



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
OIM Organización Internacional para las Migraciones

INTEGRATION OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

IOM'S CONTRIBUTION

Roundtable 1: Human capital development and labour mobility: Maximizing opportunities and minimizing risks

Session 1.1. Highly skilled migration: balancing interests and responsibilities

Studies on the specific situation and profile of skilled female migrants are scarce. The role and potential of skilled migrant women has been overlooked in the effort to put the emphasis on the unskilled and less-skilled women and the problems they face during their migration experience (exploitation, abuse...). This has resulted in shaping a general stereotype: that migrant women are mainly uneducated, coming from rural backgrounds and have migrated as dependant family members.

A recent global interest to look at what has been labeled the "Feminization of migration" has encouraged the international community to approach women's migration from a different angle, recognizing that the reality of migrant women is far more diverse and that women are increasingly migrating on their own to improve their economic situation, enhance their skills and pursue professional development. More and more female professionals—teachers, nurses, scientists, technicians and business owners—are indeed moving abroad.

These highly skilled migrant women are as willing as their male counterparts to contribute to the development of their countries of origin. However, policies and incentives put in place to promote brain gain and encourage diasporas' participation are still gender-blind, therefore possibly not as effective as they could be in encouraging highly skilled women migrants to participate.

Policy makers should review those programmes and incentives from a gender perspective to reflect the differences between men's and women's motivations and obstacles to a greater participation in the development of their countries of origin. As the knowledge-base needed to guide this process is lacking, priority should be given to research on gender differences in the socio-demographic characteristics of highly skilled migrants, their numbers, adaptation strategies, expectations and specific factors influencing their participation in development efforts towards their origin countries.

While attempting to reduce brain drain in general and the potentially negative effect of migration on particularly important sectors like health and education which have direct relevance to development, specific attention should also be given to phenomena like the substantial outflow of trained nurses and the implications that this can have when a large

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portion of the outflowing workers are women who may not be able to bring their families and related responsibilities with them .

Session 1.2. Temporary labour migration as a contribution to development: sharing responsibility

Temporary labour migration can be a win-win situation for origin and destination countries as well as for migrants themselves. For the country of origin, temporary migration versus permanent labour migration seems to be more beneficial because it involves skill transfers through returning migrants who apply the knowledge they acquired while staying abroad. In addition, migrant workers tend to keep closer ties with their home country, which will contribute to increase remittances. Remittances from women abroad will contribute to the social development of the family, in particular education and health of the children and elderly.

For the country of destination, temporary labour migration represents a mean to fill in shortages in the local labour market in particular in sectors such as agriculture, construction, tourism and domestic works. Migrant workers in the hotel, catering and tourism labour market of destination countries include a majority of seasonal workers, with a large population of female migrant workers. In some European countries (France, Greece, Italy and Spain) domestic work or housekeeping is the most common occupation open to female migrants. High- and middle-income States in Asia, including Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China), Singapore, Taiwan, China and Malaysia, and the Gulf States also employ large numbers of women migrant workers. In Costa Rica, domestic workers are drawn largely from neighbouring Nicaragua.

The impact of temporary labour migration on the development of the countries of origin remains limited when the majority of seasonal migrant workers are drawn into lower-paid, informal or casual employment in services, which is often the case for female migrants, as described above. These often gender-segregated sectors, which women tend to enter through recruitment agencies or individual networks, are largely informal and unregulated and therefore offer little protection.

However, women are disproportionately affected by a variety of risks arising from their mobility due to their increased dual vulnerability (as migrant and women). In the case of trafficking in persons, many women are lured by promises of attractive, well-paying jobs offered by agents of criminal networks without realizing the full nature of their future employment, or the conditions in which they will work. Once firmly trapped within an irregular migration environment, or otherwise disoriented and disadvantaged by their foreign surroundings, they are controlled most commonly by violence or threats of violence, either to themselves or their friends and family members, by unconscionable contracts and debt arrangements, or by having their identity documents withheld – all to facilitate their exploitation for their traffickers' benefit.

In order to fully enable women to safely enter the temporary labour migration market and benefit from it, gender sensitive labour migration policies should be adopted, including measures to ensure decent working conditions, protection in vulnerable employment markets and protection while abroad, such as maintaining the family rights, social protection standards and freedom of association to trade unions or organizations for the defense of their rights. In addition, the capacity of countries of origin to effectively manage temporary labour migration should be reinforced.

Finally, policies should ease migrants' decisions to return to their countries of origin by removing obstacles through means such as promoting social security portability and measures to encourage migrants' investments in the country of origin. These policies should take into account the specific needs of men and women in their project to return to the home country, in particular the change in the social roles and empowerment gained by women while living independently abroad.

Session 1.3: The role of other-than government partners in strengthening the development contribution of temporary labour migration?

In the country of destination, social partners may play a key role in protect migrant workers, both men and women. Trade unions can support the right to freedom of association for migrant workers for temporary workers in order to avoid abuses with respect to working conditions, terms of contract, working hours and negation of rights such as social security. Employers' organizations can also play a role in ensuring that all migrant workers, even temporary workers, are legally declared and entitled of social protection benefits, including health care access, especially female workers with specific needs such as family responsibilities or maternity protection.

In addition, regulation of private employment agencies, collaboration among private and public employment agencies both in origin and destination countries, as well as ethical recruitment practices are additional means of ensuring that other-than-government partners play a positive role in strengthening the development contribution of temporary labour migration.

Session 1.4. How can circular migration and sustainable return serve as development tools?

Policies and incentives to promote sustainable return should also include a gender analysis. In order to do so, there must be a better understanding of questions such as the following: Are women interested in the same return opportunities and packages as men? Are there gender differences in sectors attracting migrant men and women? Can measures to ensure sustainability of those returns be indifferently applied to men and women with the same expected results? How to take into consideration the changes in social and economic roles and emancipation of women which often occur when women live abroad? Which measures can be taken to avoid wasting the potential for skill transfers from women returning to the home country (where unemployment pressure is often higher)?

Roundtable 2: Remittances and other diaspora resources: Increasing their net volume and development value

Studies are only beginning to analyze the relationship between gender and remittances. This is however crucial to fully understand the elements in play particularly in a context that sees migrant women assuming an increasing economic role.

Almost all migrants, regardless of their sex, send money back to their households; however, several gender-related issues clearly impact on the amount of remittances sent, the channels used, and the impact of those remittances on development.

- The motivation for migrating: Is the migrant moving to sustain his/her family or not? Is the migrant moving as a dependant? Is the migrant moving for family reunification reasons? This will directly impact the amount of remittances sent.
- The remitting capacity: Some studies indicate that men send more money than women; women however transfer a higher proportion of their earnings. This should be explored. What is the link between those observations and the fact that women often receive less pay for equal work or are employed in lower-paying sectors?
- The desire to return to the home country: Do women and men have the same aspirations in this area? Men are said to invest less in improving their living environment in the host country in order to save money for their return.
- The interest in contributing to the development of the country of origin: Do women and men have the same level of interest in contributing to the development of their countries of origin? Are men and women generally interested in different aspects of development (e.g. education versus healthcare versus infrastructure), and thus should programmes to encourage the use of remittances for development offer targeted development opportunities depending on the gender of the migrants targeted to participate in the programme?
- The legal status: Are the possibilities for obtaining a work permit or legal status equal for women and for men? Where migrants choose to work in an irregular situation, they may expose themselves to exploitation by employers and wages below the legal minimum.

Session 2.1: Improving the formal transfer of remittances and reducing their cost

Migrants often favour informal remittances channels out of lack of accurate and clear information about formal options and their costs. In this area, women can be even more dependant on informal channels as they have less access to information given that they often work in domestic service, have less access to social networks, are more often illiterate or undocumented and are less familiar with banking systems. Measures aiming at promoting the use of formal remittances channels should be crafted in a gender-sensitive way, in order to address those differences and specific needs in order to benefit female and male migrants equally.

Session 2.2: Increasing the micro- impact of remittances on development.

Session 2.3: Increasing the macro impact of remittances on development.

Devising gender-blind programmes and policies to harness the development potential of remittances can only lead to mitigated results as the impact of transferring money on the sender's socio-economic situation, the remittances' use and the impact on receiving households and communities are not gender neutral.

- For women, sending remittances and hence becoming an economic player in the household, the family and the community can represent an opportunity for economic independence, access to new social opportunities and the renegotiation of gender roles, division of tasks and decision-making power. However, the scope of these

changes varies according to many other factors and there are almost as many realities as there are migrant women.

- Women in origin communities can also benefit from these new gender roles and experience empowerment. When it is the husband who migrated, the wife left behind can assume new responsibilities and power in using the remittances. Those women often develop income-generating activities in order to maximize the money available for the well-being and social development of their family. Women may target these additional incomes in improving education, health and housing of children and elderly. The migration of the husband also constitutes an opportunity to participate in traditionally male social activities. However, changes in gender roles are not necessarily positive if women take over traditional “male” tasks, such as harvesting or hazardous work, as a result of migration. Some younger men may refuse to work in what has come to be seen as “women’s work”.
- In cases where a community experiences a massive migration of women for labour purposes, the males left behind may be compelled to take on new care responsibilities, further altering gender roles.
- In addition, "social remittances": ideas, images, beliefs, skills, attitudes, knowledge and values promoted and imported by migrant women can have an important impact on gender equality, human rights promotion and education and health improvements in the countries of origin, elements that are all key to sustainable human development.
- The remittances sent by women migrants are mostly destined to daily needs, health care or education—a pattern which reflects the spending priorities of women in general. However, redirection of the money to other uses can happen, particularly when it is received by a male family member. The way in which men and women recipients of remittances spend the money received from abroad is directly linked to their socially constructed gender roles: women regarded as main care providers will mainly spend what they receive on food, clothing, housing, education, and health while men would prioritize savings and investments. Women also tend to be less involved in investments projects as they often have less access to the formal economy.

All policies aimed at maximizing the development impact of remittances at household, community and national level should carefully analyse those elements and include research-based findings (obtained through gender-sensitive household surveys for example).

The measures generally aimed at encouraging the productive investment of remittances should take into account the different opportunities and obstacles faced by women and men in accessing banking and credit systems (prior approval of a male family member, capacity to present identity documents or fill in written forms, ownership of land, etc.), understanding fiscal issues, participating in the formal business sector, etc. Women are disproportionately affected by those obstacles; hence their chances of taking advantage of those incentives are greatly reduced.

Session 2.4: Working with the diaspora for development.

Women's participation in migrant associations frequently shows clear signs of gender discrimination and marginalization as traditionally those associations have replicated gender relations imported from the societies of origin; men taking over the management and decision-making, leaving women with secretarial and event-organizing roles. Domestic responsibilities may also restrict women's ability to participate in meetings. These limitations to participation and the inability to further their specific priorities on the collective agendas have prompted women to create their own associations.

As specific women's needs were often forgotten in development projects financed by migrant associations, the creation of those women migrant associations has had a positive impact on making the development actions of diasporas more gender-responsive.

Any initiative aimed at strengthening migrant associations and including them in development planning in countries of origin as well as destination should consequently take into account the gender roles within the associations and the specific strategies and expectations of the members.

Roundtable 3: Enhancing policy and institutional coherence, and promoting partnerships.

Session 3.1. Measuring Progress on Migration and Development Impacts: Latest Initiatives.

Session 3.2. Coherent Policy Planning and Methodology to Link Migration and Development.

Session 3.3. Discussion on the Future of the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Session 3.4. Regional Migration Consultation Processes and Development.

Gender-disaggregated data are important to better measure and analyse the impact of migration on development, and to design policies that correspond to diasporas' expectations and needs as well as to the gender specific needs of beneficiaries in the communities and countries of origin. Male and female migrants face different opportunities and vulnerabilities during their migration and acquire different resources (human and financial) that can serve the development of their countries of origin.

The integration of a gender perspective into cooperation for coherent development and migration policies is an additional guarantee of their efficiency and sustainability.

Factoring gender considerations into those policies does not mean redesigning them but rather looking at how to incorporate the specific needs, priorities and interests of female and male migrants.