



Statement from the Network of Latin and Caribbean Women in Spain on the impacts and needed measures to make sure the pandemic doesn't leave migrant women behind.

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At this time when Spain is facing a global health, care, production and consumption crisis, we express our greatest recognition and appreciation for the health and non-health care personnel who are on the front line in dealing with this unprecedented emergency. Today, more than ever, free and universal public health care for all has value and meaning.

Although it is true that this virus is blind to social classes, ethnic groups, political ideas or religious beliefs, the impact of the pandemic on people's lives and exposure to the virus considers societal stratification. The health crisis caused by the pandemic lays bare the conditions of inequality and vulnerability of certain groups in society, including migrants.

The Spanish government has taken exceptional measures contained in Decree 463/2020 "state of alarm" to offer support to Spanish citizens that are faced by the impacts of the pandemic, including basic income schemes. ***We would like to point out that they exclude groups that have a fragile or no connection with legal citizenship to reside in Spain***, such as people in an irregular situation residing in the country, asylum seekers, people who are interned in the Foreigners Internment Centers (CIEs), or people who work in the informal economy, such as migrant domestic workers, many of whom are domestic workers.

One of the largest migrant groups in in Spain are migrant women working as domestic workers, with over 630,000 people (Labour Force Survey), of whom only 65 per cent are registered and recognized with a legal residency. Among those working in the informal economy, there is a significant group of migrant women in a legal irregular situation whose functions exceed those of domestic work, as they are generally assigned to care for dependents -the elderly and the sick. The lack of a labour contract, their invisibility and the absence of labour inspections expose them to labour exploitation and, in some cases, even to working conditions that can be associated with slavery.

Many migrant women in the informal domestic economy have told our network that they are ***not having the necessary means or materials to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in their workplaces***, and thus they are exposing their health. Those who do not work as interns and return home after a long working day are also putting the health of their families at risk.

The current health crisis is at the same time an economic, social and family crisis. It is weakening the economy of many families and in some cases impoverishing them. It causes non-payment of rent and other socio-economic hardships; it considerably reduces social ties and combined with worries about safety, food, health, etc., it is leading to depression or anxiety and ends up causing mental health problems which, in short, is also a public health problem.

The pandemic and the government's response to it also ***increases gender-based violence*** by women and their children who were already experiencing it before confinement but are now forced to share housing 24 hours a day with their aggressors. In the first days of social confinement, the first cases of gender-based violence murders were reported, and calls to 016 have increased by 20%, according to official sources.



Health care for the migrant population suffered a major setback in 2012 with the adoption of the regulation of Royal Decree Law 16/2012. Although it has been repealed - partially - by the current Spanish Government, long-term effects are still with us to this day. It is visible in the discrimination and racism that prevails in certain sectors of the population who are demanding the exclusion of migrants from the health system. See for example, the recent press statement by a member of the far-right Spanish party Vox.

And the the Law on Foreigners has considerably restricted the right of migrant women to live with their families by extending the requirements for reuniting family members in the amendment made in 2009. This has led to a considerable weakening of the support network for migrant women living in Spain, which today shows its worst face.

As the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women, we cannot fail to mention the ***transnational effects of this pandemic, which is altering the health and economy of our countries and our families of origin***. These impacts add to the anguish and concern of migrant women workers, who support family members both here and there. We are very concerned about the weak public health systems that will be unable to cope with this pandemic and will condemn thousands of women and men to poverty.

To all of this, ***we must denounce the precariousness in which we migrant women's associations carry out our work***, relying basically on voluntary work. In recent decades, the effects of the economic crisis, including the reduction of programs aimed at associations, as well as the rise of the extreme right in power -as in the case of Andalusia- have had a catastrophic result on the ecosystem of migrant associations. Our associations play a necessary role in supporting migrant women and their communities. The shrinking of public space that has taken place, has been negatively impacting the care of the most vulnerable groups, those to whom migrant women's associations have permanent access thanks to our own efforts.

At this time more than ever, we need the responsibility of governments, the different economic sectors and society in general, to alleviate the most harmful effects that the current state of alarm is causing among the most vulnerable population.

Our Demands

From the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Network we demand that the Spanish Government ensures the following:

- 1. Papers for everyone NOW.** Documentary regularization of all migrants who are in a legal irregular situation in Spain, in most cases people who have been living and working for years in the country.
- 2. Unemployment benefits for household employees NOW.** The containment measures agreed by the Spanish Government to help alleviate the negative effects in the labour and economic sphere should also apply to migrant workers in this sector. And one month of unemployment, as announced, is not enough.
- 3. Immediate and effective protection for domestic workers who maintain their jobs during the current state of alarm, especially those whose task it is to care for people in a situation of dependency.** This includes health protection measures and the provision of protective equipment.
- 4. Improvement of accessibility to the Active Insertion Income** for (migrant) groups that have been made vulnerable by the coronavirus crisis and the state of alarm and regulation, in the medium and long term. This means inclusion in the Universal Basic Income scheme.

5. **Urgent measures to ensure housing, electricity, food, etc. for the habitual residence of the most vulnerable people, in particular migrant women with family responsibilities** in case of non-payment as a result of the pandemic. Measures include exemptions from the payment of electricity, heating or internet connection costs or more flexible access to energy voucher subsidies.
6. **Measures aimed at improving the habitability of many families living in confinement in a situation of overcrowding, shared housing, small spaces or lack of hygiene.** Expansion of residential places for persons or families in a situation of residential vulnerability or living on the street.
7. **Creation of food programmes (such as the Food Bank), adapted to the current state of alarm, for example through the granting of supermarket shopping cards,** for those families living in a situation of social exclusion, aggravated by that state.
8. **Urgent measures to reconcile family and working life for women in single-parent families, in particular migrant domestic workers,** who continue to work both in the informal economy and on formal contracts.
9. **Diversification of care and protection measures for women victims of gender violence.** It is necessary that the 016 service and all other services made available online or by telephone have an **interpreter service**.
 - Urgent coordination with the consulates of origin, in order to overcome administrative barriers that may arise from the national and migratory situation, both for the victim and for her children (Measure 214 of the State Covenant).
 - **Expansion of places in shelters for women victims of gender violence and their children,** including provision of new spaces where they can temporarily reside at least until the state of alarm lasts.
 - **Awareness campaigns on gender violence should be developed in several languages,** making it easier for the message to reach migrant women from various backgrounds, especially those in an irregular administrative situation.
10. **Specific and effective measures to protect, support and contain women in prostitution, most of whom are migrants.** None of the measures agreed upon so far by the Government to help contain the effects of the state of alarm has any effect on this group, given their invisibility and special lack of protection.
11. **Closure of the CIES, with immediate measures to protect those who are detained there.**

The contribution of migrant women who provide care to the most vulnerable group every day from their different places, especially domestic workers, home care workers, or workers in care homes in the different corners of the country is of great importance for the functioning of the social fabric, we contribute to the development of the country.

WE CANNOT BE LEFT BEHIND!