

ANNEX to Roundtable 2.2 Background Paper¹

Uncovering the interfaces between Gender, Family, Migration and Development: The Global Care Economy and Chains

This Annex complements the Background Paper for GFMD Roundtable 2.2 on *Migration, Gender and Family*. It aims to illustrate the inter-linkages between Gender, Family, Migration and Development with the concrete and far-reaching example of the global care economy and chains.

Key messages

- Global Care Chains are a 21st century development issue with major implications for gender and family; yet they are not a priority for development policy.
- They involve countries of origin (COOs), transit (COTs) and destination (CODs) in the context of inequitable globalized labour markets, that profit from poor socio-economic conditions and women's economic marginalization in low income countries and inadequate care structures in higher income countries.
- Domestic and care work is low-valued and non/poorly-regulated worldwide. To redress this in labor laws is to redress a fundamental gender flaw in global labor markets.
- Women's migration for domestic work creates transnational families, which transforms the structure and dynamics of families left behind, drawing attention to the need for support services and family reunification policies in COOs and CODs..

Defining the Global Care Chains

Domestic and care work – cooking, cleaning, childcare, etc, conducted in the domestic space of home, sustains and revitalizes the family, including its 'working members,' who in turn create economic and social value. Domestic work thus has a socio-economic base. Normally performed by women in the family, it is perpetuated by gender stereotypes that define women primarily as nurturers and care givers. It is commonly deemed intrinsic to women's nature and considered a labour of love. It is unpaid, not included in a country's GDP and thus deemed non-productive, non-economic and hence not work.

When care work enters the public space of the market it is provided within the domesticity of the home by paid workers. When it is provided for a salary in foreign employer households by migrants, the care-giving back home in the COO is taken over by other members of the family and/or by paid lower-class domestic workers, in both cases mostly women. Women thus become integrated into gendered, occupationally segmented global care economy chains involving a hierarchy of women in CODs and COOs.

At the beginning of the chain is an unmet demand for care. In many developed and middle-income countries, state- and privately-provided child or elderly care remains inadequate or expensive and cannot

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respond to the demand for care generated by the increased labour participation of women, unequal divisions of care responsibilities, changing demographic profiles, the desire to maintain a certain lifestyle and social status,² as well as the reluctance of nationals to take on low-paid, low-skilled and low-status domestic jobs. There thus emerges a “care crisis”. For the middle class and rich, the recruitment of foreign domestic workers (FDWs) is an affordable solution. These are usually women, seen as readily available, needy, inexpensive, pliable, and naturally imbued with nurturing and home-care abilities.

Many of these women further down the chain have had to seek work outside their countries, due to increasing poverty, insecurity of livelihoods and increasing work burdens in unregulated markets. At the end of the chains are transnational households whose configuration varies widely and who, in the absence of a mother, wife or daughter, have to devise new strategies and practices to meet their own care needs.

Although the main migration flows for domestic work have been from south (Latin America, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, East Africa) to north (North America, Europe and Oceania), south-south migration flows are now appearing, with demand for FDWs growing in middle income countries such as South Africa, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Singapore and India, that have better living standards and see women’s increased employment. Countries at various development levels are therefore part of global care chains and can simultaneously be COOs, CODs and countries of transit (COT).

Trends in Migration for Domestic Work

Women represent 49% of all international migrants³ and half of all international migrant workers.⁴ Recent years have seen more women migrating independently and as main income-earners⁵ largely to support families. While employed in woman-specific skilled and unskilled jobs in the formal/informal service and manufacturing sectors, the heaviest concentration of women is at the lowest ends in domestic work and hospitality. Although data are scarce, ILO estimates that there are over 100 million domestic workers worldwide and that, in several regions of the world, including Europe, the Gulf Countries and the Middle East, FDWs (both documented and undocumented) represent the majority of these.⁶

Women continue however to face gender-specific barriers to their mobility due to restrictive immigration and emigration policies, including bans on women’s out-migration, discriminatory conditions of stay and work and the general absence of legal channels of migration.

Despite the scarcity of sex-disaggregated data on remittances, including from FDWs, it is now acknowledged that women migrant workers are important development actors, particularly through the remittances they send back to their families. In the Philippines, for example, where women emigrants are in the majority, and many are FDWs, they contribute more than a third of the US\$ 12-16 billion remitted annually; and in Nepal, 23% of the GDP comes from women’s remittances.⁷ Empirical studies in Africa⁸, Asia⁹ and Latin America show gendered patterns in remittance transfers with (a) women’s remittances

² Nicola Yeates, (2009). “Globalizing Care Economies and Migrant Workers: Explorations in Global Care Chains”; and UNIFEM 2005, “Claim and Celebrate Women Migrants Human Rights through CEDAW”.

³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2009). Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2008 Revision (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2008).

⁴ IOM (2008). *World Migration Report 2008: Managing Labour Mobility in the Evolving Global Economy*.

⁵ Martin, S. (2005 2004). *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Women and International Migration*, UNDESA, Division for the Advancement of Women, New York.

⁶ International Labour Organization (2010). International Labour Conference, 99th Session, 2010, Report IV(1),

⁷ Statement by Mr Bhattarai, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Transport Management, Government of Nepal, at UNIFEM’s (now part of UN Women) Regional Consultation on Migration, Delhi, 2010

⁸ UNINSTRAW-UNDP, *Migration, Remittances and Gender responsive Local Development: The Case of Lesotho*, 2010

⁹ UNDP-UNINSTRAW; based on “Migration, Remittances and Gender responsive Local Development: The Case of the Philippines”, 2010

being less than men's in absolute terms but representing a higher proportion of their income and savings; (b) women being more or equally stable remitters, compared to men; (c) women's remittances tending to be spent on education, health, food, clothing, housing and men's more on "productive assets".

Domestic work is often poorly regulated or unregulated. This, coupled with the fact that it takes place in private homes and involves migrant women who already face multiple vulnerabilities, exposes FDWs to a) exploitation by recruiting agencies and employers b) disproportionate labour market discrimination, c) exclusion from legal and social entitlements d) physical, sexual and psychological violence e) violations of their right to health, safety and privacy; and f) restrictions on freedom of movement and association.

Fortunately, the abuses and challenges faced by domestic workers' are gaining international attention, resulting in, for example: (a) the General Comment on Domestic Workers by the Committee on the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families; (b) the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No 26 on Women Migrant Workers (2008) with specific provisions on FDWs; and (c) a draft Convention on Domestic Workers and Recommendation on implementation mechanisms by the ILO. Some governments have also increasingly built more protections for migrant workers' rights and FDW employment into their laws and foreign employment policies, such as the Philippines Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, the Nepal Foreign Employment Act, 2007, or the Special Unified Working Contract for non-Jordanian migrant domestic workers .¹⁰

Impacts on the different actors of the chains

FDWs' own family responsibilities do not stop while they work abroad, but take on new forms that can create stress. Ironically, they are seldom considered as having their own care needs or being entitled to care rights, and often endure poor quality of life for extended periods of time – poor wages, long periods of work, lack of access to decent food, health care, privacy, lack of freedom of association, subjection to physical, sexual, emotional abuse. This has direct bearings on the chances of their migration producing positive outcomes for them and their families. In the COO, a circle of women, including girls left behind, steps in to make up for the absence of the migrant mothers, which has consequences in terms of exhaustion, missed education and human development opportunities.

For women employers, hiring FDWs helps them to reconcile their work and family responsibilities. The care mostly continues to be associated with women, despite the emergence of a new stratification along ethnic and class lines. Both migrant and non-migrant women in the chains may benefit from a new paradigm which challenges the role of women as unpaid caregivers. One way of achieving this is by involving men more, as they still tend to be indirect beneficiaries rather than major actors in the chains. Another good strategy may be to provide schemes in CODs for proper documentation of FDWs.

Regarding the households involved in the chains, the impacts are most positive in the higher income CODs, where the care is more accessible and affordable. In lower income COOs, the household is likely to experience more difficulties in reconciling work and family lives, and has less agency and fewer options to find solutions. In fact, the concept of "care drain" is increasingly being used to refer to the adverse effects global care chains have on the well-being of families left behind.

The last players affected by global care chains are the societies in both COOs and CODs. Both tend to lack a real sense of social responsibility towards care, which is at the very origin of the formation of the chains. Origin countries benefit from remittances that raise education, health, household/community living standards and may rein in social disaffection. Host societies reap the benefits of qualified women

¹⁰ See UNIFEM 2005, "Claim and Celebrate Women Migrants' Human Rights through CEDAW".

entering the workforce without having to cater to the needs deriving from this social change. This commoditization of care is exacerbating inequalities and often exploiting foreign workers.

The Global Care Chains are a development issue, although they continue to be peripheral to the development agenda. The GFMD offers a timely opportunity for a real transnational debate about the care needs and responsibilities of all links in the chains with a view to ensuring that care rights are met both in COOs and CODs, that migrant women enjoy decent working and living conditions and attain personal development, and that their families and communities have access to sustainable development.

Recommendations

Development policies

- Review the gendered impact of macro economic/trade policies on women and their out-migration.
- Advocate for gender sensitive policy change, including promotion of decent work and skills improvement for women.
- Promote schemes for proper documentation of FDWs.

Migration policies: Research

- Collect sex-disaggregated data on remittances and their use, disaggregation also for FDWs.
- Review trends and legal protections for FDWs in south-south flows.
- Do gender-sensitive research on the impact of male/female migration on children and spouses.
- Map good practices of gender sensitive remittance transfers and their use, family reunification policies and support services to spouses and families left behind.

Migration and Labour Policy, Legislation, Plans, Budgets

- Introduce gender sensitive policies on remittance transfers, productive investments, family reunification and support to families left behind
- Include domestic workers in labour laws and introduce standard unified legally enforceable contracts for domestic workers, with robust implementing mechanisms
- Mainstream gender equality perspectives on migration and labour in national, local, sectoral development policies, poverty reduction strategies, plans and budgets

Support services for FDWs and their families, including consciousness raising and support to men to take on domestic work and child care responsibilities

- Provide rights-based pre-departure orientation and information on safe migration, skills training, training on savings mobilization, safe remittance transfers, productive investment for women migrants, including domestic workers in COOs and CODs.
- Provide gender sensitive support services for families of FDWs in CODs and COOs.
- Raise community and male consciousness and provide support to men to assume domestic work and child care responsibilities
- Strengthen the capacity of FDWs, their associations/organizations to claim entitlements

Some Good Practices

- A 2009 **publication by UNIFEM** (now part of UN Women)¹¹ reviews the legal protection of migrant/local domestic workers in 12 countries in Asia, Africa, the Arab States and Europe. It lays out the elements of gender sensitive legislation and contracts, including for domestic workers, in labour laws of COOs and CODs. These cover all of the above recommendations, and range from

¹¹ UNIFEM, 2009, *Legal Protections for Migrant Domestic Workers*.

travel advisories and information/orientation in countries of origin at the front end, through better regulated recruitment practices, standard contracts and decent conditions of work, to health insurance upon return at the back end.

- In partnership with UNIFEM (now part of UN Women), the Ministry of Labour in **Jordan introduced a standard unified legally enforceable contract for foreign domestic workers** with many of the above provisions and amended its labour law in 2008 to include foreign domestic workers and provide robust protections.
- In 2008, **UNIFEM** (now part of UN Women) **interviewed 60 Indonesian migrant domestic workers** in Hong Kong (SAR), Malaysia and Singapore, and 40 transnational households of FDWs in Indonesia, and compared these data with the remitting behavior of male migrants in construction, plantation and manufacturing in the three aforementioned countries (see references to the findings on the gender dimensions of savings, remittance transfer, receipt, control over use on page 3 of this paper). The study offers useful gender responsive recommendations about cheaper, more accessible remittance transaction mechanisms and gender-sensitive financial packages to leverage women's remittances for development.¹²
- **IOM is implementing a project on children of Ukrainian migrant women in Italy**, to enhance the synergic involvement of local and central authorities in Italy and Ukraine in counteracting the negative effects of women's migration on their children left behind and on the local community. The project aims to build capacities and sensitize local institutions about women's migration and its impacts on home communities; and to empower Ukrainian women in Italy through their social integration, increased understanding of the impacts on their children, and training in the use of Skype and IT communication tools. The project also offers psycho-social and educational training for teachers in Ukraine through modules to strengthen their educational skills to deal with children left behind.
- **In Bangladesh, IOM has hosted a two-day training of trainers on domestic work** for a select group of trainers from Government and non governmental organizations.¹³ The refresher training was requested by the Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, as part of its efforts to expand such training nationally, and better prepare Bangladeshi women for domestic jobs abroad. Women account for only about 4% (nearly 21,000) of all Bangladeshi migrant workers abroad; but many more undocumented female migrants are believed to be working in Asia and the Middle East. The training should improve social and professional skills, provide internationally acceptable certification and overall improve the marketability and status of Bangladeshi migrant workers abroad.
- **IOM is supporting efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare (MFEPW), Sri Lanka**, to improve the training and skills upgrading of housekeeper/domestic help and caregivers, and enhance their earning potential abroad. The majority of Sri Lankan migrant workers are women, largely FDWs in the Arabian Gulf, and their remittances are critical to Sri Lanka's economy. The comprehensive pre-departure training follows wide-ranging public-private sector consultations and covers the development of job profiles, vocational training to standards and training of trainer modules. The Ministry seeks to ensure that training providers adopt the new standards and curriculum, and will monitor successful completion of the relevant training by those aspiring to work overseas.

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¹² UNIFEM, *The Gender dimensions of Remittances: a Study of Indonesian Domestic Workers in East and Southeast Asia*, 2009.

¹³ The standardized training manual on domestic work for migrant workers was produced by IOM Bangladesh in 2007; the curriculum was developed with the Government's Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).