global Backlash Against Gender Mainstreaming
- 2)** Reassessing Gender Mainstreaming in Labor Migration

Under Secretaries-General: Bengs İlban, Senrat
Şira Çavluer

Academic Assistant: Fadime Begüm Şahin



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Letter from the Secretary-General

Meritorious Participants,

I am Duru Yavuz, a senior Political Science and Sociology student at Boğaziçi University. As the Secretary-General, I would like to welcome you all to the 8th official session of BoğaziçiMUN, BoğaziçiMUN'26.

Our academic and organizational teams have been working endlessly to ensure the best BoğaziçiMUN experience for our participants. I would like to begin by thanking our Deputy Secretaries-General, Ömer Alp Şiringöz and İpek Şen for their efforts, support and friendship. And the biggest of thank yous goes to our Director-General and Club co-Coordinator Kaan Berker and our Deputy Director-General Ekin Asyalı; this conference would not be what it is without their ambition and hard work. I would also like to thank our Club co-Coordinator İrem Ayber for all her help in both academic and organizational capacities.

BoğaziçiMUN has always been a ground where we aim to achieve academic and organizational excellence, but it has also been a place where old friends get to gather and work towards a common goal, even if it is in the middle of a snowstorm. In our experience as a club and as a conference, we have broken and reshaped barriers, we have learned what it means to be in a close-knit team, we have looked to the past and embraced our legacy, and we have looked to the future to envision an improved BoğaziçiMUN.

Throughout the years, we have gained new experience, knowledge, and strength, and found a sense of community in our members and participants. In each BoğaziçiMUN, we have seen you, our participants, learn and grow with us, expanding your knowledge of international relations, world politics, and history. It was this growth and the chance to witness your dedication and curiosity that have inspired us to continue improving BoğaziçiMUN every single year. And because we get to see your enthusiasm, because we get to engage our participants' minds with



BOĞAZIÇİMUN 2026

the pressing issues of our time, our efforts are made worthwhile. This year, we have prepared for you a wide range of unique committees and agenda items, all thanks to our wonderful Under Secretaries-General, who have worked closely with our academic team to bring fresh perspectives and discussions to the conference.

After months of preparation on top of our years of foundational experience, BoğaziçiMUN is finally ready to open its doors to you and ‘Bridge the Gap’ once again this February. At the intersection of diplomacy, international relations, and creative decision-making, BoğaziçiMUN stands as a chance to take matters into your own hands. Let us embark on this mission together and broaden our horizons as well as our community. It is my utmost honor to welcome you all to BoğaziçiMUN 2026. I hope to meet you soon.

Kind regards,

Duru Yavuz

Secretary-General of Boğaziçi Mun 2026



Letter from the Committee Board

Dear Delegates,

As the Committee Board of the UNWomen committee, we welcome you to the committee with immense gratitude for the 8th official session of BoğaziçiMUN, BoğaziçiMUN'26.

We are Bengs İlban, a senior student from Bahçeşehir University with double bachelor's degrees in English Language Teaching and Sociology; Senrat Şira Çavluer and Begüm Şahin as your academic assistant we are pleased to serve you as your Committee Board. Our agenda items, Addressing Outdated Work Culture and Securing Women's Place in Business, and the committee itself are crucial regarding the daily global challenges we observe. We have tried our best to prepare a beneficial guide for encountering such issues. We want to remind you that the guide you will read will give you general information. For detailed information, please view clause seven: Further Reading. We expect you to address the importance of cooperation and challenge differences by drawing attention.

We encourage all delegates to come prepared, engage actively, and collaborate with fellow delegates to make BoğaziçiMUN'26 a memorable and enriching experience. Your passion, commitment, and innovative ideas are essential in achieving the committee's goals and positively impacting the world.

Lastly, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Secretary-General Duru Yavuz and the organisers of this conference for their determined efforts. Their dedication and hard work allowed us to unite and engage in meaningful discussions on urgent global issues.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at BoğaziçiMUN'26, we are ready to bridge the gap.

Kindest Regards,

Bengs İlban, Senrat Şira Çavluer, Begüm Şahin

bengi.ilban@bahcesehir.edu.tr

sirasenrat@gmail.com

3. Introduction to the Committee



The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, was established on July 2, 2011. After years of various separate UN entities, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 64/289, and UN Women was created. Before establishing such a UN entity, 4 distinct parts of the UN system were functional. The mentioned parts were operational and remained active until they merged into UN Women. These parts are;

- **United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

UNIFEM provided financial assistance to programs that promoted women's rights, economic security, empowerment, and gender equality.

- **Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)**

DAW worked to advance the global agenda on gender equality and women's voices to be fully integrated into all international policies.

- **United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)**

INSTRAW focused on providing research and statistics on issues relating to gender.

- **Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)**

The main objective of the OSAGI was the efficient implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

UN Women works on the idea to "enhance, not replace, efforts by other parts of the UN system (such as UNICEF, UNDP, and UNFPA), which will continue to have a responsibility to work for gender equality and women's empowerment in their areas of expertise." as well as the 9 areas of concern.



UNWomen's main areas of concern are not limited to gender inequality and empowerment of women, but extend beyond these points. Currently, UNWomen focuses on 9 areas. Mentioned areas are;

1. Women's Leadership and Political Participation

As stated by the 2011 General Assembly "Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalised from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.", from the local to the global level, women's leadership and political participation are restricted due to several mentioned reasons.

2. Economic Empowerment

Investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path toward gender equality, the elimination of poverty, and economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or by doing unpaid care work at home.

3. Ending Violence Against Women

Despite fundamental human rights, one in three women worldwide experiences physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner. And only 40% of women who experience violence seek any kind of help or report the incident, according to the Global Database on Violence Against Women data (2023).

4. Peace and Security

War, terrorism, violent conflict, and extremism have differential effects on women and girls. Despite being troubled by such occurrences, women remain largely invisible to, and excluded from, peace processes and negotiations. Proven by the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS), women's participation in peace processes contributes to longer, more resilient peace after conflict.



5. Humanitarian Action

As the world faces crises from conflicts, climate disasters, and pandemics, it is critical to understand their impacts on women and girls from the very start to better respond to their needs. The response should be tailored not only to fill their immediate needs but also to integrate resilience-building for women and girls against future shocks and transform discriminatory and harmful social norms into positive, gender-equitable ones.

6. Governance and National Planning

National plans, policies, institutions, and budgets are where governments begin to translate commitments to women into progress. Too often, however, they overlook measures to ensure that public services respond to women's needs and priorities. Viewing these dimensions of governance through a gender equality lens means putting aside the assumption that they are gender-neutral.

7. Youth and Gender Equality

Across the world, young women continue to face gender-based discrimination, marginalisation, and violence, including unequal access to education and opportunities for leadership and participation. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must deliver equal gains for youth.

8. Women and Girls With Disabilities

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Report on Disability shows that one in five women lives with a disability. Women with disabilities experience various types of impairments that may or may not come with functional limitations. In addition, the diversity of women with disabilities includes those with multiple identities across all contexts, such as ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds; their status as refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and internally displaced women; LGBTIQ+ identity; age; marital status; and living with or being affected by HIV.



9. HIV and AIDS Epidemic

Sexual violence, a widespread violation of women's rights, intensifies the risk of HIV transmission. Many women living with HIV struggle with stigma and exclusion, aggravated by their lack of rights. Regardless of whether they are living with HIV, women generally assume a disproportionate burden of care for others who are sick from or dying of AIDS. This, in turn, reduces prospects for education and employment.



4. Introduction to the Agenda Item A: Rising Global Backlash Against Gender Mainstreaming

Globally, women are confronted with significant obstacles and attacks on their rights. A united and well-funded reaction against feminism, LGBTQI+ diversity, and gender equality has emerged as an international decrease in the advancement of women's rights. This is closely related to patterns of authoritarian regressions against international democracy. The primary fields and locations of this backlash seem to be universal. The institutional and policy framework for gender equality, specific policy areas (like education, sexual and reproductive health and



rights, and preventing and combating violence against women), and the working environment/operating space for women's human rights NGOs are among them.

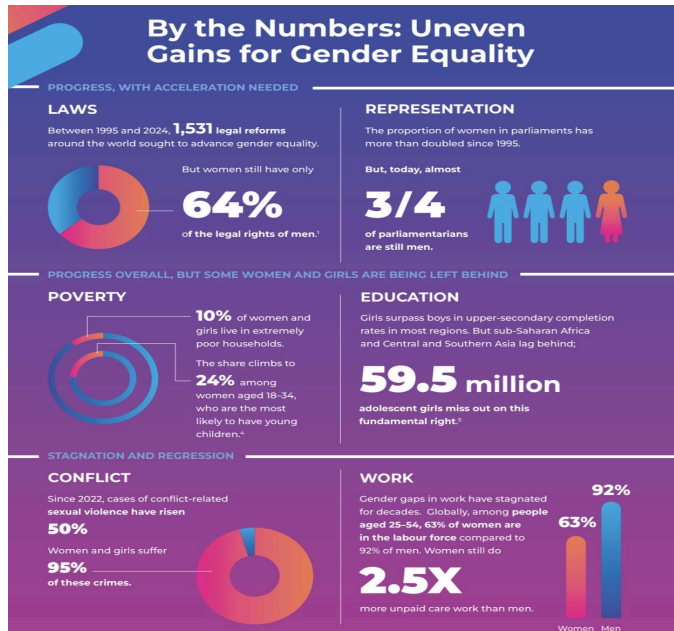
Gender inequality is a worldwide problem which exists on all continents, in all socioeconomic classes, and in every culture. Since 1995, the percentage of women serving as heads of state has remained at 10% globally, and 50% of people still think men make better political leaders than women (UNDP, 2023). Our social, economic, and political structures are contaminated with patriarchal norms and male prejudices, which are harmful to people of all genders, including men, and especially the environment. A reaction to deny women fundamental rights, criminalize LGBTQI+ lifestyles, and even introduce ultra-conservative views into our legal and educational systems is being driven by anti-gender ideology movements. Understanding the connections between anti-feminist and other anti-rights movements that support racist and hyper-nationalist agendas is crucial.

a. Key Terms

- *Backlash*: A strong negative reaction against perceived threats to traditional social norms or values, often in response to movements advocating gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, or other social progress
- *Gender equality*: Equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men (and girls and boys). In other words, gender equality means that gender does not determine one's access to rights or resources, and that both sexes benefit equally in all spheres of life.
- *Gender equity*: Fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. Gender equity acknowledges that different groups may require distinct measures to achieve equality, addressing gender gaps by meeting people's respective needs.



- Gender mainstreaming: A strategy for achieving gender equality by integrating it into all policies and programs. It involves “assessing the implications for girls and boys and men and women of any planned action” (such as legislation, policies, or programs) so that everyone benefits equally and gender inequalities are not perpetuated.
- Migrant worker: A person who works in a country of which they are not a citizen. The UN Convention on Migrant Workers defines a migrant worker as someone “who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national”. This term applies regardless of skill level or legal status. In UN discussions, migrant workers’ rights (including gender-specific protections) are a focus of international labour standards.
- Patriarchy: A social system in which men (often fathers or male elders) hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, and control of property. In such systems, men as a group maintain dominance over women and other genders
- Sexism: Prejudice or discrimination based on a person’s sex or gender, typically involving the belief that one sex (usually men) is superior to the other. Sexism commonly manifests as bias against women and girls in social, economic, or political life



b. Historical Background

i. Political, Social, and Cultural Roots of Backlash

The global backlash against gender mainstreaming is not a singular or spontaneous phenomenon; rather, it is rooted in a complex interaction of political realignments, social anxieties, and deeply embedded cultural norms. While gender mainstreaming has been internationally endorsed as a strategy to promote equality across policy areas, its implementation has increasingly been contested in both domestic and international arenas.

Politically, the backlash is closely linked to the rise of populist, nationalist, and conservative movements across various regions. These actors often frame gender mainstreaming as an externally imposed agenda driven by international organizations, liberal elites, or Western institutions. In this context, gender equality policies are portrayed as threats to national sovereignty, traditional governance structures, and “family values.”

Additionally, gender mainstreaming is frequently politicized during periods of economic instability, migration pressures, or post-crisis recovery. Governments facing legitimacy challenges may instrumentalize anti-gender rhetoric to consolidate political support, using gender issues as symbolic battlegrounds to divert attention from structural economic or



governance failures. This has resulted in the rollback of gender-sensitive legislation, defunding of equality institutions, and resistance to international gender-related commitments.

On a social level, backlash is often driven by perceptions of social disruption and insecurity. Rapid social change, shifting labor markets, and increased visibility of gender diversity can generate anxiety among groups who feel economically or culturally marginalized. Gender mainstreaming, when misunderstood, is sometimes perceived as prioritizing certain groups at the expense of others, reinforcing narratives of exclusion rather than inclusion.

Misinformation and lack of public awareness further exacerbate these tensions. Gender mainstreaming is frequently misrepresented as ideological rather than policy-oriented, leading to societal resistance grounded in fear rather than informed debate. The limited inclusion of local communities in policy design and implementation has, in some cases, contributed to the perception that gender equality initiatives do not adequately reflect lived realities.

Culturally, resistance to gender mainstreaming is deeply intertwined with traditional gender roles, religious interpretations, and long-standing social norms. In many societies, gender roles are closely linked to identity, morality, and social cohesion. As a result, policies aiming to transform structural inequalities may be perceived as undermining cultural continuity or moral order.

Furthermore, gender mainstreaming challenges entrenched power hierarchies by questioning norms related to authority, caregiving, labor division, and representation. This transformative potential can provoke defensive responses from institutions and individuals invested in maintaining the status quo. Cultural backlash is often amplified through media discourse, where gender equality initiatives are framed as radical, unnatural, or incompatible with local values.

It is crucial to note that political, social, and cultural roots of backlash are deeply interconnected. Political actors often draw upon cultural narratives to legitimize opposition, while social anxieties are reinforced through politicized discourse. This intersectionality highlights that backlash against gender mainstreaming is not solely opposition to gender equality itself, but a broader reaction to perceived challenges to identity, power, and social order.



ii. Impacts of the Backlash

Crafting a compelling narrative that often includes backlash against gender equality and hostility towards outsiders, and the subsequent impacts of the backlash are tangible, affecting legislation, institutional structures, and the safety of individuals.

The consequences are particularly severe in several key areas:

- 1. Institutional Dismantling:** Since 2023, several countries have seen the abolition or rebranding of ministries dedicated to gender equality. In Argentina, the Milei administration closed the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity and the Undersecretariat for Protection Against Gender Violence, leaving the country without a dedicated institution for eradicating gender-based violence for the first time in 40 years. In South Korea, President Yoon Suk Yeol fulfilled an "anti-feminist" campaign pledge by rebranding the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to remove the word "Women" from its Korean title and transferring key employment units to other bodies, which critics argue undermines gender-sensitive labor policies.
- 2. Legal Rollbacks and Criminalization:** Legislation protecting sexual and reproductive rights and preventing violence is being rescinded. Argentina's government has pledged to remove the aggravating factor of "femicide" from the penal code, while in the United States, 49 anti-LGBTQ laws were passed in 2024 alone. Furthermore, some states have manipulated multilateral mechanisms to undermine gender equality, with Argentina becoming the only country to reject a declaration on gender equality at the 2024 G20 forum.

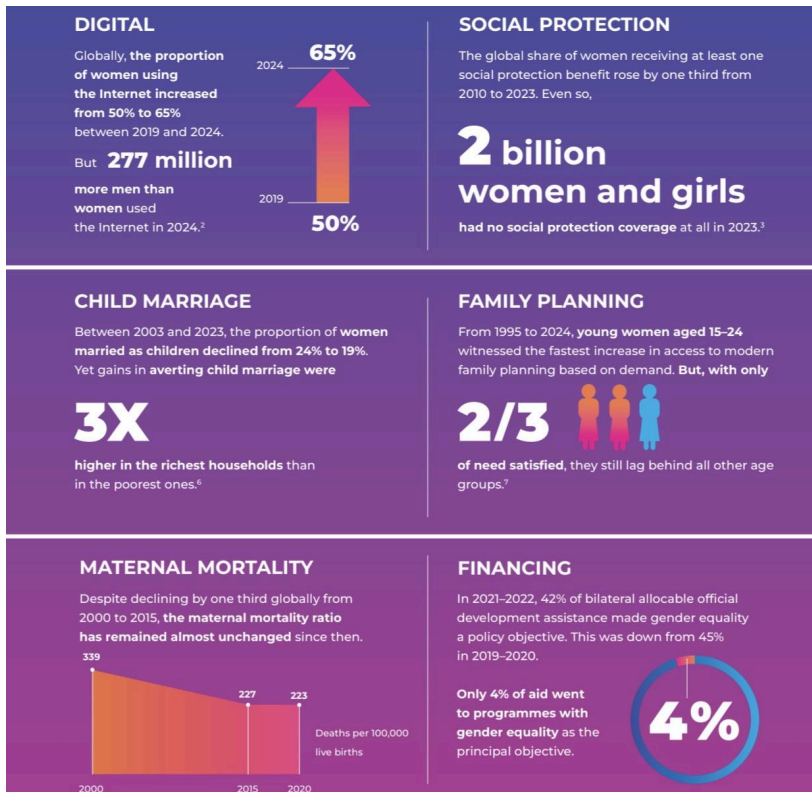


- 3. Funding Crises:** Civil society organizations are facing extreme pressure due to repressive laws and the withdrawal of state funding. In El Salvador, a 2025 law imposed a 30% tax on donations to NGOs, while in Argentina, programs for survivors of gender-based violence saw budget cuts of up to 100%. This creates a "perfect storm" where the needs of women and girls are increasing while the resources to support them are disappearing.
- 4. Violence and Harassment:** The backlash has normalized violence against women in public life. Online sexual abuse, such as the Nth Room case in South Korea, and the rise of technology-facilitated gender-based violence, are deterring women from participating in politics and journalism. In Argentina, lawyers and advocates warn that the government's narrative challenging the credibility of victims has "unlocked a whole spectrum of hatred" and increased violence based on prejudice.

While these ideological shifts threaten global norms, the reassessment of gender mainstreaming must also address several critical "red-flag" areas that currently imperil the safety and rights of migrant workers:

Violence and Sexual Exploitation: Women and girls constitute 98% of all sexually exploited victims of trafficking. Violence occurs at all stages of migration, from transit to the workplace. In many host countries, restrictive migration statuses—such as the "one employer rule" or visa sponsorship systems—make it nearly impossible for victims to report abuse without risking deportation.

The Digital Gender Divide: A lack of access to technology and digital literacy limits women's ability to access vital information, secure employment, and use mobile apps for safe travel or financial services. This divide is particularly acute in rural areas and among older migrants.



Lack of Access to Justice:

Migrant women and gender-diverse persons face systemic barriers to the legal system. These include language barriers, fear of authorities, and laws that do not recognize gender-based violence as a labor violation. In 2024, LGBTQI+ migrants report higher rates of discrimination in the workplace (25% vs 16%) but are less likely to seek redress due to fear of stigma or criminalization.

Health and Reproductive Rights: Migrant women often have limited access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, including maternity care and gender-affirming services. This is exacerbated by the backlash against "gender ideology," which has led some countries to ban gender-affirming care and restrict inclusive sexuality education.

5. Introduction to the Agenda Item B: Reassessing Gender Mainstreaming in Labor Migration

Labor migration has become an increasingly central feature of the global economy, with millions of individuals crossing borders in search of employment opportunities. Within this context, gender plays a decisive role in shaping migration patterns, employment sectors, working conditions, and access to rights and protections. Women now constitute a significant proportion



of international labor migrants, particularly in sectors such as domestic work, caregiving, healthcare, agriculture, and service industries.

Gender mainstreaming has been widely adopted as a key policy strategy to address gender-based inequalities in labor migration by integrating gender perspectives into all stages of migration governance. International frameworks, including those developed by UN Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), emphasize the need for gender-responsive migration policies that protect migrant workers from discrimination, exploitation, and violence.

However, despite these commitments, persistent gaps remain between policy objectives and lived realities. Women migrant workers continue to face disproportionate risks, including informal employment, limited access to legal protection, restricted mobility, wage disparities, and heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence. At the same time, existing gender mainstreaming approaches have faced criticism for being overly generalized, insufficiently intersectional, or inadequately responsive to diverse migration contexts.

Despite the widespread institutionalization of gender mainstreaming within migration governance, women migrant workers continue to experience structural vulnerabilities, including concentration in informal or low-regulation sectors, limited access to legal remedies, wage disparities, and heightened exposure to gender-based violence and exploitation. These outcomes point not to a lack of normative commitment, but to challenges in implementation, enforcement, and contextual adaptation.

In response, growing scholarly and policy-oriented literature has called for a critical reassessment of how gender mainstreaming operates within labor migration regimes. Such reassessment does not imply a retreat from gender equality objectives, but rather an effort to refine existing approaches to ensure greater responsiveness to diverse migration contexts. Standardized gender frameworks, while valuable at the normative level, may insufficiently capture the intersection of gender with legal status, ethnicity, class, age, and caregiving responsibilities, thereby limiting their effectiveness in practice.



Ultimately, refining gender mainstreaming within labor migration requires balancing universal human rights principles with sensitivity to socio-economic and cultural contexts. Effective frameworks must remain adaptable to shifting labor demands, migration patterns, and political environments, while continuing to address structural inequalities. A strengthened and context-aware approach to gender mainstreaming has the potential to improve labor protections, reduce vulnerabilities, and promote equitable participation in migration systems.

a. Key Terms

- *Gender-based violence (GBV)*: An umbrella term for any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will based on gender. GBV includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm or suffering directed at someone because they are female, male, or gender-diverse. For example, the World Bank notes GBV covers violence or threats “based on socially ascribed differences between women and men”.
- *Intersectionality*: A framework for understanding how multiple social identities (such as gender, race, class, age, migration status, etc.) overlap and intersect, creating unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. OHCHR explains it as recognizing “the complex ways in which social identities overlap and can create compounding experiences of discrimination and concurrent forms of oppression”. For instance, a female migrant worker may face discrimination both as a woman and as a migrant, which intersects in specific ways.
- *Human rights-based approach (HRBA)*: A policy framework grounded in international human rights standards. In this approach, all development and migration policies are guided by human rights norms and principles. As UNRISD/ILO notes, an HRBA is “normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human



rights.” This means migrants and workers are viewed as rights-holders with entitlements (e.g., to fair treatment), and governments and employers are duty-bearers responsible for upholding those rights.

- *Gender discrimination*: Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on gender that impairs or denies equality. For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines gender (sex) discrimination as any action “made based on sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying” women’s enjoyment of their rights. In practice, gender discrimination can be written in law (de jure) or happen in practice (de facto), and prevents equal opportunities for women or men.
- *Empowerment*: The process of increasing individuals’ strength, confidence, and access to resources and decision-making. In gender terms, women’s empowerment means giving women and girls more control over their lives and choices. UNICEF defines it as raising people’s awareness, self-confidence, and access to resources so they can challenge and change the structures that reinforce gender inequality. Empowered migrant women, for example, are better able to assert their labor rights and participate fully in society.
- *Labour migration*: The movement of people from one place to another for work. Specifically, as defined by IOM, labour migration is “the movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for employment”. This includes temporary or long-term moves in sectors like construction, agriculture, or domestic work. Labour migration is a key part of the global economy and can affect gender dynamics both in origin and destination communities.

b. Overview

i. Current Gender Mainstreaming Frameworks



The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, agreed in 1995 by 189 countries, elaborates actions under 12 critical areas for concern. These generate gains for women and girls across all areas of their lives and underpin achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals. Based on evidence from the thirtieth anniversary review of progress on the Beijing Platform for Action, including the national reports of 159 Member States, and consultation with partners, UN-Women has defined a Beijing+30 Action Agenda. It comprises six key actions to make faster strides on both platform commitments and the global goals.

For All Women and Girls: A Digital Revolution

A notable **70% of countries are boosting science, technology, engineering, mathematics and digital skills among women and girls** but are still slow in translating education gains into better jobs.

For All Women and Girls: Freedom from Poverty

Social protection programmes have grown in 79% of countries. Disparities in access remain among the most marginalized women, however, including those in informal work. The share of countries promoting decent care jobs is trending up but slowly.

For All Women and Girls: Zero Violence

While **79% of countries have national action plans and 90% have laws to end violence against women and girls**, most do not provide nearly enough funding, enforcement or protection.

For All Women and Girls: Full and Equal Decision-Making Power

While **52% of countries have temporary special measures to boost women's participation in politics**, limited compliance slows progress towards equal representation. It also undercuts the quality of policymaking and accountability to women and girls.

For All Women and Girls: Peace and Security

As crises multiply, **112 countries and territories have adopted national action plans on women, peace and security.** But only 28% have increased funds to implement them, despite the devastating impacts of crises on women and girls and their proven roles in resolving them.

For All Women and Girls: Climate Justice

While **53% of countries have integrated gender in disaster and climate laws and policies**, only 34% have taken steps to ensure women's access to green jobs. This undermines the potential to build equality into transitions to sustainable development.

These actions, if taken thoroughly, can accelerate equality by freeing women and girls from poverty and increasing their voice, choice, and safety. They help close the persistent gaps in the current state, thus preventing any possible backlash towards the movement.



Opposition to gender equality has been an ongoing discussion for decades. Yet almost 30 years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, anti-gender equality organizations and movements have found avenues to grow in strength and visibility. In 2025, the latest wave of “gender backlash” is threatening hard-won gains for women and girls. It poses renewed challenges to commitments to the rights of women and girls, and LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, plus) persons, while also undermining human rights and democratic institutions more broadly.

Wanting things to stay the same to keep their special benefits, efforts for gender equality are often blocked by groups. Such opposition includes upholding discriminatory laws or patriarchal gender norms, supporting a culture of misogyny that undervalues women’s roles, and blocking gender equality policies. Yet not all forms of opposition are labelled gender backlash.

While there is debate among scholars and activists on how to define this backlash, it is understood here as deliberate, organized attempts to roll back established commitments, rights, and achievements in gender equality, women’s rights, and women’s empowerment as defined in a given local, national, regional, or global context. It usually takes the form of orchestrated, often virulent political opposition to the rights of women, girls, and people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and to the actors who champion them.

ii. International Cooperation and Member States' Role

No single state can manage the gendered dimensions of migration alone. International cooperation is the bedrock of gender-responsive governance.

Bilateral and Multilateral Agreements: New initiatives like the STREAM program (Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers in the South Asia-Gulf Corridor) show promise by including non-nationals in maternity benefits (Saudi Arabia) and establishing provident funds (Bahrain and Oman). However, most Bilateral Labor Agreements (BLAs) still lack explicit gender-responsive protections and focus on "vague mentions" of national laws.



Regional Frameworks: ASEAN has been a leader in reviewing laws and policies for women migrant workers through the Spotlight Initiative's "Safe and Fair" program. This includes the establishment of Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) that provide gender-sensitive support and information.

The Global Compact for Migration (GCM): The GCM serves as the primary roadmap for international cooperation. Implementation requires a "whole-of-government" and "whole-of-society" approach, involving trade unions, civil society, and women's rights organizations in the design of migration policies.

Standard Setting by ILO and UN Women: The ILO provides critical guidance on fair recruitment and the care economy. UN Women's "Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming" (2022/2025) offers tools for integrating gender analysis into all areas of development and humanitarian response.

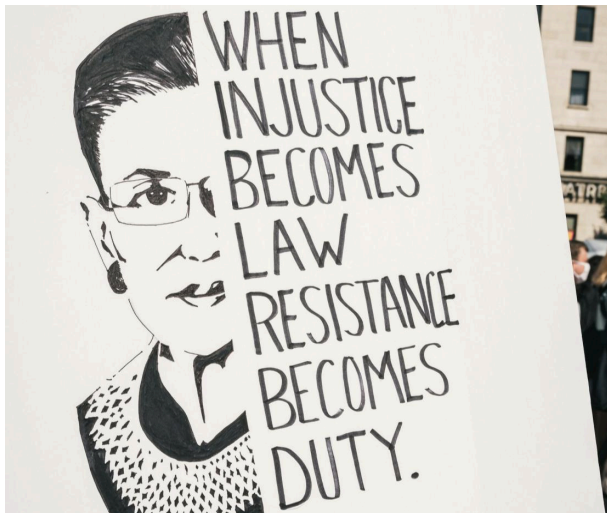


Photo: "When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty. Gayatri Malhotra. 2021. Public domain.

6. Main Areas of Concern: Most common forms of opposition

The opposition usually starts with "moral" or "traditional" foundations. These are often framed as protecting the "natural family" against state intervention. People who oppose egalitarian ideas

base their actions on a few fundamental views. In terms of thematic focus, the most common



forms of opposition relate to politicized gender policies that touch on religious or customary issues. There is a strong focus on policies that regulate procreation and child-rearing, sexuality and family relations (spanning sexual and reproductive health and rights, particularly abortion), the recognition of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and comprehensive sexuality education.

The thematic focus of anti-gender equality activism expands to other progressive policy areas, as seen in the following three key sectors:

- 1) **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR):** This is the most consistent battleground. It includes opposition to abortion access, contraception, and IVF.
- 2) **LGBTIQ+ Rights:** Opposition focuses on the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships and gender identity laws (specifically policies that allow for self-identification).
- 3) **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE):** Activists often frame CSE as "indoctrination" or "sexualization of children," arguing that parents should have the sole right to educate their children on these matters.

More recently, violence against women and women's political representation have emerged as areas for anti-gender action and policy dismantling. In Europe, for instance, the Istanbul Convention to address violence against women has been a focal point for backlash. It is a landmark treaty by the Council of Europe to combat domestic violence. Opponents claim it "smuggles" in gender-neutral language that undermines the traditional family structure. This led to Turkey's withdrawal and stalling of ratification in countries like Hungary and Bulgaria. Widespread campaigns against gender equality have contributed to the "normalization" of gender inequalities and anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiments to varying degrees across the world, with some common and distinctive features emerging across countries and regions.



Crafting a compelling narrative that often includes backlash against gender equality and hostility towards outsiders and the subsequent impacts of the backlash are tangible, affecting legislation, institutional structures, and the safety of individuals.

The consequences are particularly severe in several key areas:

- 1. Institutional Dismantling:** Since 2023, several countries have seen the abolition or rebranding of ministries dedicated to gender equality. In Argentina, the Milei administration closed the Ministry of Women, Genders, and Diversity and the Undersecretariat for Protection Against Gender Violence, leaving the country without a dedicated institution for eradicating gender-based violence for the first time in 40 years. In South Korea, President Yoon Suk Yeol fulfilled an "anti-feminist" campaign pledge by rebranding the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family to remove the word "Women" from its Korean title and transferring key employment units to other bodies, which critics argue undermines gender-sensitive labor policies.
- 2. Legal Rollbacks and Criminalization:** Legislation protecting sexual and reproductive rights and preventing violence is being rescinded. Argentina's government has pledged to remove the aggravating factor of "femicide" from the penal code, while in the United States, 49 anti-LGBTQ laws were passed in 2024 alone. Furthermore, some states have manipulated multilateral mechanisms to undermine gender equality, with Argentina becoming the only country to reject a declaration on gender equality at the 2024 G20 forum.
- 3. Funding Crises:** Civil society organizations are facing extreme pressure due to repressive laws and the withdrawal of state funding. In El Salvador, a 2025 law imposed a 30% tax on donations to NGOs, while in Argentina, programs for survivors of gender-based violence saw budget cuts of up to 100%. This creates a "perfect storm" where the needs of women and girls are increasing while the resources to support them are disappearing.



- 4. Violence and Harassment:** The backlash has normalized violence against women in public life. Online sexual abuse, such as the Nth Room case in South Korea, and the rise of technology-facilitated gender-based violence are deterring women from participating in politics and journalism. In Argentina, lawyers and advocates warn that the government's narrative challenging the credibility of victims has "unlocked a whole spectrum of hatred" and increased violence based on prejudice. While these ideological shifts threaten global norms, the reassessment of gender mainstreaming must also address several critical "red-flag" areas that currently imperil the safety and rights of migrant workers:
- 5. Violence and Sexual Exploitation:** Women and girls constitute 98% of all sexually exploited victims of trafficking. Violence occurs at all stages of migration, from transit to the workplace. In many host countries, restrictive migration statuses—such as the "one employer rule" or visa sponsorship systems—make it nearly impossible for victims to report abuse without risking deportation.
- 6. The Digital Gender Divide:** A lack of access to technology and digital literacy limits women's ability to access vital information, secure employment, and use mobile apps for safe travel or financial services. This divide is particularly acute in rural areas and among older migrants.
- 7. Lack of Access to Justice:** Migrant women and gender-diverse persons face systemic barriers to the legal system. These include language barriers, fear of authorities, and laws that do not recognize gender-based violence as a labor violation. In 2024, LGBTQI+ migrants report higher rates of discrimination in the workplace (25% vs 16%) but are less likely to seek redress due to fear of stigma or criminalization.
- 8. Health and Reproductive Rights:** Migrant women often have limited access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, including maternity care and gender-affirming services. This



is exacerbated by the backlash against "gender ideology," which has led some countries to ban gender-affirming care and restrict inclusive sexuality education.

7. Case Examples of Member Countries

In response to rising anti-abortion policies and the continued epidemic of sexual violence across Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional reproductive rights organization has utilized strategic litigation as a key tool to challenge harmful laws, influence policy reform, and set human rights precedents. Faced with legal and political resistance, particularly around access to abortion for survivors of sexual violence, the organization presented emblematic cases before United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These cases focused on the rights of girls under the age of 14 who had been subjected to rape and subsequently forced to carry pregnancies to term highlighting this as a widespread, systemic violation rather than isolated incidents.

Through this legal advocacy, the organization succeeded in securing groundbreaking decisions that recognized forced pregnancy as a violation of girls' rights to dignity, health, and freedom from cruel treatment. These rulings established international legal precedent, calling on states including Nicaragua, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru to align their laws and policies with human rights standards, irrespective of existing national abortion frameworks.

In response to escalating risks faced by WHRDs particularly in conflict, post-conflict, and humanitarian settings the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), in partnership with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), launched a dedicated Funding Window for WHRDs in 2022. The window provides both rapid-response and long-term funding to WHRDs to ensure their protection and enable them to continue their vital work despite intensifying repression, threats, reprisals, and intimidation.



By centering WHRDs who work in fragile and often dangerous contexts—such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Myanmar, Colombia, and Ukraine the WPHF funding window addresses critical gaps in traditional donor support, which often overlooks individual activists or smaller grassroots organizations. Through flexible, accessible, and trust based funding modalities, the mechanism offers core support for physical and digital protection, relocation, psychosocial care, and legal aid. This has enabled WHRDs to respond to threats they face and continue their activism in the defence of human rights, including documenting human rights violations, supporting survivors of violence, and advocating for peace and accountability.

As of June 2025, 921 WHRDs and 2,704 of their dependants have received support through this window. The model's agility, commitment to feminist movement priorities and principles, and emphasis on co-creation with defenders make it a powerful example of pushing forward protection strategies in the face of intensifying backlash and threats to peace. It demonstrates the importance of coupling political advocacy with resourcing tools that centre the needs, safety, and leadership of WHRDs on the frontlines of resistance.

- In Belo Horizonte, Brazil, young leaders have demonstrated the transformative power of intersectional and intergenerational organizing in a context marked by political regression, shrinking civic space, and backlash against gender equality. Young women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and other WHRDs often face dismissal, institutional obstacles, and social stigma. To respond to these challenges, a youth-led movement in Belo Horizonte has developed a robust and inclusive model of organizing. Rather than waiting for recognition or space to be granted, these young activists have built a platform for collective action, positioning themselves as co-creators of solutions on issues ranging from gender justice to climate resilience and social inclusion.

Their strategy includes empowering diverse youth voices, integrating gender perspectives into youth spaces, and formalizing commitments from public institutions to uphold gender and youth-responsive policies. As a result, this movement has achieved notable progress in institutionalizing youth participation and breaking down barriers to policy influence, even amid



political volatility. Their efforts have not only shifted municipal policy dynamics but also strengthened the resilience of feminist and youth movements. By ensuring youth leaders have access to tools, training, and financial resources, this initiative is paving the way for a more inclusive and democratic future one that recognizes young people as essential architects of change, rather than passive beneficiaries of it.

These examples show actions that have taken against backlash upon gender mainstreaming. Despite the efforts you can see below at the chart that they are not enough and will not be enough at the pace we are going.

- Mexico is the first country in the Global South to adopt a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). Under its first female president, Mexico is a fierce advocate for "Substantive Equality." Mexico's role in labor migration is unique because it is a country of origin, transit, and destination. They lead the push for a "National Care System" that would support migrant women, arguing that labor migration policies must account for the "global chain of care"—where migrant women leave their families to provide care work in wealthier nations.

On feminist foreign policy specifically, the message was clear: adopting an FFP is not enough if it does not translate into concrete actions with tangible results in fiscal justice, peacebuilding, and the eradication of structural inequalities. FFPs must be real tools for transformation, not merely symbolic frameworks. In the face of growing antifeminist backlash in the region, participants called for unity within the Latin American and Caribbean feminist movement and urged States and actors promoting FFPs as “international models” not to remain silent in the face of rollbacks in Latin America and the Caribbean, as silence implies complicity.

- Norway is a "Super-Model" for gender equality, consistently ranking in the top three globally. Norway's 2025–2030 Gender Equality Strategy focuses on financial independence, specifically for migrant women. In labor migration, Norway advocates for the "Introduction Programme," which provides targeted language and job training for



female refugees to prevent them from falling into unpaid care work or isolation. They are the strongest critics of the global backlash, often providing "bridge-building" diplomacy to keep gender on the UN agenda. Acknowledging the agenda's importance Norway's National Action Plan: Women, Peace and Security developed.

Implementation of this action plan will take place at many different levels and in different forums – nationally, bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally. In third countries, the focus will continue to be on selected priority countries where Norway has a presence or plays a special role that makes effective engagement possible. The list of priority countries will be dynamic and can be adjusted as conditions change. For 2023, the list is as follows: Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Jordan, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine, the Philippines, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela and Yemen.

8. Links Between Agenda A and B

The rising global backlash against gender mainstreaming and the reassessment of gender mainstreaming in labor migration are closely interconnected, reflecting broader tensions surrounding gender equality, governance, and social change. While Agenda Item A examines the sources and manifestations of resistance to gender mainstreaming, Agenda Item B explores how these dynamics affect the effectiveness and legitimacy of gender-responsive policies within a critical policy domain.

Political and ideological backlash directly shapes labor migration governance. Narratives opposing gender mainstreaming often portray gender-responsive migration policies as externally imposed or ideologically driven, contributing to reduced political support for protective frameworks targeting migrant women. This resistance has, in some contexts, resulted in weakened labor protections, limited access to justice for migrant workers, and the marginalization of gender considerations within migration policy design.

At the same time, labor migration serves as a focal point where gendered inequalities become highly visible. Migrant women's concentration in informal, feminized, and low-wage sectors intensifies public debates around gender roles, care work, and national labor markets.



These dynamics are frequently instrumentalized within backlash discourse, reinforcing stereotypes and framing gender mainstreaming as incompatible with economic competitiveness or social cohesion.

The two agenda items are further linked through shared structural challenges in policy implementation. In both cases, gender mainstreaming frameworks often encounter difficulties related to insufficient data, limited institutional coordination, and inadequate integration of intersectional perspectives. When gender mainstreaming fails to address the complex realities of migrant workers, it risks reinforcing critiques that it is ineffective or disconnected from lived experience—thereby fueling further backlash.

Moreover, resistance to gender mainstreaming constrains opportunities for reform and innovation within labor migration governance. Political environments shaped by anti-gender rhetoric may discourage states from experimenting with more nuanced or inclusive approaches, even where evidence suggests such policies improve labor outcomes and social stability. This creates a cyclical relationship in which backlash undermines policy effectiveness, and perceived policy shortcomings reinforce backlash.

9. Questions to be Addressed

1. How does backlash against gender equality initiatives affect the design, implementation, and enforcement of gender-responsive labor migration policies?



2. In what ways can gender mainstreaming frameworks be refined to better address the intersection of gender with legal status, sectoral employment, ethnicity, and caregiving responsibilities in labor migration?
3. To what extent do existing international legal and policy frameworks adequately protect the rights of women migrant workers, and where do gaps in implementation persist?
4. How can improved data collection, including sex-disaggregated and sector-specific data, strengthen evidence-based gender mainstreaming in migration governance?
5. What role should international cooperation play in countering backlash and promoting coherent gender-responsive approaches across countries of origin, transit, and destination?
6. How can the participation of migrant workers, civil society organizations, and trade unions be meaningfully incorporated into gender mainstreaming strategies to enhance legitimacy and effectiveness?

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