

The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) draws global attention to the rights of all migrants and, recognising the heightened risk of exploitation faced by migrant women and children, calls for increased safeguards and legal recognition

Geneva, Switzerland, 18 December 2014 – Today on [International Migrants Day](#), the International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)) highlights that approximately 232 million people live outside their country of origin,¹ including over 15 million refugees, the majority of whom are women and children.² States must ensure that all migrants are afforded adequate and express protection in national and international legislation in order to guarantee their fundamental human rights and to protect them from all forms of discrimination. IFUW urges states to immediately ratify and incorporate the [International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#) and the [European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers](#), which expressly include the right for all migrant workers and their children to access education. Additional international standards for the protection of migrant workers, including trade union rights and the abolition of forced and child labour, as enunciated by the [International Labour Organisation](#), must be upheld by states and individual employers. Recognising that migrant women are a distinctly vulnerable economic group, IFUW insists that the empowerment of women should be a specific target in all migration policies, including by providing recognition to foreign qualifications, and access to linguistic and vocational training.

President of IFUW, Catherine Bell, emphasised the limited professional prospects faced by migrant women, where they are often subjected to unfavourable working conditions with little possibility of recourse in the event of mistreatment “Migrant women are distinctly over-represented in domestic labour, despite the fact that many have higher qualifications than nationals employed within the same sector.³ By not providing adequate opportunities for the recognition of foreign qualifications, these women are marginalised both professionally and socio-economically. Linguistic barriers make it difficult for migrant women to understand their legal rights, which increase the risk of exploitation. States need to reinforce the principle of non-discrimination in the work place, where all employees must be treated with dignity and where everyone should receive equal pay for work of equal value– women and men, migrants and nationals.”

By providing migrant women and girls with access to lifelong, quality education and vocational training, the risk of exposure to vulnerable employment, discrimination and exploitation is greatly reduced. IFUW urges states to prioritise the situation of migrant women and children, and calls for the introduction of specifically tailored educational and professional policies and programmes to improve their living conditions and opportunities.

The International Federation of University Women ([IFUW](#)) is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and has an international membership. Founded in 1919, IFUW is the leading girls’ and women’s global organisation advocating for women’s rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. IFUW is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO.

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¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) “World Migration in Figures” (2013) <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/World-Migration-in-Figures.pdf> .

² United Nations briefing paper: Refugees <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/refugees/> .

³ Maria Gallotti and Jesse Mertens, ‘Promoting integration for migrant domestic workers in Europe: A synthesis of Belgium, France, Italy and Spain’ International Migration Papers No. 118, International Labour Organization 2013, p. 11.