

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL JULY 10, 2007 (0:00 GMT)

Women migrants must be better heard to make remittances more effective for development, urged a UN top official

[Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic] At the Global Forum on International Migration and Development (GFMD) in Brussels, Belgium, the Director of United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) Carmen Moreno called on representatives from private sector, trade unions, academia and governments to optimize the benefits of remittances for development by listening more carefully to migrant women.

“Money sent back home by migrants cannot be expected to help fight poverty in the developing world as long as women migrants who return to their home countries remain largely excluded from traditional banking systems, capacity-building opportunities and property ownership rights”, stated Carmen Moreno. “Persistent gender discrimination only brings development efforts down and generates more poverty for both men and women”, she continued during the international gathering hosted and organized by Belgium on 9, 10 and 11 July 2007.

“Who represents half of all remittance senders and the greater part of remittance recipients? Who is known to be wise financial managers? Who makes decisions about how money is spent and invested in the household? Women and again women!”, emphasized Moreno. “Unless the entire migration process is examined from a gender perspective, projects that aim to maximize the pros and reduce the cons of remittances are doomed to fail”, said UN-INSTRAW Director.

Carmen Moreno stressed that whereas much attention has been paid to the remittances as an instrument for development, the majority of studies do not take gender perspectives into account. With past and ongoing case studies in the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, South-East Asia and Africa, UN-INSTRAW's pioneering research on the gender dimensions of remittances for development has demonstrated the significant potential of women's migration and economic empowerment for household and community well-being and economic growth.

“Women comprise half of the world's migrants and should not be left out of the international discussion”, said Carmen Moreno. “International meetings that look at the impact of migration on development must include them in the centre of the debate. I am confident that this Global Forum will highlight the needs, concerns and priorities of women migrants in the agenda for migration and development,” concluded UN-INSTRAW Director.

The flows of remittances –both recorded and unrecorded— have become more than twice as large as the official aid received by developing countries and the greatest source of external financing for many of them. Migrant persons are increasingly considered a driving force in the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable household and community development. At the global level, the 191 million migrants sent a total of 232 billion US dollars in remittances during 2005; 54 billion were sent to Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Global Forum for Migration and Development is a new global, state-led and consultative process that allows the governments of developing and developed countries to examine how migration can contribute to development in the context of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). More than 120 governments, over 200 civil society representatives, as well as international organizations and UN institutions are attending the three-day dialogue. One of the three main roundtable discussions focuses specifically on how to increase the effectiveness of migrant remittances and other resources of the diasporas.

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