

# **The Language of Needs: Nonviolent Communication as a Framework for Emotional Self-Advocacy in Migrant Women**

**Lilia Arbogast**

*European Association of Psychology and Law, Luxembourg*

## **Abstract**

For many women, migration unsettles the ordinary conditions of speech: the familiar ways of asking, refusing, explaining, and defending oneself no longer work with the same force. This paper examines Nonviolent Communication as a conceptual framework for emotional self-advocacy in migrant women's lives. Rather than treating it as a general technique for improving interpersonal tone, the paper approaches it as a disciplined language of orientation in situations marked by dependency, cultural ambiguity, family pressure, and contact with institutions. The argument brings together Nonviolent Communication, cognitive-behavioral work on the clarification of thoughts and feelings, and intercultural psychology. It proposes a three-step model: first, the recognition of an affective state without immediate self-blame; second, the translation of distress into concrete needs and limits; third, the formulation of requests that preserve dignity while reducing escalation. Special attention is given to the moments in which a woman must speak across unequal positions: with a partner, a legal or social service, an employer, or a new community. The paper suggests that the ability to move from diffuse distress to precise speech can strengthen agency, reduce shame, and make support more usable.

**Keywords:** Agency; Boundaries; Cross-Cultural Counselling; Gendered Vulnerability; Procedural Safety