

Gender, Poverty Reduction and Migration

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Introduction

Why discuss gender and migration in the context of poverty reduction? Of the 190 million or so migrants in the world today, almost 50% are females; many, possibly the majority having moved from and within developing countries. Of the \$160 billion or so migrant remittances sent home to developing countries in 2004 (more than 166 billion in 2005), it is likely that the major proportion was received by women. We know that the integration of a gender perspective into development policies and programs can contribute to their efficacy and sustainability (Ramirez et al, 2005). We also know that migration, particularly through remittances, can be an important motor for poverty reduction and growth in many developing countries (Lucas, 2004; Adams, 2005). But we still know too little about the actual linkages between gender, migration and poverty reduction, and the policies to make these linkages work for poverty reduction.

Gender as a social construction that organizes relations between males and females can greatly differentiate the causes, processes and impacts of migration between the two sexes. Knowing how these differences play out at the interface of migration and poverty can be important for achieving the third Millennium Development Goal – to promote gender equality and empower women, as a way of enhancing economic growth and reducing poverty. MDG No. 1, which addresses poverty reduction, is not just about reducing the proportion of people in low and middle-income developing countries living on less than US\$2 a day, but also about empowerment, opportunity, capacity and security of poor people, which are also important causes and effects of migration.

A gender analysis of migration looks beyond simple differences in migration behaviour between men and women – such as the likelihood and type of migration – and examines the inequalities underlying those differences. It looks at how these are shaped by the social and cultural contexts of the individual, and the influence that membership of social groups and economic and political conditions can have on decisions about migration.

The household theory about migration decisions being taken rationally by families was an important departure from earlier neoclassical economic theories of migration. It recognizes that the relative control over resources exercised by men and women has a significant and often gender differentiated impact on family consumption and expenditure. But it has not adequately accounted for the fact that households, like workplaces, can be sites of inequitable decision-making in many cultures. Gender inequality can permeate the decision, process and impacts of migration, as well as the networks and support systems that play a key role at all stages of migration (UNGA, 2004). But migration can also help reconfigure gendered relations, particularly by offering more women the opportunity to enter the global labour market.

Migration can result from poverty, but it is not always the poorest who migrate, because of the costs and opportunities involved (World Bank, 2005). And poverty may result from migration, both for the migrants in destination locations and the families left behind, often mostly affecting women and children. At the same time, female migration can indirectly help alleviate poverty by raising the productivity, education and health of the females and their families, all key to reducing inequality and poverty in the home.

But evidence of the positive impacts of migration on poverty remains scanty. Firstly, a number of developing countries with high poverty levels have no significant studies on migration, poverty and livelihoods (Black, 2004a), let alone gender analyses in that field. Secondly, most immigrant-receiving countries do not consider the gender implications of their immigration policies and programs, and thirdly most migration literature to date has been gender indifferent,

or given it a male bias. Overarching this is a general deficit of evidence on the exact impact of migration and remittances on poverty.

I will look at some gendered aspects of the determinants, processes and impacts of migration, because poverty can play a role at each of these stages of the migration. The main focus is on impacts, because there seems to be more literature available on these - albeit scattered and piecemeal. Disaggregated data collection and impact analysis is increasingly warranted at a time when more developing countries are interested in the potential benefits of remittances and other “returns” of their diaspora for development support at home

Gendered Migration

The gender distribution among migrants today is reasonably balanced, with almost 50 percent of the global migrant population today being female, although the increase has been mainly in the developed world. Between 1970 and 2000 the numbers declined in Asia (46.6% to 43.3%) and North America (51.1% to 50.3%), but rose in Africa (42.7% to 46.7%), Oceania (46.5% to 50.5%), Latin America and the Caribbean (46.8% to 50.2%) and Europe (48% to 51%). But these statistics on recorded migrant populations do not reveal the true numbers of movements, particularly within countries and regions. We do know that in most developing regions more females are migrating independently, i.e. not just as dependants or family members, and more are making a difference for development (Sorensen, 2004).

Our perception of international migration is that it was predominantly a male phenomenon during the large labour movements of the 60s and 70s in Europe and the US, with women and children following in secondary waves of family reunification in the 1980s and 1990s. But by the 1990s, women were migrating in far higher numbers, both as family members and independently, voluntarily or involuntarily. This has certainly been the experience of Maghrebian women (particularly Moroccans) in the EU region (Khachani, 2001; Sorensen, 2004). In Asia and Africa, more women have become primary wage earners in domestic and cleaning jobs, child rearing, care of the elderly, and as nurses and hospital aides (UN World Survey, 1999).

In the late 1990s, one million Filipinas, 500,000 Indonesian women and 40,000 Thai women were working outside their countries, and these numbers have since grown (IOM, 2005a). In the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, female migrants account for 60-80 percent of their labour migrants (IOM, 2005a): 73 percent for the Philippines and Indonesia in 2002; and currently two-thirds of overseas contract workers for Sri Lanka (ibid).

In Pakistan, both the Integrated Household Survey (PIHS) and the Labour Force Survey of 1998 found that more women than men were migrating internally. On closer inspection, many of these movements were marriage-related or to accompany spouses (Memon, 2005). In Bangladesh, a country of large internal movements, there is also considerable internal female migration, but more than 56 percent of the women who migrate thus do so across rural areas, again indicating a high prevalence of marital migration (Afsar, 2003). In China in the 1990s, women moved both internally and internationally predominantly for family reasons, because of the strong cultural bias towards the nuclear family and patriarchy (despite the government's commitment to sexual equality) (Rowland, 1992).

In Vietnam and Ethiopia, migration provides women with employment opportunities and the ability to improve their living standards at home, mostly through domestic work (ILO, 2004). In Ethiopia, where permanent migration of women seems to be greater than for men, women are now also migrating temporarily for work-related reasons (Goldstein et al, 2000). In Indonesia, women displaced from agriculture have found alternative means of earning a living in urban homes, particularly as more lower middle class women are moving into the labour force (Momsen, 1999). There are variations of this sequential feminization of labour and migration in

parts of South and Southeast Asia, Latin America, North Africa and the Middle East, both within countries and regions and across borders.

Migration can help raise women and men from the lower to lower middle class socio-economic ranks (ILO, 2004; De and Ratha, 2005). Many migrant women seize the opportunity to buy land or real estate with their earnings (e.g. Indian and Filipina migrants). Many tend to remit more of their earnings than men, and to exercise control of their household income by ensuring the remittances are spent on food and clothes for the family back home (IOM, 2005b). This general pattern has been observed elsewhere, despite the fact that women often do not have the same labour opportunities abroad and tend to earn less than men (ILO, 2004). Increased education seems to encourage more migration of women (UNESCAP, 2003a), and in turn foster greater education of females. For Indonesian women in the Gulf Countries, migration can be both a way of seeing the world and making a pilgrimage to Mecca (ILO, 2004).

For many poor women, migration has strengthened their agency within structures that normally offer them few opportunities. And lesser paid, lesser regarded occupations like domestic work or sex work have enabled them to carve out spaces for control and influence at home and in the community. In Kerala, India, in the 1990s, the so-called “gulf wives” left behind by male emigrants were found to experience loneliness and too high a work burden at home. But today, they and their daughters form a new generation of self-confident, independent female managers in Kerala (UNESCAP, 2003a).

Migration increasingly offers women education and career opportunities that may not be available, or be denied them, at home, as well as alternatives to marriage, the traditional role of home carer (even though it is often home care that the women engage in abroad) and some of the more negative cultural practices regarding women (such as genital cutting). These opportunities include domestic work in other households for an income rather than to be an unpaid domestic in their own household (Momsen, 1999). A Moldova survey found a higher rate of separation and divorce among women migrating than those that stayed behind (IOM, 2005b). In Guatemala, a survey has found that while females are not the majority of emigrants, more than 25 percent of those that do migrate are single, divorced or separated (compared with 30 percent of males) (IOM, 2004). Also in Ethiopia this is more prevalent among migrants than among non-migrants (Addis Ababa University, 2000).

The Moldova survey also highlighted a number of negative characteristics about female migration applicable to other countries, including lower opportunity to migrate because of lack of resources (money, network, language) generally more available to males in many societies. In more conservative cultures, women have also been compelled by pressures of filial piety to leave their homes, parents, husbands and children to work as domestic servants in richer regions, and while this has removed some of the traditional constraints on spatial movements of women and their role as economic drivers (Momsen, 1999), it has not necessarily led to greater gender equity in the family or in the community. In some traditional societies, the subordinate role of women has remained intact, despite their new earning power abroad.

Migration as a transforming experience, can improve or worsen the position of women in families and society. It can also do that for men, but often not in a way that is as gender-specific. It is important to note that while statistics under-represent the number of females who migrate, they tell us even less about the number who ultimately end up in the workforce, regardless of how they migrated (Carling, 2005).

Displaced female migrants

Of the established 25 million persons displaced internally by conflicts, more than 70 percent are women and children. As with general migration, around 49 percent of refugees are female (UNGA, 2004). Many of these suffer gender-specific problems at a number of levels, including

sexual abuse. Despite strong UN Resolutions in 2000 on women's full participation in peace processes, females still have been largely excluded as active players in conflict prevention and peace-keeping (IOM, 2005a). Yet this is a critical area where females can be key resources for development and poverty alleviation in the post conflict environment (UNGA, 2004).

NGOs and international organizations like IOM have attempted to help correct this, and empower women as agents of development, by inserting nutrition, reproductive health and gender equality into post-conflict and demobilization programs (e.g. in Mozambique and Angola). Women have been trained to develop and manage microenterprise projects in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Timor Leste and Vietnam. And workshops held in Rwanda, Guinea Conakry and DRC on microenterprise management have drawn on the capacities of female diasporas (IOM, 2005).

Many female displaced persons and asylum seekers have experienced empowerment in exile, and since returning home (even if only temporarily) are changing the gender roles of the future generation. The impacts of these changes, and the inclusive roles females can play, still need to be fully comprehended and factored into development planning and projects.

Determinants of female migration

All major studies on migration agree that economic disparities between developing and developed countries continue to be a key determinant of cross-border movements for poor countries (UNDP, 2005). The increase in female migration has several explanations, among them the trans-globalization of economies, which has created a labour demand in low paying service sectors of developed economies (Sassen, 2003). In many developed countries, the combination of demographic change, growing participation of women in the workforce and reduced social services for child and aged care has led to a dependency by rich countries on the care offered by people from poor countries (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003).

As employment opportunities have opened up in such service sectors as domestic work, nursing and teaching in Europe, North America and parts of Asia, these have become female migrant niches for women from poorer regions in Africa, Latin America, Southeast, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia (Al-Ali, 2004). At the internal level, they have offered an important opportunity to reduce the risks that subsistence agriculture poses for many poor families (Martin, 2004).

Many female migrants come from developing countries that are already somewhat integrated into the global economy with export-oriented industrialization (e.g. Philippines, Sri Lanka). Also, where there is already a long tradition of domestic migration in such countries, there is a stronger likelihood of female emigration (Oishi, 2002). For example, many of the Philippine women who migrated to Hong Kong and China have tended to come from such internally mobile areas. Also, many of the Thai women who have integrated into the global sex industry moved first to Bangkok or one of the major tourist resorts, where clients and agents could arrange work or marriage for them overseas. The flow-on international migration generated by this could then occur directly from the rural locations (UNESCAP, 2003). Compare this scenario with the Bangladesh situation, where the majority of women are still in the agricultural sector in rural areas, and rural-urban migration is still dominated by men.

Education can also affect women's migration potential, as it does with men. But, unlike men, while their education may impel them to move, foreign companies have frequently preferred to hire them because they are cheap and docile rather than educated (Oishi, 2002). The Philippines places a premium on the training and education of its emigrants, particularly nurses, domestic workers and seamen as part of its proactive labour exporting policy (IOM, 2005a), and as a result is able to achieve higher wage levels for its migrants in destination countries (Orozco, 2005). In turn, education has become a way of reinvesting the gains of migration in more future

Philippines emigration. In Ethiopia, it is the better educated females in rural areas who tend to migrate elsewhere (Addis Ababa University, 2000). Similarly, in the large emigration state of Kerala, India, where emigration has been mostly male (1 in 10 are women), the women who migrate tend to be better educated than the men (UNESCAP, 2003a).

Health can also be an important determinant of migration by the poor and an adverse effect of migration, as discussed later. In the poorest countries, disease (malaria, TB and particularly HIV) is affecting agriculture, changing and reducing crop yields, and directly affecting the work of women. This is causing them to move elsewhere for survival, although we need more information on the scale and implications of this. But the health sectors of developed countries are also increasingly drawing women and men from poorer regions into the global labour markets, as populations age and labour supply diminishes in the critical health care services (e.g. Ghanaian and Nigerian nurses to the UK, and Caribbean nurses to Canada).

Again, as is true of migration generally (Adams and Page, 2003), it is not necessarily the poorest or most deprived women who migrate. For example, in Sri Lanka where men's unemployment rate is higher than women's, more women migrate (79% of the total in 2002). Yet in Pakistan, where women's unemployment is higher, more men migrate than women. Thus, in Asia at least, the economic indicators of neo-classical economic theory do not sufficiently explain the international migration of women (Oishi, 2002).

Socio-cultural determinants

As gender attributes are usually assigned by cultures, the migration choices and constraints for females can vary vastly depending on their socio-cultural origins. One could argue that in the case of the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, the high emigration of women has been possible inter alia because of the greater flexibility in gender roles in those societies. One survey found that many Philippine and Sri Lankan women tend to take their own decision to migrate – contrary to household strategy theories – because they already enjoyed considerable autonomy and decision-making power within the family, also in regard to household finances (Oishi, 2002). This may also explain why spousal separation has relatively less of an impact in those countries than in more patriarchal cultures where women's social role is more strictly prescribed (such as in parts of South Asia and the Middle East).

The more restrictive the role assigned to women in their origin countries, by culture or religion, the less actual female migration, as witnessed in the Indian state of Kerala, where the lowest proportions of migrant women were from the Muslim population (compared with the Syrian and Latin Christians (Zachariah et al, 2001). But such restrictions can also force women to move, or to use marriage or work offered by recruiters, often clandestine, to escape such situations. In Tanzania, women have found themselves compelled to migrate – either for work or marriage – because they are excluded from land inheritance (Black, 2004a)

Gender-blind government policies

Government policy at both the origin and destination ends of the migration spectrum can have a gender-specific influence on migration decisions. Many poor female migrants have been more vulnerable to irregular forms of employment and deportation by having their residency status and entitlements tied to the immigrant status of the male spouse (e.g. Spanish policy before 2003). Even where this kind of status dependency also applies to male spouses, it is likely that the selection criteria for the principal migrant would (inadvertently) exclude women from many developing countries, because of their lack of educational opportunities at home. Most destination countries also still apply strict exclusionary policies to female victims of trafficking without legal migration status (Italy with its temporary residence status options is one of the exceptions). It is worth examining the useful model pioneered by Canada to test all new immigration policies for their potential gender impact (Gender Based Analysis matrix (CIC).

Current policies on skilled immigration can attract more or fewer female migrants from developing countries. For example, Australia's shift away from family reunification to a skills-based approach appears to have favoured female selection, and corrected the gender distribution more (Inglis, 2003). This may help the immediate needs of the women, but have longer term detrimental socio-economic effects in the developing country of origin.

Developing country policies related to demographic planning, such as the "one child" policy in China, or the cultural bias towards male children in India, have shifted the gender balance sufficiently in those countries to attract both voluntary and involuntary migration of women (mostly internal) to redress these imbalances (IOM, 2005d). Some governments have attempted to control female migration in order to protect their citizens from abuse abroad (e.g. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam), but these have only driven migrants urgently needing an income into more risky, clandestine forms of migration. Where labour recruiting agencies are not sufficiently monitored by governments, migrants can also be at the mercy of unscrupulous and abusive practices that are often gender-specific (discussed later).

Some labour emigration countries like the Philippines and Sri Lanka have developed workable models to prepare, train, support and protect their migrants abroad, as well as their return and reintegration, and the well being of families remaining behind (IOM, 2005). More analysis is required of the practical effects of these in terms of protecting migrants and leveraging their impacts on well being and development back home.

Immigration policies can unintentionally reinforce traditional gender roles. For example, if the legal status of a female spouse is dependent on the male partner, then if there is spousal abuse, the female is usually liable to deportation, unless a special visa category is introduced to protect her independently (as e.g. Canada has done). Temporary labour migration programs that do not permit accompanying dependants have also inadvertently caused hardship for female spouses and families back home (e.g. in the case of Mexican and Central American families of the mostly male beneficiaries of the regularization program under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) in the US (Martin, 2004)). Citizenship laws in many western countries of destination have also evolved to give equal weight to female and male parentage (see the changes to Canadian law in 1977 to give equal weight to a child born of a Canadian father and a married Canadian mother (Martin, 2004)). Some foreign labour recruiting countries do not extend their labour laws to the jobs traditionally taken by migrant women (e.g. UAE).

INSTRAW ascribes the increased migration of women to structural adjustment policies imposed on developing countries in the last decades of the 20th century by IMF and the World Bank. Imposed as a precondition for loans, these have caused the failure of small and medium scale enterprises, increased unemployment and cuts in social services in developing countries because of unsustainable national debts; and have compelled males and females to seek survival opportunities through migration and informal economies (Ramirez et al, 2005). Women and children are the most vulnerable as a result; but many women have also become more empowered by the necessity to take over as heads of households.

Gendered labour niches

With the primary shift in labour demand in most developed countries from industrial to service sectors, highly gendered niches have appeared in some sectors (domestic work, health, child and aged care), that are likely to be more female dominated. Export-oriented industrialization driven by foreign direct investment, particularly in the larger growth economies in Asia, but also in Latin America and Africa, is drawing females from depressed rural areas to textile and garments factories, and into domestic caring jobs in the cities. And the same is happening across borders, as trans-nationalization of the global economy provides the dual opportunity of cheap and vulnerable labour both at home and abroad (Sassen, 2003).

While undramatic at the global level, the numbers of female migrants responding to these demands has grown hugely in such countries as the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Rich countries are increasingly dependent on migrant women in the domestic, health, entertainment and textile sectors. 90 percent of all Asian migrant workers in Hong Kong are foreign domestic workers; 30 percent of the total migrant labour force in Singapore. Most are from Indonesia and the Philippines (Orozco, 2005). Asian women meet the demands for medical personnel and domestic workers in many Middle Eastern countries (up to 80% of Sri Lanka's workforce in the Middle East are female housemaids) (Maimbo et al, 2005). African and Asian nurses fill the gaps in the medical sectors that countries like the UK and US anticipate will continue over the next 10-20 years (Stilwell et al, 2004).

In the late 1990s, two-thirds of the one million or so Filipina migrants to Japan were women, many of them working in the entertainment industry (Orozco, 2005). (Total entertainers in Japan in 2003 were 65,000, of whom 78 percent were Filipinas (Orozco, 2005) (now changing with the Japanese clamp-down on entertainers from the Philippines). Large numbers of Filipinas and Indonesians take over the child care and housekeeping work in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Generally, women work overwhelmingly in the domestic, garment manufacturing, entertainment and nursing spheres, frequently in an irregular migration status. In some countries, the domestic sector is not covered by labour laws, hence the migrants are subject to long working hours, low pay, and a high degree of control. They are often isolated, with less contact to other workers, lack local language skills, and frequently subjected to abuse, including sexual (ibid). With its longstanding, well planned and trained labour emigration, and well structured administration of overseas foreign worker programs, the Philippines manages to attract better working conditions for its workers in some countries. For example, Filipinos earn more than 4 times as much as Indonesians in Singapore (ibid). The government also ensures through compulsory pre-departure information and training, that all migrants are aware of their rights, and in the case of women, the risks involved in migration.

Women are referred to as the “servants of globalization” because many go abroad to serve families of a higher social status, while they pass their own family caring role to other family members or less privileged women in their countries of origin (Asis, 2003). This can have untold effects on the children and family, including mental and physical health problems.

Gender and Abuse

In many countries, it is migration law that predominantly covers migrant workers, not labour laws, which can be particularly problematic for female migrants. The low status of women's jobs means lower wages and conditions, and while men in lower end jobs are also subject to these, women are susceptible to the additional gender-specific forms of physical and sexual exploitation (ILO, 2004, UNGA, 2004). This can have serious health consequences, which in some countries can lead to termination of the contract and expulsion of the worker (ibid).

In the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (especially UAE) the “kafala” sponsorship system¹ places many foreign domestic workers, mostly females, in indentured situations, where the sponsor holds their papers, secures piece work with several employers, and charges the migrant for the sponsorship services. The women are isolated, and their movements restricted. In Kuwait, sponsors often allow the women's visa to expire, or sell them to other employers, in breach of visa conditions; and the workers find themselves outside the law (ILO, 2004). These

¹ The Kafala sponsorship system established in the oil states requires that each foreign labourer has a sponsor (“kafil”) who holds the citizenship of the recruiting state (ILO, 2004).

circumstances can reduce the women's capacity to earn reasonable wages and to remit them to the family.

In the UAE, the domestic worker sector is not covered by labour law², which means that female migrant worker situations are only considered under laws relating to migration control and security, mostly focused on the illegality of the migrants rather than the illegal practices of employers and middlemen (ibid). Under these conditions, labour mediation flourishes at the clandestine level. Where recruiters sign contracts with sponsors that may itemize the responsibility of employers towards the migrant worker, these mostly just safeguard the legal and business interests of the agency, with little monitoring of the treatment of the migrants (see the Lebanon example in ILO, 2004). In the UAE, recruiting agencies may be licensed by the local government, but are not closely monitored. As a result, some migrant workers do not even have a contract, a situation the UAE government has been attempting to address (ibid).

The enormous income disparities between these countries and the home country compel many migrants to continue to make the trade-off between income vs rights. The wages may be low by destination country standards, but generally are at least 4-5 times higher than at home (for Indians in the Gulf Countries, up to 100 times higher) (ILO, 2004). Nevertheless, many women do not make it back home again. For example, ILO has reported on suicides among Sri Lankan domestic workers (1997) and Ethiopian domestic workers in Lebanon (2000) (ibid).

The Philippines government addresses these problems through compulsory information and counseling of migrants before they leave, and through the vigorous activities of its labour attaches abroad, both in assisting the migrants and advocating for higher wages and conditions. These efforts, coupled with sound training and education of the Filipino workers, has ensured some of the highest wages for Filipinos in countries such as Singapore and UAE (ILO, 2004).

With growing urbanization, female migrants are also major victims of the increasing lawlessness and human rights abuse in some developing countries (e.g. Bangladesh (Afsar, 2003). In Nepal, one of the poorest countries in the world, high numbers of women and children are trafficked within and out of the country, and there is a high prevalence of AIDS among them (UNESCAP, 2003c).

Trafficking in Persons

Clandestine cross-border migration can involve gross forms of human rights abuse, which in turn can undercut the benefits both of migration and development efforts. If age, minority ethnicity, gender and location are major factors in determining poverty, they are also key factors for trafficking in persons. Trafficking mostly targets people in vulnerable, low income, socially deprived circumstances, mostly women, children and minority groups in developing countries and countries in economic transition – often from depressed rural areas (e.g. in Moldova, Mali, Nepal, Bangladesh). Minorities and youth in these areas tend to experience acute labour market exclusion, isolation and powerlessness in post-conflict scenarios (Clert et al, 2005), and it has been shown that these aspects of youth vulnerability have been gender-specific (Paci, 2002). In regard to South-Eastern Europe, it has been described by one World Bank report as a form of gender-based violence that has increased with the upheavals of transition (Clert et al, 2005).

In South-Eastern Europe, in particular, there has been an increase in trafficking of women and girls over the past 10 years. This has been linked to increased levels of domestic violence and discriminatory hiring practices associated with the transition, where migration offers women alternative economic prospects. In the subsistence economies of Sub Saharan Africa, children

² In the UAE, all foreign female domestic workers in the country, along with male domestic workers and gardeners, are considered unskilled and fall under the same category as maids or house workers. It is the only category exempt from all applications of labour regulations (UAE Labour Laws). Hence the migrants have no rights relating to limited working hours, holidays or end of work compensation.

are enlisted into the family labour pool as critical production assets. Child trafficking is demand-driven where there is a huge market for cheap labour and sex and insufficient legal frameworks or trained authorities to prevent it (IOM, 2005c). UNICEF estimates that in West and Central Africa up to 200,000 children are trafficked annually (Dottridge, 2002). ILO reports that some 200,000 to 250,000 women and children are trafficked annually in Southeast Asia, and that more than a million children are affected globally every year (ILO, 2002). Government reports from Bangladesh cite more than 13,000 children removed from the country over the last 5 years (IOM, 2005c), both male and female. Where there is a labour demand, such as for child camel jockeys in the UAE, the vulnerability of poor children cuts across gender divisions.

In South Eastern Europe, extensive research and victim case studies have shown that trafficked victims come from the poorer countries of the region, which are also generally large migration sources – Moldova, Romania, Albania and Bulgaria. The ECA transition countries experienced serious increases in poverty levels in the 1990s, and despite some reductions in poverty levels in recent years, Moldova and Albania remain the poorest in the region and also primary source countries for trafficked women and children. In China, there is evidence that poverty in rural areas is causing considerable internal trafficking (IOM, 2005c). In West and Central Africa, poverty is seen as the key factor in the huge trafficking of women and children. Endemic rural poverty often causes poor families to sell their children to traffickers, in the hope of improving their life chances (Dottridge, 2002). In South Asia, two of the most poverty-stricken countries, Nepal and Bangladesh, are the major source countries (along with Sri Lanka) (ibid).

Demographic gaps such as the dearth of females in certain parts of India, or in China as a result of the one-child policy, are another demand factor in developing countries (US Department of State, 2005). In one of the few studies covering internal trafficking, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women reports on the scale of internal migration and trafficking of women in China, largely from the poorer provinces to those where there are gender imbalances (IOM, 2005c). According to the Special Rapporteur, such trafficking accounts for 30%-90% of marriages in some Chinese villages (Coomaraswamy, 2003).

Like smuggling, trafficking in persons re-directs the benefits of migration from the migrant, his/her family, community, government or legitimate employer to the traffickers and their associates. UNICEF calculates the global profits to traffickers at around \$7-10 billion a year. The US government estimates approximately \$9.5 billion in annual revenues to trafficking agents and accomplices, and links this to money laundering, drug trafficking, document fraud and human smuggling (US Department of State, 2005).

Trafficking can help irretrievably deplete a developing country of its human capital, reduce the returns to the home country through remittances and in many cases lead to the breakdown of families through neglect of children (a large percentage of trafficked women in SEE have children) and the aged (Clert et al, 2005; US Department of State, 2005). It can reduce the availability of family members to care for the elderly, and force children to work, denying them education and reinforcing the illiteracy and poverty cycle that hinder development efforts. It can also pose a threat and cost to public health, also when victims of trafficking return home. The human and economic costs of unattended health problems of trafficked persons, particularly in the sex industry, and given the often unsanitary conditions under which trafficked persons work and live, are immeasurable (US Department of State, 2005). The abuse and subordination of vulnerable and marginal groups can also perpetuate social inequalities within developing societies (e.g. between men and women) and between rich and poor countries.

But there remains insufficient empirical and theoretical information about the causes and impacts of poverty on trafficking, and vice versa; a serious omission in national and international efforts to prevent and prosecute the crime, and link it to development efforts.

Treatment of female migrants in the country of destination

Many female immigrants find themselves excluded from integration programs in the destination country, both as a result of their dependent status and in some cases their illegal migration status. At the same time, most destination countries still do not have migrant integration programs, and where they do exist, they tend to overlook the multiple burdens and vulnerabilities of migrant women, or reinforce the subordinate role perceived as usual for women from developing countries (Ramirez et al, 2005). Migrants (particularly females) tend to have higher unemployment rates in Europe; and by not benefiting from language and skills training, their chances of finding work or improving their employment situation are reduced.

Poverty is also a problem among migrants in certain destinations, including in developed countries, particularly in migrant and ethnic ghettos in urban slum areas, where they suffer segregation, unemployment and lack of access to mainstream welfare services. Within countries of origin this can be a function of the labour market dynamics between rural and urban regions (e.g. Nepal, Somalia, Vietnam). In countries of destination, it is a particularly severe problem among irregular migrants (e.g. Haitians in Dominican Republic). In the US, census statistics show a higher poverty rate among foreign born (17.1) and non-citizens (21.6) than among natives (12.1). Since among the native born, females have a higher poverty rate than men, it would be interesting to compare the ratio among the migrants in the US.

The female diaspora

Both male and female migration can often help to equalize gender relations, also through new ideas and approaches acquired in more liberal cultures of destination (Carling, 2005). This is partly reflected in the new ideas on family health transferred back to home countries by female migrants. Yet many migrant associations abroad either exclude or limit the participation of women to traditional roles of administrative support, fundraising etc. Women migrants have thus increasingly taken the initiative and formed their own associations, such as the African women's groups in France, which provide support for humanitarian and development projects in their countries of origin (IOM, 2005). Isolation and control of domestic workers' movements in some countries have led to closer bonding of female migrants along ethnic and national lines (ILO, 2004). ILO has found that among the Sri Lankan and Filipina migrants in Kuwait, females were more likely to help friends and relatives obtain visas and steer a safe course through the restrictive yet lucrative work terrain abroad than the males (ILO, 2004).

Through their new earning powers and exposure to different gender norms abroad, female migrants from developing countries have also been able to change their own gender relations within the family abroad (e.g. the Hindi American experience), and organize themselves around issues such as domestic violence (Ramirez et al, 2005).

As transnational commercial networks grow in number and importance for countries of origin, they can profit from greater engagement of women and their skills and resources acquired abroad (Ramirez et al, 2005). Currently, most employment generation schemes funded by the diaspora (also Hometown Associations) seem to benefit men most. Improved information dissemination to women could help correct this, as could better access for women to lending, credit and microfinancing schemes in the origin country. It would be useful, for example, to analyze the impact of the very high participation rate of women in the lending schemes of Fonkoze (96% of borrowers), the Haitian microfinance institution offering alternative banking services to the poor (Ramirez, 2005).

Country of origin policies, programs and institutional structures to support the migrants abroad – particularly female migrants - can be critical for the protection of the workers and strengthening of their capacities to support families back home. The Philippine Embassy in the UAE, for example, is considered to offer the best programs for educating and informing female

domestic workers and helping their work to move out of the unskilled labour category to the skilled one. These efforts have in recent years helped a large number of Filipina domestic workers to be brought under labour laws not normally applicable to that sector (ILO, 2004). The Philippine Embassy has also been actively working with the government of UAE on a standard contract form for domestic workers (ILO, 2004). Filipina domestic workers in Kuwait are the highest educated and the highest paid among that population of foreign workers (ibid). By contrast, poor countries such as Ethiopia, which do not have a diplomatic presence in the UAE, have been unable to provide this kind of support their domestic workers

Gendered Impacts of Migration on Development/Poverty Reduction

Remittances

Remittances are one of the most visible developmental effects of migration, although too little is still known about their impact on poverty. There is evidence that they alleviate poverty at the household level in some countries, among others by funding child schooling, reducing child labour, increasing family health and expanding durable good ownership (Yang, 2004). According to the G8, remittances by both male and female migrants have become the most stable source of foreign assistance for their home countries (Ramirez et al, 2005). They form a “family welfare system”, that can help smooth consumption, alleviate liquidity constraints and provide a form of mutual insurance. As such, they particularly affect women, as traditional homemakers and major recipients of remittances, but also increasingly as heads of households in place of the migrating men (Sander and Maimbo, 2003).

While there is evidence that remittance flows and expenditure patterns can be highly gender-specific, there is still too little research on the relationship between gender and remittances. Most of it is piecemeal and scattered throughout general studies on remittances. Most household surveys do not account for gender differences, and most data collected on remittances do not disaggregate by sex. There is particularly little on how the culturally constructed roles that men and women play in their home countries can influence the way in which they invest their remittances. INSTRAW has in recent months undertaken a study of gender, remittances and development, which uses as its two key units of analysis the household and migration networks (Ramirez et al, 2005).

It is clear that low-middle income regions with a high share of female emigration, such as Latin America and the Caribbean, or South Asia, also have high remittance rates (LAC = 35% of all remittances globally in 2003). This is true also of female dominated sectors, such as the domestic worker sector in Kuwait. And there is some evidence that females tend to remit more of their earnings than men. The domestic workers in Kuwait were found by ILO to remit a higher percentage of their income monthly (more than 85%) than the men (78.5%) (ILO, 2004). Another study found that in the first 12 months of 1995 female Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong remitted almost 30 times the amount sent by the larger number of male Filipino migrants from Saudi Arabia (Engle, 2004). Moldovan women tend to remit more of their earnings (especially if older), and earmark their remittances for food and clothes for the family back home (IOM, 2005b).

Similarly, it is likely that the majority of remittance recipients are female. In Guatemala, a household survey in 2004 showed that some 55 percent of the more than 3.3 million Guatemalans benefiting from remittances are female. This is ascribed to the culturally-based domesticated roles assigned women in Guatemala. Not surprisingly, 73.4 percent of Guatemalan remittance senders are males (IOM, 2004). In parts of Asia, it is common for the mother or other female relative of a remitting female migrant to both care for the family in the absence of the migrant, and to receive and spend the remittances, often on instruction from the migrant (Momsen, 1999).

Impact of Migration and Remittances on Health, Education and child Mortality

Analyses by the World Bank and others tell us that remittances sent and/or received by females can have a positive effect on health, education and mortality of children. In some countries, women tend to remit a higher percentage of their salaries than men (although overall less than men, because of low salary levels), and prioritize nutrition, health and education for the family over savings and investments for the future (Escriva and Ribas, 2004). These priorities are mirrored in the behaviour of female heads of households receiving the remittances in the country of origin.

Regression analysis based on a recent survey conducted in Sri Lanka by the World Bank shows that remittances received by female heads of household in Sri Lanka have a positive impact on health and education of the children (controlling for sex, age, land ownership, food consumption, absence of father etc) (De and Ratha, 2005). By comparison, in Sri Lanka it was found that where males are heads of households, there is rather a more positive impact on asset accumulation (ibid). An analysis of the impact of exchange rates on Filipino remittances and a range of household outcomes in the Philippines finds that positive exchange rate shocks generally result in higher household expenditure on education for children, but with a higher increase in education for girls (Yang, 2004). (Note that efforts by one World Bank expert to estimate the impact of international remittances on the accumulation of human capital assets in Pakistan failed to produce any meaningful results (Maimbo et al, 2005).)

In Mexico, it is shown that the overall increased income through remittances improves children's health and mortality rates. This is in addition to the general improvement of family health through the increased health education of female migrants abroad. The same has been found in Morocco and Guatemala. This knowledge is found to be greater with migrating mothers than with migrant fathers (Hildebrandt and McKenzie, 2005).

The same study in Mexico has found that children of migrant households are estimated to be 3-4 percent less likely to die in their first year than children born in households without a migrant member (controlling for state-level health infrastructure reduces the estimated effect to 3.7 percent.) Similarly, children in households with a higher migration prevalence were found to be statistically less likely to die as infants. Migration and remittances have resulted in higher birth weights and strong improvements in child health in Mexico (ibid).

The impacts of poverty and migration on health – of the migrants, their families, and the public – are complex and vary according to a large number of factors, including public policy, culture, vulnerability of mobile populations and sexual behaviour, all of which can be highly gender-specific. There continue to be enormous disparities in health between developed and developing countries, or poorer and richer regions within countries; and poverty is the critical indicator for these. Public policies can play a critical role in correcting this, but there is as yet insufficient connection between migration, health and development policy-making, despite the globalized impacts and costs of such pandemics as AIDS.

A number of European destination countries have reported an increase in infections among people from countries with generalized epidemics, predominantly Sub-Saharan Africa (IOM, 2005). But it is also clear that mobile persons can become vulnerable to HIV and other infections through the migration process itself; and that this is often highly gender-specific. In Cameroon, a study of urban populations found that in one year migrating men had a higher incidence of HIV than those remaining home, and this increased the longer they were absent from home (7.6 percent among those away for longer than 31 days; 3.4 percent for less than 31 days; and 1.4 among those who did not leave). No similar correlation was found between women's mobility and HIV infection (ditto). On the other hand, South Africa reported at the end of 2003 a surprisingly high HIV prevalence among female partners (in southern Africa of

South Africa?), where the men had migrated and failed to send home money, leaving the women no other choice than to sell sex to support their families (UNAIDS, 2004).

The XV International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, July 2004,³ identified a growing prevalence of HIV among migrant workers in Asia, particularly women (although it is unclear whether this is simply a reflection of more HIV testing among migrant workers). Most affected are the poorer migrants working in the domestic and sex industries, such as those from East Java travelling to Taiwan and Hong Kong. In Japan by the end of 2002 non-nationals accounted for 33 percent of HIV cases and 72 percent of females infected with HIV – a remarkable statistic considering that only 2 percent of the population was foreign (IOM, 2005a). The vulnerability of women in domestic and sex-related jobs is clear, particularly where they have no legal status and limited access to medical care – this scenario is repeated in the Middle East, Europe, the Americas and Africa.

A study by Erasmus University in the Netherlands shows a high correlation between increased immigration from rural to urban areas in Africa and the prevalence of HIV in urban areas. It generally finds a higher incidence of HIV among pregnant women in Malawi, where more than 20 percent of the female population were immigrants, as compared with Senegal, where only 3 percent were immigrants (ditto).

At the migrant receiving end, a number of West European countries have for years been reporting that the high HIV infection rate among their immigrants results from lack of knowledge and access to prevention efforts, also because of the irregular status of many of the migrants (IOM, 2005). Thus simply controlling for healthy and legal immigrants has not resolved the public health issues at stake here. There is an urgent need for data on the linkages between poverty, mobility, gender vulnerability and health to ensure greater matching of prevention and cure policies between origin and destination countries. Disease prevention efforts in developing countries should better complement public health efforts in destination countries that are inclusive of migrants, regardless of their status.

It is important to note that in the very sectors where women today can reap the benefits of the sectoral impacts of a globalized economy – particularly nursing and teaching – they are indirectly contributing to the drain of skills essential for the poor in developing countries. Policy makers are still trying to understand the full impact of large scale emigration of nurses and doctors from e.g. Zambia and Ghana to the UK and Saudi Arabia. This may well be more an issue of good governance than bad migration; but whatever policies are ultimately considered, their gendered effects will need to be taken account of in light of the expectations and opportunities that now exist for women on the global market.

Government policies to support remittances

Government policies can be crucial for stimulating productive use of remittances, but in some developing countries of origin the legal systems limit or even exclude women from owning land or accessing the means to gain credit or loans and invest remittances more productively (Ramirez et al, 2005). Immigration policies of some destination countries have tended to reinforce these gendered characteristics. The legal status of an immigrant is one of the key factors determining patterns of remittance transfers. In many destination countries, this is tied to the possession of a work permit or family unification conditions, including through marriage with a resident or citizen. More significantly, where women are working in clandestine circumstances – at the extreme end as trafficked persons - their remittances are likely to be small or non-existent, or grossly under-estimated if invisible to the authorities and the researchers.

³ The symposium session on population mobility was organized by IOM, UNHCR and CARAM Asia.

The extent to which destination countries support the settlement and integration of migrants in the host community can influence their propensity to remit funds, indeed generally to contribute through knowledge exchange or other “returns” to the home country. There is still inconclusive evidence to show that greater settlement in the destination country will lead to more or fewer remittances and ties with the origin country. Some studies show that women have a greater tendency to settle in the destination country, and initiate family unification, thereby reducing future remittances home (Ramirez, 2005). But there are too few examples, and there is still inadequate evidence that long term migration or settlement generally leads to lowered remittance flows (World Bank, 2005 (forthcoming)). In some cases, such as the Pacific Islands Fiji or Tonga, the kinship cultures are strong enough to ensure that remittances continue unabated over many decades. But the gendered aspects of this phenomenon still need to be fully explored.

The vulnerability of migrant women can be exacerbated through discriminatory wages or higher qualification requirements. In the UAE, despite that country’s ratification of the ILO Convention on equal pay for work of equal value between men and women, male housekeepers are paid more than female housekeepers (ILO, 2004). Canada’s requirements in the 1990s for higher qualifications of child care workers led to a replacement of West Indian workers in that sector by better educated Filipina workers (Momsen, 1999).

Remittances have been able to strengthen women’s economic status in both countries of origin and destination, and in some cases help them to re-negotiate the gender roles at home. Women send money home, and in many cases it is other women in the family who receive and use the remittances for the family. In Kerala, the “Gulf wives” left behind by men working in the Gulf countries feel that their status and authority have increased through remittances. By 2001, half of them had houses or land in their own names, some 40 percent had their own income, which they controlled, and 7 out of 10 kept their own bank accounts (Zachariah, 2001).

Thus, women back home have also been able to strengthen their role as financial managers, in some instances through creative investments in, say, microcredit enterprises. This is seen as a new form of transnational networking at the household level, with multiplier effects at the societal level, even if only symbolic (Ramirez et al, 2005).

This has the potential to correct gender inequalities, although it has not always worked. For example, where migrant/ethnic enclaves have formed in destination countries to safeguard cultural identities, these have worked to reinforce traditional gender roles (see Ramirez et al on the Dominican Republic, 2005). In some instances, however, traditional female roles at home have had to be assumed by the men remaining behind, which has also helped change the division of labour between men and women (Curran et al, 2003).

Conclusion

The links between gender, migration and poverty reduction are complex; and there is an immense paucity of information, data and analysis on all three and their links, particularly the impact of gender on poverty reduction. New statistics and impact analyses are needed to identify the mixed gender aspects of migration, and under which circumstances these can have a natural equalizing effect either during settlement in the country of destination or for the family back home. More information is needed on the insertion of women migrants into host labour markets, even where they may have migrated for family reunification purposes, or for other non work-related reasons (Carling, 2005), and their remittance patterns and impacts.

There is an urgent need generally at both ends of the migration spectrum for gender disaggregated statistics on migrants, and for more systematic research on the consumption and investment patterns of the family in regard to female remitters and recipients. Without this, governments will continue to have emigration and immigration policies, that are blind to the

needs and benefits of gendered migration, particularly for poverty-stricken societies. Some key first steps would be to include gendered migration in all relevant national censuses and household and labour surveys, both in the origin and destination countries.

There is growing evidence that female migrants can play a crucial role both in steering and using remittances towards poverty reduction through food security, education and health. There is less evidence, however, that the reconfigurations of gender roles that migration and remittances bring necessarily lead to a sustained gender equilibrium, an important factor for poverty reduction. More empirical evidence of these effects, and on the regulatory frameworks to empower women in these directions would guide policy makers in both the migration and development areas.

Giving regard to the economic rights of women, more evidence is needed of the detrimental impact of clandestine, particularly trafficked, forms of female migration on earnings and remittance for poor families, as well as the lack of access to financial support systems (lending, credit, banking) by women and their families both in origin and destination countries. Insertion of migration and gender concerns into country PRSPs may well secure the appropriate attention of policy makers and donors.

Countries of destination generally continue to separate the migration and development policy fields, with the exception of some exploratory work by the UK, Norway, Sweden, Canada etc. It would be instructive to follow the experiences and lessons of these pioneers and bring them to the table with the good practices of countries of origin, such as the comprehensive and rights-based approach to managing emigration (especially female) by the Philippines government. Common objectives for the origin and destination countries could be to include women's needs in development projects funded by remittances, and to create the regulatory environment for greater inclusiveness of women in diaspora activities to reduce poverty.

To support origin countries in a more comprehensive gendered approach to both migration and poverty reduction, international donors and capacity building partners need to target their technical and financial support more towards building capacity to:

- 1) inform and train emigrants so that they can compete in global markets.
- 2) train labour attaches to provide support and advocacy for migrants while abroad,
- 3) negotiate fair contracts and cover costs of managing this. The Philippines gives an important lead not just in supporting protection of working and living conditions, but also in helping to raise domestic workers from the unskilled to the skilled category to bring them within the purview of labour laws (ILO, 2004),
- 4) strengthen and expand financial systems in both origin and destination countries to provide poor families with better access to banking, and loans and credit for female heads of households back home).

Countries of destination need to ensure that immigration and integration policies are tested for their gender bias, and that work contracts are fair and binding on the employers or contractors. They should ensure better monitoring of recruiting agencies, among others to stem the highly lucrative "visa trading" in some countries. Work-related visas should also allow sufficient mobility for female migrants to enable them to escape the exploitative practices of recruiters and employers. All migrants should have equal access to a facility to lodge grievances about abuse and seek redress.

The more evidence we have of the benefits of migration for poverty reduction, and the specific contributions of females and males, the more policies are likely to cohere naturally around these three related issues.

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