



SCHOOL OF POLITICAL TRAINING BY RED LATINAS IN SPAIN

In order to improve political participation by migrant women, the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women in Spain (the Red Latina Network) organized a School of Political Training (25 April and 9 May 2020). The two modules “Migration, Citizenship and Participation” and “Migrant Women Confronting Violence” were intended to strengthen migrant women's knowledge of participation and citizenship and of the forms of violence affecting migrant women.

In the first module, the issues of migration, citizenship and participation were discussed. Only a small percentage of migrants in Spain are able to actively participate in politics due to bureaucratic difficulties in gaining citizenship and official recognition. The first module considered citizenship as a construct, a utopia towards which migrants are moving. During the training, various strategies to strengthen participation were identified. The conclusion was that greater political commitment by the Latina network is necessary and participants agreed to create a political agenda around decolonial and intersectional citizenship and participation.

The second module addressed issues related to the large number of migrant women in gender-based violent incidents and the lack of institutional support in those cases. Migrant women also face structural violence on a daily basis due to being both migrants and women, which puts them in extremely precarious situations. Attendees were presented with various techniques that can be used to assist migrant women survivors of violence. It was also stressed that the women offering help to survivors of violence need to prioritize self care due to possible burnout.

The aim of the training was for migrant women to reshape their personal experience (body, emotions and actions) together with reflective feminist approaches and activism into political agency. Combining video and face-to-face meetings, supported by written and audiovisual materials, the training aimed to empower migrant women by showing them how to use collective reflection as a tool for transforming societies.

When thinking about citizenship, we must place care at the centre, as both a means and an end – “care-citizenship”. With “care-citizenship” as the goal, the present time must be seen as a starting point.

The obstacles and discrimination experienced by migrant women are part of the experience of fighting inequalities and rising to power.



Background to the School of Political Training

The Red Latina Network was formed following a process of communication and coordination between organizations of Latin American women in Spain. It is a national network established by and for immigrant women. Their main goal is to empower themselves and defend their rights as migrant women through dialogue, learning and sisterhood. They position themselves as political subjects endowed with rights, claiming active citizenship for migrants. Currently, the network is made up of 14 associations based in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Zumaia, Donosti, Granada, Seville and Galicia. Since its inception, it has carried out training sessions to strengthen the knowledge and skills of its members through joint reflection, in order to improve their capacity for political influence.

The network decided to organize a School of Political Training for migrant women in order to enhance this community's political participation. The network assessed that an open debate on the political participation of migrant women in the country was both urgent and necessary. A workshop organised as part of the 4th Network Meeting in 2018 brought to light the importance of the political participation of migrant women and described the obstacles to migrant women's participation as well as the strategies women use to overcome certain obstacles.

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It was concluded that since migrant women actively participate in every aspect of life (personal, family, social, work, community) they can and should also participate politically in all of these areas. After a Political Forum in 2019, to which allied associations and political parties were invited, the Latina Network concluded that a training session on political participation and citizenship geared to all the members of the Network was necessary in order to raise awareness of this issue.

The School of Political Training aimed to train members of the Red Latina Network whose participation was limited. A total of 49 women took part, representing 14 associations of the Network.

Methodological approach

The training sessions are based on the principles of Popular Education and on Feminist and Reflective Participatory Action-Research. Among other things, these principles include experiential education that uses the body, emotions and actions and participatory processes based on activism and reflective feminist approaches deriving from democracy, care and transparency. The goal of the training is to shift the meaning of cultural patterns in order for the participants to re-learn and revolutionize them. The participants use personal experience and redefine it as political. The training is meant to be transformative and to show the participants how to use collective reflection as a tool for transforming the societies where they live, in pursuit of justice and equity.

The participants were sent written and audiovisual material in preparation for the training. The training included face-to-face and online workshops and ended with an evaluation during which proposals for further action were collected.



MODULE 1: MIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

Background

Article 13 of the Spanish Constitution, which extends suffrage (the right to vote in political elections) in municipal elections to foreign citizens, was initially conceived to accommodate Spanish emigrants living abroad. In the 1980s, Spanish society began to change and diversify due to the arrival of migrants to the country. The aforementioned clause has turned the constitutional mandate into an obstacle to recognition of the right to political participation for migrants. The law imposes unjustified restrictions on the right to vote for non-EU citizens. Foreign persons may only vote in municipal elections, and of the 100 nationalities present in the country, only 13 nationalities are authorized to do so because of bilateral accords existing between Spain and those countries.

In the 2015 municipal elections, of more than 4,700,000 adult foreigners resident in the country at that time, only 464,074 were entitled to vote and of those non-EU citizens made up only 5%.

The right to active suffrage (running for office) is restricted to those who acquire Spanish citizenship or are EU citizens. The obstacles to the political participation of migrants are not limited to voting rights; there are also major barriers to active participation in unions, political parties and social movements.

The importance of political participation is intertwined with the societal problems that many migrants experience: precarious labour situations, the difficulty of meeting basic subsistence needs, the lack of institutional support, the absence of a broad campaign of political education for the population and the lack of migrant role-models in politics who could represent this population.

The organizers also created a collaborative online document in which participants could contribute responses to the following six questions:

- a. What does citizenship mean to us?
- b. How is citizenship practised?
- c. How and why do migrations question the model of national citizenship or citizenship based on sovereignty?
- d. What model of citizenship might we promote in our Network so that there might be room for everyone?
- e. What spaces do we consider vital and fundamental in order to demand and guarantee effective citizenship for migrant persons in Spain?
- f. Is citizenship limited to a matter of rights?

Organization of the first session

The module “Migration, Citizenship and Participation” was split into two sessions. The first session was held on 25 April 2020 and lasted two hours. The participants were asked to read two pieces of text before attending the module. The first was an article entitled “Migration and Citizenship: an Oxymoron?” by Liliana Suárez. This article provides a historical framework for the notion of citizenship in relation to the modern state. It describes how the modern state deals with non-citizens, how differences are defined



and how other cultures and territories are imagined to be riddled with inequality and exclusion. The other article was: “Migrant women and participation: building a favourable environment from their position as political subjects” by the Solidarity Alliance. This article focuses on the right to participation as a foundation for human development, peaceful coexistence and community cohesion in the context of the Foreigners’ Law and a labour market that disproportionately affects migrant women.

Conclusions of the first session

Citizenship is a concept in constant construction and easily thought of as a utopia towards which migrants are moving. As they move towards this utopia of citizenship, they must establish themselves as political subjects, with the rights that every human being is entitled to.



When thinking about citizenship, we must place care at the centre, as both a means and an end – “care-citizenship”. With “care-citizenship” as the goal, the present time must be seen as a starting point and the obstacles and discrimination experienced by migrant women are part of the experience of fighting inequalities and rising to power.

The perspective going forward must be intersectional as well as decolonial.

Beyond gender analysis it is also important to address the inherent racism and white supremacy of patriarchal and capitalist institutions, the neoliberal market and Foreigners’ Law, since these are all structures that create and perpetuate different forms of violence that affect migrant women.

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As migrant women cross many borders and inhabit many spaces, they do not have one, but many political “Agoras”, the main one being their own bodies, which have become “territories of struggle”. All the relationships they have with other people, their home, their community and the land they inhabit are formed through and within the body.

In the fissures of the system there are opportunities for migrant women to participate, influence and make decisions as political subjects, constituting new geographies of citizenship, new transnational forms of citizenship, and acting locally with a global perspective. Amid the many tensions and challenges that migrant women face, the first session concluded with the idea that the traps set by the system must be faced and new paths must be opened up, which take account of and include the diversity of individuals and communities.



Organization of the second session

The second session was held on 9 May 2020 and lasted two hours. The objective of the second session was to agree on a plan of action and strategies based on the work the network and individual members have been doing for years in the area of political advocacy. The participants were asked to read four pieces of text before attending the second session of the module.

The first was the summary of conclusions of the first session. The second was “Political Participation of Migrant Women”, chapter 3 of *Immigration Policies and the Extension of Citizenship in Spain*, (2020) coordinated by the Alliance for Solidarity and written by ESCODE (Estudios y Cooperación para el Desarrollo), which tells the story of the demands of the migrant movement in Spain over its 30-year history. The third document was: “Immigration in Spain: Effects and Opportunities”, a report by the CES (Consejo Económico Y Social España, 02/2019), that considers migration in Spain to be stable and therefore deems the participation of this population important to political decision-making in the country. The fourth was the: “Open Letter to the Government” written by the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women in April 2020 to demand the regularization of migrants in the context of COVID-19.

The organizers also created a collaborative online document for the representatives of each association to complete before the event:

- 1.a What political demands have migrant collectives made?
- 1.b What approaches have been taken to implement social integration policies in Spain?
- 1.c Why doesn't the migrant population vote?
- 1.d From our agenda document, prioritize the following five issues, by marking each 1 to 3 (3 being the most and 1 being the least relevant):
 - The Foreigners' Law
 - Justice at the territorial borders
 - Recognition of asylum and refuge

Conclusions of the second session

During the session, some of the landmarks of migrant organizing in Spain over the last 30 years were named, in some of which the Latina Network participated actively:

- Demands of the movement “Papers for all”, in existence since 1999: regularization of people without authorized residency and modifications to the Foreigners Law.
- Decent conditions for domestic and care workers. Ratification of the ILO Convention 189, making the Special Status for Domestic Employees equivalent to the General Workers' Status, raising awareness about the importance of care in sustaining life and the economy of the country.
- Campaign to close the Migrant Internment Centers (CIEs) in Spain.
- Participation in the 15M movement camps (*Indignados* movement).



- Campaign to repeal the law RDL (16/2012) that excluded undocumented foreigners from access to health care.
- Alliance with the movement against abusive mortgages (like the Platform of Mortgage Victims - PAH), outcry against banks and predatory investment funds, demands to stop evictions.
- Participation in the “Regularization Now” campaigns.
- Highlighting the forms of violence that affect migrant women in Spain. Participation in the shadow report of the CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women).
- Leadership in the establishment of migrant women’s associations.
- Alliances with the Spanish feminist movement.

Diverse participation strategies that have been used in previous years were identified: lock-ins in institutions, demonstrations, rallies, marches, political forums, training sessions, local round tables, advocacy documents, campaigns.

The session also reflected on the current laws and policies. Public policies regarding immigration and integration have not served to broaden the concept of citizenship in a way that effectively integrates all persons. Without suffrage or access to certain economic, social and labour resources, we cannot speak of migrant persons’ citizenship, especially in the case of those whose administrative status is irregular.

Public employment policies, especially those oriented towards migrant women, are based on the notion that migrant women are a homogenous group: generally vulnerable and lacking in qualifications. It is taken for granted that they are destined for care and cleaning jobs. Their professions and degrees from their countries of origin are not recognized, which serves to maintain stereotypes and racialization of migrant women. Migrant women encounter significant obstacles to actively participating in Spanish society due to their precarious working conditions, working hours incompatible with personal and political life, difficulties caused by the digital access gap, language difficulties, a weak social fabric or the fact that in many neighbourhoods they coexist with neighbours but do not “live together” due to the lack of communitarian intercultural policies. This affects their sense of belonging and the ownership required to participate actively in these communities.

The session was concluded with a recognition of the need for political commitment by the Latina Network, who must demand the right to active and passive suffrage for migrant people in Spain and propose a new concept of citizenship that includes the entire migrant population. They agreed to design their political agenda around “Citizenship and Participation”, focusing on the following points, in order of importance:

1. The Foreigners Law
2. The right to participate. Recognition of suffrage.
3. Public policies on social integration and the exercise of citizenship.

There is a lot of cynicism and incredulity regarding politics among the migrant population. Most migrants do not have a right to vote.

The ones who have a right to vote usually limit their political expression to voting in elections and tend to not take part in building societies.

This frames the entire political situation of all migrants as extremely frustrating.



MODULE 2: MIGRANT WOMEN CONFRONTING VIOLENCE

Background

Migrant women are overrepresented in the statistics on gender-based violence in Spain. One alarming statistic is that this kind of violence kills 29 migrant women for every million foreign residents in Spain, compared with five women for every million within the Spanish population. According to the VioGen system used by the security forces, 35% of the total number of incidents involving gender-based violence (including reports, interventions and follow-up) affect migrant women.

Another statistic that offers a picture of this lack of protection has to do with the remote supervision of restraining orders. Remote supervision was provided for less than 20% of foreign women between 2009 and 2017. As for the economic assistance provided by article 27 of the Law (1/2004), only 13.3% have benefited from this, while the Active Income for Insertion, a measure taken specifically to assist victims of gender-based violence, has reached 23% of foreigners (from the report: *Migrant women and gender-based violence in Spain*, AIETI (The Association for Research and Specialization on Ibero-American Issues)) and the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women, 2018).

The “Migrant Women Confronting Violence” module was organized in order to deepen the analysis of the forms of violence that affect migrant women in Spain, including not only gender-based violence but also institutional and police violence, racism and xenophobia.

Since 2018 the Latina Network, in alliance with AIETI, has been analysing the forms of violence that affect migrant women in Spain. In that year, the Network released a political advocacy document entitled *The Right to a Life Free of Violence from the Perspective of the Network of Latin American and Caribbean Women in Spain* (2018), which broadened the debate on this question. In 2019 the Network wrote up a quantitative report on gender-based violence, based on official statistics on the issue: *Migrant Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence in Spain* (2019). The conclusion was that this kind of violence affects migrant women more than Spanish women. This report was updated in 2020.

Data from the documents opened many questions. What causes the over-representation of gender-based violence among migrant women? What responses are these women receiving from institutions and services that are meant to provide care and protection? What prevents them from being properly protected?

At the same time, since 2018 certain associations in the Network, led by Amalgama, have been running a programme called “Community Agents against Gender-Based Violence”. This programme arranges for migrant women volunteers trained in issues of gender-based violence to accompany migrant women victims of violence. This programme provides the associations in the Network with first-hand information about the situation of victims, allowing them to carry out individual and sociological analyses.

Despite the fact that foreign women are over-represented in gender violence statistics, they receive less protection. Among the fatalities between 2006 and 2016, 25% of the Spanish women victims had previously reported violence, a figure that goes up to 38% in the case of migrant women victims.



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One of the notable observations arising from these analyses is that gender-based violence does not operate alone. Migrant women experience different types of violence before migrating, during their migration, and once settled in Spain.

Discrimination, racism, xenophobia and exploitation are all forms of violence that contribute to the impact of gender-based violence, and present serious obstacles to the protection of victims when they want to report the violence.

The Red Latina network considers it essential that all their members understand this reality in depth and that they possess well-founded arguments in order to be able to exercise their role as political agents facing public authorities, to demand rights and protection for all migrant women.

Objectives

The goal of the module was to provide a space for reflection and awareness about the forms of violence that affect migrant women both as migrants and as women. They intended to review the documents published by the Latina Network and provide updated information (both quantitative and qualitative) on the situation of gender-based violence that migrant women face. The main point of the module was the fact that Latin American women deserve to live a life free from violence.

Organization of the first session

The module “Migrant Women Confronting Violence” was presented in two sessions of two hours each. The first session was held on 3 October 2020 and was moderated by a facilitator, who based the session on questions selected to generate debate. Prior to the session, a call for participation, readings for reflection and documents for collaborative work were sent out. Before attending, the attendees were asked to read a document entitled *Migrant Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence in Spain* (AIETI and the Latina Network, 2018) and the summary of *Large-Scale Survey of Violence against Women 2019*, an official instrument that systematizes the most relevant data in this field, published every four years. The statistics provide a specific and updated view of the extent, forms and features of violence against women.



Conclusions of the first session

It was concluded that messages spread by the media frame the migrant population as bearers of a violent and sexist culture, highlighting cases of gender-based violence within couples of foreign origin. These messages further stigmatize migrant people as they seep into the population and help reproduce xenophobia and racism.

Gender-based violence intersects with the normative, economic and political violence exercised by institutions and consequently migrant women find themselves in even more vulnerable positions. This prevents them from breaking cycles of violence. The situation is aggravated for those in irregular administrative situations. Furthermore, these situations intersect with social class and racialization. The outcome is a degraded form of citizenship that leaves migrant women without protection or defence against gender-based violence.

Various hierarchies are embedded within the social structure. This enables structural forms of violence, which affect different individuals and groups unequally and is often invisible. It is therefore imperative to name these forms of violence and make them visible. It is also extremely important not to speak of migrant women victims of gender-based violence as a homogenous group, since there is great diversity among women and their situations.

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Conclusions of the second session

The second session was held on 27 November 2020 and was entitled “Techniques for intervention to prevent gender-based violence”. There are four associations in the Red Latina network that actively work on assisting and accompanying migrant women victims of violence. They work on prevention, awareness raising, intervention, reparation and training in self care and in effective accompaniment. The representatives of these organizations shared practical examples drawn from their own experience.

Prevention and awareness-raising work is done with victims themselves, with the goal of encouraging them to develop a critical understanding of their own situations and the gender roles assigned to them, with additional illustration of how these roles establish inequalities and injustices. Similar work is also done with services established to provide assistance to migrant women. There are often obstacles that impede victims from turning to these services, obstacles that sometimes have to do with the prejudices, stereotypes or lack of familiarity on the part of the professionals working within them. Intercultural mediation with a gender perspective is necessary, as modelled by the programme “Community Agents against Gender-Based Violence.”



Prevention has three levels of intervention: primary (in which the causes are identified), secondary (detection, intervention, evaluation and referral) and tertiary (recovery and rehabilitation). The “Protocols for Action in Assisting Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence” are manifestly necessary, and all organizations that provide assistance should be aware of them. The associations that make up the Latina Network should be familiar with all the resources for assistance and protection in each region or province in order to better counsel women.

Training in “Skills for Accompanying Women” and in “Tools for Personal and Group Self Care” is required. Accompanying victims requires empathy and active listening, as well as patience and understanding. It requires respecting the rhythms of each person, knowing how to determine the factors of risk and of protection, and having a range of skills and strategies. Lastly, it requires recognizing our own limits when accompanying women in extremely painful circumstances, which is why training to help prevent burnout is necessary.

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