

# CROSSING BORDERS II

Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective



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**Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective**

**United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW)** promotes applied research on gender issues, facilitates the exchange of information and supports capacity-building processes through networks and associations with UN agencies, governments and civil society.

*Crossing Borders II: Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective*

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# Preface

Men and women from different ethnic groups, socio-economic backgrounds and ages cross borders in search of better living conditions, new employment horizons, or in order to send money home to maintain their families. It is estimated that 3 per cent of the world's population – around 200 million people – live outside of their home country; 50 per cent of these people are women. The migratory experience is shaped by gender relations in all aspects: how the decision is made regarding which family member will migrate; how that person participates in the labour market in the destination country; how often remittances are sent, and in what way they are used.

In 2004, UN-INSTRAW – the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women – initiated a research area on gender, migration and development, in order to understand how gender factors impact on the migration–development nexus. Initially, the area focused its attentions on remittances as a key link within this relationship.

UN-INSTRAW has completed a series of case studies over the intervening six years, in collaboration with different United Nations agencies, migrants' associations, universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This publication, *Crossing Borders II: Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective*, is the result of theoretical reflections and empirical studies carried out by the Institute.

In this paper, UN-INSTRAW explores what other issues, beyond remittances alone, constitute strategic topics for deeper analysis. The broader aim is to create – from a gender perspective – a positive synergy between migration and development. These strategic issues, here termed "instantiations", have been selected in order to make visible women's current role in migratory processes, and, above all, to introduce into the debate the gender inequalities experienced by women which then influence their participation in contemporary labour migration. New axes of analysis are investigated, which we consider essential when considering phenomena as complex as migration and development. Some examples are the reduction of gender inequalities as a development goal; the importance of broadening the concept of development to include human growth and not only economic development; global care chains; and migrants' rights.

*Crossing Borders II: Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective* invites debate and reflection. Its publication is evidence of the need to consider and debate new paradigms in order to identify public policies and programmes which make gender equality central to development, and which recognize women as leaders in different spheres of action. UN-INSTRAW considers the promotion of this type of dialogue a priority, as a means of participating in the collective construction of knowledge, the systematizing of experiences, and the debate around the future we seek to build.

Carolina Taborga  
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August 2008



# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1. Background and context</b> .....	<b>13</b>
1.1 The dominant paradigm in the approach to the migration–development nexus: “remittances for development”.....	16
<b>2. UN-INSTRAW’s proposed gender-based approach to the migration–development nexus</b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.1 Proposed axes of analysis.....	20
2.1.1 Gender as a central analytical category.....	20
2.1.2 The right to development.....	22
2.1.3 The spatial dimension of development: from the transnational to the local.....	26
2.1.4 Migrants as protagonists of development.....	28
2.2 The strategic instantiations of the migration–development nexus.....	30
<b>3. Women as subjects of the globalization of migration</b> .....	<b>35</b>
3.1 The feminization of migration and characteristics of female migration.....	36
3.1.1 Beyond the economic reasons for migration.....	39
3.1.2 Sexuality: the invisible dimension of migration studies.....	39
3.2 The transnational family.....	41
<b>4. Strategic instantiation 1: What happens in destination countries? Migratory policies and the rights of migrant women</b> .....	<b>43</b>
4.1 Migratory policy, irregular migratory status and the victimization of migrant women.....	44
4.1.1 Migratory policy, irregular migratory status and the victimization of migrant women.....	46
4.2 The human rights of migrants.....	47
4.3 The living and working conditions of migrant women.....	49
4.3.1 The right to health, and to sexual and reproductive health.....	49
4.3.2 The conditions of domestic work.....	53
4.4 The impacts of migratory processes on women’s empowerment.....	55
4.4.1 The impact of women’s paid work on migrant households.....	56
4.4.2 Women’s empowerment and the decision to return.....	58
<b>5. Strategic instantiation 2: What happens in home countries? The impact of remittances on local development</b> .....	<b>63</b>
5.1 Gender-differentiated remittance flows and patterns.....	64
5.1.1 Differentiated patterns in sending remittances.....	64
5.1.2 Differentiated patterns in receiving remittances.....	65

5.1.3 Differentiated patterns of remittance use.....	67
5.2 Are there macro level benefits?.....	69
5.3 The “virtuous circle” at the local level.....	73
5.3.1 The impact on remittance-receiving households.....	74
5.3.2 The impact on migrants’ communities of origin.....	75
5.4 Productive investment and formal banking from a gender perspective.....	79
<b>6. Linking origin and destination.....</b>	<b>85</b>
6.1 Strategic instantiation 3: Global care chains.....	86
6.1.1 Interlinking care structures.....	86
6.1.2 Consequences for development.....	91
a- The impacts of migration on children left in home countries.....	92
b- Consequences for the social organization of care on a global level.....	95
6.1.3 Care in the global development agenda.....	97
6.2 Strategic instantiation 4: Co-development.....	99
6.2.1 Migratory policies at the service of home countries’ development.....	101
6.2.2 Migrants as a co-development vector.....	104
<b>7. Conclusions.....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>8. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>113</b>

## List of figures and boxes

<b>Figure 1:</b> The “remittances for development” paradigm.....	17
<b>Figure 2:</b> The adoption of a gender perspective.....	21
<b>Figure 3:</b> Progressive reductionism in the approach to development.....	23
<b>Figure 4:</b> Volume of daily transactions in international capital markets compared with principal real variables, 1990-2004.....	70
<b>Figure 5:</b> Remittances in Latin America, 1999-2005.....	72
<b>Figure 6:</b> The remittance euphoria.....	73
<b>Figure 7:</b> Neglected elements of the “virtuous circle”.....	73
<b>Figure 8:</b> “Strategic instantiations” and “Axes of analysis”.....	109
<b>Box 1:</b> The denial of rights as a reason for migration.....	24
<b>Box 2:</b> “The ‘remittances for development’ paradigm: elements for concern” and “Axes to reorient the debate”.....	32
<b>Box 3:</b> Strategic instantiations.....	33
<b>Box 4:</b> Separation and divorce in migration contexts.....	60
<b>Box 5:</b> Visibilizing the contribution of remittances sent by women.....	65
<b>Box 6:</b> UN-INSTRAW Case Studies: <i>Women as recipients: household managers in vulnerable situations and Conflicts around sending remittances: the Southern African Development Community and mandatory remittance regimes</i> .....	66
<b>Box 7:</b> UN-INSTRAW Case Studies: <i>Differential patterns of remittance use</i> .....	67
<b>Box 8:</b> UN-INSTRAW Case Studies: <i>Maintaining households of origin at the expense of personal plans</i> .....	74
<b>Box 9:</b> UN-INSTRAW Case Studies: <i>The Philippines: persistent structural problems</i> .....	76
<b>Box 10:</b> UN-INSTRAW Case Studies: <i>Household reorganization in the wake of migration</i> .....	78
<b>Box 11:</b> The care crisis in Japan.....	87
<b>Box 12:</b> Migration and domestic employment in Spain: living and working strategies.....	89
<b>Box 13:</b> UN-INSTRAW Case Studies: <i>Migration and the transfer of gender inequalities</i> .....	90
<b>Box 14:</b> The ageing population.....	95
<b>Box 15:</b> The migration of African medical and nursing personnel.....	103
<b>Box 16:</b> UN-INSTRAW Case Studies: <i>Difficulties in organizing diaspora communities</i> .....	106



# Acronym list

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>AMCO</b>	Central-Western Metropolitan Region of Colombia
<b>BIS</b>	Bank for International Settlements
<b>CMW</b>	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HLD</b>	High-Level Dialogue
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>IADB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>ILGA</b>	International Lesbian and Gay Association
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISTR</b>	International Society for Third-Sector Research
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MFI s</b>	Microfinance Institutions
<b>MIF</b>	Multilateral Investment Fund
<b>Migration DRC</b>	Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty
<b>NCFH</b>	National Center for Farmworker Health, Inc.
<b>NEF</b>	The New Economics Foundation
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SAIIA</b>	South African Institute of International Affairs
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
<b>UNDG</b>	United Nations Development Group
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UNIFEMCA</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women Central America
<b>UN-INSTRAW</b>	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
<b>UNPD</b>	United Nations Population Division
<b>UNRISD</b>	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
<b>US</b>	United States of America
<b>WHEFSEM</b>	Women's Health and Education Fund of Southeastern Massachusetts
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

# Executive summary

The publication *Crossing Borders II: Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective* is the result of a process of theoretical and conceptual reflection conducted by UN-INSTRAW. Following the initial publication of *Crossing Borders: Gender, Remittances and Development* (UN-INSTRAW, 2005), in which the linkages between gender, migration and development were explored from the perspective of the sending, receiving and use of remittances, several case studies have been conducted by UN-INSTRAW in various contexts. The evidence documented through these case studies has allowed us to revisit our initial analytical framework with new insight, and today present a revised framework that looks more broadly at the connections between migration and development from a gender perspective, taking into account – but also moving beyond – the question of remittances.

This framework discusses several axes of analysis that are crucial to a full understanding of an area as complex as migration and development. It explores how the elimination of gender inequalities could become in itself a goal of development, and deconstructs the “remittances for development” paradigm which forms the basis for the current hegemonic discourse in migration and development theory. Thus, a revision of the underlying principles of this paradigm is proposed, in which human development is defined to look beyond the limits of economic growth, and the role of migration in this process is analysed. Within this same perspective, new areas of research and intervention are explored, including strategic issues such as migrants’ rights, global care chains, and the impact of migration on local development and the area known as “co-development”, all of which require a more in-depth critical analysis.

## Objectives

To this effect, this paper has two main objectives. First, to rethink the dominant paradigm of “remittances for development”, which holds that the economic and social profits of migration have a positive impact in communities of origin through the transfer of money and capacities. From a perspective of gender and human development, however, new inequalities, dependencies and deficiencies become evident in the process, and subsequently feed back into migratory processes.

Second, the study also explores new strategic axes for study, which seek to highlight the particularities of women’s autonomous migration from a gender perspective, but, above all, propose a critical analysis of the inequalities and inequities that underlie the decision-making process, migratory forms and processes, and consequently, the sending, receiving and use of remittances.

## Content

This analytical framework is divided into seven chapters; they can be read separately, but at the same time constitute an integrated document whose main thread is an exploration of the elements mentioned above. The **first section** situates and presents the paper as a comprehensive vision of the relationship between migration and development. The inclusion of a gender perspective, as well as the human rights and development approaches, allows for the critical analysis of the predominant paradigms and highlights some of the gaps to be explored. This first section shows how the “remittances for development” paradigm is based on the principle that development derives from commercial growth, to the extent that an increase in economic resources generates entrepreneurship, increases spending and produces a type of “virtuous circle” at micro and macro levels. In short, the surfeit of monetary resources is channelled through the formal banking system and increases, on the one hand, individual entrepreneurship (or that of the family receiving remittances),

and on the other, creates demand for new banking services (credit, insurance, etc.) that will promote market growth. According to this model, receiving remittances benefits not only direct recipients but communities in general. It promotes “financial democracy”; generates employment (in new enterprises); decreases the cost of goods and promotes internal consumption. As this paper demonstrates, however, in practice there is little evidence to support these assertions. On the contrary, it is quite evident that the market is unable to generate development if remittances not also accompanied by substantive support in terms of public policies.

The **second section** presents the axes of analysis that UN-INSTRAW identified as appropriate for framing the migration–development nexus from a gender perspective and suggests the strategic scenarios to be taken into account. This also gives rise to sections four, five and six. The following are taken as axes of analysis:

- **Gender, as a central analytical perspective.** This is understood as a primary structural variable that affects micro-, meso- and macro-level processes; as a mark of subordination which is qualified by other variables such as social class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, etc., and which, therefore, does not affect all women in the same way; and as a changeable and flexible construction that is recreated throughout the migratory process. The conceptualization of gender as a proposed category avoids heteronormative assumptions and does not focus exclusively on women; instead, it tries to examine the relationship between women and men.

- **The right to development.** This proposes that any analysis of the migration–development nexus should be carried out from a holistic understanding of human development. Accordingly, economic development is not limited to the idea of commercial growth, nor does it acquire its own meaning, but it is seen as the conjunction of several means (commercial and non-commercial) of obtaining the necessary resources for the broader objective of human development. With the aim of avoiding the individualist bias of the “remittances for development” model, it is suggested that access to and enjoyment of capacities and freedoms be understood in collective terms. The core of the human development process is the social process that guarantees such capacities and freedoms, and as such constitutes them into rights that are recognized and exercised by members of a society. In this sense, “development” should be understood as the right to enjoy the full range of human rights. The change of perspective is particularly relevant to the issue of migration, as the denial of the right to development often underlies the decision to migrate.

- **The spatial dimension of development.** Studies in “local development” tend to be concentrated on modifying the living conditions in communities that are sources of migration and subsequently receive remittances. However, this focus ignores the structural and macro-level interventions needed to modify the structures that generate and support migratory flows in the first place. Although the global perspective may open new possibilities for spurring local-level initiatives, the local level itself cannot mitigate structural and/or systemic deficiencies. At the same time, the exclusive focus on the impacts of migration on communities of origin fails to recognize the contribution of migrants to maintaining well-being in destination or developed countries; instead, attention is concentrated on the recipients of financial resources, not on the beneficiaries of this cheap, flexible labour force. In addition, the disparity between the political agendas of home and destination countries in relation to the management of migration becomes evident. The authors propose, therefore, an understanding of local development in terms of opportunities to be taken advantage of. Furthermore, these situations can and should replicate pre-existing processes which, in fact, are “constructing” development, but which occur in a framework of structural restrictions that themselves require modification. Local development is understood as initiatives that

respond to local needs, led by local actors and using locally available resources; thus, it is removed from the notion of local development as an increase in competitiveness within the territory in response to increasingly globalized markets.

• **Migrants as protagonists of development.** Migrants' rights are not yet a part of current debates on migration and development. This absence means that the agency of migrants is valued only in terms of their contribution to development in origin and destination countries, and not in terms of the benefits that they themselves accrue. People migrate to support their transnational families; the socio-economic systems of richer countries are now highly dependent on migrants' work and contribution; and migrants are then made responsible for the development of their communities of origin. A rights-based approach to development demands recognition of those who play a leading role in the migration–development nexus; in that they are the people who shape migration, make decisions about it and gain benefit from it. The living and working conditions of migrants must be taken into account. They should be a part of all development processes and, moreover, should be part of the analysis of the impact of migration on development.

The **third section** deals with the feminization of migration and the establishment of transnational families. An overview is provided of the principal changes experienced in contemporary migratory movements, situating both processes in the broader contemporary framework of the globalization of migrations. The document then establishes the causes behind these transformations as they are associated with gender inequality on a global level, as well as identifying new issues that result from these changes. In this sense, many of the non-monetary reasons behind women's migration are highlighted, such as the need to escape oppressive family or partner relationships, the denial of the rights to freely enjoy their sexuality or independently construct gender identity, etc. This analysis also shows how the current international division of labour is highly sex-segregated, and how feminized labour sectors more likely to operate informally, with greater flexibility, less recognition and limited legal protection. The fundamental role of migratory policies in channelling migratory flows towards certain sectors, as well as in the intensity and characteristics of migration itself, is also made evident. The extent to which these policies can restrict the full accomplishment of migratory projects is also set out, e.g. through the imposition of residency regulations. In a complementary way, the issue of sexuality is also highlighted as a forgotten dimension of migration studies.

In the final part of the paper, **sections four, five and six** delve into the strategic instantiations that UN-INSTRAW has put forward in order to reorient the debate in terms of the links between migration and development. **Section four** seeks to answer the question "what happens in destination countries?", thus establishing a thread between migratory policies and the rights of migrant women. The section takes a more in-depth look at the situation faced by women migrants in destination countries, including the various living and working conditions in which they may find themselves throughout their migratory project, and particularly in relation to two oft-hidden areas that we consider strategic: (a) the labour rights of women migrants, specifically in domestic labour, a sector highly stratified by both gender and ethnicity; and (b) the sexual and reproductive rights of women migrants, insofar as this is health-related area that is frequently ignored, but of particular importance from a gender perspective. This section also considers the impact of migratory policies on the different levels of access to human rights, and on the need to recognize migrant people's human rights over and above their labour status or their economic contribution. For this purpose, a brief overview is provided of the development and gradual adoption of the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

**Section five** takes an in-depth look at the impacts of remittance flows on local economies. The rich experiences revealed in UN-INSTRAW's case studies serve as a basis for the de-construction of the "remittances for development" paradigm. A look at the main gender differences in the sending, receiving and use of remittances – identified in each of the studies – leads to questions around some of the supposed main benefits of remittances at both the macro level and in terms of household and local development. The formal banking and investment of remittances are also analysed from a gender perspective, giving rise to substantive questions concerning the role of the State in the promotion of the "virtuous" circle of development, which is neither automatic nor necessarily oriented towards the integral well-being of the population. An analysis of the local impact of migration further provides a glimpse of the structural flaws of development policies in migrants' home countries, including the way in which migratory and remittance flows only superficially alleviate structural deficiencies.

**The sixth section** on "linking origin and destination" explores two areas which, from a transnational perspective, link these two opposite poles of the migratory chain. These are (a) global care chains; and (b) co-development. Caused by a combination of factors – women's entry into the labour market, men's still-low participation in care tasks – these deficiencies have fostered the transfer of reproductive duties along circuits of women. These circuits, or "chains" as they are more commonly known, cross national borders; at each stage women delegate reproductive tasks to others. Added to this are other factors: demographic (population ageing), social (changes in women's individual expectations; transforming household structures), and political (absence of public care services). Together, they generate a complex web of demands and supplies, in which migrant women play a fundamental role. This debate is of particular relevance to this work, implying as it does a revision of the gender perspective as applied to development processes, and more concretely of the role that care plays in the social, economic, and political agenda of developed countries. In this way, the role of gender as one "backbone" of social and economic systems is highlighted, as is the formal value given to the reproduction of life, on a daily basis and at different levels of analysis.

Co-development arises as an attempt to identify policy and programmatic solutions that will allow home countries to access benefits beyond the macroeconomic stability represented by remittances, converting what could be the negative economic and social consequences of migration into opportunities for development. From among the basic principles that should govern co-development, two are submitted to gender-based analysis of their concrete practice. In the first of these, the lack of consideration of the idea of "common interests" between origin and destination countries is outlined in terms of developed countries' active recruitment of health-care personnel from developing countries. This has significant consequences for the women of these countries, as their recruitment is influenced by gender considerations.

Secondly, considering migrants as co-development vectors supposes that their participation will be promoted through the strengthening of migrants' associations, a principle which is frequently applied without appreciating the factors that hinder or limit women's participation in such organizations. At the same time, gender equality is rarely considered as a development objective of projects that are promoted within associations and/or under the rubric of co-development.

1

# Background and context

In 2004, UN-INSTRAW launched a research programme on gender, migration and development; initially, it focused on the question of remittances. Its main objective was to reach a better understanding of how gender factors (the feminization of migration; gender inequalities in access to productive resources; the sexual division of labour; gender roles, etc.) affect and determine the links between migration and development, considering remittances as a key component of this relationship. The ultimate goal was to employ gender-sensitive analysis to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of current initiatives designed to maximize the potential impact of remittances on development, converting them into development interventions which hold gender equality as one of their core objectives.

This work is guided by a political strategy that aims to mainstream these research results into the work carried out by organizations that address the issues of migration and development, in particular the various bodies of the United Nations. UN-INSTRAW's collaborative partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) have been instrumental in consolidating this research programme. The research conducted by UN-INSTRAW contributes several items for conceptual reflection and promotes gender mainstreaming in the agencies' interventions around migration and development.

UN-INSTRAW's work to date has been conducted from a twofold approach, with both elements constantly feeding into one another. One is the development of conceptual frameworks, from which gender-sensitive research on the migration–development nexus can be conducted. The other is the elaboration of a series of concrete case studies, whose results have fed into the initial conceptual frameworks. This, in turn, has led us to question some of the underlying assumptions that guide the interventions designed to maximize the positive impact of migration on the development of countries of origin.<sup>1</sup> In this way, this publication constitutes a continuation – enriched by our subsequent research – of UN-INSTRAW's initial conceptual framework, published as *Crossing Borders: Gender, Remittances and Development*.

As Kunz asserts, “The migration–development nexus is still a relatively new and unconsolidated field of enquiry, drawing on literature from different disciplines and from different methodological backgrounds” (2006, p.9). Migration has not been adequately explored by the social sciences. A case can be made that there is still no minimally accepted theory of migration, nor of international or economically motivated migration (Sutcliffe, 1998).<sup>2</sup> In fact, “[t]he development community has been rather reluctant in the past to integrate migration as a parameter for development policies” (Olesen, 2002, p.125). Policy and programmatic interventions in the area of migration and development reflect this analytical weakness, which is further compounded by the use of varying methodologies that are not in line with the framework of each theory. This

1. The case studies carried out and in progress are available at [www.un-instraw.org](http://www.un-instraw.org) in the “Gender, Migration and Development” section. The completed studies include: (a) Gender, Remittances and Development: The Case of Women Migrants from Vicente Noble, Dominican Republic (UN-INSTRAW, 2006); (b) Género y remesas: migración colombiana del AMCO hacia España [Gender and Remittances: Colombian Migration from the AMCO Region to Spain] (UN-INSTRAW/IOM, 2007) – in Spanish only; (c) Gender, Remittances and Local Rural Development: The Case of Filipino Migration to Italy (UN-INSTRAW, 2008a); (d) Gender, Migration and Remittances: Preliminary Findings from Selected SADC Countries (UN-INSTRAW/SAIIA, 2007); (e) the “Migration, Remittances and Gender-Responsive Local Development” series, covering Albania, Dominican Republic (in Spanish only), Lesotho, Morocco, the Philippines and Senegal), in collaboration with UNDP; (f) Building Networks: Latin American Women in Global Care Chains (Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile and Spain) – see [www.un-instraw.org/en/md/global-care-chains/proyecto-construyendo-redes.html](http://www.un-instraw.org/en/md/global-care-chains/proyecto-construyendo-redes.html). See the bibliography for full details.

2. This deficiency is related to the fact that social sciences have been, and still are, fundamentally rooted in the concept of the nation-state, which holds the view of migration as a pathological phenomenon. We find ourselves facing the “difficulty of considering migration as a normal part of human life. The idea that everyone is born to a country and that they should stay in that country is profoundly established in social sciences” (Sutcliffe, 1998, p.20; our translation). This analytical nationalism contaminates the field of intervention; migration is basically understood as a problem to be managed and/or prevented in the best way possible – rather than as a natural and positive human process that can be the expression not only of problems, but also of desires.

results, in turn, in the recurring problem of differing results (e.g. in calculating the volume of remittances flows) and even contradictory ones (e.g. in assessing the impact of migration on children). If the migration–development nexus has received little attention, its gender dimensions have received even less. Analyses of the importance of gender factors in understanding migratory flows, as well as their impact on socio-economic structures, are still rare, and the use of a gender-sensitive conceptualization of development is, at best, anecdotal in these debates.

These analytical deficiencies obviously translate into deficiencies in the formulation and implementation of policies which aim to promote positive synergies between migration and a form of development which is both aware of gender’s impact and has the objective of eroding unequal gender relations. The analysis presented in this paper aims to contribute to these ongoing debates, with a firm focus on the formulation of policies and programmes. The document combines a series of critical reflections on the paradigm which framed our research design, the results of UN-INSTRAW’s case studies, and a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on migration, development and gender.

This revised framework, formulated on the basis of accumulated experience, has two main objectives. First, it aims to provoke critical reflection of the current, dominant paradigm of “remittances for development”. We seek to do this by: indicating the weaknesses of this paradigm from the human development perspective (which includes gender equality as one of its development goals); questioning some of its underlying assumptions (e.g. the supposed positive impact of remittances on poverty reduction); and proposing axes of analysis that we consider fundamental to reorienting both debate and action. In revisiting our own work, we aim to develop a vision of the impact of remittances on local development which takes into account certain previously ignored dimensions, and is more sensitive to gender as an unequal relationship. Above all, we hope to enable future interventions that seek to maximize the impact of remittances on development, allowing them to depart from a broadened notion of development itself and therefore respond more effectively to the challenge of spreading the positive impacts of migration beyond the destination countries.

The second objective, inexorably linked to the first, is to identify what other issues – beyond the issue of remittances – require more thorough analysis in order to create a positive, gender-sensitive synergy between migration and development. These strategic questions have been identified in order to highlight women’s role in contemporary migration, but also to place at the centre of critical analysis the gender inequalities that are the basis of women’s particular migratory role and, consequently, in the sending and use of remittances.

The analysis that we present pertains exclusively to the area of labour migration, and does not include any other type of movement such as forced displacement as a result of armed conflict, or the movement of people by means of deception or coercion. In terms of geographical scope, the development of many of the arguments contained in this paper is based on case studies of migratory movements from Southern countries to Northern ones. An important future analysis would be that of South–South migrations, which constitute one third of all global migratory movements.<sup>3</sup>

This paper is divided into seven chapters, which can be read separately but which at the same time constitute an integrated whole. It demonstrates the need to understand

3.UN-INSTRAW is aware of the significance of South-South migration and the need to increase available knowledge on the phenomenon. Accordingly, the Institute has conducted an initial analysis of intraregional migration to South Africa from several countries of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (available here: [www.un-instraw.org/en/library/gender-remittances-and-development/preliminary-findings-from-selected-sadc-countries/download-2.html](http://www.un-instraw.org/en/library/gender-remittances-and-development/preliminary-findings-from-selected-sadc-countries/download-2.html)) and has initiated an exploratory qualitative study of Guatemalan women’s migration to the south of Mexico. Similarly, the UN-INSTRAW project “Building Networks: Latin American Women in Global Care Chains” considers the creation of global care chains as a result of migration between Peru and Chile.



and address the migration–development nexus utilizing the perspectives of gender, human development and human rights. These aspects are linked and mutually complementary. In this first section, we locate the document within the specific context of the dominant “remittances for development” paradigm. The second section presents the axes of analysis that UN-INSTRAW identified as appropriate for exploring the migration–development nexus through a gender lens, and introduces the four strategic instantiations that UN-INSTRAW proposes in order to reorient research and intervention on migration–development issues. The third section deals with the feminization of migration and the establishment of transnational families. An overview is provided of the principal changes experienced in contemporary migratory movements, situating both processes in the broader contemporary framework of the globalization of migrations. This establishes the causes behind these transformations as they are associated with gender inequality on a global level, as well as identifying new issues that result from these changes. Sections four, five and six delve into the strategic instantiations listed in section two. The first two instantiations (sections four and five) refer to one of the two poles of migration (the human rights of migrant women in destination countries, and the impacts of remittances on the local economies of home countries). The latter two (global care chains and co-development) are transnational, meaning that they link countries of origin and destination, and are thus both addressed (in separate analyses) in section six. Finally, section seven sets out the paper’s main conclusions.

## **1.1 The dominant paradigm in the approach to the migration– development nexus: “remittances for development”**

In spite of the analytical and methodological deficiencies outlined above, it is possible to identify a single discourse around the migration–development nexus which is shared by various international organizations, national governments of both home and destination countries, and cooperation agencies, although each entity emphasizes or clarifies different aspects of the discourse. This discourse (of which the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) is one of the main proponents, particularly in Latin America), has been dubbed the “remittances for development” paradigm.

This predominant discourse on the impact of migration on development focuses on the effects of migration in home countries. Some time ago, the most widely held view of migration was a pessimistic one, focused on the emigration of the working population from their home countries and dubbed the “brain drain”. More recently, this vision has been inverted. Increasing emphasis has been placed on the opportunities that migration creates for the free circulation of highly qualified people, as well as the flow of “social remittances” which are channelled to home countries by returning migrants or diaspora communities through various media (e.g. the projects of migrants’ associations, or transnational networks of qualified migrants). Such social remittances spring from new knowledge or ways of learning which are acquired during the migratory experience, and include so-called business, technological and cultural remittances. The “brain drain” was originally considered

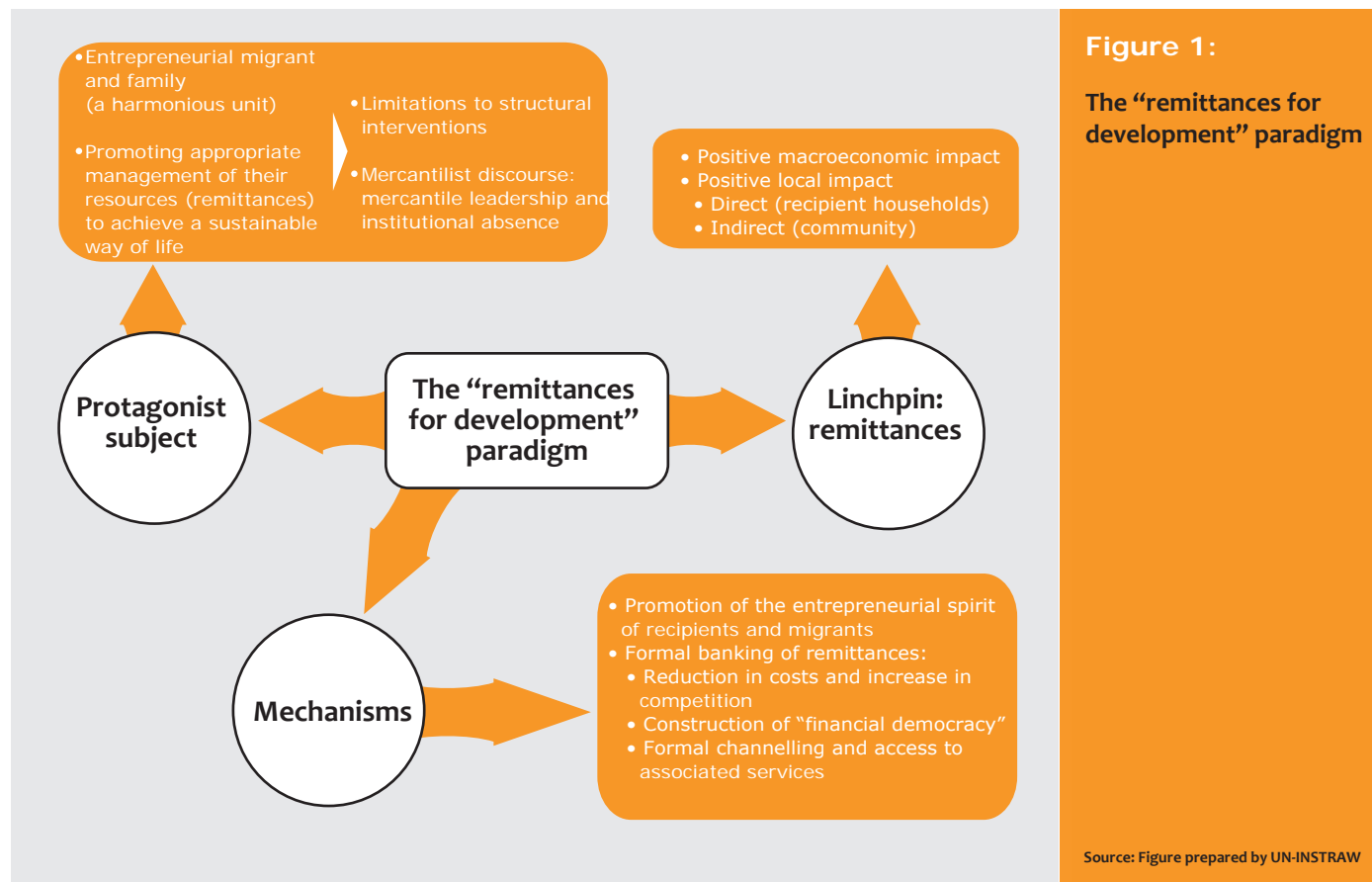
“a major problem for developing countries because it hampers economic and social development. This was balanced with the view that while there might be a ‘drain’ of human capital in the short term, in the long term these human capital skills can be enhanced through migration and knowledge exchange and contribute in a positive manner to the development process when migrants return to their home communities” (Department for International Development and World Bank, 2003, p.6).

But the key element that justifies this new positive spin is not these flows of knowledge. The core of the dominant paradigm is the understanding of monetary remittances as

migration's key influence on development. From this vision, the increase in financial resources brings with it a potential for development that is demonstrated in positive impacts at the macro level (stabilization of the balance of payments, sources of financing, and poverty reduction), as well as at the level of local development (directly in recipient households, and indirectly for the community as a whole). The increased availability of monetary resources, to the extent that this is accompanied by market-driven changes in the formal financial system, is believed to result in a type of "inclusive financial democracy". In turn, this will increase access to financial services for both migrants and their remittance-receiving households and, moreover, for the community at large. This will allow them to undertake the entrepreneurial activities that represent the backbone of local development in this paradigm.

"Remittances for development" holds entrepreneurial migrants and their families to be the protagonists of the local development process that is made possible by the flow of remittances. The touchstone of this discourse consists in increasing the opportunities, both for migrants and their families, to utilize this money. From this point on, "[t]hey will do the rest" (MIF/IADB, 2005; quoted in Bakker, 2006, p.14). Individual initiative is praised as the motor for the economic dynamism that will break with traditional macro-level poverty-reduction interventions, which see the beneficiary population as passive recipients of policies. In the words of Canales (2006b):

"Contrary to the nature of previous poverty-reduction policies that attend to the basic needs of individuals, the new approach shifts focus to the promotion of the correct management of the poor's activities and resources, so that they themselves can confront and overcome their situation of poverty and vulnerability. [...] According to this approach, the poor can be the protagonists of development processes because they possess the necessary resources to do so, including remittances. In any case, they only need to learn how to use and manage them correctly" (p.175; our translation).



From this perspective, a key initial sphere of intervention is the promotion of the entrepreneurial spirit of both senders and receivers of remittances. This then guarantees that remittances are invested – in businesses that feed the local economy, and in the creation of sustainable livelihoods. It also avoids dependence on remittances, or wasting them in mere consumption.

This entrepreneurial capacity is limited when remittances are sent through informal channels, because these cannot be used by recipients as collateral against loans or other financial services, nor do they increase the availability of financial resources in the community as a whole: “inclusive financial democracy” is not created. Thus, a second key sphere of intervention becomes the channelling of the largest possible volume of remittances through formal banking systems. In order to achieve this, it is crucial to increase the competitiveness of the transfer services offered by remittance companies, reducing sending costs and broadening and diversifying the range of accessible financial services. An increase in competition – leading to a more efficient financial market for the migrant population, and an increase in the information about and choice of services available to them – thus becomes crucial to the promotion of development. In addition to their beneficial effects on local development, at the macroeconomic level formal remittances also allow these monetary flows to have a stabilizing effect on the balance of payments, and they become a significant source of income.

A third key sphere of intervention for advancing “inclusive financial democracy” is the promotion of the formal banking of remittances among those who are outside the formal financial system. The reach of this system is thus expanded to a wider population, including both those who send remittances, those who receive them, and the rest of the population, thanks to greater liquidity and the expanded presence of financial institutions. In this manner, the entire community of origin can benefit from existing financial services and can join in the process of the dynamic entrepreneurship of local development.

These are, in general terms, the assumptions that underlie the common framework of operations for the majority of international organizations. Within this structure, UN-INSTRAW first began its research programme in response to the demand to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues in the work of the United Nations system.

# 2

**UN-INSTRAW's proposed  
gender-based approach to the  
migration–development nexus**

Throughout its work in this area, UN-INSTRAW has identified the various analytical and methodological deficiencies of the “remittances for development” paradigm (many of which have also been pointed out by other authors) as well as its weak empirical foundation. UN-INSTRAW’s case studies have contributed to a revision of the approach used to observe and intervene in the migration–development nexus. The experience gained has led us to redefine our axes of analysis; to integrate not only a gender perspective, but also a transnational focus; and to understand that development can in no case be reduced to a process of mercantile expansion. Migration is a complex social reality that cannot be understood without accepting the radically social nature of the migrant, the subject behind the sending of remittances. For this reason, the individualistic and mercantilist notion of the subject that guides the “remittances for development” paradigm is extremely limited, and warrants rethinking.

The redefinition of these axes of analysis is essential, as is a broader focus that acknowledges that remittances – as important as they are – cannot encompass everything there is to be said about migration and its relationship to development. Remittances represent, by their very materialism, the most tangible economic result of a much broader phenomenon that implies a significant degree of complexity – the migratory process and its impact on development. UN-INSTRAW has identified other processes that are also of crucial importance to understanding the migration–development nexus from the proposed axes of analysis. In addition to the impact of remittances on local economies, these processes, which we have termed “strategic instantiations”, are: migratory policies and the rights of migrant women; global care chains; and interventions proposed under the rubric of co-development.

## **2.1** Proposed axes of analysis

### **2.1.1** Gender as a central analytical category

Gender is a first-order structural variable, which affects all social processes and the organization of the socio-economic system at the macro, meso and micro levels. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate a gender perspective into any analysis of the potential impact of remittances on development. A multitude of variables that affect the migration–development nexus, related to both home and destination countries, are structured by the matrix of gender.

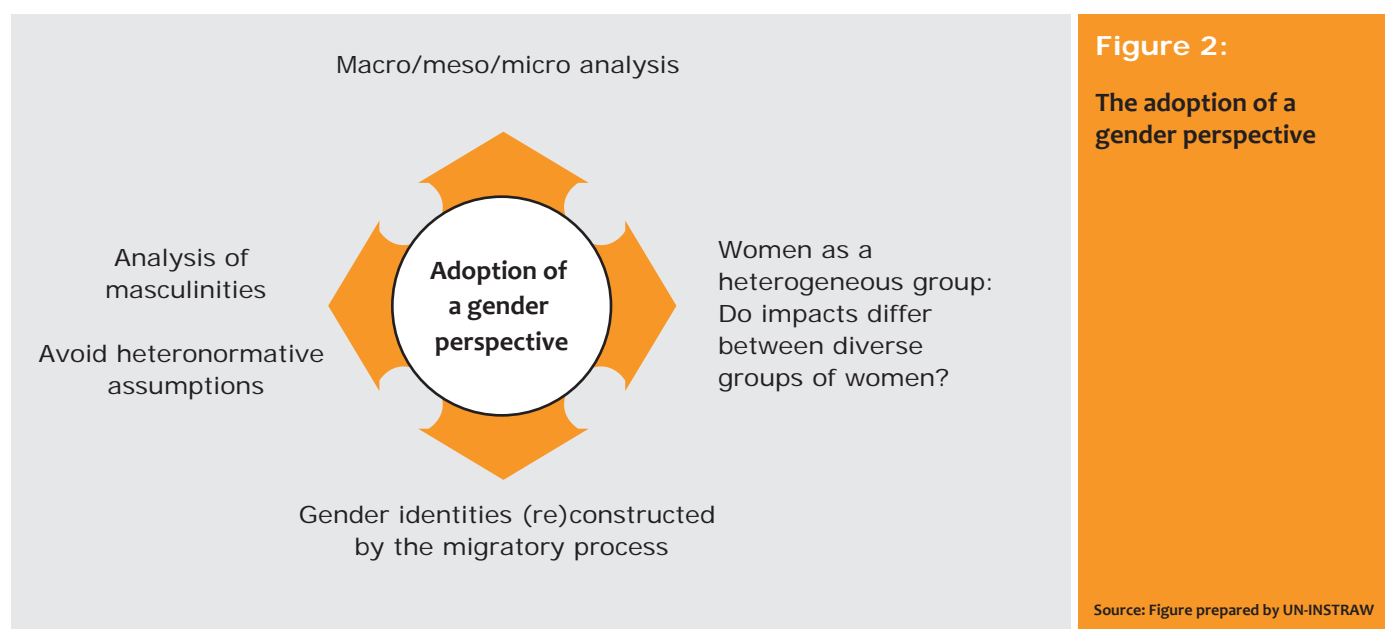
At the micro level, gender affects individual, household and business-related processes: power dynamics within homes determine the decision to migrate; gender roles and stereotypes determine culturally acceptable forms of movement and specify the terms under which migration can be undertaken by men and women; the working dynamics of transnational households determine the sending and use of remittances; women and men may have different opportunities and capacities to undertake entrepreneurial activities, etc.

At the meso level, gender conditions the functioning of sex-segregated labour markets, which suppose different and unequal work opportunities and conditions; the sexual division of labour, which involves a complex network of socially prescribed rights and responsibilities in the use of women and men’s time, and conditions the function of and services offered by the welfare state; and the formation and dynamics of social networks that sustain migratory processes and economic systems in home countries.

Finally, at the macro level, gender inequalities suppose the creation (as a result of migration and other factors) of a new and sexualized international division of labour

that conditions development processes in both home and destination countries. This is also intimately related to the current feminization of migration, within which a gender-based analysis of the migration–development nexus must be framed.

Consequently, a gender-based analysis of the links between migration and development cannot be limited to understanding intrafamily power dynamics alone. These, although crucial, do not fully encompass the many ways that structured inequality shapes socio-economic reality. They can only be understood through an analysis that considers together the micro, meso, and macro levels (Staveren, 2005). This allows for a greater understanding of the links between household-level decision-making processes, international agreements and macroeconomic conditions. It also facilitates an understanding of the distinct spatial scales on which a gendered view of migration must be projected: global, regional, national and local (Donato et al., 2006).



Many common errors befall a gender-based analysis of socio-economic processes. Women are often considered as a homogeneous group, whereas gender should itself be understood as a mark of subordination that is qualified by other variables. Thus, a gender-sensitive analysis must take into account the intersection between this social structure and other axes of social hierarchy: class, ethnicity, nationality, migratory and citizenship status, sexual orientation, physical (dis)ability, etc. This is of particular importance to understanding the possible existence of diverse, or even contradictory, effects of development among different groups of women: as is the case of global care chains, for example, as we will explore below.

Gender must also be seen as more than a stable, binary structure. According to King et al., “the relational character of gender risks a binary and heteronormative distinction between males and females in migration, ignoring the reality that women and men articulate their migration projects in relation to the time–space strategies of the same, as well as of the other, sex” (2006, p.410). In talking of gender, we are talking about social structures that designate different spaces for women and men that constantly change and regenerate, and are thus mutable and flexible. In this sense, a key analytical factor must be the (re)creation of gender identities throughout the migratory process – including an understanding of how pre-existing gender relations may condition the impact of migration on development, but are also transformed by it. Knowledge of how identities are (re)created is also fundamental to an understanding

of remittance-sending, in that they imply a reorganization of households (e.g. in the case of divorce, or changes in intrafamily negotiating power).

Another error that often plagues gender-based analyses is the reproduction of heteronormative assumptions. Manalansan (2006) draws attention to the role of sexuality and desire in the migratory process. One area which carries the risk of departing from and reproducing heteronormative assumptions is that of global care chains – there, it is assumed that all migrant women working in domestic service are heterosexual mothers.

A final error that is common to gender-sensitive analysis is the confusion of a gender lens with an exclusive focus on women, conducted without looking at the relations between men and women, and altogether excluding an analysis of men's migration. One field that is gaining increasing attention is the transformation of masculinities throughout the migratory process.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, it is important to point out that gender also shapes the research priorities, conceptual frameworks and explicative models used by academics and public policymakers, particularly when gender itself is treated as just another variable and not as a central theoretical concept (Pessar, 1999a). In this sense, the research priorities proposed here seek to recover particularly relevant issues, considered from an angle sensitive to the inequalities between women and men.

### 2.1.2 The right to development

Human development is the universally accepted paradigm of development.<sup>5</sup> The concept of human development can appear quite inclusive, yet when we move from theory to the implementation of programmes and public policies, we are faced with the serious issue of progressive reductionism: the final analysis equates development with mercantilist expansion. This reductionism – clearly identifiable in the “remittances for development” paradigm – passes through the following successive stages:

- **From the concept of human development to a focus on well-being:** In the transition from the human development concept to the human development approach (i.e. looking at the approach that guides the design of interventions), a de facto reductionism is produced by the move from a holistic view of development – the expansion of the capacities and freedoms of individuals – to a narrow view – focused on well-being in terms of education, health and, above all, the availability of income (Kempf, 2004). This focus on well-being limits the consideration of other political and social elements. It prevents an exploration of essential issues such as the impact of migration on gender equality or the (dis)empowerment of migrants and communities of origin, looking only at what we might call “entrepreneurial empowerment” (or an increase in the ability to start up new businesses).
- **From well-being to economic development:** Rather than a concern for well-being per se, this approach centres on income levels. Education and

4. For example, the series of seminars run in Nicaragua on Relaciones de Género, Masculinidad y Migración [Gender Relations, Masculinities and Migrations]. The seminars were offered by the Asociación de Hombres Contra la Violencia [Association of Men against Violence] and the ILO-run Proyecto de Promoción de Empleo Decente para Emigrantes Laborales y Mejora del Bienestar de sus Familias [Project for the Promotion of Decent Work for Labour Migrants and the Improvement of their Families' Well-being] (see Montoya et al., 2003).

5. The debate around development has changed its focus: the discussion of how to achieve development has become a controversy around development content itself. Thus, for decades development was understood as mere economic growth (mercantilist, as we will argue below) and the debate centred on what model could best achieve this – a capitalist- or socialist-style model. However, a series of historical transformations and events has meant that the capitalist system took precedence as the hegemonic model (in both discourse and practice) and the discussion has shifted towards the objectives of development: economic growth, or a broader human development framework. In the context of the discussion of the migration–development nexus, these paradigms continue to clash. The human development paradigm has gained ground on a rhetorical level, while the economic growth model continues to dominate interventions and policy formulation.

health are seen as means to development, or mercantilist growth, in that they are an investment in human capital rather than the goals of development itself. Levels of development are subsequently understood as individualized access to income, and the reference to sustainable livelihoods is finally understood as sustainable sources of income generation.

- **From economic to economistic development:** The economic system provides the resources necessary to attain human development, and thus economic development is a key dimension of a broader human development process. The problem is that only individual access to goods and services offered by the market is taken into account as a means of providing and access to resources. The “remittances for development” paradigm is profoundly mercantilist in three ways. First, because it places the potential for migration-driven development in the hands of the migrant entrepreneur, acting within the market scenario – a markedly individualistic paradigm. Second, because it emphasizes market mechanisms and ignores the role of public institutions. Third, because it is wholly consistent with neoliberal policies, including the financial liberalization that characterizes the current period of globalization.

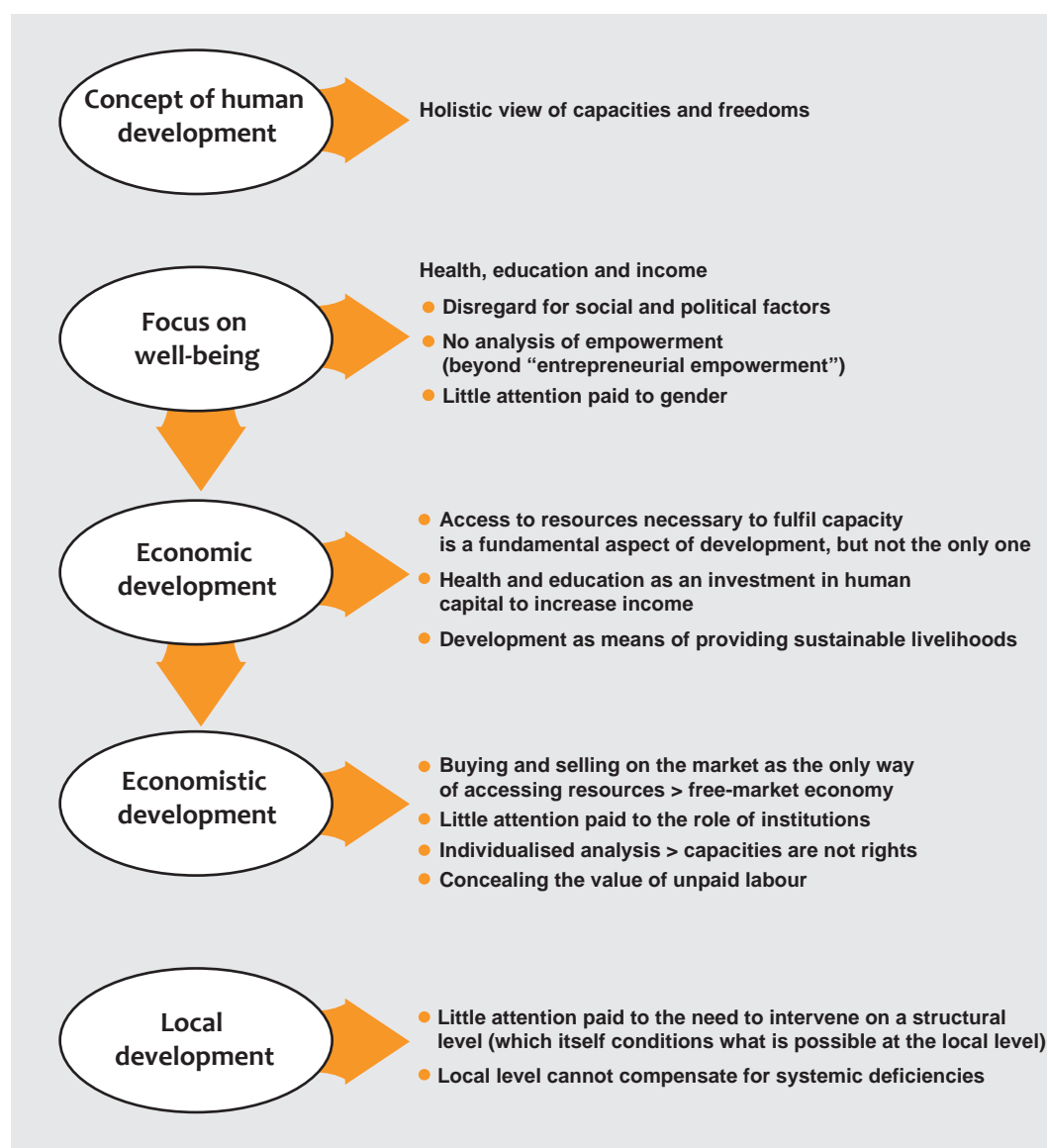


Figure 3:

Progressive reductionism in the approach to development

Source: Figure prepared by UN-INSTRAW



This progressive reductionism can be found in the “remittances for development” paradigm: when assessing impact at the local level, it is common to focus on well-being; at the macro level, an analysis of the impact of remittances is based in a narrow notion of development as an increase in mercantilist activity.

On the other hand, UN-INSTRAW considers that, in the first place, any approach to the migration–development nexus should be based on a holistic notion of human development, in which economic development is neither reduced to the idea of mercantilist expansion, nor acquires meaning in itself, but is seen as the conjunction of various means (mercantile and non-mercantile) to achieve the necessary resources for the broader goal of human development. Second, in order to avoid the individualist bias of the “remittances for development” approach, it is important to understand the access to and enjoyment of capacities and freedoms in collective terms. The centre of the human development process is the social process that guarantees these capacities and freedoms and, as such, constitutes them into rights that are recognized and exercised by the citizenry. Thus, development is understood as the comprehensive right to enjoy the full range of human rights. In the area of migration, this change of focus is especially relevant. As Sutcliffe (1998) affirms, a progressive vision of migration should not be based on its economic consequences, but rather on rights and freedoms.

In fact, it is the denial of the right to development which often underlies the decision to migrate.

Box 1  
The denial of rights as a reason for migration

**The right to education**

The denial of the basic right to education is a recurring reason for migration; many migrants expect that, by migrating, they will be able to give their children access to an education that will allow them to reach levels of well-being and security that they themselves have not enjoyed. This is the case in the Central-Western Metropolitan Region (Área Metropolitana Centro Occidente, AMCO) of Colombia, where one of the main reasons for migration is to ensure children’s access to university-level education as a means of supporting social mobility for the lower classes, and avoiding a decline in lifestyle for the middle and upper classes. Although the Colombian State’s education model is based on the principle of universal coverage, there is still significant stratification in terms of users’ ability to pay for access to quality services. Moreover, private education guarantees access to the social and cultural capital (e.g. through learning a second language) that acts as a precondition to social mobility.

**The rights to the free enjoyment of sexuality and the free construction of gender identity**

Similarly, the denial of the right to free enjoyment of sexuality and free construction of gender identity often spurs migration as a strategy for lesbians, gays, and bisexual and transgender people (LGBT) who are trying to escape family and community control and find a home with less discriminatory legislation (Manalansan, 2006). In fact, the transgender population has historically been one of the most mobile (Jolly and Reeves, 2005). This denial of this right in countries of origin has been recognized by the LesMigraS project, which brings together migrant lesbians and lesbians of colour in Europe: “In the majority of European countries and in many non-European countries, female homosexual discrimination does not exist on a State level. However, lesbians are persecuted within their families and social spheres, and in many cases they are forced to marry. For this reason, many lesbians have chosen to migrate to Europe as well as non-European countries”<sup>6</sup> (our translation). At the same time, sexual orientation and gender identity become the basis for discrimination in migratory policy (for the case of the European Union, see Krickler, 1999), for example when the same migratory rights are claimed by same-sex couples or when persecution on the basis of gender identity is used as the basis for a claim to asylum.

6. Originally sourced from [www.lesmigras.de/spanmig.html](http://www.lesmigras.de/spanmig.html) (now no longer available). The organization’s current English-language web page is [www.lesmigras.de/englisch.htm](http://www.lesmigras.de/englisch.htm).

While the denial of the right to development, understood from this broad perspective, often spurs the migratory process, migration itself affects the definition of rights. The rights related to people's movement cannot be understood as a simple sum of the rights recognized within the framework of a nation-state (Sutcliffe, 1998). Similarly, migration implies transformations in the subject of rights and access to them – that is, in who can enjoy them and how. This context gives rise to debates on transnational citizenship, to which we will return.

An understanding of development as the right to enjoy the full range of human rights immediately opens the debate on which rights actually constitute the nucleus of the development process. Moreover, the debate is not limited to which rights these are or should be, but deals with who determines them and how they are determined. Although this may seem an excessively broad debate, it is essential to the democratization of discussion surrounding development. As the *Comité Nacional Feminista de Nicaragua* (Nicaraguan National Feminist Committee) states:

“The discourse of development in rich countries conceives of social life as a technical matter, a rational management question to be left to development professionals, instead of viewing this change as a process rooted in the interpretation of each society's history [...] The forms of power thus established by development discourse act not through repression, but through normalization and controlled knowledge” (cited in Montenegro et al., 2002, p.21; our translation).

The determination of the range of rights that make up the nucleus of the development process should not be the result of a technical discussion, but of a democratic process of debate in which the interests and needs of diverse social groups are taken into account. Debates on migration and development should be linked to debates on governance and political participation. This allows us to recognize the agency of the people involved in the migratory process, not only in mercantilist terms (as in the “remittances for development” paradigm) but as subjects of development in the triple sense that they (a) are its protagonists; (b) define its content; and (c) benefit from it.

Access to, and the active exercise of, rights is determined by citizenship status. This brings up a fundamental question: access to citizenship is segmented<sup>7</sup>, and this segmentation responds to structures of social inequality such as class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and – clearly – migratory status. The analysis of power relations and discriminatory structures are thus at the core of this analysis. In our case, this segmentation is also directly related to stratified entry for different categories of migrants, which (as we will see below) is determined by the migratory policies of destination countries in response to such factors as qualifications or sex.

Along the same lines, gender as a mutable structure has to be part of any understanding of the development process itself – that is, gender equality in the enjoyment of rights is a key dimension of development. Any evaluation of the impact of migration on development should thus focus on whether or not it produces an erosion of unequal gender relations and whether a greater degree of freedom in the construction of gender and sexual identity are attained. This should allow questions that are particularly relevant to women to appear on the development agenda, such as access to and enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights (which should be taken into special consideration in any analysis of migrant women's living conditions) and

7. Citizenship status can be classified as formal citizenship (or legal membership) and substantive citizenship, including the possession and exercise of rights. Legal citizenship is both an “object of exclusion” – in that it constitutes a prerequisite for other rights – and an “instrument of exclusion” – as a social position with restricted access (Contreras, 2004; our translation; it further develops ideas set out by Brubaker (1992)). In addition, although legal citizenship is a prerequisite for substantive citizenship, it does not constitute a guarantee. In any case, an individual's position in any of these states is not absolute – there is a thread of continuity connecting the three states: non-citizen, formal citizen and substantive citizen.

rights related to care and care work (a topic that will be addressed in our analysis of global care chains). That is, a redefinition of the very notion of the rights that constitute development is necessary in order to establish a gender-sensitive approach to development.

In any case, while debate continues regarding the rights to be included in any guiding notion of development policy, operational proposals are formulated that, without being overly broad, are sufficiently strategic in their analysis of the rights-based linkages between migration and development. Thus, in this paper we have formulated a threefold proposal that is adjusted to the different objectives pursued in diverse processes. On the one hand, while valuing the impact of remittance flows on development, we propose a consideration of the expenses that are repeatedly covered by recipient households and that correspond to the following basic rights: adequate food, housing, education, health care and social protection (in cases of unemployment, illness, disability and retirement). In addition, we propose that the rights of migrants be seen as a privileged space which condenses development opportunities resulting from migration. We will also focus on the right to health, in that it is paradigmatic for understanding living conditions, with a particular evaluation of women's sexual and reproductive health, as well as labour rights in the two sectors that are particularly relevant for migrant women: domestic and sex work. Finally, in our discussion of global care chains, we will examine the need to address access to care rights (the right to receive adequate care, and the right to decide freely on care work)

### **2.1.3 The spatial dimension of development: from the transnational to the local**

Jolly and Reeves assure us that “[t]he literature on migration remains very much State-centred” (2005, p.29). If this is true on an analytical level<sup>8</sup>, it is even more so in terms of interventions that address the development potential of migration, in which links between events at each end of the migratory chain – as well as in the spaces between – become blurred. This assumes that there is no analysis of the role played by the internationalization of the labour force and the creation of a double world labour market<sup>9</sup> that sustains a flexible process of accumulation on a global scale. Thus, the capacity to intervene in the role played by global-level migration in sustaining a specific globalization process is lost. The link between migration and development is considered only in terms of its impact on home countries, and the dynamic relationships between the development process in home and destination countries is not addressed simultaneously. The lack of attention paid to the impact of migration on destination countries<sup>10</sup> carries an implicit supposition: that the current socio-economic organization of destination countries is the development model that should be replicated in the “developing” world. This cancels out the possibility of evaluating migration's role in sustaining this structure, i.e. in judging the sustainability of these models. Accordingly, development is only questioned where it is assumed not to exist.

The impact of migration is evaluated in terms of development in home countries, and in terms of security in destination countries. Accordingly, the migration policies of

8. On a theoretical level, it is worth noting that the notion of transnationalism has gone from being a rarely used concept, limited by the “dominant methodological and epistemological nationalism”, to a concept that is today “subjected to such abuse and misuse that its heuristic and analytical potential has simply disappeared” (Suárez Navaz, 2007; our translation). Nevertheless, this misuse occurs mainly in the study of cultural interconnections, social networks and the construction of new subjectivities, not in the field of economic development.

9. That is, liberated in the case of qualified migrants, but highly restricted for unqualified migrants, thus creating a mobile reserve of cheap manual labour.

10. The impact on the labour market is addressed, but only as a sectoral question and not in terms of the transformation of socio-economic structures in their entirety.

destination countries, and those aimed at strengthening the development potential of remittances in home countries, are formulated based on completely different criteria. Concerns around security and the labour market (not always easily reconciled) are what determine migration policy in destination countries. As Gzesh (2008) affirms, “national security and the interests of the free market are the dominant paradigms for [migration] policy analysis and planning. In [the United States and other migration-receiving countries], the discussion is about ‘control’ – border fortifications, fraud-proof identity documents, raids on workplaces, detention as a deterrent, etc.” (p.90). This divergence between criteria and objectives significantly complicates the implementation of real co-development policies, a point to which we will return.

Interventions that seek to promote the productive use of remittances concentrate not only on the home country, but convert the local level into a privileged space for action. The emphasis on development as a process that should spring from the local sphere is considered to respond to the minimal success of conventional centralized policy (Canzanelli, 2001), in that it brings economic “growth” to marginalized areas. For example, it is argued that these policies have not avoided the trend towards depopulation (i.e. the increase in both internal and external migratory flows) and the loss of income. The ultimate cause of policy inefficacies would be the existence of a gap between global processes and macroeconomic policy; this must be filled by local development initiatives focused on the generation of employment and aimed especially at the creation of small and medium enterprises. The territory itself is understood as an economic entity with comparative and competitive advantages that can be fostered. In other words, these local spaces are entities that can compete in the global market, beyond individual enterprises. The problem is that this emphasis on the local sphere is produced

“in a context characterized by the failure of structural adjustment and commercial liberalization policies to improve the living conditions of the majority in developing nations – policies, moreover, that were not only promoted but imposed by the same international economic development organizations (IMF, IADB, World Bank, UNCTAD, etc.) that now promote this new paradigm of development driven by remittances and the leading role of migrants” (Canales, 2006a; our translation).

There is a real risk of losing sight of the importance of intervention both in the structural and the macro level. Although it is the global context that opens up the possibility of spurring the local sphere, the latter cannot alleviate structural or systemic deficiencies. Moreover, structural conditions cannot be ignored in a discussion of the synergies between migration and local development. When these conditions are not recognized, social realities cannot be adequately understood. If structural conditions are not addressed, migration can become a continuous process, in which phenomena such as replacement migration, circular migration, or dependence on remittances highlight the incapacity to promote a real development process. Local development must therefore be viewed in terms of scenarios of opportunities that should be taken advantage of, and ongoing processes that can and should be replicated. These, in fact, are “constructing” development, but are playing out within the framework of structural restrictions in which intervention is crucial. Local development – understood as initiatives that respond to local needs, led by local actors, using locally available resources – is an idea that is far removed from the notion of local development as an increase in competitiveness within local territory and in the context of growing global markets.

### 2.1.4 Migrants as protagonists of development

In the “remittances for development” paradigm, as set out by Bakker (2006), the migrant appears as a “neoliberal subject” (p11) and migration is presented as a profoundly entrepreneurial process in which “migrants – ‘[I]ike entrepreneurs who seek markets around the world’ – criss-cross the globe ‘in search of comparative advantages’” (p13, quoting MIF/IADB, 2005)<sup>11</sup>. One positive element of this view is that migrants, and the populations which benefit from development interventions, are no longer viewed as mere passive recipients of these policies: their capacity for agency is recognized. However, the form of this recognition carries with it twin, correlated risks: this decision-making capacity is valued only in regards to the market, and it occasionally takes on instrumentalist tinges. The lack of attention paid to migrants’ rights supposes that their capacity for agency is valued only in terms of their role as “pawns of global development”, not as its beneficiaries. People migrate in order to sustain transnational families; the socio-economic systems of richer countries are highly dependent on their work and their contributions and, moreover, they are responsible for the development of their communities of origin.

A view of development through a rights lens demands recognition of those who act as protagonists of the migration–development nexus, as subjects who build it, make decisions around it and benefit from it. This also commands the construction of channels for intervention and participation that allow for action in all three spheres, not only in the first (interventions that focus exclusively on the productive use of remittances) as tends to be the case today.

A gender-sensitive analysis of the migration–development nexus demands visibility for the role played by women. The migrant, travelling the world looking for business opportunities, has been historically viewed as an autonomous male. Women protagonists of migratory processes have tended to be either (a) invisible; (b) simply absent from migration; or (c) seen as mere dependents of men’s migratory decisions and projects. This view continues to hold weight, and women continue to be rendered invisible in migration and development discourses.

Women have always been protagonists of migratory processes, although the nature of their role has varied, as we will see below. Their leadership role must be made visible; we must recognize women’s agency and their capacity to make decisions about their lives. The feminization of migration and the growing role that women play in the sending of remittances – in fact, as we will see, they tend to send larger proportions of their incomes than men do – presupposes that the “remittances for development” paradigm will gradually recognize the role of migrant women. However the form that recognition takes has inherent risks. Women’s capacity for agency is understood in purely mercantile terms, and their decision to migrate seen as a purely economic decision. Other factors, such as those related to women’s position (e.g. the existence of gender-based violence) are thus left aside, and interventions are directed only at fostering their action in the market (through the productive investment of remittances, ignoring other development objectives such as a more equitable distribution of unpaid work). At the same time, structural factors are ignored that, independent of individual initiative, strongly condition women’s experiences of migration and the ways they can contribute to development. It is essential to intercede in these factors, including, for example, strongly sex-segregated labour markets in both home and destination countries.

11. The perverse effects implicit in this notion of the migrant as protagonist of socio-economic processes, the ideological gaps which underpin it, and alternative proposals for an understanding of this subject were addressed in UN-INSTRAW (2005). Here, we limit ourselves to additional considerations as to how two of the principal arguments made from a gender perspective (the needs to reclaim migrants’ agency, and to recognize the household as a decision-making space) can be co-opted and distorted.

Another necessary adjustment to the concept of “protagonist” is the move from considering migration in purely individual terms to seeing it as a household strategy. Recognition of this reality is beginning in the “remittances for development” discourse – however, the problem lies in the notion of the family that is being imposed and that directs policy. This is a narrow definition that is linked to the notion of the traditional nuclear family, hiding the existence of other forms of co-habitation that do not receive the same support in policy. Same-sex couples or extended households which transcend blood ties are usually ignored. Moreover, the idea of a transnational household as an engine for development is based on a harmonious view of the home, in which conflicts and power relations are absent. The demand for recognition of migrants not as individualized beings, but as members of co-habiting decision-making units has led to a view of the family (in its most conventional form, and free of all conflict) as an entity that brings into being the “virtuous circle” of migration and development.

Associated with this is the fact that the recognition of the household’s role is usually only acknowledged in the case of migrant women, but is less frequently used to understand men’s migratory experiences. This presupposes that, in a discussion of migrant women, classical models of the family are given priority above other forms of co-habitation, and the experiences of women who migrate alone and autonomously are hidden. It also tends to promote the instrumentalization of women (both migrants and those who stay in their home countries) by lauding their capacity to make sacrifices for the good of the family, and stigmatizing those who break oppressive family ties. Other problems that appear in the reclamation of female leadership are the trend of victimizing women (particularly in the discourse around human trafficking), and the laying of blame in the discourse around global care chains and the impact of female migration on households – and particularly on boys and girls – in home countries.

The recuperation and promotion of migrants’ capacity for agency, for both men and women migrants, must substitute those interventions that view migrant populations merely as passive recipients or simple victims of processes (as is the case with women and anti-trafficking/trade policies). However this recognition of migrants’ role as active subjects cannot be limited to their participation in the construction of global development processes. Migrants are not “pawns of global development” and the risk of their instrumentalization can only be overcome by opening possibilities for migrants themselves to decide on development processes, and on the content and aims of interventions. Similarly, migrants must be recognized as development beneficiaries, in that their living and working conditions should be understood as part of global development processes. Migrants are protagonists of the migration–development nexus because they construct it, but also because they should be able to make decisions around it, and benefit from it; they do this not as isolated individuals, but as members of social networks that are cross-cut by power relations that must be brought to light. For example, fostering the collective agency of migrants’ associations should also involve questions around the different position that women and men migrants occupy within these associations.

Women must be brought to light in the understanding of migration–development relationships, yes – but care must be taken not to instrumentalize, victimize or blame them. As we will see below, the tendency to lapse into these distorted visions is all too common.

## 2.2 The strategic instantiations of the migration–development nexus

We can determine specific positions from which to observe the exact nature of the migration–development nexus by introducing parameters to reorient the debate outlined above: by adopting a gender perspective; by understanding development as a right; by recognizing that migrants are active subjects; and by simultaneously attending to the transnational and local dimensions, thus reclaiming the role of institutions.

We propose to focus on the analysis of these instantiations as paradigmatic spaces that condense the socio-economic dynamics appropriate for analysis and intervention. We look to identify *strategic instantiations*, as defined by Saskia Sassen as “strategic research aspects that examine the organizational dynamic of globalization and begin to shed light on the way in which the gender dimension operates” (2003a, p.69, our translation).<sup>12</sup>

In this paper, we propose four strategic instantiations from which we can understand the links between migration and development in a gender-sensitive way.

1. **The impact of remittance flows on local economies.** This is a strategic aspect, not least because remittances are the most visible link between migratory processes and development. To date, they also condense global debates and interventions. As Canales (2006a) affirms, remittances are “one of the big, fashionable issues” (our translation). However, this instantiation also allows us to depart from an understanding of development as a process that guarantees rights, and test out operational proposals to focus on the access to and enjoyment of those rights that tend to consume the majority of remittance flows. Similarly, it lets us reclaim the role of public institutions, and ask about the relevance of policies that expand on the logic of financial sustainability (e.g. policies that promote the formal banking of remittances) and on the true potential of local development if there is no intervention in structural conditions. Finally, in this instantiation it is especially important to apply a gender perspective, given the central role that women play as senders and receivers of remittances, and the debates about whether this constitutes a significant advance in terms of their empowerment.<sup>13</sup>
2. **Global care chains.** These are considered a strategic instantiation because they allow for public debate on questions that often remain hidden (we could say, that are part of development’s hidden agenda), largely because of the failure to apply a gender perspective to development processes. On the one hand, gender-sensitive analysis is required of the position that care occupies in the structure of society, and the priority that care is assigned in development models at the local, national and global level. On the other hand, study should be undertaken of the role that gender plays as a backbone of social and economic systems, that is, the positions considered appropriate for men and women in the economy. Once we understand the societal organization of care as an integral element of development, we can link the impact of migration to different levels of development in both home and destination countries; we can apply a transnational lens and question the sustainability of development models in

12. This concept was originally set out in English in Sassen (2003b).

13. An analysis of remittances in communities of origin is particularly interesting in this respect. As King et al. point out, “there is a considerable literature now on gender and migration, and an equally substantial literature on remittances and their role in developing migrants’ home countries. Until very recently, these two literatures barely touched each other” (2006, p.411).

destination countries. Finally, this is a field of analysis and intervention that is particularly relevant from a gender perspective, because it obliges us to apply innovative conceptions of gender relations. It makes us question how gender identities are redefined, and what elements could result in conflicts of interest for women operating within care chains. Always, we must take care to avoid reproducing clichés (e.g. women have a natural gift for care; migrant care workers are all heterosexual mothers, etc.).

3. **Migrants' rights throughout the migratory process.** The situations that are faced by migrant women and men encompass transnational development processes that go beyond the impact of their movement to a specific territory. These include their living and working conditions in destination communities, as well as issues related to their human rights throughout their migration trajectory. Inquiring into the impact of migration on migrants' living and working conditions (understood as rights) allows us to overturn the instrumentalist nature of many interventions formulated under the "remittances for development" umbrella. This is a strategic instantiation not only because it approaches development as a right, but also because it obliges us to respond to the questions that we formulated earlier: defining the rights in question (paying special attention to those which tend to be left out of the debate, e.g. sexual and reproductive rights); identifying migrants' citizenship status (the extent of, and mechanisms used, to grant stratified entry, as discussed earlier) and which territories recognize and guarantee rights. From a gender perspective, this allows us to introduce empowerment and equality as development vectors. Finally, this is a strategic instantiation because it allows us to question the impact of migration on development and on destination countries as a result of the application of their migration policies.
4. **Co-development.** In spite of the fact that the term "co-development" does not yet have a universal definition, it is possible to identify a common corpus of meaning that has been constructed through successive papers and communications in the European sphere over recent years.<sup>14</sup> Several points of consensus on co-development constitute a strategic instantiation which allow us to analyse the migration–development nexus. Of particular interest are the areas regarding the recognition of the transnational as a privileged space for co-development (defined by the relation between migrants' places of origin and destination) and migrants' key role in this process. The emphasis on stimulating the role of diasporas in promoting development in their home countries is inextricably linked – as recognized in a number of documents – to easing the integration and citizenship of migrants in destination societies. The call for migrants' active participation and their incorporation in development processes is based on recognizing them as participants in and beneficiaries of development. Finally, the co-development perspective allows us to highlight the pre-eminence of public institutions (both in home and destination countries) in the creation of adequate conditions, allowing other social actors to play a beneficial role in establishing a link between migration and development, as well as in fostering connections between Southern and migrant organizations. To summarize, the co-development framework contemplates the axes of

14. Among these it is worth highlighting the Communication by the Commission of European Communities (here: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52005DC0390:EN:NOT>), and the consensus document of the Grupo de Trabajo de Codesarrollo of the Consejo de Cooperación al Desarrollo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación de España (Co-Development Working Group of the Council on Development Cooperation of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation) (here: [www.maec.es/SiteCollection-Documents/Cooperaci%C3%B3n%20espa%C3%B1ola/Publicaciones/GT%20CCD%20Consenso%20Codesarrollo%2019.12.05.pdf](http://www.maec.es/SiteCollection-Documents/Cooperaci%C3%B3n%20espa%C3%B1ola/Publicaciones/GT%20CCD%20Consenso%20Codesarrollo%2019.12.05.pdf)).



recognition of migrants’ agency; the construction of transnational citizenship; and the importance of institutions – elements necessary, in our opinion, for an adequate understanding of the migration–development nexus. There only remains the need to include gender as a cross-cutting axis, in particular in terms of the participation of migrants’ organizations in the design of projects as co-development initiatives, such that they effectively convert migration into a process that benefits home and destination countries.

## Box 2. Remittances for development

The “remittances for development” paradigm: elements for concern	Axes to reorient the debate
<p>Vision of development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reductionist notion of human development</li> <li>• Emphasis on individual well-being through the market</li> <li>• Lack of attention to the role of public institutions</li> <li>• Development as economic development</li> <li>• Economic development as mercantilist expansion</li> <li>• Lack of attention to non-monetary spheres of the economy and care work</li> </ul> <p>Local development without structural intervention</p> <p>The subject of development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mercantile subject and harmonious family</li> <li>• Migrants as pawns of global development?</li> </ul> <p>Absence of a transnational perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unquestioned development model</li> <li>• Barriers to co-development</li> </ul>	<p>Introduction of the gender perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macro/meso/micro analysis</li> <li>• Women as a heterogeneous group</li> <li>• Analysis of gender relations</li> <li>• Analysis of masculinities</li> </ul> <p>Development as a the right to enjoy the full range of rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacities and freedoms as rights: the role of institutions</li> <li>• The nucleus of development: democratic debate</li> <li>• Redefinition of the notion of rights: sexual and reproductive rights, care rights</li> <li>• Stratified access to citizenship</li> <li>• Citizenship and territoriality: co-development</li> <li>• Gender equality as part of development</li> </ul> <p>The need for a transnational perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact at origin and destination</li> <li>• Role of migration in global development</li> <li>• Sustainability of the development model in the destination country</li> </ul> <p>Local development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenarios of opportunity within structural conditioning factors</li> <li>• Essential structural intervention</li> </ul> <p>Migrants as protagonists of development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjects who construct development, decide on it and benefit from it</li> </ul>

### Box 3. Strategic instantiations

Home country	Destination country	Linking home and destination countries	
The impact of remittances on local development	Migrants' living and working conditions	Global care chains	Co-development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational proposal: development as processes that guarantee the right to food, education, health, housing and social protection</li> <li>• Methodological proposal: levels of analysis: individual/ household/ community (analysis of social, gender, class and ethnic inequalities )</li> <li>• Local development within structural conditioning factors</li> <li>• The role of public institutions</li> <li>• Redistribution of work and negotiating power within households</li> <li>• Productive investment: re-thinking criteria of productivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reverse the risk of instrumentalizing migrants, especially women</li> <li>• What rights (sexual and reproductive)?</li> <li>• What citizenship status (stratified access and territoriality)?</li> <li>• Impact in destination countries</li> <li>• Empowerment and equality as development vectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social organization of care as a development vector</li> <li>• The impact of development in home and destination countries</li> <li>• New international sexual division of labour</li> <li>• Sustainability of the development model and of women's liberation</li> <li>• Redefinition of gender identities and redistribution of care work</li> <li>• Visibility of unpaid work</li> <li>• Gender as a backbone of the economic system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transnational space as a privileged scenario for action</li> <li>• Recognition of migrants' agency linked recognizing them as participants and beneficiaries of development</li> <li>• Central role of migrants: attention to women's role in migrants' organizations and the incorporation of gender-sensitive plans into co-development projects</li> <li>• Pre-eminent role of public institutions</li> </ul>



# 3

**Women as subjects of  
the globalization of migration**

### 3.1 The feminization of migration and characteristics of female migration

In recent years the term “feminization of migration” has become commonplace, used even in news reports. However the term can be confusing: it suggests an absolute increase in the proportion of female migrants, when in fact, in 1960 women already made up 46.8 per cent of all international migrants. That figure has risen over the last four decades to 49.6 per cent in 2005 (United Nations, 2006).<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, in order to understand the concept of feminization, it is important to look beyond statistics on migratory flows. A good beginning is the general increase in international migration, which doubled between 1960 and 2005 to reach 190 million people or approximately 3 per cent of the global population. This figure divides into similar proportions for South–North migration (62 million people), South–South migration (61 million people), and South–North migration (53 million), with an additional 14 million South–South migrants. It is important to note that during the period 1990–2005, *the greatest increase was recorded among migrants to highly developed countries, which almost doubled. It is within this group that we find the greatest increase in female migrants, who for the first time surpassed men (who continue to predominate in South–South migrations).*<sup>16</sup>

In addition to the net increase in the proportion of women within migratory flows, primarily to highly developed countries in the North, the term “feminization” denotes an important qualitative change in the composition of these flows. That is, *the sustained increase in the proportion of women migrating independently in search of employment*, instead of as “family dependents” who travel with their spouses or reunite with them abroad. In other words, over the last two decades, a significant number of women – migrating independently, assuming the role of economic provider – have joined migratory flows that were previously dominated by men.<sup>17</sup>

The feminization of migration is part of the broader phenomenon of the “globalization of migration”,<sup>18</sup> a term that alludes as much to the sustained increase in the number of international migrants – from a growing number of countries throughout the world – as it does to the significant changes in the nature and characteristics of these migrations. The background to this sustained increase has been the economic inequality between rich and poor countries that has characterized the process of neoliberal globalization, where transformations in productive structures and in the international division of labour have affected developed nations’ pattern of manual labour importation. These processes have spurred constant increases in the flows of men and women, who see migration to rich countries as an escape from poverty and a chance to improve their living conditions.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the demand for migrant labour in developed countries was concentrated in the agricultural and industrial sectors. It typically involved importing contingents of male labour – so-called “guest workers” – through bilaterally negotiated agreements between home and destination countries. The majority of female migration during this period corresponded to family reunification processes with these male migrant workers who, contrary to initial expectations, tended to establish themselves definitively in destination countries. However the global economic

15. The data presented in this section are taken from United Nations (2006) and United Nations Population Division (2007).

16. In the year 2000, women represented 51 per cent of migrants to developed countries and 46 per cent to developing countries.

17. For example, in the case of Latin American migration to Spain, migratory flows from all countries now show a preponderance of women. The exceptions are Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, where sex distribution is evenly balanced (Pellegrino, 2004).

18. The term is taken from Castles and Miller, cited in Hochschild (2005).

changes that began in the 1980s significantly reduced the demand for male migrant workers in the industrial sector, while they considerably increased the demand for cheap labour in other sectors, particularly the service sector. The feminization of migration is built into the growing third sector of Northern economies, in particular the expansion of the labour market for personal services which created a specific demand for female labour. Added to this were emerging demographic changes in the North, where ageing populations and a decrease in demographic growth also fed the demand for migrant labour.

As we will discuss further on, this new context was accompanied by changes in migration policy in destination countries, aimed to promote the arrival of specific categories of migrants and block the arrival of others, mainly as a function of their level and type of qualifications. The selectivity of these policies however, has not always reflected the real situation of labour markets, and thus has, either directly or indirectly, spurred the migration of women alone or the irregular migration of both sexes. As a consequence, in destination countries the labour market presents a sharp labour stratification in terms of ethnic origin, migratory status and sex; migrants represent a global labour underclass, which, in turn, is internally stratified by sex, qualification, ethnicity and legal status. Because of its nature, the labour market favours the hiring of irregular migrants; stripped of all legal protection, they can be subjected to more intense conditions of exploitation. As the International Labour Organization (2004) explains:

“Migrant workers are concentrated in the labour markets that are sometimes characterized as the ‘bargain basement’ of globalization. Most are employed in low-skill services, agriculture and labour-intensive manufacturing in which employers are small enterprises that are basically ‘price-takers’ – that is, they have no influence on the prices of their products or services. With intensifying competition with suppliers from other parts of the world, employers in these sectors seek to maintain their small margins by squeezing workers’ wages. [...] the demand for foreign labour reflects the long-term trend of informalizing or downgrading low skilled and poorly paid jobs. Migrants in irregular status are often preferred since they are willing to work for lower wages, for short periods during production peaks, and to accept physically demanding and hazardous jobs. The resulting demand for migrant workers provides a significant impetus to labour flows and encourages the use of undocumented migrants, at the expense of formal protections of workplace safety, health, minimum wage and other standards” (pp.45-6).

The sectors of migrant labour insertion show a strong segregation based on sex – agriculture and construction predominate for men, whereas personal services predominate for women. Both participate to a lesser extent in other service areas, such as hotels and restaurants, as well as manufacturing – in so-called “sweatshops”, especially in clothing production, although there men tend to occupy administrative positions while women are manual workers (Piper, 2005). The main concentration of women workers is in the area of personal services such as domestic work, care for children and the elderly, and sex work. It is estimated, for example, that in France, Italy and Spain, the proportion of migrant women who work as domestics exceeds 50 per cent, while in the case of Spain this sector represents the entryway to the labour market for 63 per cent of migrants from outside of the European Community (Colectivo IOÉ, 2003a; Economic and Social Council, 2006; ILO, 2003).

The demand for foreign domestic and care workers in destination countries is driven by the convergence of several factors, particularly the mass entry of local women into the labour market, together with the deficiency or increasing privatization of social services that absorb part of the burden of family care, such as day-care centres and senior citizens’ residences. The fact that most men still refuse to assume equal amounts of domestic responsibility, combined with various social changes

in developed countries (such as the end of the country–city migration cycle that fed the need for domestic workers; the continued preference for more regulated, salaried positions for poor, local women; and the characterization of domestic work as being of little prestige and showing a strong taint of servitude), has reduced to a minimum the availability of poor local women willing to perform these tasks, and led to a constant increase in the flow of migrant women. The so-called care crisis in the developed world has thus provided an escape route from the catastrophic failures of development policy implementation in poor countries, and in particular from the effects of neoliberal structural adjustments imposed on these countries over the last decade. These have led to the growth of un- and subemployment, the reduction of social services, the dislocation of labour markets and an increase in poverty among broad sectors of the population, in particular women. The migration of both men and women will continue to increase as long as poverty in poor countries continues to be feminized, and as the number of men who cannot fulfil their traditional role as provider continues to grow. This increases pressure on women to devise new strategies for family survival – including migration.

The most notable characteristic of female labour migration is that it is based on global capitalism’s reproduction and exploitation of gender inequalities. The majority of female migrants perform “women’s work”: the least desirable labour niche in terms of pay, working conditions, legal protection and social recognition. In this way, gender acts as an organizing principle of the labour market in destination countries, reproducing and reinforcing traditional gender patterns which now become articulated as other forms of oppression: it is not only women who perform this work, but women of a certain race, class, ethnic origin or nationality. Thus, female labour migration shows how gender intersects with other forms of oppression to facilitate economic exploitation, relegating a significant number of women to servile status (domestic and care workers) or degradation (sex workers).

The regulatory frameworks of destination countries (and to a lesser extent, of home countries) play an important role in channelling migration to specific labour sectors, applying policies that restrict labour mobility, deny or restrict access to documentation, and limit the recognition of migrants’ social and labour rights. The case of Dominican women who migrate to Spain and Switzerland serves to illustrate some of these mechanisms. The Swiss strategy for restricting female migration – by limiting the availability of visas in all categories except those for cabaret dancers or “companions” – channelled a significant number of Dominican women to sex work in Switzerland. There, they later encountered restrictions on their ability to change jobs or regularize their migratory status (marriage to a Swiss citizen being one of the few routes available). Meanwhile, Dominican migrants to Spain find easy entry into domestic service, which is a largely unregulated sector that can be accessed even without a residency or work permit. The informal, unregulated nature of this work allows employers to maintain low salaries and restricts the access of domestic workers to social services and other forms of protection. At the same time, a number of regulations and bureaucratic barriers make it difficult for migrants to access other labour sectors, even if they possess the qualifications to do so. For example, before filling a professional position with a migrant worker, a Spanish employer must verify with national employment offices that the position cannot be filled by either a Spanish or European national. Once we add to this the bureaucratic challenges, delays and costs of validating foreign education credentials, it is easy to understand why so many professional women work as domestic employees or in other low-qualified sectors. In fact, a significant number of migrants of both sexes are underemployed, working in positions that are below their qualifications. In addition, women generally find it harder to validate their education credentials in the labour market (Kofman, 2005).

Gender inequality in home countries also plays an important role in migratory dynamics that contribute to the feminization of migration. For example, upon deciding on the migration of one of its members, families often decide to support a woman's migration based on expectations that women are willing to make more personal sacrifices than men to ensure family well-being: they work hard, remit a greater proportion of their income, spend less on themselves, and accept poorer living conditions. Gender-based discrimination in home countries can thus contribute, directly or indirectly, to a woman's decision to migrate, e.g. disparities in access to education, employment, or salaries; forced marriages; the lack of protection or the rejection faced in some countries by single mothers, women without children, divorcees, or those who choose to remain single. These and other circumstances can increase women's vulnerability to economic pressures that then spur migration (Piper, 2005), or they can themselves be its primary causes. Some studies have shown that, in addition to economic reasons, the migratory decisions of women may be motivated by other factors linked to gender, including the desire to escape from a violent husband.

### 3.1.1 Beyond the economic reasons for migration

Intimate-partner violence as a determining factor behind female migration has begun to draw more attention in recent years, although it is still eclipsed by the attention given to economic factors, especially when the research methodology does not explicitly address this topic. It is worth noting that the use of qualitative research techniques has facilitated the visibility of violence much more than surveys, as illustrated by the 2006 study of Latina migrants in Canada, conducted by Bernhard et al. Although, in general, economic factors dominated the migratory decisions of the sample, migrants' personal stories revealed that in one of every three cases, the desire to escape a violent partner played an important role in the decision to migrate. In addition to highlighting the role of gender-based violence in migration decisions, the in-depth interviews conducted by Ruiz (2002) and Herrera (2005) with Ecuadorian migrant women, and the interviews conducted by UN-INSTRAW (2008) with Colombian migrant women, also brought out other motivating factors such as ethnic discrimination, sexual orientation, and the desire to end unsatisfactory relationships, flee from authoritarian fathers/husbands, enjoy more personal freedom, and "discover other worlds".

The variety in both women's motivations and migrations are indicative of the transformations that have occurred in their position at the global level. Women's international migration cannot be separated from their increasing labour participation in their home countries, their increasing access to education or their enjoyment of rights, conditions without which so many women could not migrate. Although structural-economic factors play a deciding role in female migration, the way in which they interact with other motivating factors, together with the societal changes that facilitate migration as an option for women, are issues that require much greater attention than they have received to date.

### 3.1.2 Sexuality: the invisible dimension of migration studies

A number of authors have made reference to the scant attention paid to the issue of sexuality in migration studies, despite the fact that it plays a key role in structuring gender inequality and that, like gender, it moulds and organizes the migratory process in various ways (see Cantú, 1997; González López, 2003;



Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003). In fact, a literature review shows – incidentally at times – the broad range of factors associated with sexuality that impact on the migratory experience of both men and women. For example, one UN-INSTRAW case study in Colombia found a significant number of mature-aged women whose primary reason for migrating was not related to economic or family reasons (as their children were already adults). Instead they were motivated by the desire to find a new intimate relationship in Spain, as women of their age in Colombia had little chance of forming new bonds.

Even when the initial reason for migration is economic, many women who migrate without partners come to value the higher degrees of personal and sexual autonomy allowed to women in the North, particularly in Western European countries, in contrast to the more restrictive attitudes that prevail in their home countries. As a result, the decision to return may be affected by women’s unwillingness to give up this new personal autonomy, especially when going back would imply a return to the rigid controls of the family milieu. Interestingly, in the case of male migrants, the decision to return may be influenced by the opposite desire. Singer and Gilbertson’s 2003 study of married Dominican migrant men in New York reveals that one reason men show more interest in returning to the Dominican Republic – and pressure their wives to do so – is that there they enjoy more opportunities for sexual conquest. In this case, the sexual freedoms that men traditionally enjoy in the home country are added to the privileges associated with the higher economic status of returned migrants.

The risk of sexual violence accompanies women throughout their migration trajectory. They can suffer violence in transit at the hands of traffickers or *coyotes* [people smugglers], or from police or migration authorities; being a migrant increases their vulnerability to sexual harassment by employers (for domestic workers) or by clients or pimps (for sex workers). The aspect of sexuality that has received the most attention in the academic literature has been the effect of migration on the spread of HIV, and the increased risk of infection among both migrant populations and the partners who remain in the home country.<sup>19</sup> The increased sexual freedom of men at both ends of their migratory path can transform them into HIV vectors in their communities of origin, in particular when male migration is circular or seasonal. It should be noted, however, that many of these studies pay more attention to the epidemiological impacts of HIV than to an understanding the social, sexual and family dynamics behind the phenomenon. HIV is also an important concern in regards to migrants who engage in sex work, which contributes to their social stigmatization. Almost no information exists in this area, demonstrating the lack of interest in researching the living and working conditions, or the human rights situations, of these populations (Agustín, 2005).

One of the aspects that have received least attention in migration literature is sexual orientation. Partial studies and a significant volume of anecdotal evidence suggest that many people migrate for reasons related to their sexual orientation or gender identity, although the weight of these factors within global migratory flows has never been clearly estimated. This would allow us to determine, among other things, to what extent lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender people – LGBT individuals – are overrepresented in these flows. Little is also known about

19. The 2004 Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic: 4th Global Report, published by UNAIDS, analyses the connections between different kinds of mobility and the increased risk of HIV infection, but it also points out that “while there is a widespread prejudice that migrants ‘bring AIDS with them’, the fact is that many migrants move from low HIV prevalence areas to those with higher prevalence, increasing their own risk of being exposed to the virus” (UNAIDS, 2004, p.83). See also UNAIDS/IOM (2001), which presents a global overview of the problem: Hirsch et al. (2002) analyse Mexican migration to the United States; and Lurie (2004) looks at the situation in southern Africa.

these migrants' living conditions in destination countries, although some studies have documented a strong rejection by their compatriots and their subsequent exclusion from diaspora communities in destination countries<sup>20</sup>. There is no doubt, however, that the contrast between socio-cultural attitudes about sexual diversity in the North and in the South constitutes a strong incentive to migrate for LGBT people, added to the increased liberty implied by their distance from their families and communities of origin. However, in spite of the increasing levels of tolerance and legal recognition of their rights that sexual minorities find in many destination countries, they continue to face discriminatory situations, for example, in migration legislation (Kofman, 2005).

Historically, the policies of destination countries that favour family reunification when granting migration and residence permits have been formulated from a heterocentric perspective, based on legal marriage as the source of rights. As a result, marriage to a citizen or family reunification have been migratory mechanisms reserved exclusively for heterosexuals. This situation has begun to change in recent years, in that more countries grant legal recognition to same-sex unions. However, these legal modifications do not always translate into equal migratory opportunities for these couples, who may be faced with continuing exclusion from existing migration norms or bureaucratic hurdles in the application of new ones. Even so, a Human Rights Watch report states that at least 19 countries, most of them European, "extend immigration benefits to same-sex couples" (2006, p.145), although there are still important exceptions, the most notable being the United States. Contrary to the liberal trend in most developed countries, in 1996 the United States<sup>21</sup> – the world's top destination country for migrants – passed the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which reaffirmed the exclusively heterosexual nature of marriage in all dealings with the federal government. As a result, the 2000 Census registered almost 40,000 binational same-sex couples living apart due to the impossibility of obtaining migration permits for the foreign partner. This does not take into account the thousands of binational couples who must hide their relationships, live apart from one another, or leave the United States.

## 3.2 The transnational family

Contrary to the traditional pattern of family groups moving and setting up permanently in destination countries, as has historically characterized international migration, the diversity of migratory patterns in the current phase of "the globalization of migration" indicates new problems that locate the family in a key analytical space. The migratory policy of rich countries is the principal factor behind current patterns, in that they promote the migration of temporary workers and foster irregular migration, leading to the circulation of a significant number of individual migrants of both sexes. In addition, the predominance of agriculture and domestic service as the key sectors for migrants' labour insertion plays an important role because of the structure of this work, i.e. the mobility and seasonal nature of current agricultural labour, and the fact that domestic workers often live in the houses of their employers. The development of new communication and transportation technologies facilitates frequent movements and constant communication between

20. An example of this is the study by Ruiz (2002) of Ecuadorian transvestites and transsexuals in the Netherlands. These individuals present a pattern of systematic exclusion from the rest of the Ecuadorian migrant community, with which they have little contact. Transgender people are also discriminated against in the labour market, which often steers them towards sex work as the only alternative in both home and destination countries (Jolly and Reeves, 2005).

21. According to HRW (2006), these countries are Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Israel, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

migrants and their families in their home countries, allowing the maintenance of close ties and the development of new modes of family management, despite the distances that are characteristic of transnational families.

On the other hand, family migration is still present in some migratory patterns (e.g. highly qualified professionals), and family reunification frequently occurs thanks to the norms of destination countries which continue to prioritize reunification among their criteria for granting entry permits. The migrant regularization programmes implemented by countries such as Spain (and, in the past, the United States), have led to the reunification of many families, who were unable to reunite earlier due to the irregular status of the migrant family member. Reunification refers not only to the members of nuclear families, but can also include ancestors and other family members – such as grandmothers who live in the destination country and care for the children of their working daughters, or the brothers and sisters of migrants who join migratory chains via reunification. UN-INSTRAW case studies in Spain show that many regular migrants opt not to reunite their entire families, preferring to use their new status for other ends: e.g. to make regular visits to the home country; for cyclical migration (spending extended periods in the home country and then returning to work); or to ensure the household's "migratory turnover". In this case, a migrant woman sponsors the reunification of a sister or adult daughter, who in turn becomes the temporary or permanent economic provider for the household in the home country.

Occasionally, migrants may not desire reunification because they consider their migration to be temporary and intend to return definitively to their home country. The fear that migration will negatively affect children, exposing them to the dangers of the degraded social environments within fringe neighbourhoods where migrants are often forced to live, may contribute to this decision. UN-INSTRAW case studies of Colombians and Dominicans in Spain also show the opposite case of women, who opt for reunification because it ensures better living conditions for their children, particularly with respect to education and health care. The hardship that tends to characterize the living and working conditions of migrants – labour exploitation, racism and xenophobia, economic limitations aggravated by the need to remit significant amounts of their income, etc. – keeps the hope of a successful return alive. Such a return is symbolized by the migrant returning home with sufficient savings to ensure a more prosperous standard of living for his/her family. Another group to be taken into account is the small minority of people who undertake migration outside of a family context, and do not participate either in transnational families or in reunification processes.

Despite these elements, we must not lose sight of the fact that family separation consistently emerges in studies as the most painful aspect of the migratory experience, regardless of whether the person voluntarily chooses migration or, more often, is forced into separation as a result of his/her irregular migratory status. This is particularly the case for female labour migrants who have left young children in their home countries; their irregular status prevents them from travelling home, which can result in long periods of separation between mother and child.

# 4

**Strategic instantiation 1:  
What happens in destination  
countries? Migratory policies and  
the rights of migrant women**

The human development approach is closely linked to the rights-based approach. In fact, the latter has been adopted by the United Nations system in the full range of its cooperation and development programmes.<sup>22</sup> The convergence between the human development and rights-based approaches is born of the need to broaden our scope beyond development processes themselves, to ask *how* these processes are achieved. In this sense, human rights concepts offer instruments that broaden our concern for the development process: “Individual rights express the limits on the losses that individuals can permissibly be allowed to bear, even in the promotion of noble social goals. Rights protect individuals and minorities from policies that benefit the community as a whole but place huge burdens on them” (UNDP, 2000, p.22).

The exclusive focus on remittances as a means of improving the well-being of recipient households often hides the fact that this improvement is based on the denial of migrants’ rights, particularly the rights of women. As we have argued throughout this paper, strengthening the links between migration and development requires attention to migrants’ rights, and an understanding that respecting and guaranteeing these rights should be an essential component of any assessment of the sustainability of development processes in destination countries. Accordingly, this section focuses initially on an analysis of the living and working conditions of women migrants, based on a review of the migratory policies of major destination countries. The majority of these countries have introduced important changes over the last decade as a result of (a) the reduction in demographic growth and the demand for labour in some sectors; and (b) the intensification of anti-immigration attitudes within certain political parties and significant sections of the local population. In any consideration of the human rights situation of migrants, it is worth noting that Gzesh (2006) and others have argued that the motivating factors behind migration may include human rights violations in the home country, such as the right to employment and a fair wage, the right to health care or education, women’s right to a life free of violence, etc. Some countries – notably the United States – have taken their antimigration policies to an extreme on almost every level, although the European strategy of “selective or stratified entry” is more representative of current prevailing attitudes in destination countries.

On the other hand, although it is true that the denial of rights constitutes one of the principal motivating factors behind migration – while being a foreigner in destination countries may simultaneously bring a new denial of individuals’ rights as migrants – it is also true that migration may improve access to and enjoyment of certain rights. In this sense, one of the aspects that have raised the most interest to date is the impact of migration on women’s social and personal empowerment, an issue that we will also analyse in this section.

## **4.1 Migratory policy, irregular migratory status and the victimization of migrant women**

The rapid economic growth experienced by European countries after the Second World War generated a labour scarcity in the continent’s most industrialized regions, a situation that gave rise to relatively open migratory policies based on the importation of labour contingents – known as “guest workers” – from the less industrialized countries of southern Europe and other regions (e.g. the migration of Turks and Kurds to Germany). This policy continued until the economic crisis of the 1970s

22. See *The Human Rights Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Towards a Common Understanding among UN Agencies*, available from [www.undg.org/archive\\_docs/6959-The\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Based\\_Approach\\_to\\_Development\\_Cooperation\\_Towards\\_a\\_Common\\_Understanding\\_among\\_UN.pdf](http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/6959-The_Human_Rights_Based_Approach_to_Development_Cooperation_Towards_a_Common_Understanding_among_UN.pdf).

put an end to Europe's economic expansion, leading to a "closed door" migratory policy that lasted, in most countries, until the late 1990s (Pellegrino, 2004). At that point, changes in the global economy and in domestic labour markets, together with demographic changes, led to the adoption of a new, common migratory policy for the countries of the European Union. The result was a strategy of "stratified entry", based on the exclusion and expulsion of numerous "unwanted" migrants (mainly those with low qualifications) and the entry or active recruitment of other categories of migrants (as a function of certain characteristics or labour qualifications). This was accompanied by greater restrictions on family migration, reunification and, above all, the entry of refugees (Jolly and Reeves, 2005).

According to Gzesh (2006, 2008), the migratory policies of destination countries are based on two main factors which are not always easy to balance: the interests of the free market, and border control or national security. In the context of globalization, labour markets demand increased cheap, unregulated labour, while migratory policy focuses increasingly on border control and the expulsion of undocumented migrants. The combination of greater migratory restrictions with a growing demand for informal workers has generated a significant increase in irregular migration. This occurs in conditions that are highly beneficial to employers, who have access to cheap, "flexible" labour that has been stripped of legal protections and is easily exploited. The implicit complicity of authorities in destination countries with the interests of employers, although never officially expressed, has been frequently reported by defenders of migrants' human rights, and was recognized by Gabriela Rodríguez Pizarro, (former) United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants.<sup>23</sup> In the United States, for example, the proportion of irregular migrants among agricultural workers – the main employment sector for foreigners – grew from less than 10 per cent at the beginning of the 1990s to more than 50 per cent at the end of the decade (ILO, 2004). In 2003, 52 per cent of foreign women and 50 per cent of foreign men residing in the Comunidad de Madrid (Community of Madrid) were doing so without a permit (Colectivo IOÉ, 2003a). In that same year, referring to border-control policies and the expulsion of migrants, then United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared:

"Few if any States have actually succeeded in cutting migrant numbers by imposing such controls. The laws of supply and demand are too strong for that. Instead, immigrants are driven to enter the country clandestinely, to overstay their visas, or to resort to the one legal route still open to them, namely the asylum system" (Annan, 2003).

Based on selective entry, short stays, and the channelling of migrants towards specific labour sectors, the model of "stratified entry" entails the creation of a hierarchy of categories – beginning with highly qualified migrants who are actively recruited to work in science, management and information technologies, and who enjoy numerous privileges. Within this qualified sector is another category, highly feminized, that includes nurses and other health-care personnel – they are also actively recruited from abroad, but do not enjoy the same privileges as the first group of qualified migrants, either in terms of the duration of their stay, family accompaniment or reunification, or the right to apply for citizenship. Following this group are the less-qualified migrants who enter legally through a system of quotas or labour contingents in specific sectors, such as agricultural or hotel workers, with temporary work permits and limited access to rights. Below this category is another, usually the largest, of undocumented migrants who have either entered irregularly or stayed in the destination after their entry permits expired. Although this can vary from one country to the next, in general the working conditions of migrants, even regular migrants, are extremely difficult. The International Labour Organization (2004) describes it in the following terms:

23. See Jolly and Reeves (2005, p.30).

“Migrants often face multiple disadvantages. As temporary workers they often have limited legal rights. Most can only find employment in sectors where wages are squeezed because producers are in [the] highly competitive end of global production chains. Trends towards more flexible employment relationships, gender discrimination, abuses in recruitment and irregular status compound these disadvantages, and have led to the greater vulnerability of most migrant workers” (p.69).

“[F]or an unacceptably high proportion of migrants, working conditions are characterized by abuse and exploitation: forced work, low salaries, poor working conditions, lack of real social protection, denial of the right to unionize, discrimination and xenophobia, as well as social exclusion, which prevents them from enjoying the potential benefits of working in another country” (p.41).

Although gender neutral in the formal sense, in practice the “stratified entry” model can discriminate against women due to gender-segregated labour markets, differences in qualification levels, and prevailing gender roles in countries of origin and destination (Piper, 2005). The legal situation of migrants indicates another source of gender inequality in employment. Despite the notable growth in female labour migration, the proportion of irregular women workers generally surpasses that of men, due to the fact that destination countries tend to assign recruitment quotas to male-dominated employment sectors, such as agriculture and construction, while marginalizing sectors that demand female labour (Moreno-Fontes Chammartin, 2006). The lack of recognition of the social and economic value of work performed by women, which permeates the granting of work permits, is added to the effects of androcentrism in migratory policies applied to migrant families (Kofman, 2005). Given that migratory laws tend to privilege men in the granting of residency permits, many qualified female migrants enter as their husbands’ dependents. Without their own labour identity, their chances of obtaining work papers or residence are affected. The higher rates of irregularity among women worsen their employment opportunities, pushing them towards sectors with lower pay and worse working conditions – domestic work, clothing factories and, in the case of women who migrate with their families, small family businesses where they often work without pay (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003).

#### 4.1.1 Irregular migratory status and the victimization of women

The adoption of restrictive policies has led to the progressive criminalization of irregular migration. In fact, the fight against “illegal” migration, which both official and popular discourse associate with delinquency and organized crime,<sup>24</sup> has become the main focus of migratory policy in developed countries, reinforced by the concerns for national security raised after the September 11 terrorist attacks. However, these restrictive policies were already being implemented before 2001. In the United States, policy restrictions crystallized with the 1996 reforms to social welfare laws,<sup>25</sup> which severely limited migrant’s access to economic assistance for poor families, food stamps, health insurance and other benefits. During the first year of the application of these reforms, 940,000 migrants lost their access to food stamps; between 1994 and 1998, the number of non-resident migrant women with access to health insurance fell by 10 per cent (Rios and Hooton, 2005). At the same time, the federal budget for border control increased from 361 million US dollars in 1993 to 6.7 billion US dollars in 2006; the number of detained undocumented migrants increased by

24. In reality, migrant populations – particularly the undocumented – tend to exhibit lower levels of delinquency than local populations. A recent study from the Public Policy Institute of California (Butcher and Morrison Piehl, 2008) shows that in California, which has the country’s largest migrant population, the rates of incarceration of migrants were 10 times lower than those of the local population (0.42 per cent versus 4.2 per cent).

25. The reformed law is The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996.

750 per cent between 2002 and 2006 (WHEFSEM/Connections Co-op, 2007). The discourse of illegality, associated not only with trafficking and criminal gangs but also with terrorism, has spurred discrimination, abuse and violations of migrants' rights. It has also given rise to a systematic loss of rights and labour protection, as evidenced by the Supreme Court decision denying undocumented migrants the right to claim unpaid salaries, even in cases of illegal dismissal, or by the judicial decision to overturn the law that obliged the government to provide prenatal medical care to undocumented migrants.

The association between irregular migration and people trafficking<sup>26</sup> has become a fundamental component of migratory policy over the last decade, both in the United States and the European Union, permeating the discourse of international organizations responsible for migration issues. It is paradoxical that the concern over trafficking, originally expressed by feminist organizations worried about the sexual exploitation of women and children, has come to exemplify the way in which gender ideologies cut across migratory policy and produce differing impacts on women and men. In the words of Agustín (2005):

"There is a growing tendency to describe migration as a criminal phenomenon, and the resulting discourse is gendered: the male migrant is a 'delinquent' and the female migrant is a 'victim'. Thus women are represented as being forcibly removed from their poor countries, without the will to make their own decision to migrate. According to this discourse, when such a woman works in the sex industry, any process of movement that is supported by other people becomes violent, duplicitous, and coercive, and she, as a passive child with no other choice, opts for this route. This discourse, promoted both by theorists and European sympathizers who wish to protect or help non-European women, infantilizes them and nullifies their capacity for action. Although it is not their intention, this reductionism supports the 'European Fortress' policies that promote the closure of borders or the deportation of any migrant found without the appropriate documentation. This gender-based distinction can also be seen in the Vienna Protocols to the 2000 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in which women, together with children, are depicted as 'trafficking victims, while male migrants are described as 'contraband'" (p.1; our translation).<sup>27</sup>

In addition to victimizing women, the fight against trafficking fulfils an important function of providing moral legitimacy for the migratory policies of destination countries, endowing the fight against irregular migration for humanitarian reasons – i.e. the fight against irregular migration acquires the metaphoric characteristics of a just struggle against criminals who abuse defenceless people. Although the sexual exploitation of migrant women and minors is a very real problem that should be addressed, this focus elides the fact that many trafficked women have migrated voluntarily. Instead of protecting trafficking victims, the intensification of migratory controls worsens the situation of these women who, unable to access formal migration channels, resort to dangerous alternatives that place them at greater risk of abuse and exploitation.

## 4.2 The human rights of migrants

Migrants are one of the least protected and most vulnerable social groups – both in regards to employment, and in social, political and legal terms. The greatest vulnerability is faced by the poorest migrants, the least educated, and those in irregular situations. Sex is an added factor of vulnerability: in all of these situations,

26. In the section below on sex work, the situation of women migrants who support themselves as sex workers is analysed in greater detail.

27. Skeldon (2000) indicates that academics and public policy only recognize women and children as trafficking victims, while male victims constitute "the invisible dimension of trafficking" (quoted in Piper, 2005, p.18).



women are more vulnerable. Together, these groups make up the vast majority of labour migrants throughout the world. Nevertheless, international organizations have been quite timid in their approach to migrants' human rights, and there is still no global mechanism charged with orienting and monitoring policy in this regard. The main relevant international instrument is the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (hereafter, CMW). It was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in 1990, although 13 years would pass before it was ratified by the 20 countries necessary for it to enter into force. It is significant that, as of December 2007, only 37 countries have ratified the CMW, most of them home countries of migrants rather than their main destination countries. In contrast, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, adopted in 2003, was ratified by 117 countries in just three years.

The CMW seeks to compensate for the absence of an integrated regulatory framework by bringing together the general principles of human rights, enshrined in six fundamental international instruments, and applying them directly to migrants and their families. Thus the CMW unites the specific protections for migrants that already exist, dispersed throughout the international system – among them the ILO conventions of 1949 and 1975 on the rights of migrant workers<sup>28</sup> – and integrates them into the broader framework of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights contained in international human rights law. Without according new rights to migrant persons, the CMW lists those that already exist in the core instruments and extends them to migrants on the basis of the principle of equality of all people, migrants and citizens (Redpath, 2006; Yau, 2005). One key aspect of the CMW – which helps to explain the reluctance of destination countries to ratify the Convention – is its recognition of the rights of irregular migrants, in its declaration that all migrant workers and their families, irrespective of their legal status, have the right to the basic principle of legal equality. This does not mean that undocumented migrants enjoy the full range of rights granted to regular migrants, or that States are obliged to regularize the situation of undocumented migrants. On the contrary, the CMW ratifies the right of States to combat irregular migration (Yau, 2005).

Some of the key protections of the CMW, applicable to both documented and undocumented migrants, are the reaffirmation of the principle of non-discrimination, the recognition of the right to equal pay and working conditions, the right to emergency health care and education for children, as well as the right to cultural identity, effective State protection from intimidation and violence, and diplomatic protection. Regular migrants receive additional protection, such as equality with citizens in the area of labour rights (including unemployment benefits, social security and unionization), the right of access to social and health-care services, education and training, as well as recognition of the right to family reunification (Redpath, 2006; Yau, 2005).

Some authors have criticized the CMW's reticence in addressing the issue of family reunification, as it simply sets out that States should take the steps they consider necessary to facilitate it. No international instrument explicitly establishes migrants' right to family unity, which would apply both to entry and residence as well as reunification, although some human rights conventions do contain relevant elements.<sup>29</sup> As reported by Jastram (2003), "The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the

28. These conventions are the C98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (available from [www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C098](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C098)) and the C143 Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (available from [www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C143](http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C143)).

29. For example, Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child obligates States to guarantee that "a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when [...] such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child" (see Jastram, 2003).

human rights of migrants, Gabriela Rodríguez Pizarro, has emphasized the pervasive nature of the problem in observing that families separated by migration are becoming increasingly common, and will become a defining characteristic of societies in many countries in the twenty-first century.” Others have highlighted the need for studies that analyse laws and policies that limit or obstruct the formation, unification or material well-being of migrant families (Pessar, 2003).

In the case of women, the CMW is the only instrument of its kind that uses non-sexist language, stating explicitly the applicability of each right to both men and women. Nevertheless, the CMW does not include the specific gendered needs of migrant women, such as recognition of the increased vulnerability to various forms of sexual violence, or specific protection for domestic workers or sex workers (Jolly and Reeves, 2005). Although this gap, which plagues other instruments on migrants’ rights, can be partially covered by international instruments that do address women’s gender-specific needs, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the absence of a gender perspective remains a significant weakness in the CMW. An additional limitation is that it does not establish effective mediation or accountability mechanisms for States, so migrants must continue to depend on the destination State to protect their rights.

Obviously the CMW’s major problem is its lack of enforcement in destination countries which have not ratified it. As mentioned, one of the major obstacles to ratification is the recognition of the rights of undocumented migrants; some countries perceive this as a stimulus to irregular migration, in addition to a violation of their national laws. A large section of the migrant population and its defenders argue that the main reason that States oppose this protection is that equality of labour rights (particularly in terms of pay) would eliminate the advantages that employers gain by hiring undocumented migrants. States are also opposed to the recognition of the right to work and residence of regular migrants, which limits their mobility in periods of economic crisis; and to the costs implied by the equal access of regular migrants to the various economic, social and cultural benefits enjoyed by nationals (Yau, 2005).

### **4.3** The living and working conditions of migrant women

Out of the many facets of migrant women’s rights and living conditions, which provide many potential axes of analysis, we have chosen two that exemplify and condense the inequalities and denial of rights that are implicit in the dual condition of woman and migrant. The first is health, specifically sexual and reproductive health, a right that tends to be left out of the debate on migrants’ rights and that, nevertheless, represents an area where migrant women face particular difficulties which are not usually considered a priority for public policy or intervention. The second refers to the working conditions of domestic service, a preferred niche for migrant women’s insertion into the labour force that is plagued by deficient regulation. It provides a true reflection of the especially precarious and vulnerable situation of feminized and ethnically biased labour sectors.

#### **4.3.1** The right to health, and to sexual and reproductive health

Migrants’ access to health-care services, particularly related to sexual and reproductive health, is generally limited and deficient, even in countries (mainly European ones) that offer relatively broad coverage of these services. Although it is true that

most labour migrants are young people of working age, and their health profile is in some respects stronger than that of the local population, it is also true that the migratory experience implies significant health risks. The low socio-economic status of this population is an initial factor of vulnerability, together with any trauma they may have suffered during migration – as in the case of migrant women who are subjected to sexual violence in transit or after their arrival. Migrants present high levels of illness and work-related accidents – both as a result of the sectors in which they work and the prevailing working conditions – and several studies have reported a high incidence of mental health problems among this population, including depression, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse, anxiety, and elevated levels of stress.<sup>30</sup> Added to this is a range of factors that restrict migrants' access to timely health care; in many cases, the sick do not seek or receive necessary care until the problem worsens and their health risk is greater.

An analysis of the obstacles to migrants' access to health care reveals a complex network of interacting elements: migratory laws; the social policies of destination countries; migrants' labour characteristics and low incomes; migrants' own socio-cultural histories and health-care experiences in their home countries; the ethno-racial discrimination they may face in the destination country, etc.<sup>31</sup>

- **Social policies.** The first obstacle faced by migrants, in particular undocumented migrants, is lack of access to public health-care services. International norms have declared health a fundamental human right; in theory, then, destination States are obligated to provide health care to all persons under their jurisdiction, independent of their migratory status. Moreover, various international instruments require that the right to health be enshrined not only in emergency care but also in preventive and palliative care. However,<sup>32</sup> in the majority of destination countries, the prevailing view is that access to health-care services for undocumented migrant is not an obligation but an act of generosity or charity that, in any case, should be covered by the State. In fact, an important economic stimulus behind the hiring of irregular migrants is that it exempts employers from the obligation of providing health insurance, which significantly reduces their expenditure. As a result, most destination countries only guarantee access to emergency services, which is actually what the CMW stipulates.<sup>33</sup> As we will see below, the United States has particularly exclusionary policies (e.g. obliging legal residents to live in the country continuously for five years before granting them access to public health-care services), although in many European countries the combination of lack of information, time required and bureaucratic hurdles constitutes a significant barrier to many migrants' access to health-care services.
- **Migratory policies.** As policies become more restrictive and the threat of detention and deportation for undocumented migrants increases, so too does migrants' reluctance to use health-care services or to request leave from work, etc. It is worth remembering that the absence of opportunities for regular

30. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) pays particular attention to these issues; see [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int) for their range of publications.

31. The main sources for this discussion are WHO (2003) and data provided by the IOM.

32. For example, in their interpretation of Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – to which all European countries are signatories – the Committee of the same name affirmed that States “have an obligation to respect the right to health ‘by refraining from denying or limiting equal access – on economic, physical and cultural grounds – for all persons, including [...] asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, to preventive, curative and palliative health services’” (quoted in (WHO, 2003, p.20).

33. Article 28 of the CMW states, “Migrant workers and members of their families shall have the right to receive any medical care that is urgently required for the preservation of their life or the avoidance of irreparable harm to their health on the basis of equality of treatment with nationals of the State concerned. Such emergency medical care shall not be refused them by reason of any irregularity with regard to stay or employment.”

migration and the corresponding increase in irregular migration and trafficking places many women in situations where they are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, both during migration itself and in their workplaces in destination countries. As a result, the limitations on access to services for both mental and sexual and reproductive health (i.e. attention to sexually transmitted infections or pregnancies that result from rape) affect women in specific ways.

- **Factors associated with the relationship with health-care providers.** Linguistic barriers are a significant obstacle, given that many patients cannot adequately communicate their problems in the language of the destination country and health-care services do not usually have interpreters available to assist. Cultural differences (e.g. in the understanding of illness, or in health-care practice) may also present additional barriers to communication, as can the lack of trust of patients who find themselves in an irregular situation and fear being reported to the authorities. The health histories of migrants, their experiences during the migration trajectory, and their living and working conditions in the destination society tend to configure a particular set of needs that health-care providers may not be aware of or have not been trained to address. All of these factors may be aggravated if health-care personnel have discriminatory attitudes towards patients because of their migratory status, or for ethnic or racial reasons.
- **Lack of information.** Many migrants lack information about the health-care services they are entitled to in their destination country, as well as the procedures for accessing them, the location of service centres, etc. It is important to remember that many migrants come from countries with severely deficient health-care systems, and have little knowledge of health-care matters and limited experience with health-care provision. This is particularly the case for women with low levels of education.
- **Costs.** Given that in the majority of destination countries, the health-care services provided free of charge to migrants (particularly irregular migrants) are limited to emergency situations, the costs of services and medications can pose a significant obstacle. Even when care is free, accessing services may imply secondary costs (e.g. transport, time lost at work) that many migrants cannot afford, especially when they are under an obligation to remit regularly to their home country. Given that women, who earn less, tend to remit a greater proportion of their income, this issue affects them in a particular way.
- **Bureaucratic obstacles.** Even in those cases where migrants have the right to care and are well informed about the services they can access, the process of accessing it may be long and complicated. Health-care providers may also be unaware of which services migrants have the right to access, and rules defining access may be ambiguous or imprecise. Finally, the administrative procedures that health-care centres must follow to reclaim the costs of care for uninsured people may be excessively complex and costly, which reduces both the willingness of providers to provide the service, and the quality of service offered.

In conclusion, the barriers to accessing health-care services are multiple and varied, and comprise a basis for exclusion that impacts the quality of migrant populations' living and health conditions. The situation particularly affects women, both for biological (pregnancy and childbirth) and social reasons, in that they are made responsible for family health-care, particularly of children. A gender-sensitive analysis reveals other differential factors that result in greater impact on women, such as the risk of sexual or domestic violence, higher rates of poverty and unemployment, lower level of education, etc. For this reason, it is useful to provide a brief overview of women's sexual and reproductive health situation in the United States and in the European Union.

### Sexual and reproductive health

Access to health care is a generalized problem in the United States, where a high proportion of the national population has no access to health-care services because they are privately managed and expensive. In this context, the intensification of an anti-immigrant sentiment and the implementation of measures designed to limit migrants' access to social services has generated a real crisis in the health-care conditions of this population, particularly in the sexual and reproductive health care of women.<sup>34</sup> An example of this is the decision made by a US Federal Court in 2001, which overturned legislation obliging the government to provide prenatal care to undocumented migrant women. As a result, tens of thousands of women lost access to these services. The lack of trust and the fear generated by these xenophobic policies has significantly reduced migrants' access to all social services, in particular health-care services, as well as their demanding these rights when they do exist (e.g. in the case of undocumented migrants). Below we set out some key indicators for the Latino population in the United States, which constitutes the largest group of migrants and their descendants:<sup>35</sup>

- Latinas have the least access to health insurance of all population groups. Some 56 per cent of women migrants do not have any kind of health insurance, a figure that increases among the undocumented population.
- The rate of cervical cancer among Latinas is more than double that of the white population (15.8 per cent versus 7.1 per cent), and maternal death is likewise high (8.0 deaths per thousand versus 5.8 per thousand).
- The rate of adolescent pregnancy among Latinas is the highest in the country (83.4 per thousand), and almost triple that of the white population (28.5 per thousand).
- At the same time, Latina adolescents present a lower rate of legal abortions (27.5 per cent) in comparison with whites (32.0 per cent) and African Americans (40.8 per cent).
- The rate of HIV/AIDS among Latinas is seven times higher than among white women.
- Although studies indicate that migrant women are especially vulnerable to domestic violence, they present the lowest rates of police reporting and service use for all victims. United States government statistics indicate that among migrant women, only 30 per cent report violence, a figure that drops to 14 per cent among undocumented migrants. This contrasts with 55 per cent of the national population (Jolly and Reeves, 2005).

Migrants residing in European Union countries also present a worrying picture with respect to sexual and reproductive health care, where "studies have found that migrants receive inadequate or no antenatal care and exhibit higher rates of stillbirth and infant mortality" (UNFPA, 2006, p.36). The studies cited by the UNFPA document a general pattern in all Western European countries, where migrant women present higher rates of unwanted pregnancy; lower use of contraceptives; and higher incidences of complications during childbirth, early childbirth, underweight babies, and maternal death. A comparison among ethnic and racial groups shows the role that discrimination plays in health status. For example, a government study of black and Asian women in Great Britain recently showed significantly higher rates of infant mortality than among white women (Office for National Statistics, 2008).

34. The problem also severely affects migrant men. For example, a study conducted by the National Center for Farmworker Health concludes that in the United States, "[t]he health status of migrant farmworkers is at the same standard of most Third World nations, while the country in which they work, the United States, is one of the richest nations on earth" (NCFH, n.d., p.2).

35. Unless otherwise indicated, these figures are taken from Rios and Hooton (2005) and refer to the entire Latina population, both immigrant (53 per cent) and non-immigrant.

Migrant women's situation in regards to abortion illustrates their difficulties in terms of accessing sexual and reproductive health-care services. In the United States, where public services do not cover the procedure, the high cost of abortions makes them inaccessible to many migrant women, who consequently present lower abortion rates than other population groups.<sup>36</sup> However, in European countries where abortion is available through public health-care services, the situation is reversed, and migrant women actually present abortion rates that are two to four times *higher* than among national women (Carballo, 2007; UNFPA, 2006). How, therefore, do we explain that among poor migrant women in Europe, illegal abortions – particularly those self-induced with misoprostol – are becoming increasingly common (Haslam, 2007; Hunter, 2005)? The same trend has been observed among Latin American and Caribbean migrants in the United States, where in recent years research has revealed a sub-culture of Cytotec use (the commercial name for misoprostol). In this case, not only the practice but the medication itself has been imported from the home country through migratory networks. In 2000, one study revealed that in three reproductive health-care clinics in New York, many low-income migrant women have resorted to self-induced abortions with misoprostol as a cheap, easily available alternative (Leland, 2005). Since then, a number of legal cases have been initiated against migrant women who have engaged in this practice, including accusations of murder against a Mexican woman in South Carolina in 2005, and against a Dominican woman in Massachusetts in 2007. Both women induced abortions during the second trimester of their pregnancies.

Both the low abortion rate among migrant women in the United States, and the high rate among their counterparts in Europe, as well as the increasing use of self-induced abortion in both cases, is indicative of the difficulties that migrant women face in controlling their fertility and obtaining timely contraceptive information and services in their destination countries. Even under circumstances where abortion is legal and cost-free, the practical obstacles to accessing health-care services continue to limit women's access. This often has disastrous consequences for the health of migrant women and their professional and personal development.<sup>37</sup> In cases where national women are losing their right to freely interrupt their pregnancies, migrant women are particularly affected. Recent attempts to promote a more restrictive interpretation of the law that legalizes abortion in some parts of Spain have made women fear accessing clinics, particularly migrant women.<sup>38</sup>

### 4.3.2 The conditions of domestic work

"Working conditions of domestic workers vary enormously. Some are treated as members of their employer's family, while others are exploited and subjected to conditions which in some cases amount to virtual slavery and forced labour. Domestic workers often have to work long or even excessive hours of work (on average, 15-16 hours per day), with no rest days or compensation for overtime; they generally receive low wages, and have inadequate health insurance coverage. Domestic workers are also exposed to physical and sexual harassment and violence and abuse, and are in some cases trapped in situations in which they are physically or legally restrained from leaving the

36. Some analysts have suggested that the lower rate of abortion among migrant women in the United States corresponds to the proportion of Latinas in that group, whose (largely Catholic) religion prohibits the practice. However, the very high rate of abortion among this same group of women in Europe, where it is free and accessible, detracts from the credibility of this argument and indicates the role of costs and access to services. This last point is of particular importance in the case of adolescents in the United States, where many states require parental notification, even when the service is private and paid for entirely by the patient.

37. In the case of abortion, we must add to the list of obstacles analysed in this section the fact that many migrant women come from countries where abortion is illegal, resulting in an underground culture of clandestine abortion that migrant women take with them. Not knowing that abortion is legal in their destination country, many women may continue to operate within the parameters of this clandestine sub-culture.

38. The spokeswoman for one of Spain's main gynaecological clinics said, "If a woman has to abort, she will. We are particularly concerned for immigrant women. There is a risk that they will resort to Cytotec or place themselves in the hands of abortionists. We cannot forget that [these abortionists] still exist." (Sahuquillo, 2007; our translation).

employer's home by means of threats or actual violence, or by withholding of pay or identity documents" (ILO, 2004, p.59).

Domestic and care work, the main areas of employment for women labour migrants throughout the world, exemplifies the sex-segregated nature of labour markets and the way in which the new international division of labour reproduces and exploits inequalities between men and women. The factors that contribute to the particular vulnerability of domestic workers include:

- **Absence or inadequacy of legal regulations.** In many destination countries, domestic work is not regulated, or is subject to "special regulations" that do not contemplate the rights and protections awarded to other labour sectors. This difference can come in terms of salaries, work schedules, health insurance, arbitrary termination, unionization, etc. Some countries concede temporary residence permits to migrants who enter for domestic work, but informality is rampant in this sector. Workers with temporary residence permits usually have better working conditions than informally employed irregular migrants, but only when their permit allows migrants to change jobs. On the other hand, when work and residence permits are combined, and the loss of employment also implies the loss of the residency permit, women workers are more vulnerable to abuse at the hands of their employers.
- **Social invisibility of domestic workers.** Male migrants are concentrated in sectors where work is organized into groups (agriculture, construction). Accordingly, any exploitation and abuse committed by employers is more visible and better documented (Piper, 2005). However, domestic work is characterized by the dispersion and social isolation of its workers, in particular when they reside in their employers' houses, and abuse and poor labour practices are consequently less visible and not as well documented.
- **Low levels of education among women domestic workers.** Although the closure of legal entry channels or various categories of qualified migrants forces many qualified women into domestic work upon their arrival in the destination country, they have the possibility of eventually achieving a certain labour mobility after some years of residence. This is not the case for less-educated women, who also present the highest levels of poverty. This increases their vulnerability in several ways: this group shows the highest levels of irregularity, for which reason they have less chance of obtaining other employment; low levels of education are also associated with less knowledge of the destination society and the protections and services to which migrants are entitled. Women migrants are thus less likely to claim their rights, report abuse or make use of social and community organizations that provide them with support. The isolation of domestic work means that women are less integrated into migrants' social networks and the formal and informal resources that they can offer.
- **Poor pay for domestic work.** Added to the low socio-economic status of households of origin, poor pay strengthens women's need to retain employment in order to continue sending regular remittances home, paying off debts and maintaining the family. A change of employment implies a period of unemployment, which many women are not in a position to afford. Thus, the social isolation of women living in their employers' homes reduces the number of contacts that may help them change jobs, as well as the access to social networks that provide shelter and protection during periods of unemployment.

Many of the problems associated with domestic work respond to the fact that it is conducted in the private sphere of the home. In contrast, legal norms and oversight mechanisms were designed for the public sphere, traditionally associated with male work. This increases the lack of protection for domestic workers who, although they

may have some legal guarantees, do not always have the means to pursue them. Historically, the private sphere has been free of State intervention, and the establishment of labour protection for domestic workers would imply inspections or other forms of monitoring that are seen as an “invasion” of employers’ privacy (Anderson, 2006). Added to this are the practical difficulties and costs required to extend the State system of control and monitoring to the household level. The massive influx of labour migrants to domestic and care work challenges both the division between the private and public spheres, and the relationship between the market and the State in regards to care. This is particularly so in that the privatization of social services leads to new practices, such as State subsidies for hiring care workers. Various countries, including France, Great Britain and Spain, have implemented this type of programme, where the State makes direct payments to households for the hiring of care workers, particularly in the case of older or disabled persons.

These are not the only challenges that must be faced in order to improve the living and working conditions of migrant domestic workers. The low value attributed to domestic work, as a part of social reproduction and as “women’s work”, constitutes a fundamental obstacle which generates the relative social invisibility of these workers. We would have to begin, therefore, by revaluing the work of social reproduction that women perform within the home, emphasizing the essential nature of their contribution to the maintenance of families and the economic system.

#### **4.4** The impacts of migratory processes on women’s empowerment

As revealed throughout this paper, gender intercedes in every aspect of migration: the reasons behind migration; migrants’ labour insertion; their living and working conditions; transnational family relationships; migratory status; the exercise of rights; and health and other impacts, including the individual’s personal, subjective experiences of migration.

We have seen that the segregation of labour markets leads to different working opportunities and conditions for each sex, with women bearing lower incomes and greater risk of exploitation. Although the demand for women domestic and care workers can lead to more rapid labour insertion and lower initial rates of unemployment, the jobs that men eventually do obtain tend to include better working conditions and higher remuneration (Herrera, 2005). More women than men find themselves in an irregular migratory situation, which affects the exercise of their rights and their access to social services. At the same time, the invisibility of the labour sectors where migrant women are concentrated exposes them to a lower risk of deportation than men, who are located in more public, visible sectors (Jolly and Reeves, 2005). Men are also perceived of as a greater threat than women by national populations; they may be exposed to greater xenophobia and political violence, particularly in the case of black or Muslim men. From an individual’s decision to migrate through to his/her return, from the sending of remittances through to organization-building practices, no aspect of the migratory experience is immune to the influence of gender.

One area of particular interest for many studies is the impact of migration on women’s personal and social empowerment. How does migration affect the gender norms that govern relationships between men and women within the couple, the family, and the community? To what extent does migration increase the degree of autonomy enjoyed by women, or reduce the power imbalances that characterize their relationships? The answers to these questions varies depending on whether women migrate alone or as part of a family group; whether or not they have



children in the home country; their qualifications; their migratory status; the characteristics of their culture of origin; and a host of other variables.

The complexity and variety of impacts on gender roles and relationships indicates that they cannot be seen as simple and unidirectional – e.g. by assuming *a priori* that paid work increases female autonomy in every case and to the same extent. It is important to recognize that women migrants are not themselves a homogenous population, even within one country or community; also, the ways in which gender intersects other forms of oppression – e.g. class, race, ethnicity or nationality – must be considered. The coexistent nature of these diverse positions explains the range of results observed, which can vary significantly from one context to another and are often mutually contradictory (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Menjívar 2003; Pessar, 2003).

In general, female labour migration tends to subvert the patriarchal order of the family, taking women outside of their traditional role as biological and social reproducers and undermining the material and social bases of gender inequality (Pessar, 2003). However, an analysis of the impact of paid work on women's degree of empowerment illustrates the previous argument of the risks in considering this relationship mechanically, while ignoring the mediating influence of different variables and contexts. For example, although many migrant women highlight the importance of having their own income as a democratizing influence on family and couple relationships, others see paid work as an extension of their obligations as wives/mothers, and claim that if their family's economic status permitted, they would choose not to work. UN-INSTRAW case studies show that among autonomous migrant women who send remittances to their transnational families, being an economic provider can significantly improve their position within the family and society. Many of them build new homes, acquire property and even finance small businesses in their communities of origin, which significantly improves their standing in the home and community. However, acting as a provider can also make migrant women feel exploited by their own families, whose constant demands for money reduce their own standard of living and personal well-being. In the longer term, these demands can prevent women from saving for later life or illness, or from accumulating the resources necessary for their own entrepreneurship, to finance training or education, etc. Migrant women who leave children in their home country also suffer the social stigma of "abandoning" the family, which adds feelings of guilt to the pain of separation.

#### 4.4.1 The impact of women's paid work on migrant households

Throughout the 1990s, various studies appeared in the United States regarding the positive impact of women's paid work on gender inequalities in migrant households.<sup>39</sup> The economic precarity of these households, added to the ease with which women obtained stable employment as domestic workers or nannies, and resulted in the increasing participation of women in paid work. This generally favoured a more equal distribution of domestic work and authority within the home. However, this situation does not lend itself to simplistic analysis. Women's empowerment within the home simultaneously implies a loss of power and authority among the household's men, which can result in a number of difficulties. When the labour market of the destination country generates male unemployment or labour instability,<sup>40</sup> the role of women

39. See the extensive bibliography on this topic in Pessar (2003) and Menjívar (2003).

40. For example, studies carried out in California and other US states have shown that labour-market characteristics and other contextual factors in the destination country tended to favour higher rates of female employment. Thus, women obtained regular employment as domestic workers or nannies, while men gathered daily at meeting places where they might or might not be hired as day labourers. Eventually, many men obtained steady employment in restaurants, as gardeners, or in other areas, but they generally presented higher rates of unemployment and labour instability.

as providers can give rise to tensions that manifest themselves in increased male alcoholism, intrafamily violence and marital separation. The fact the women work outside the home does not exonerate them from domestic responsibilities, nor does it always lead to a more equitable distribution of domestic work among the couple: many migrant women face long days of paid work followed by long periods of domestic work. Some studies have found that men's willingness to assume household responsibilities is greater when both men and women are employed, and the difference in their incomes is smaller.<sup>41</sup> In these cases, men continue to (partially) fulfil their role as provider and the corresponding threat to their masculinity is decreased. This is especially so when both partners see the woman's work as a temporary, stopgap measure, to be overcome as the family's economic status improves. In this context, the reluctance of unemployed men to assume greater domestic responsibility, and the willingness of women to fulfil exhausting dual roles, is interpreted as an affirmation of patriarchal norms which are part of the family's cultural identity, in a situation where these norms are otherwise gravely threatened (Menjívar, 2003; Ruiz, 2002).

In fact, the renegotiation of tasks and responsibilities that has been observed in many migrant homes could merely be a temporary response to the family's difficult economic conditions, not a fundamental transformation of traditional patriarchal ideologies. This reinforces the perception of many authors that migrants' advances in terms of gender equality are modest at best, and should not be analysed in isolation from the broader context of the coexisting oppressions experienced by the migrant population. Improvements in gender relations are not always accompanied by advances in other areas, such as paid work and social life, where women continue to face a significant burden of discrimination. This would explain why, when migrant women express dissatisfaction with their living conditions, their complaints are centred more frequently on problems associated with class, ethnicity, race or legal status, rather than gender (Pessar, 2003).

This analysis allows us to understand the findings of various studies<sup>42</sup> regarding the decision of women in Cuban and Dominican migrant families to abandon paid work and return to the traditional role of homemaker – even when this decision affects their personal empowerment and the power relations within the home. This decision is strongly influenced by the women's perception of the ideal middle-class home – fostered by public images in societies of both origin and destination. It is also influenced by the realization that the stability, and even the economic prosperity, won by years of hard work in the destination country do not provide an escape from the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by these households, for ethnic, racial, national or class reasons. Faced with the disjuncture between maintaining their personal achievements versus increasing the prestige of the family unit, many women opt for the traditional family model as a way of demonstrating the household's economic success and promoting its social advancement.

The analyses of the relationship between paid work and women's empowerment varies significantly in response to whether the women worked before migrating, and their schooling, class, ethnicity, family situation, etc. For example, the study conducted by Menjívar (2003) among Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in the United States reveals important differences between *ladinas* and indigenous women, linked to their respective cultural patterns in their home countries. Indigenous women from both countries come from cultural contexts where women regularly work, contribute to the household budget, and male authority is less pronounced. On the other hand, *ladina* culture is more patriarchal, and generally privileges the ideal of the traditional household in which the male is the provider and the female

41. See, for example, Menjívar (2003). Pessar (2003) cites several studies with similar results.

42. See Fernández-Kelly and García (1990), and Pessar (1995), both cited in Pessar (2003).

is responsible for domestic work. Since *ladinas* do less paid work than indigenous women before migrating, their integration into paid work in the destination country offered greater potential gains in terms of personal empowerment. However the greater respect for patriarchal norms in *ladina* culture generated more serious problems within their homes; accordingly, the majority of women preferred to return to traditional roles. The paid work performed by indigenous women – even when they were the only or the main household providers – resulted in much less conflict, but it did not imply significant advances in terms of gender relations in comparison with the situation in their home country.

#### 4.4.2 Women's empowerment and the decision to return

Several studies show that more men than women intend to return to their home country, with women having higher rates of naturalization than men. These differences have been explained as the contradictory effects of migration on class-based status and gender equality.<sup>43</sup> In general, both migrant women and men experience upward social mobility in relation to their societies of origin, and downward mobility in relation to their destination society, where they often end up in employment that is below their qualification levels and offers low social prestige. Added to this are the effects of exclusion because of ethnicity, race or nationality, which expose migrants to a range of daily indignities and impedes their integration into the destination society. This is sufficient to explain why so many men cling to the idea of return, especially when the economic progress that can result from migration assures them upward mobility in their society of origin.

Women, on the other hand, although they suffer these same effects, can also experience upward social mobility from paid work. Having their own income and making a monetary contribution to the household – either in the home or destination country – increases women's personal independence and strengthens their position in relation to the male members of the household. In addition, their successes are underpinned by the more flexible gender attitudes and greater freedom of women in developed countries. In migrant or reintegrated homes, women's greater autonomy translates into fewer privileges for men, which further aggravates their loss of status in the destination country. Women's desire to maintain their advances – which could be set back if they return to the society of origin – explains not only their reduced interest in returning to the home country, but also their greater efforts to integrate into the destination society. As an example, women tend to make greater use of social services and to participate more in community spaces in the destination society, while men are more active in diaspora associations that link them with development projects funded by collective remittances and with political activism in societies of origin. These dynamics do not apply equally to all women and – as with other gender-differentiated impacts – can vary significantly from one context to another, including in relation to the sex ratio of the migrant community. For this reason,

"it is necessary to understand the relative importance of the sexes within each migrant colony, given that, generally, the main contact-people and solidarity networks are established with individuals of the same nationality. From a gender perspective, it is not the same to belong to a group made up of an equal number of men and women (a situation which, from the outset, facilitates the reproduction of roles defined in the society of origin) than to be a part of a group where women constitute the clear majority (which favours a change in traditional roles), or a third group where women are the minority (which can reinforce masculine social control)" (Colectivo IOÉ, 2003b, p.17; our translation).

43. The first relevant findings were reported in Patricia Pessar's 1986 study of Dominican migrants in New York. Her findings have been confirmed by subsequent studies, mainly with Latin American migrants in the United States. The following description is based on the analysis by Piper (2005).

UN-INSTRAW case studies suggest that, in fact, the clearest impacts on women's empowerment can be seen among independent labour migrants, who are generally part of the most feminized migratory flows. These women obtain the benefits associated with paid work and providing for their transnational household, yet without being subjected to the constraints of their compatriots in migrant or reunified families. These constraints can include: the constant renegotiation of power relations within the home, and conflicts that arise as a result; the maintenance of gender roles and the patriarchal model of feminine domesticity implicit in the family model; the double workload; the pressures to comply with traditional roles that characterize the community spaces built around migrant families, etc. As several authors have pointed out<sup>44</sup>, in migrant communities organized around family structures, the preservation of traditional cultures and the affirmation of identity in the face of xenophobia and hostility tend to rest disproportionately on women's fulfilment of traditional roles.

The consequences of this are evident in ethnic organizations that are mixed or family-based, where men typically monopolize management functions and women fulfil "helping" roles and carry out "feminine" tasks such as preparing food, decorating and cleaning meeting spaces, conduction activities with children, etc. In contexts where autonomous female labour migrants predominate, however, we often find community associations of women that are oriented towards improving the living conditions of migrant women and their access to and exercise of rights. Finally, autonomous migrant women can receive greater benefits from gender norms in developed countries that recognize greater autonomy and personal freedom for women.

The achievements of autonomous migrant women in terms of personal empowerment should be seen in very relative terms, as they are still subjected to gender-based constraints in the destination society, and will perhaps be even more constrained when they return to their society of origin. For example, the "racialization" of foreign women commonly includes sexual stereotypes that objectify them and increase their risk of facing sexual harassment (e.g. the sexual voracity of black women, or the submission and sexual exoticism of Asian women); gender ideologies carried over from the home country can continue to mark many aspects of life (i.e. women continue to define their personal worth in terms of the services they provide to their transnational families, and the personal sacrifices they are prepared to make in this regard); the work that they perform in the destination society as care, domestic and sex workers reproduces and exploits the traditional sexual division of labour, reinforcing gender-based subordination and roles, etc. Similarly, the women's return to the society of origin can result in a re-imposition of patriarchal control within the family and community, restricting their autonomy in the personal sphere, in family life and in economic decision-making.<sup>45</sup> An example of this is seen among returned migrant women who invest their savings in economic projects which are deliberately managed by their husbands or other male household members as a way of reinforcing or re-establishing their masculine role as provider.

44. See, for example, Kurien (2003) in relation to Hindu families, and Le Espiritu (2003) in relation to South-East Asian families in the United States.

45. See, for instance, the findings of Carmen Gregorio Gil (1998).

### Separation and divorce in migration contexts

Empirical evidence of the effects of migration on marital unions comes mainly from case studies, which makes it difficult to discern patterns or make generalizations. These studies indicate that the risk of marriages dissolving is as great for autonomous migrant women as for familial migrant women, although the factors that impact on each case are different. As we have seen, a significant cause of separation among familial migrants are the tensions associated with women's paid work, and the difficulties this causes the male partner (especially husbands) in negotiating a new sexual division of labour and power within the home. In the case of individual migrants who leave their husbands or wives in the home country, there is no doubt that prolonged separation increases the possibility of the relationship ending, although there is insufficient information available on the circumstances and factors that increase or reduce the risk of this occurring. These might include the sex of the migrating partner; the length of the relationship prior to migration; whether there are children from the relationship, and their ages; the frequency of transnational contact; the caregiving role assumed by fathers following the migration of mothers, etc.

Studies with female labour migrants have highlighted that a critical variable in this respect is the state of the relationship prior to migration: in many cases, the problems faced by a couple can be a cause and not a consequence of migration, the most common being gender-based violence. Case studies by UN-INSTRAW and other sources have shown that women may opt for migration because it is easier for them to end the relationship after moving to another country, contradicting the accepted view that it is migration itself that causes marriages to end. It also happens that migrants seek to end a relationship because of a weakened bond after many years of separation; because they have initiated a new relationship in the destination society; and/or because of a desire to enter into a new marriage, often as a way of regularizing their migratory status. In some instances, it is the wives in the home country who ask for divorce, as the husband has not fulfilled his promise to send remittances to the family, or because she has initiated a new relationship.<sup>46</sup>

Studies of HIV/AIDS among migrant populations have shown such a pervasive pattern of infidelity among male migrants that a new term has been coined to describe the phenomenon: "transnational polygyny" (Mora, 2003; our translation). Anecdotal evidence suggests that women migrants may also be unfaithful to their husbands, although there is little concrete information on the subject (Piper, 2005). Gender norms being what they are, it can be assumed that women are less likely to be unfaithful to their husbands, and are more accepting of their husbands' infidelity (therefore not considering it a reason to end the relationship).

Although gender operates as an organizing principle of both men's and women's migration, it can act in diverse and even contradictory ways in different situations and contexts. Accordingly, the migratory experience can reinforce certain gender inequalities, while challenging them on another level. It is therefore inappropriate to speak of net losses and gains in terms of migration's impact on women's empowerment. Nor should we evaluate the extent of women's empowerment solely in terms of gender alone (Pessar, 2003), without taking into account the other axes of power that condition women's labour insertion and working conditions, their quality of life and enjoyment of rights, and their participation in the distribution of social, economic and cultural benefits in general. As Herrera (2005) points out, in reference to Ecuadorian migrants in Spain,

46. One example is the article "La migración devela crisis matrimoniales" [Migration exposes marital crises] (El Nuevo Día, Bolivia, 3 February 2008).

“...if we examine the organization of their daily lives, the way in which women link their labour activities with the [social] reproduction of their families, either in their home or destination country, a complexity emerges in which processes of gender subordination are mixed with those of social empowerment, economic mobility and intense emotional exhaustion. These complicate the panorama in terms of understanding these women’s subordination. The changes and personal experiences that migration has brought about have granted social and gender empowerment only at great emotional and personal cost” (p.20; our translation).

Women’s achievements associated with paid work and being an economic provider should be considered alongside the multiple forms of subordination and exploitation implicit in their migratory experiences, particularly in the labour arena, as well as the persistence of traditional gender norms and ideologies at both ends of the migration trajectory.

The discourses *of* migrant women, as well as discourses *about* them – both academic and popular – continue to underline their roles and responsibilities in relation to the home, measuring their achievements in terms of the benefits they bring to their families. This construction of feminine identities based on family and caregiving roles manifests itself quite clearly in the nature of migrant women’s insertion in the labour market; their patterns of sending remittances; and the social opprobrium (and self-blame) of women migrants who leave children in the home country. However, it is also demonstrated when, for example, studies emphasize the role the household plays in the decisions of migrant women – but not migrant men – thus underestimating women’s personal agency while minimizing the role of the household in male migrants’ decisions. The naturalization of women’s family roles leads to a dangerous idealization of the family, conceived as a harmonious and homogenous unit in which men and women naturally fulfil their social roles. This tends to mask power inequalities and the conflicts of interest that underlie decision-making dynamics.

Praising migrant women as always being ready to sacrifice themselves for the well-being of their families materially impoverishes the women themselves, reducing their quality of life and their chances of personal achievement. It also underlies their representation in the academic literature on migration and development as more reliable remitters, better remittance administrators, better recipients of loans for investment, etc. These representations not only reinforce gender stereotypes about women, but also lead to their instrumentalization in community development interventions, which are often built around female roles as remitters or remittance administrators. Accordingly, it is in this context of the overexploitation of female labour, the reproduction of gender inequalities at work and in the home, and the overvaluing of migrant women’s personal sacrifices in support of family well-being, that we should situate the discussion of migration’s empowering effects for women. When we add the conceptual and empirical complexities that still plague the assessment of gender’s impacts on migration, the final result discourages triumphalism and recommends instead cautious optimism.



# 5

**Strategic instantiation 2: What happens in home countries?  
The impact of remittances on local development**



The analysis of remittance flows and their impact on local development is a privileged point of observation for the migration–development nexus, as explained above. The “remittances for development” paradigm has the initial consideration that remittances are basically positive, although they require a certain degree of intervention to maximize their potential. If we do not accept this optimistic view, but rather bring it into question based on the axes for analysis we have defined above, the “virtuous circle” loses its strength and other relevant factors come to light. In asking – from a gender perspective – what the impact of migration is on communities of origin, the first aspect to consider is how gender affects remittance flows: do men and women present differentiated patterns of remittance sending, receiving and use? A second aspect to be evaluated is the impact of these monetary flows in terms of an erosion of unequal relations between men and women, both from an individual perspective (women in their homes and communities) and a collective perspective (women as a heterogeneous collective, and gender as a ranking principle that structures the socio-economic system). This forces us to expand the analytical elements of the “remittances for development” paradigm, moving beyond the mercantilist effects of remittances at the macro and local levels.

## **5.1 Gender-differentiated remittance flows and patterns**

There are serious limitations to the availability of quantitative and qualitative information that is disaggregated by sex and compiled from a gender perspective. The information available is often deficient: e.g. we can find sex-disaggregated data on remitters or recipients, but we cannot find any cross references for these data, either internally or with other key variables such as household composition. In other instances, this information is conspicuous by its absence. Yet despite these deficiencies, the information gathered from surveys and case studies allows us to draw certain conclusions on the roles played by women and men in remittance flows.<sup>47</sup>

### **5.1.1 Differentiated patterns in sending remittances**

The first statement we can make is that women are, in many migratory flows, the majority of remitters. Women’s leadership in sending remittances is a faithful reflection of the process of feminization of labour. In general, the sex of the person sending the remittances affects volume, frequency and continuity of remittance flow over time. Although men and women send similar quantities of remittances, women tend to send a higher proportion of their income; this implies greater effort on their part, particularly in view of the pay discrimination women uniformly face in destination countries. This remitting strategy is based on a strict self-control of women’s expenditure (men designate greater amounts of money for personal use) and on maintaining labour strategies that will guarantee constant flows of money, even at the expense of personal plans such as career advancement or consolidating relationships that favour integration into the destination society. This strategy implies high costs in terms of personal well-being for migrant women, to a much greater extent than their male counterparts, and responds to differentiated domestic roles that make women ultimately responsible for the well-being of a household.

47. This section is based primarily on research conducted by UN-INSTRAW, whose results do not differ significantly from those of other, similar studies.

A recent World Bank publication (Morrison et al., 2007) analyses the importance of women's contributions to family in their home countries, both in terms of quantities remitted and in supporting the migration of other family members. For example, although Dominican migrant women in the United States earn the least income (along with Colombians and Cubans) of all national groups in this country, these women remit 20 per cent more than their male counterparts. This has led researchers to conclude that Dominican women in the United States act as the "insurance" for their households of origin, guaranteeing the maintenance of their parents or other family members, whereas men only fulfil this role when they are the only family member residing abroad. According to the study, this pattern reflects the fact that men more often send remittances to be invested, whereas women are more concerned with maintaining households. Women's concern is also manifested in their efforts to support the migration of other family members. In its analysis of Mexican migration to the United States, the World Bank study highlights the role that migratory family networks play in the migration of other household members, pointing out that female networks are the main determinant not only of female but also of male migration, offering greater support than male migratory networks. Given that migratory networks tend to function along the lines of sex and occupation, the authors interpret this finding as evidence of migrant women's greater commitment to their families in the home country, leading them to cultivate these networks and provide more services to recently arrived family members.

Women also send remittances with slightly greater frequency, but, above all, they are more willing to respond to unforeseen situations in the household of origin and a tendency to benefit more members of the extended family, taking responsibility for the maintenance – to differing extents – of numerous family members of different degrees of separation. The fact that migrant women make themselves responsible for the well-being of such a great number of people implies that in many cases (e.g. the Dominican Republic), women extend their stay in the destination country far beyond the time they had originally planned, and postpone, if not abandon, the objectives that originally spurred their plans to migrate. In the case of Filipino migration to Italy, the pressure that women place on themselves to meet the needs of their extended family leads them to take out loans at high interest rates, eventually placing their own survival in the destination country at risk. Finally, women show greater continuity over time in sending remittances. Once they have formed new intimate relationships in the destination country, male migrants detach themselves more easily from their household in the home country. This often leaves the women who stayed in the home country in highly vulnerable situations – with domestic labour as their only occupation, they become single women responsible for their families and the main providers for their households. However, migrant women who do choose to break with partners in their home country continue to send remittances to support their children until they manage to reunite with them in the destination country.

### 5.1.2 Differentiated patterns in receiving remittances

Women tend to be the main recipients and administrators of remittances, regardless of whether the remitter is a man or a woman. Despite the enormous variety of family and affective relationships that underlie the sending of remittances, we can make several generalizations. Male migrants usually remit to their wives, whereas female migrants who leave husbands in the home country more often send remittances to another female family member who has been left in charge of their children (although women do also remit to their husbands, particularly when they

are left in charge of home and children). This means that women are key actors in the “remittances for development” paradigm, and the success of local development programmes requires a clear understanding of the gender-differentiated characteristics of remittance use, savings and investment.

#### **Women as recipients: household managers in vulnerable situations**

In the case of Colombian migration from the AMCO region to Spain, women’s dominant role as remittance recipients is not only related to their being left in charge of the children of other migrant women, or their receiving remittances from their own husbands. Rather, it is also a result of a range of situations that highlights either the importance of women as household managers, or their greater vulnerability to situations such as widowhood, divorce or unshared family burdens. Thus, among those who receive money from their migrant children, women are the clear majority (82 per cent). A significant percentage of these cases are women living in vulnerable situations because of their widowhood. However, even in cases where both partners are present, children privilege their mothers as remittance recipients because of their role as the household’s financial managers. Among recipients of money from brothers or sisters, women again predominate (73 per cent), notably sisters who are single mothers, or divorced women facing difficulties in supporting their children.

#### **Conflicts around sending remittances: the Southern African Development Community and mandatory remittance regimes**

Migrants from Mozambique and Lesotho who are hired as miners in South Africa are obliged to abide by a deferred payment system, under which 60 per cent of their salaries during six months of the year (for Mozambicans) and 30 per cent during 10 months of the year (for Basotho, the dominant ethnic group in Lesotho) must be collected from an office of the main employment company for miners (The Employment Bureau of Africa, TEBA) in their home country. A number of studies have shown miner’s dissatisfaction with this mandatory remittance regime. On the other hand, both their wives in the home country and the governments of Mozambique and Lesotho support this formula, fearing that, were this deferred payment scheme to become optional, remittance sending would be notably reduced. For wives who are designated as recipients, this scheme ensures the receipt of remittances even in cases where the migrant does not return home.

The choice of the person who receives and administers remittances depends, obviously, on the household’s structure. Prioritizing women as recipients and administrators is related to their ultimate responsibility for the well-being of the household, and the fact that they tend to be left in charge of the children. However there are other factors – such as the increased vulnerability of women with less status in the community – which make women more dependent on this external source of resources.

There is an assumption that the person who receives remittances has the ability to manage them, decide on their use, or otherwise benefit from them. It is, however, often the case that women are privileged as recipients and managers, but that they use remittances to benefit the well-being of other members of the household, rather than their own. Similarly, receiving and managing remittances does not imply deciding on their use; women who receive remittances often cannot make such decisions, which are often dictated by the remitter. In other cases, the money may be received by someone other than the person who manages it, which is sometimes the case in Colombia, where male migrants send money to a male family member (father or brother) as a way of controlling women. Thus they receive the money only to the extent that their behaviour is considered appropriate, especially in terms of their sexuality.

### 5.1.3 Differentiated patterns of remittance use

The end-use of remittances, repeatedly and regardless of the home country being studied, is to cover recurring household costs: food, housing, clothing and increased access to consumer goods. The proportion of households which puts remittances towards *productive* investment is extremely small. This calls into question one of the main assumptions of the dominant paradigm, as remittances are found to be functioning as salaries and not as capital.<sup>48</sup>

Beyond meeting basic needs, spending figures for health care and education reveal two areas of vital importance in the outlay of remittances. Although this varies according to context, the health-care coverage of home countries tends to be deficient and depends to a large extent on the ability of heads of households to pay for private services, making health care a priority expense when household income increases through remittances. Similarly, ensuring access to higher education for children is, in many cases, one of the main objectives of migration, such that it also accounts for a significant portion of remittances. A final, consistent function of remittances is as a substitute for the social protection that is not provided by the State in home countries, acting as a retirement pension for the parents of migrants, unemployment or health insurance for brothers and sisters, income for widowed mothers, etc.

#### Differential patterns of remittance use

Maintaining or increasing access to consumer goods – either individually (in autonomous migration) or collectively (in family migration) – is one primary objective for a significant proportion of Colombian migrants to Spain. This migration is made up not only of poor sectors, but also of middle- and upper-middle-class migrants who feel that their career goals, economic progress or social mobility have been affected or threatened by increasing violence in Colombia. For these groups, the success of their migratory experience is determined by the achievement of economic progress, granting access to goods that symbolize status and distinction. In this sense, we find a number of references, strongly differentiated by gender, to the expenditures and investments made by these migrants when they return to visit or vacation in Colombia. Accordingly, within a framework designed to display the success of the migratory experience – held common by women and men – men generally choose recreational activities (often collective in nature), while women are more focused on appearance and beauty as distinctive symbols of womanly success. Thus, a car is the prototypical demonstration of success for the migrant man, whereas women opt for plastic surgery:<sup>49</sup>

“Men come here and party, they let loose, while women want to be well dressed. In our municipality, we have a second-rate hospital that is already performing plastic surgery: lipo, breasts. Speaking with the administrator, he told me that a large percentage of these people come from there [Spain], and they come to make themselves beautiful. You see them, they’re very fashionable, like they want to look good, while for the men it’s about partying, about the car” (key informant, La Virginia, Colombia).

Women’s primary role as remittance managers and (where appropriate) users directly determines the increased use of remittances for food and education. This supports the

48. This theory is reinforced by data on the frequency of sending remittances: the vast majority of remittances are sent every two weeks or 30 days, coinciding with pay days in the home country.

49. The reiteration in interviews of the supposed demand for plastic surgery by migrant women is a surprising element that deserves greater qualitative exploration. With the information available it is difficult to determine the scope or magnitude of the phenomenon and, to the extent that none of the people interviewed was either a woman or relative of a woman who had undergone plastic surgery, it is impossible to explain the desires or needs this demand responds to.

thesis, proposed in other fields such as that of food security, that when women have more control over household monetary resources (as remitters who maintain control over the money's use, or as managers of received remittances), they tend to invest more in improving the household's general well-being. It has also been shown – as in the case of the Dominican Republic – that men who manage remittances tend to consider the funds their private property, keeping a proportion for their personal needs (e.g. leisure expenses). This type of behaviour has led many women to opt for sending remittances to their mothers or sisters, as a way of ensuring that remittances are fully invested in the overall well-being of the household.

In any case, the debate on the existence and dynamics of differentiated patterns of sending, receipt and utilization of remittances demands some specificity. Donato et al. (2006) argue that “either the presence or absence of gender differences constitutes a positive research finding and should be reported, as would the presence or absence of differences among ethnic, racial, or national groups.” This affirmation encapsulates three essential points: It is always important to observe the possible existence of differentiated patterns, but these do not always have to appear. Thus, for example, in the case of Colombian migration from the AMCO region to Spain, social class appears as a much more determinant factor of differentiated patterns of sending and utilization of remittances. In fact, King et al. (2006) affirm that:

“The ‘nurturing nature’ of women, and their stronger sense of obligation and responsibility for family matters, are often advanced to explain this difference; men are often accused of being selfish and not fulfilling their family obligations. We have the feeling that this is ‘truth’ created by assertion and repetition, rather than validated by rigorous scientific investigation. Feminist scholarship on this topic is in danger of fashioning its own myths and stereotypes.”

That is, there is a serious risk that gender-based analysis will reconstruct prior assumptions instead of testing them. Many gender-sensitive analyses take this differentiated behaviour and responsibility between men and women as an axiom that either does not require comparison, or allows the meaning of differences in usage patterns to be magnified, even though these differences may only be minor. Added to this are methodological problems derived from the difficulty of establishing when a woman or man is making or deciding on the spending of remittances. In this sense, the spending patterns of female- and male-headed households are often compared, without considering other limitations such as the difference between managing and deciding on remittance use (e.g. often the distribution of remittances is decided beforehand by the remitter, rather than the recipient); the analytical weakness of the category of “head of household”; the importance of other factors such as social class or household structure in the determination of expenditures; the complexity of intra-household decision-making processes, which can rarely be reduced to whether a man or a woman is making the decision, etc. Given these possible gaps in analysis, it is appropriate to mention that the gaps are wider still in interventions.<sup>50</sup> Finally, a gender-based analysis must always be aware of other axes of inequality; as we have mentioned earlier, it is critical to

50. On this point, the negative picture which is often painted of migrant men is worthy of note, in addition to the fact that it contrasts with the figure of a protagonistic subject within the development process that is set out by neoclassical economics: homo economicus, incarnated in white, Western men. Gender-based interventions in destination countries are sometimes initiated from a very negative vision of the role of migrant men, who are accused of embodying values that are applied quite unfairly. For example, Spain's Plan Estratégico de Ciudadanía e Integración 2007-2010 (Strategic Citizenship and Integration Plan 2007-2010) recognizes the serious problems that migrant women face in balancing work and family life, blaming migrant men for their lack of involvement in care duties. The blame laid here on migrant men is disproportionate to the responsibility laid at the door of men in Spain's non-migrant households. That is, it is worth asking whether the dominant role of migrant women as being responsible for their households is not partly based on praise of the self-sacrificing woman, on the one hand, and the stigmatization of migrant men on the other. Both are distorted images that do not allow a true understanding of the situation, nor permit the design of interventions based on making progress in terms of gender equality.

analyse gender differences between different social classes, cross-referencing sex-disaggregated data with population quintile, education, etc. In other contexts, for example that of Guatemala, the UN-INSTRAW experience shows the importance of taking into account ethnic difference in order to understand migratory processes and, thus, remittance flows.

## 5.2 Are there macro level benefits?

At a macroeconomic level, the “remittances for development” paradigm argues that remittances benefit home countries in regards to the financial sphere, and to decreasing poverty and inequality.

In the area of finance, the monetary flows have multiple positive effects. Remittances have become the major source of foreign exchange for many poor countries: in Latin America they have surpassed the combined total of foreign direct investment and official development assistance (Newland, 2007). Remittances can thus improve the international credit rating of home countries, and their future flows can be used as collateral against foreign credit, as has happened in Brazil, El Salvador, Mexico, Turkey and elsewhere (IOM, 2005). The stability of remittance flows and their counter-cyclical nature (compared to the cycles in home countries) make them a valuable source of foreign currency for countries of origin, in contrast to foreign direct investment and other, less predictable, financial flows.

Nevertheless, these positive effects can also become risk factors, both in economic and political terms, as home countries become dependent on the constant flow of remittances to ensure their macroeconomic stability. The sudden reduction of these flows because of recession or crisis in the destination country can have disastrous effects on the home country’s economy, a possibility that is unfortunately not remote in view of the current global economic climate. Thus, remittances can have an element of instability inasmuch as they are pro-cyclical in regards to destination countries. It is worth asking whether depending on remittances as a stabilizing factor in the balance of payments and a source of foreign currency does not constitute a new form of economic colonialism: the smooth functioning of the macroeconomies of poor countries becomes more directly dependent on the smooth functioning of the macroeconomies of rich countries. Changes in migration policies in destination countries can also have a similar effect, as demonstrated by the reduction in the growth rate of remittances to Mexico as a result of the United States’ increasingly restrictive migration policy.

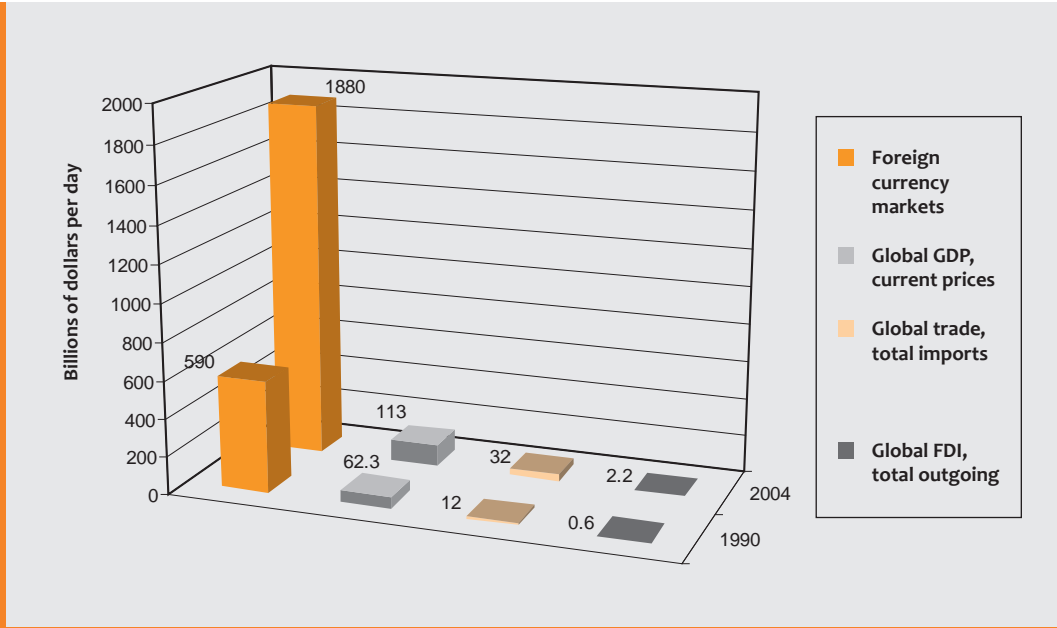
In terms of highlighting the stabilizing influence of remittance flows, it is important to take into account the fact that they represent a very small proportion of global financial flows. We therefore cannot expect that their influence on the balance of payments will outweigh the risks presented by short-term and speculative capital, which can be transferred from one country to another almost instantly. In figure 4, we can see the weight of foreign direct investment (FDI, whose aggregate value we can compare with that of remittance flows) with respect to the foreign currency market (with speculative and short-term characteristics).

Moreover, proposals that are developed within the “remittances for development” paradigm tend to increase the financial liberalization that permits an increase in these speculative flows. The application of a gender perspective to this process has shown that this liberalization is in no way gender neutral, and has a highly gender-differentiated effect with a disproportionate impact on women. If, as Elson (2002) proposes, we look at this issue “from the kitchen” instead of “from the boardroom”, we can identify that the increased risk for economies – inherent in the process of financial

**Figure 4:**

**Volume of daily transactions in international capital markets compared with principal real variables, 1990-2004**

Source: Prepared by Álvarez Peralta (2007), using data from IADB, UNCTAD, WTO, and IMF (2006).



liberalization – supposes that these risks trickle down and are absorbed “in the kitchen”. That is, they are compensated by readjusting the combination of paid and unpaid work performed by women. Girón González and González Marín (2006) show the impact of financial liberalization in Mexico, subsequently leading to an increase in female migration to the United States in search of new survival strategies.

On the other hand, a broad consensus has been created around the positive impacts of remittances in terms of alleviating poverty and, as a result, inequality. Accepting this positive correlation implies that it has been placed beyond questioning or testing (Binford, 2003). However, in those cases in which it is still tested, the evidence is contradictory, in that the macro effects on inequality are mediated by several factors, such as location, household income, etc. There are several ways in which remittances contribute to increasing inequality: directly, because households with higher incomes receive a disproportionate amount of remittances; and indirectly for reasons that we will explore in the following section. These include the perversion of the so-called multiplier effect; the creation of inflationary and/or speculative processes in particularly sensitive markets (especially in basic goods and services, housing and land); and the possible degradation of public services in cases where the State has abandoned its redistributive role. In general, we must evaluate whether remittances (and their indirect impacts) are equitably distributed among different social groups, thus creating the space to propose different policies for different flows or remittances, as a function of which social groups receive them.

As a whole, remittances can have diverse impacts on inequality; in practice, the research is inconclusive and often proves contradictory. This is in fact to be expected, as it depends on the composition of the migratory flow. As the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty (also called the Migration DRC) states: “Given the range of different types of migration, and the varied contexts within which migration occurs, any overarching conclusion about impacts on inequality is unlikely to be very robust at a global or even a regional level” (2006, p.1). For these reasons, the impact of remittances on poverty and inequality should become a matter of interest, demanding that we address certain methodological problems. The data on the high percentage of poor households among the total of recipient households is often cited in isolation from the data on the percentage of total remittances actually received by

poor households.<sup>51</sup> Remittances tend to be unequally distributed, although the disparity is not always as pronounced as in the distribution of other sources of income. In Latin America, for example, although the greater proportion of recipient households belongs to the lowest-income quintile, the highest-income quintile tends to receive a higher amount of money per capita. In some countries, such as Mexico and Ecuador, the average amount received by the richest quintile can be double that received by the poorest (ECLAC, 2006). The Colombian case study conducted by UN-INSTRAW and IOM Colombia demonstrates that the richest quintile receives 48 per cent of remittances in the AMCO region.

A review of case studies conducted in Central America, Eastern Europe, Western Africa and South-East Asia by Migration DRC<sup>52</sup> determined that the impact of migration on inequality (at the global and local levels) depends on who is able to migrate and the opportunities they encounter on arrival. The more people from the poorest quintile in migratory flows, the greater the impact of migration on reducing inequality. That is, access and opportunity are two main focus areas for policy intervention: increasing the range of legal opportunities for migration in order to foster a positive impact in reducing inequality. At the same time, this range can be broadened to the poorest populations of home countries through actions which defend labour rights, regulate hiring procedures, support local migrant associations and promote safer methods of migrant transport.

A renewed focus on the impact of remittances on inequality should include the variables of gender and social class, examining whether women are equally present as priority beneficiaries in all social classes. This would allow us to deduce whether the receipt of remittances contributes to diminishing inequality in income availability between women and men. This last question, as far as UN-INSTRAW is aware, has never been addressed.

Different levels of analysis can lead to contradictory results, as diverse contextual or country-specific factors can produce divergent effects in real-life migration. Moreover, the use of a range of conceptual frameworks, explanatory models and empirical methodologies can lead to diverse and even contradictory evaluations of the same facts, particularly in terms of impact on inequality and poverty.

At the most elementary level, this is made clear by the very diverse estimates of the total amount of remittances received in home countries. An important initial distinction should be made between gross and net remittances. It is often the data on gross remittances (the total volume of remittances that reach a country) that are used to represent the impressive flows of financial resources that home countries receive, compared with other flows such as international cooperation or FDI. However, this

“is misleading, since the gross figures do not take into account the transfers migrants make to rich countries, and those that take place between developing countries. When these ‘reverse flows’ are taken into account, the net amount received by developing countries is much smaller” (IOM, 2005, p.178).<sup>53</sup>

51. This differentiation is similar to the one that Gammeltoft (2002) proposes in his analysis of whether remittances contribute to alleviating inequalities between countries. He affirms that data on the proportion of remittances (compared to overall external flows) that are received by low-income countries can lead to excessively optimistic conclusions, which are more positive than the conclusions drawn if we were to consider other data such as the percentage of remittances received by middle-income countries as a proportion of the total volume of global remittances.

52. The centre's website: [www.migrationdrc.org](http://www.migrationdrc.org).

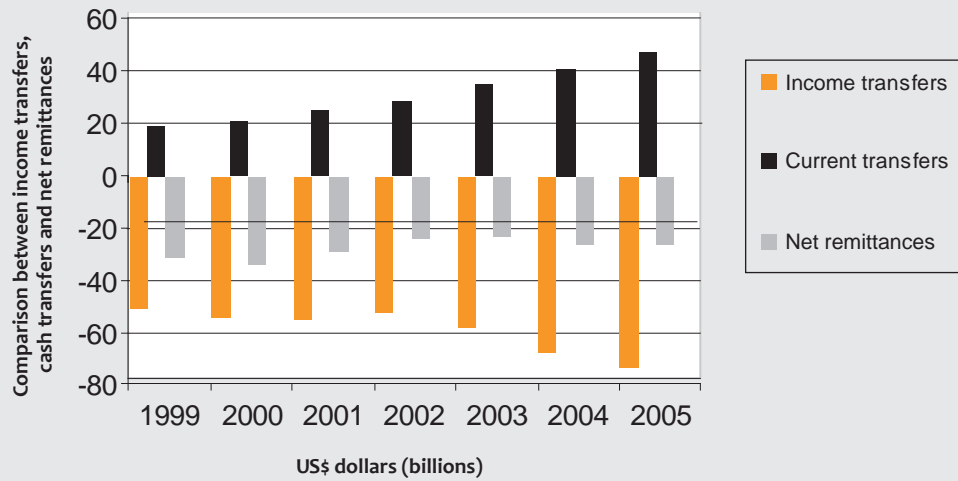
53. This is related to the simplification of analyses that tend to classify countries as either the origin or destination of migration, with no understanding of the complexity of migratory flows. For example, one of the objectives of the UN-INSTRAW study of the Southern African Development Community was to understand intra-regional migration between different countries in the continent's south, going beyond the traditional analysis of migration to South Africa alone.



**Figure 5:**

**Remittances in Latin America, 1999-2005**

Source: Prepared by UN-INSTRAW, using data from Banco Central de Cuba (2006).



The fact that the balance of payments accounts separately for income from work and income from capital, with remittances understood only as the former, impedes an understanding of financial dynamics between countries within the framework of unequal relations at the global level. Home countries obtain their income primarily from the employment of migrant labour, and destination countries obtain it from capital; which, in the latter case, shows the unequal international distribution of the means of production. In this sense, if instead of looking only at the exchange of income from work (made up primarily of so-called family remittances and accounted as cash transfers), we also looked at the exchange of income from capital (made up of the entry and exit of paid interest and dividends, i.e. remittances from utilities and interests), the picture would be less flattering. Although the former tend to grow, the latter are clearly decreasing, as can be seen in figure 5. If we incorporate an analysis of the different relationships with the means of production, we will see that international monetary flows are clearly advantageous to destination countries, which tend to accrue benefits from ownership of the means of production rather than the sale of their labour force (the main source of income for migrants' home countries).

Ultimately, the willingness to look exclusively at family remittances (and, given their growth over the last years, extract an overall optimistic view) or to contrast these flows with others which lead to less positive conclusions, responds to distinct analytical and political positions.<sup>54</sup> There are multiple spaces from which to observe the impact of remittances on development, all of which offer very different images. The first requirement is, therefore, to specify where we are speaking from. Throughout the rest of this paper, we will consider only remittances sourced from work, in the awareness that this seriously limits our understanding of development processes in a globalized economy where the resource gains from capital and work are unevenly distributed.

54. It is curious that, in measuring the macro volume of remittances, remittances are considered income from work and are not compared with the income from capital. Yet, in emphasizing their potential as development drivers (in that they can become productive investments), what takes precedence is an understanding of remittances as capital, rather than as a salary. This contradictory view within the discourse reminds us once again of the analytical inconsistency of the "remittances for development" paradigm, although determining whether this is a result of methodological problems or a wilful use of multiple frameworks is beyond the scope of this publication. In any case, as Canales (2006b) states, "these approaches [the institutional discourse on migration and remittances] are plagued by various conceptual and methodological deficiencies, while at the same time they are based on hypotheses and analytical models that have not been adequately contrasted" (p.172; our translation).

### 5.3 The “virtuous circle” at the local level

As we have argued, interventions in migration and development are concentrated at the local level, operating on the basis of a euphoric discourse of migration’s positive impact on development and exemplifying an economic approach. This discourse affirms that the positive impact is produced both directly, to recipient households, and indirectly, to communities (see figure 1).

Figure 6: The remittance euphoria

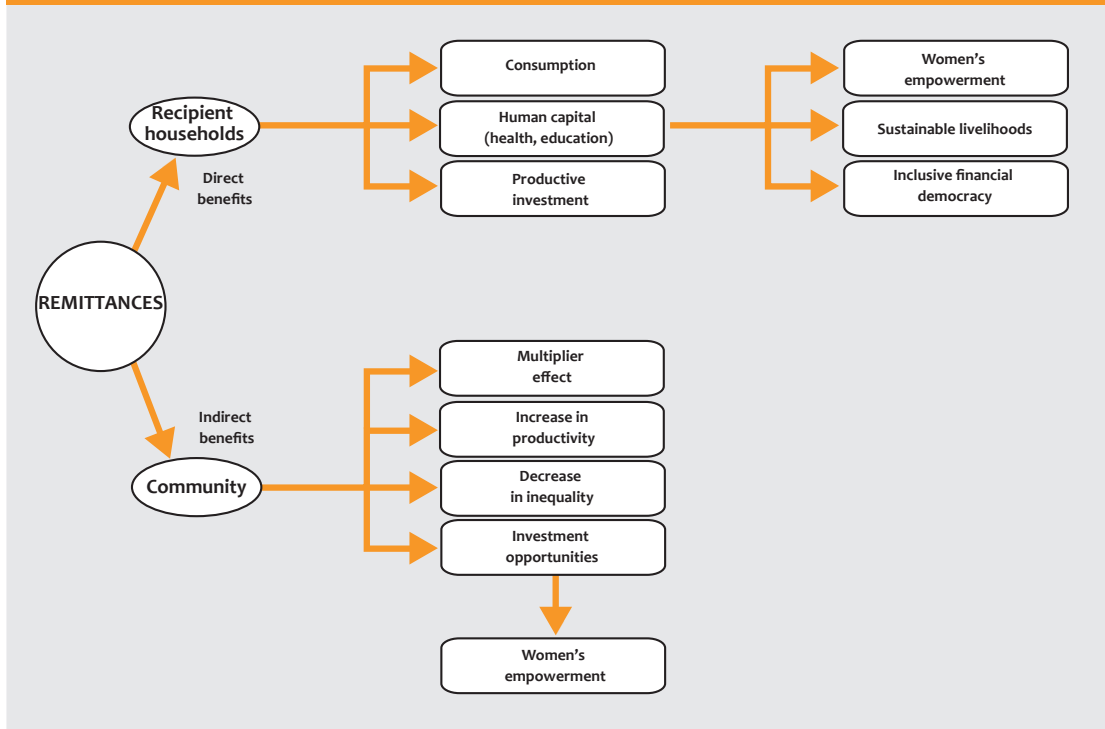
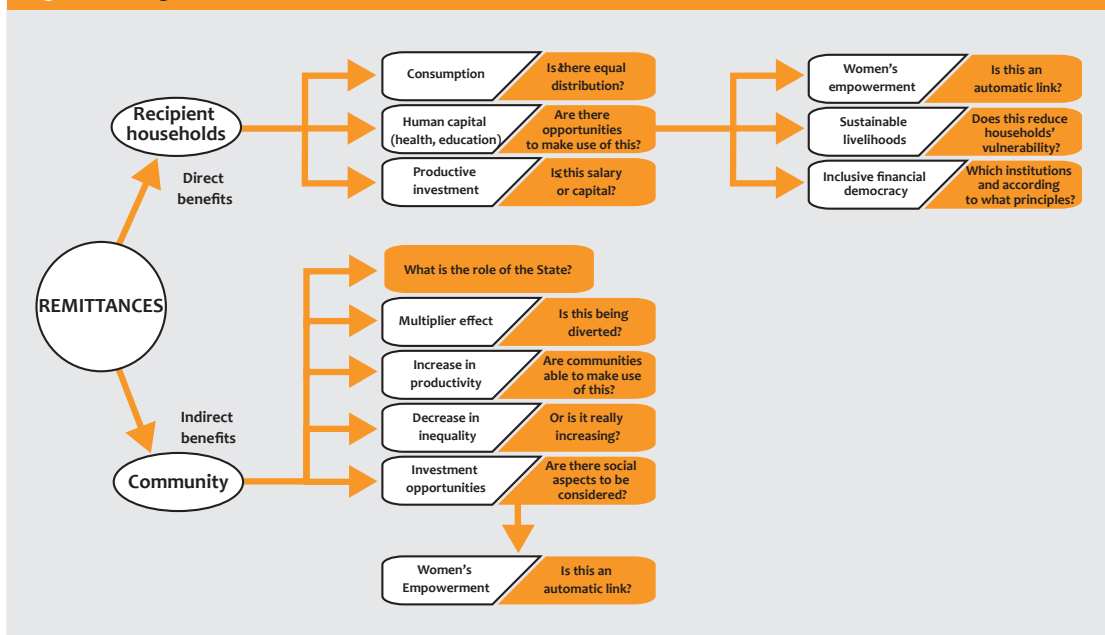


Figure 7: Neglected elements of the “virtuous circle”



### 5.3.1 The impact on remittance-receiving households

Directly, the increased income that remittances provide for recipient households allows an increase in consumption, which leads to a reduction in poverty. It also allows an improvement in health and education for household members and, therefore, an increase in the human capital of recipient families.<sup>55</sup> These more immediate positive impacts can be maximized through the “productive use of remittances”, permitting an increase in future income and guaranteeing the creation of sustainable livelihoods beyond the short term. In fact, it is this creation of sustainable livelihoods that distinct modes of intervention aim to maximize.

If remittances are sent through formal channels and there is sufficient and appropriate development of financial markets, recipient households can access associated financial services, particularly credit (with remittance flows acting as collateral) and insurance (life, health, retirement, etc.). Access is granted to a whole range of financial services from which these households were previously excluded.

**Box 8. UN-INSTRAW Case Studies**

#### **Maintaining households of origin at the expense of personal plans**

For Dominican women in Spain, the need to maintain constant levels of remittances in order to ensure the survival and well-being of households of origin often means staying in domestic work in a live-in capacity in order to save the largest possible amount of their salaries. This clearly acts in detriment to investments in training which would grant women access to sectors other than domestic work.

The testimony of a Dominican woman is illustrative of a reality that emerges time and again in interviews with migrant women: “for the time that I’ve spent here I should have money. If I had a smaller family and if they had needed less, I’d be able to say, ‘I have a car, I have a house, I have money in the bank,’ but with so much family...”

This feeling of responsibility is linked to the fact that Dominican women are willing to make greater sacrifices to fulfil their roles as women and primary providers for their households.

The direct benefits to recipient households seem easy to corroborate, in that migration is a strategy for survival or to improve quality of life in the migrants’ homes. However, this statement alone is insufficient, and should be complemented by an analysis that observes the differential levels of impact: the household as a whole, its individual members, and the community in a broader sense. Households are not homogenous or harmonious units; each member has different interests; intrafamily power relations are inevitably present; these, amid a range of other factors, determine intrafamily decision-making processes. The negotiating power of each family member will determine the each accrues from this income. Within the community, impacts can vary according to class, gender and ethnicity; other phenomena can also act to increase inequalities between recipient and non-recipient households. Moreover, an analysis of the impact of remittance spending in communities of origin should be complemented by an analysis of the destination country – asking the question “what they [remittances] are not

<sup>55</sup>. In fact, the dominant discourse has evolved from a more negative vision (focused on the few productive investments made with remittances) to a much more positive view. Here, consumption is not itself a waste of resources (since it allows for the alleviation of poverty), and expenses usually considered as consumption (expenses related to health care and education) are no longer considered ‘consumption’, but investment in human capital. Finally, these expenses, appropriately channelled through financial institutions, allow progress to be made in the much-lauded financial democracy that promotes productive investment.

spent on in order that they be sent abroad and who is affected by this lack of spending” (Pessar, 2005, p.5; her italics). This material improvement in households of origin often hides very difficult living conditions, and the fact that migrant women forgo their own plans in life as they assume responsibility for sending remittances.

On the other hand, investment in education and the corresponding increase in human capital often clashes with local labour markets, which are incapable of satisfying new working and living expectations. This is especially so for women, as labour markets in communities of origin are profoundly sex-segregated, and offer women fewer job opportunities and in less attractive sectors when compared to men.

In regards to the conviction that remittance flows allow for the implementation of sustainable livelihoods, it is important to emphasize that, although at the aggregate level remittances represent imposing amounts, they are broken into a multiplicity of small transactions that often achieve nothing more than a reduction of households’ vulnerability in crisis situations. This is the case of remittances in Africa’s Southern Cone, where the only unquestioned impact of remittances is in reducing vulnerability in cases of food crises. In terms of productive investment, as we have mentioned, remittances act as a salary rather than as capital; therefore, the percentage that is actually available for savings or productive investment is very small. The means of converting remittances into capital is through formal banking, but this is very limited because of the small quantities available for savings or because communities of origin are structurally deficient (itself one of the origins of migration). In this context, individual entrepreneurship faces a number of constraints that are beyond the capacity of individuals to remedy.

### 5.3.2 The impact on migrants’ communities of origin

The “remittances for development” paradigm goes further, affirming that, indirectly, remittance flows to a specific place benefit the whole community in various ways: (a) the increase in monetary flows supposes an increase in consumption and, as a result, of mercantile activity and employment: the so-called multiplier effect; (b) the alleviation of poverty in recipient households leads to an overall alleviation of social inequalities (this question has been addressed above); (c) the increase in human capital implies an increase in productivity that benefits the entire community; and (d) if, moreover, remittances are accompanied by formal banking processes, then the construction of financial democracy begins, creating access to financial services not only for recipient households but for the whole community. Financial institutions have the capacity to recycle domestic resources and circulate them throughout the community, thereby expanding opportunities to create sustainable livelihoods even for non-recipient households. However, the multidimensional beneficial impact of remittances on communities of origin seems more difficult to corroborate.

Of the alleged multiplier effect, it is worth asking what its magnitude is and who benefits from it, since it can be skewed or unequally distributed throughout the population. It can be directed towards social groups that are better positioned in the market, by creating only certain types of employment (e.g. in male-dominated sectors), or translating the gains derived from increased consumption into both employment and increased business benefits (e.g. through the development of capital-intensive industries). In any case, in the absence of integrated development plans, there is no guarantee that quality jobs will be created, nor that women will be able to access them on an equal footing with men. To the extent that women are not as well-positioned in markets, it is to be expected that they will benefit less from this effect.

### The Philippines: persistent structural problems

Important changes in agricultural production have occurred as a result of remittances flowing into the rural Filipino communities being studied by UN-INSTRAW. These changes impact on interest in agricultural work, division of labour, and land use and ownership. For example, this study reveals that remittances allow migrants' households of origin to purchase agricultural land. As former tenants become land owners, these farmers are more willing to invest in technology to improve the quantity and the quality of their harvests:

“Families of migrants who put their money into developing their farm can now afford to buy better farming equipment, like motorized pumps for the water system, hand tractors and threshing machines. They can also buy fertilizers and pesticides to eliminate weeds” (mother of female migrant, Mindoro, The Philippines).

Nevertheless, in most interviews with households that had used remittances to buy property and invest in farming technologies, emphasis was placed on persisting structural problems that threaten the sustainability of agriculture in their communities. Among the issues highlighted by interviewees were problems relating to market access; to the prevailing model of agrarian development that is being imposed in a context of commercial liberalization (most strongly affecting small farmers); and to the government's role in importing crops that are also produced locally, such as rice.

Therefore, remittances can improve access to food in migrants' households of origin, while these opportunities are fewer for non-recipient households. Having a member of the household abroad, therefore, is almost indispensable for the survival of these communities – thereby contributing to perpetuating migratory flows.

The multiplier effect can also be diffused towards other regions. It can drive migration to cities, or investment to areas with fewer structural problems (this is related to the dominant model of formal banking, as we will see below). Income can be spent on goods manufactured outside the region. Historically, in fact, this trend has been skewed towards urban areas. Finally, the effect can be diverted outside the country of origin by increasing imports. On the other hand, and in line with our proposal to analyse not the impacts on both home and destination countries, several authors argue that this multiplier effect must be contrasted with the effects of migrants' consumption in the destination country. Ultimately, it is in the destination country that migrant women and men live day-to-day and, accordingly, pay for their daily expenses. Moreover, when plans to return become plans to remain in the destination country and, in the case of transnational families, to reunify there, investment of savings will be made in the destination country (primarily in housing, but also in small-scale entrepreneurship). To what extent does migration's multiplier effect impact the destination country?

In response to the supposed increase in productivity that is derived from greater investment in human capital, the absence of mechanisms that allow communities to take advantage of these resources should be noted. This more-qualified labour force can remain underused, and tends to migrate to other zones, to urban areas, or even to other countries. This is especially the case in rural areas, where structural problems and power relations between urban and rural worlds explain a tendency to devalue rural living. The increase in human capital from remittances can have a strong negative impact on agriculture, as rural areas are increasingly seen as worlds with no future that are characterized by harsh labour conditions.

A final element to include, which is not usually taken into account in traditional discourse, is the role of public institutions – at the State or sub-State level – in providing loans and guaranteeing rights such as education, health care and social protection. Communities of origin often evidence serious deficiencies in guaranteeing services and loans, deficiencies which can, in fact, be aggravated by remittances (as explained above). Spending remittances on health care and education emerges from the prior absence of a public safety net. As the effects of private remittance flows on these variable are praised, less emphasis is placed on public responsibility; accordingly, no advances are made in realizing these rights, and households that do not receive remittances continue to face the same, if not greater, difficulties in accessing health-care and education services. In the case of collective remittances, often they simply compensate for the lack of public services (by repairing cemeteries, building roads, establishing public libraries, etc.).

To date, remittances generally function as a substitute for social protection systems (e.g. migrants send remittances to their parents who have no retirement pensions, or to unemployed brothers or sisters who have unemployment benefits). Moreover, the promotion of the formal banking of remittances can be linked to the development of associated financial services (private insurance of every kind: education, health, retirement, life, etc.), initially intended for remittance-receiving households but meant to eventually reach the entire community. In this case, individual savings function as a way to diminish vulnerability and risk, stopping the gap in public coverage and feeding the creation of privatized social protection systems. This does not imply the degradation of public systems (generally non-existent) but does inhibit citizens' demand that they be created.

On the whole, the emphasis on the role of remittances in covering education, health-care and social protection needs can be seen as one more step towards the privatization of development strategies. This takes emphasis away from macro transformations and accentuates both the micro and the potential of affected populations to escape poverty on their own if only they have the necessary initial resources to take advantage of their underused capacities – thus definitively absolving institutions of their responsibility to guarantee basic rights. In addition, there is a dangerous tendency to consider that remittance flows make other development policies unnecessary, because remittances will only have broad-based, sustained positive impacts within policies that address the structural problems typical of communities of origin. As The New Economics Foundation (NEF) affirms: "Above all, although remittances can selectively relieve the poverty of recipients and enable household (and sometimes wider community) consumption and saving, they do not automatically generate development, and should not be regarded as a substitute for policies that do so" (Mitchell, 2006, p.16).

### Household reorganization in the wake of migration

Migration implies separation and household reorganization for many Filipinos and their families. When a migrant leaves, households are often faced with reorganizing and redistributing roles and responsibilities among the family members who remain in the Philippines. The biggest adjustments to household organization occur when the migrant is married or a single parent with children. In these particular cases, measures must be taken in order to reassign the duties of the head of household and/or primary caregiver.

The selection of another household or family member for these roles is often based on sex and age; other factors include education level, marital status and the migrant's subjective evaluation of different family members, and their commitments and responsibilities. As a result, the reorganization tends to reinforce pre-existing gender norms and power relations within the home, based on age and sex.

"When they migrated, I became the head of the family because I was oldest child left behind. Currently, in my own nuclear family, my husband is the head of household" (daughter of migrant parents, Mindoro, the Philippines).

Another solution, which is not uncommon, not only means the reinforcement of gender norms, but also the transfer of gender-based inequalities between women. When it is an adult female who migrates, households resort to hiring local nannies and domestic workers to assume caregiving tasks. In fact, a portion of the remittances may be sent to cover the costs involved in hiring a woman from outside of the family to take care of children and other dependent family members. This phenomenon can be seen as an increase in the number of employment opportunities for non-migrating women in the community, particularly given the challenge of generating employment for women in rural areas. However, this employment is both poorly paid and informal in nature.

Although women's migration and the subsequent reorganization of their homes tend to reinforce pre-existing gender norms, in many cases it can overturn them or challenge them: men who previously lacked experience in childcare and domestic work sometimes learn how to perform these tasks. This includes men whose wives go abroad, as well as men who travel abroad alone.

One final problem with the financial democracy concept is that it promotes the idea that social cohesion is an indispensable prerequisite for development. This notion of social cohesion inhibits the recognition of social conflicts (e.g. between classes or sexes), which could be a starting point to creating spaces for their negotiation and resolution.

There is one last, gender-based argument to the supposed positive impact of remittances: that women's privileged role as recipients and/or managers of remittances translates into a process of empowerment, as managing these resource increases their autonomy and/or intrafamily negotiating power. If, moreover, thanks to the remittances received, women undertake some kind of productive activity, the remittances' empowering effect is even greater. Obviously the dominant role of women as remittance providers or managers implies an increase in their decision-making or negotiating capacity. For example, when the wives of male migrants receive and administer remittances, occasionally through the establishment of small businesses or management of properties acquired, the results are much better than when remittances are administered by one of the husband's family members, as this can reinforce the subordination and patriarchal control exercised by the family. However the link between women's management of these resources and their empowerment is neither so clean nor so direct as it would seem; rather, it is mediated by a multiplicity

of factors.<sup>56</sup> As we have already seen, the administration of household income does not imply the ability to make decisions about its distribution, nor to benefit from its expenditure (often decided as a function of the interests of other household members rather than the woman herself). Intrafamily negotiating power depends on such questions as perceptions of the contributions and needs of each household member. In fact, in the case of women, the recognition of the value of their providing role constantly collides with the critique of their supposed abandonment of their caregiving responsibilities. This tension often leads to (self-)blaming processes, as we will see below in the section on global care chains. Along these same lines, even in cases where women's greater role as providers implies an increase in their social recognition, the problem lies in that there is no change to the basic concepts of what is valued socially: the activities traditionally carried out by women outside the market (especially linked to care and unpaid work) remain invisible.

Another determining factor of remittances' impact on empowerment is women's access to other resources such as land, social or family support, job opportunities, etc. Ultimately, the availability of this wide range of resources determines women's intrafamily (and even intracommunity) negotiating power. Similarly, in the case of wives who remain in the home country, the husband's migratory experiences can lead to greater flexibility in gender roles after his return, with respect for the freedoms women have gained as a result of living independently during the years of separation. Conversely, it may also result in the imposition of even greater restrictions on women, as when men use economic resources accumulated through migration to force a return to more traditional roles (Piper, 2005).

An additional element to consider is that migration often results in an increase in the labour burden for women who stay in the home country. This may result either because women are left in charge of households and especially of the care work that the migrating women performed before they left, or because, in addition to their normal responsibilities, women are now responsible for managing remittances. In any case, the discourse on remittances carries with it a serious risk of instrumentalizing migrants, as we have pointed out – particularly women, both those who migrate and those who remain in the home country with new responsibilities. An emphasis on women's role as guarantors of the well-being of others can lead us to forget that it is their well-being that should be guaranteed by the development process; we may then blame women for making themselves the priority.

## 5.4 Productive investment and formal banking from a gender perspective

A broad consensus exists around the need to foster the implementation of sustainable livelihoods through productive investments; to increase the availability of financial services to migrants and remittance recipients; and, eventually, to expand these services to the non-recipient community. Remittances play a key role in both the promotion of small- and medium-scale productive investment through microcredits, and the provision of monetary resources that can be made available to the community as a whole.

However, this same consensus does not exist with respect to the type of financial services required, the model of productive investment to be followed, or, in a broader sense, the general suppositions that underlie the model of promoting investment and

56. Mayoux (2006) outlines similar questions regarding the widely accepted idea that access to microcredit leads to an associated empowerment process. For the complexity of elements that affect women's capacity for intrafamily negotiation, see Agarwal (1997).



formal banking. What is defined as a productive investment? Do women and men benefit equally from these investments? Should the formal banking of remittances complement or substitute public policies? Should the guiding principle be social equality or market efficiency? The answers to these and other questions depend on assumptions made about the nature of development; the role of public policies and institutions in promoting development; and the extent to which the market should be the main, or the only, organizing principle of economic activity, etc.

UN-INSTRAW case studies show that women's remittance-based entrepreneurship, in addition to facing the same obstacles confronted by men, has different characteristics and challenges. These include: (a) women generally have lower education levels, and thus fewer entrepreneurial skills and increased barriers to accessing credit; (b) women tend to spend a greater proportion of remittances on household consumption (especially on health care and education) and have less access to credit; their investments are therefore normally small; (c) given the small amounts available for investment, businesses started by women tend to depend more heavily on unpaid family labour and have little capacity to generate employment; (d) in accordance with gender norms, women tend to invest in businesses considered "appropriate" for them – beauty salons and small food, clothing and accessories stores; and (e) as a consequence, women's entrepreneurship is characterized by low profitability and challenges to medium-term sustainability (i.e. many businesses quickly fail).

All of the above raises questions about the discourse that assumes immediate positive effects from women's insertion into the labour market through entrepreneurship. It also signals a need to implement significant support and accompaniment measures, so the impact of these businesses can move beyond granting women access to minimal (though essential) income to maintain their households within a crisis of social reproduction. Of these measures, generating sources of financing is particularly important. The question is whether interventions channelled through the formal financial market are as beneficial as those channelled through microfinance institutions, which are not submitted to the market's demands to the same degree.

The positive impact of financial institutions in communities of origin depends on two factors. First, the creation of a genuine financial infrastructure for communities of origin, including the establishment of accessible financial services for the broader local community. Second, this infrastructure's capacity to recognize and support different entrepreneurial initiatives and diverse, coexisting economic objectives and rationales, particularly those of women.

Different microfinance paradigms have clearly differentiated effects in terms of local development and women's empowerment. We have gradually moved from a focus on small institutions with a particular social orientation (the microfinance paradigm) to what is currently known as "inclusive financing" or "financial democracy". This concept promotes the integration of microfinance institutions in the formal financial market, making the private banking sector more accessible to the "bankable poor". Microfinance institutions have some degree of public financing (provided by the State or by donor agencies), a more democratic and/or cooperative perspective, and a greater commitment to social viability. Conversely, the "inclusive financing" paradigm focuses on the profitability and financial sustainability of institutions, since its objective is to improve efficiency in order to attract private-sector resources. The reasoning behind intervention is therefore shifted from social considerations to financial viability (given the need to adjust to the market's requirements), and institutions change size, ownership and operation (moving from collective, small-scale ownership to private, large-scale ownership).

The constitution of genuine “financial infrastructure” requires financial services that allow for the establishment of a direct correlation between savings and investment in the region. That is, the savings produced in the community of origin (concretely, through remittances) translate into increasingly accessible financial services. The main problem is that these communities often present serious structural deficiencies that limit the profitability of investments. Thus, savings tend to be displaced towards regions with greater investment potential – a result of both migrants’ own decisions (they often prefer to speculate in more promising regions),<sup>57</sup> and the operation of financial institutions (which respond to purely mercantile logic, and prefer to authorize loans where they will be more productive). The consequent effect is an increase in regional inequalities. To counteract this drain of resources, it would be essential to establish a financial infrastructure that is committed to the local sphere, maintaining resources within the region and allowing migrants’ savings to be converted into credit for those who do not migrate.<sup>58</sup> This is the operational logic of cooperative financial services, such as so-called intermediary rural financial services. However, can commercial banks provide these same services? The key distinction between banks and financial cooperatives or other microfinance institutions is the democratic nature of the latter. They grant the non-migrant population a decision-making ability, therefore indicating an institutional commitment to the community at large. Formal financial institutions, on the other hand, operate on the basis of profitability and are not guided by these types of commitments.

In the case of women entrepreneurs, financial institutions that operate on purely mercantile principles face clear difficulties in responding to broader development objectives as we have defined them. Mayoux (2006) determines that the benefits obtained by the broader community, and particularly by women, depend on a variety of factors, above all the ownership of financial institutions and their operating procedures (interest rates, payment schedules, collateral required, size of loans, etc.). The most beneficial and most equitably distributed impacts at the community level (those that erode gender and class inequalities in the community) are generally associated with the following characteristics: flexible operating procedures that respond to the needs of both male and female beneficiaries; commitment to the community; and integration of financial and non-financial services (such as training, investment advice, etc.). Given that these attributes are not profit-oriented, they are almost never offered by for-profit institutions.

Possibly the greatest problem with formal financial institutions is their limited understanding of productivity. In the “remittances for development” paradigm, productive investment is the establishment of small businesses that then provide a continued source of income and generate benefits that allow the business to grow. This conception prohibits formal financial institutions from becoming involved in, and – most importantly – working to boost, the many initiatives which are undertaken (in terms of the varied reasons for their existence, the different criteria for measuring their success, and lastly, their utility). The range of payment methods managed by financial institutions has the capacity to respond to the varied needs of entrepreneurial initiatives.

Julia Evelin Martínez comments that, within UNIFEMCA’s MyDEL<sup>59</sup> project, the prevailing definition of productive investment presents gender gaps that limit an understanding

57. Another phenomenon that appears repeatedly is the large-scale purchasing of goods, such as housing for speculative purposes, which have little impact on individual or community well-being.

58. It is important here to note the need for structural intervention to be able to create investment opportunities, again indicating the pivotal role of public institutions in development processes. In any case, local initiatives focus only on this level; they must operate within regional, national and international networks.

59. The *Programa para el Empoderamiento Económico de las Mujeres y Fortalecimiento de su Liderazgo en la Gobernanza del Desarrollo Local-Regional* (Programme for Women’s Empowerment and Strengthening Women’s Leadership in the Governance of Local-Regional Development, MyDEL) is coordinated by UNIFEM Central América; its web page is: [www.unifemca.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=8&Itemid=15](http://www.unifemca.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8&Itemid=15).

of the full range of female activity. Thus, she proposes a discussion of entrepreneurship as “any type of economic initiative with the potential to become a means of empowerment and/or autonomy for those who undertake them – undertaken either individually or collectively, and initially on a relatively small scale” (Martínez, 2007, p.2; our translation). With this definition, Martínez seeks to draw attention back to activities designed for subsistence (rather than commercial growth); to pay greater attention to microenterprise (rather than small and medium enterprises); and to identify those initiatives that either have no defined, physical work space, or operate from within the home. These are all normal characteristics of the initiatives undertaken by women, which, however, often remain invisible.

Not only do women’s microenterprises remain invisible, their capacity for success is often undervalued. Women’s enterprises, particularly when they are collective in nature, possess intangible assets such as experience, knowledge (often linked to traditional or environmental knowledge), and social capital (family and community, including support networks that provide unpaid labour). However, traditional methods of financial assessment do not recognize these assets, and the potential of and challenges to women’s enterprises are not accurately captured. This limited understanding translates into greater difficulties or restrictions on obtaining loans or other financial services. Moreover, it is often pointed out that women’s enterprises operate for subsistence, not accumulation. Although this may be accurate, it does not follow that it must be understood as a problem. As Martínez (2007) states:

“Women (like men) create enterprises in order to achieve their aims in life. Women’s (and men’s) aims in life are not always profit or the quest for material success, but can also include achieving economic security for their families, education for their children, escape from a violent or abusive relationship, etc. These objectives are as valid as seeking profit” (p.7; our translation).

Banks face serious challenges in responding to these objectives and valuing assets that do not have an immediate monetary translation. This gives rise to grave doubts about their appropriateness as the mechanism of support for the range of economic initiatives in general, and particularly those undertaken by women.

It may be necessary to rethink the very notion of productivity, which currently measures the success of these local initiatives and evaluates whether to support them and how. From a gender perspective, we could suggest the following criteria for measuring productivity (that is, success):

- **Sustainability.** This implies that maintenance of the enterprise is not based on the continuous consumption of resources. Sustainability should be measured from a multidimensional perspective: environmentally (destruction of natural resources is usually an invisible cost); socially (activities that do not consume public resources like subsidies, fiscal benefits, etc., or unpaid work and/or social networks); and financially (sustainability implies lack of dependence on constant flows of external income like remittances, but it does not imply the achievement of increasing benefits – this points to the possibility for growth, but not to sustainability itself).
- The success of an entrepreneurial activity could also be measured by its degree of democratization, i.e. in promoting internal decision-making structures that are collective and that allow for an equal distribution of work and benefits. In addition to legitimate objectives of entrepreneurial activities, an emphasis on well-being and achieving objectives other than the accumulation of capital can be more strongly tied to promoting human development, as these activities are more committed to satisfying local needs.

- Finally, a desirable quality is the potential for synergy of an entrepreneurial activity, or the extent to which it creates horizontal and vertical linkages (including both economic activities and social networks).

These criteria, which have yet to be tested, could become alternative criteria for assessing the productivity of entrepreneurial activities, and provide a means of reorienting interventions and revaluing women's enterprises. For example, the analysis of MyDEL in Central America has highlighted women's enterprises as synergetic activities that are inserted in dynamic production chains, rather than small, isolated businesses with severe limitations on their success.

Finally, different kinds of financial institutions have diverse capacities for responding to communities' needs for a genuine financial infrastructure, one which is capable of recognizing and attending to multiple productive initiatives, and which finances and supports local development processes. Thus it is crucial that initiatives that aim to promote banking remittances and financing micro- and small enterprises should carefully assess the advantages and disadvantages of each type of institution, based on a less economic definition of productivity and entrepreneurial success.



# 6

**Linking origin and destination**

## 6.1 Strategic instantiation 3: Global care chains

The establishment of global care chains is one of the phenomena which most clearly represents the continuing feminization of migration. Driven by the current configuration of globalization, it is also associated with the transformation of the welfare state in many countries. Understanding what these chains are, how they operate, and how they are interlinked allows us to address the impact of migration on development from a perspective that explicitly revalues women's economic contributions and dramatically brings to light how the socio-economic organization of our societies is profoundly marked by gender inequalities.

### 6.1.1 Interlinking care structures

Global care chains exist transnationally, and have been established with the aim of sustaining daily life. Within them, households transfer care work from one home to another, based on power axes like gender, ethnicity, social class and place of origin. One very simple example of such a chain is as follows: a Spanish family decides to hire a Dominican woman to look after their grandfather, who requires constant care. The family initially supposed that one of the daughters-in-law could take on this task, leaving the place of employment she joined when her children grew up and left home. However, she does not wish to return to full-time caregiving, and it turns out that sharing the costs of hiring a migrant woman between all of the grandfather's children is not that expensive. The woman who is hired has, in turn, migrated in order to ensure sufficient income for her family; she left her own children in her mother's care in the Dominican Republic. This very simple example allows us to highlight some essential components of global care chains.

Men and women occupy different positions within these chains. Men tend to be care beneficiaries rather than taking on systematic care-providing responsibilities. This responsibility tends to fall to women, who generally assume an active role. In any case, the spread and shape of each chain depends on the distribution of care within a family. It also depends on factors such as the existence of public care services; the influence of the organized private sector; migratory policies; the regulation of domestic employment, etc. (Clearly, it depends on what we will come to call the prevailing model for the societal organization of care.) Global care chains connect multiple modes of care in diverse settings: the market, the domestic sphere, public or private, non-profit institutions, etc. Each type of care is underpinned by different reasoning: an individual may provide care because they are seek income and/or are motivated by affection, responsibility, coercion or guilt. If care is provided through a company, there will always be a profit motive; if provided through a public institution, the objective will be to fulfil the care-recipient's social rights.

The formation of global care chains responds to the confluence of at least two phenomena. On the one hand, structural adjustment programmes and subsequent neoliberal-style reforms have had a disproportionate impact on women in the South, giving rise to the aforementioned feminization of migration or feminization of global survival circuits. Women take over the primary and ultimate responsibility for care in migrants' home countries, holding them responsible for ensuring the sustainability of their households during crises of social reproduction (Herrera, 2006). In contrast, in Northern countries a so-called care crisis has been identified: a breakdown of the previous model of societal organization of care. This

requires a redistribution of care work, and consequently creates great demand for a cheap, flexible labour force – this is largely provided by migrants, especially migrant women.

To date little attention has been given to Japan's situation within global care chains. This is understandable, given that Japan's strict immigration policies have ostensibly removed it from these networks. However, evidence shows that this situation could change in the near future. The potential care crisis is a threat that can be explained by several factors.

**Demographic pressure.** The decline of both birth and death rates has created an imbalance between age groups in Japan. According to some studies, 20 per cent of the Japanese population will be 65 years or older within the next five years (Ito, 2007), while the oldest age group – 85 years or older – continues to increase in proportion.

**Changes in women's expectations.** In Japan, care work has traditionally been a family matter. (Children were responsible for taking care of parents; parents/grandparents were responsible for caring for children/grandchildren). "Family responsibility" was a euphemism for women's responsibility, as it was mostly women who stayed at home to assume the role of primary caregivers for their children, partners, parents and parents-in-law. However, societal changes and women's expectations in regards to paid work outside the home have increased the number of women participating in the labour market, and diminished the number who wish to, and/or are able to, take care of relatives at home. Often, taking care of elderly parents or children has financial and emotional implications for professional Japanese women – whether it means forgoing a full-time job, or reducing their work schedule to part-time work or flexible hours – in turn, these changes imply reductions in salary and limitations to women's professional futures.

**Transforming household composition.** The traditional three-generation household (parents, children and grandchildren) is slowly being replaced by smaller, nuclear families. This means a larger number of elderly people who live alone or far from their children, who then cannot provide even part-time care. At the same time, parents of small children can no longer count on family support to provide childcare while they are at work.

Box 11. The care crisis in Japan

Migration destination countries previously had a care-provision model characterized by the sexual division of labour and the societal division between public and private spaces. This made women responsible for unpaid care work, while salaried work was understood as a masculine prerogative. Without any public, societal responsibility for the provision of care, this responsibility fell on domestic groups in private spheres. Women were assigned the responsibility of unpaid care work, as paid work was considered suitable for men alone. The gendered nature of power relations within homes made women ultimately responsible for care provision. Socio-economic systems resembled the structure of an iceberg: caregiving was the base of the social structure, which remained invisible as the protagonists did not have full access to citizenship benefits. Various processes, among them an ageing population and a change in women's social roles and aspirations, have caused the collapse of this model.<sup>60</sup>

60. These are two factors that are usually mentioned. Other factors have also been indicated, yet despite their undeniable impacts they do not receive the same attention: the loss of social networks (neighbourhood, community, extended family, etc.) and the subsequent tendency to individualize life plans; the growth of large urban centres (that hinder the establishment of a work–life balance); the growing, multidimensional phenomenon of precarious lifestyles (including non-steady work and the privatization of social welfare systems), etc. (Pérez Orozco, 2006; Precarias a la Deriva, 2004, 2005).



The poor response of institutions, which have tended to complement or substitute the central role played by private homes, and private sector's increasing refusal to accept any responsibility, have meant that caregiving responsibilities continues to fall on households – primarily and/or ultimately. Families have deployed various strategies to balance their role, which exists in two spheres that respond to opposing sets of reasoning: that of care, which should respond to an individual's changing needs throughout his/her life; and that of salaried work, which responds to commercial needs.<sup>61</sup> Of these balancing strategies, it is worth mentioning the reorganization and redistribution of unpaid care work within the household and the extended family. However, these options are generally insufficient, and consequently some domestic tasks are contracted out, or care work becomes salaried within the domestic sphere. In other words, there is a tendency to purchase care services in the market. Here, migrant women have taken on a central role by increasing their participation in this sector; these jobs tend to be precarious and poorly paid (Pla Julián et al., 2004; Schwenken, 2004; Social Alert, 2000), as we have seen in our analysis of the labour conditions of female domestic workers. Overall, the care crisis has been one of the motors for the feminization of migratory processes, opening up labour opportunities directed at women: in the areas of care, domestic work, and other related public and private service sectors.

These labour sectors are clearly segregated by sex (i.e. they are strongly feminized) and by social class. Nevertheless, they are increasingly stratified by migratory and ethnic status, in addition to being characterized by their intrinsic undervaluing of care work. In the case of domestic work, the lack of value becomes even more evident by the particular relationships that usually develop between employers and workers. Both employers and workers are generally women, because in employers' households caregiving remains the responsibility of women, although in this case it is done by hiring another person to take over the tasks. Women employers tend to reproduce gender-based dynamics, by undervaluing the work of the hired women just as housewives' work has traditionally been undervalued. Moreover, women employers' discourses reveal that their relationship is generally understood and negotiated in personal terms, which ultimately avoids any negotiation of labour conditions. Employers speak of treating the worker well instead of creating decent labour conditions; of giving gifts instead of discussing pay; of giving her a chance instead of recognizing her need to work; of making her feel at home instead of negotiating days off and holidays, etc. This reflects the fact that caregiving is considered "less than work".

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61. These strategies vary depending on context, and are born from multiple factors. Among the strategies we have identified are varying the organization of caregiving in the domestic sphere (changing the content or intensity of care work, substituting free time with work time, conducting daily negotiations to redistribute tasks, etc.); adopting particular ways of joining the labour market (e.g., part-time employment); utilizing geographical strategies (locating the places of residence, work and care within proximity of each other); and applying those Tobío Soler has termed as "indirect strategies[, which] are those practices that ensure compatibility by eliminating or reducing part of the problem: children or work" (2002, p.159; our translation). This can imply forgoing either children or work either on a temporary basis – entering and leaving the labour market – or definitively – choosing not to have children, for instance.

The percentage of migrant women in the least attractive forms of domestic work is growing. In 2001, Spanish women made up only 7.3 per cent of live-in domestic workers in their own country, while they had 43.8 per cent of positions as contracted non-live-in domestic workers, and formed 49 per cent of hourly domestic workers (Colectivo IOE, 2001).

The differential presence of migrants, and migrants of different nationalities, also reflects other factors, such as the cultural construction of care and domestic work tasks. Historically, hiring Filipinas and Filipinos has been associated with a demonstration of social status. Latina women are prioritized for childcare work because of greater cultural and linguistic commonalities with their Spanish employers; Eastern European women migrants, because of their supposed efficiency, are preferred for domestic tasks not associated with personal care.

The different workplace roles also depends on how long migrants have lived in Spain, since a position as a live-in domestic is a gateway for many female migrants, but over time they establish strategies to move to other sectors (as in the case of Dominican women). However, it is not only length of residence that determines labour insertion. Migrants pursue different living strategies (especially in terms of returning to their home countries or reunifying with family), which translate into a range of labour strategies. Moroccan women in Spain tend to turn down live-in domestic work, preferring non-live-in domestic employment, either on a permanent or an hourly basis. These choices are associated with their long-term aim of reunifying with their family in the destination country. In contrast, Filipinas tend to continue in live-in positions, aiming to save as much as possible for their return home and/or send the greatest possible remittances to their households of origin.

Global care chains have a considerable history in many regions of the South,<sup>62</sup> where for decades intranational chains have been comprised of poor women – who are generally rural, indigenous or black. These women leave their families or home communities to work as domestic employees in cities. As Herrera (2005) points out:

“[the] global process finds counterparts in the national and local dynamics of women’s internal migration in [Latin American] countries. The domestic-work dynamics in poor countries, along with their indicators of class, ethnicity and social status that characterize inequality in [Latin American] countries, is being transferred on a global scale in a sort of societal regression of neoliberal globalization” (p.3; our translation).

Once triggered, migration implies a restructuring of households. In the transnational households of migrant mothers, the women’s separation from their children inevitably leads to a redistribution of caregiving tasks. The role of the men who remain in the home country determines such reorganization. On occasion, they take on increased caregiving responsibilities following the migration of the household’s women (although they do not tend to be the primary caregiver); at other times, they continue to remain uninvolved in these tasks. More frequently, it is a female relative, one of the extended family, who takes care of the children – usually the grandmother, but sometimes a sister or an older daughter. Occasionally, however, the family resorts to hiring a domestic worker. These workers are often internal

62. In the developed world, a live-in domestic service job was also a recurrent employment niche for rural women who migrated to urban centres. In Spain, a decrease in the number of domestic workers has occurred between the 1960s and the 1980s, associated with the end of a rural–urban migration process. In 1972, Durán spoke of “the eradication of this professional group” (our translation) and, according to studies from the 1960s, the data show that the parents of 52 per cent of women domestic workers were involved in farm work, and 62 per cent of women domestic workers sent money to family. This decrease occurred prior to the more recent increase which has resulted from the care crisis (mentioned earlier) in which migrant women play a central role.

migrants, sometimes indigenous women, who move from rural to urban areas (as in Colombia) or women from a neighbouring country (as in the case of Haitian women working in the Dominican Republic).

The fact that these women are no longer physically present in their own household does not imply they have abandoned the care providing role they held before migrating, but rather, a transformation of these tasks (to maintaining contact via telephone or visits; managing the household from a distance; providing emotional support or remittances, etc.). These transnational forms of care reveal the strong emotional and organizational aspects of care work, which go beyond the physical presence of whoever takes on care responsibilities.

**Box 13. UN-INSTRAW  
Case Studies**

**Migration and the transfer of gender inequalities**

In the Dominican Republic, as in the Philippines, the migration of women implies transferring their domestic responsibilities to other women in the family. The mothers or sisters of female migrants are usually the ones left in charge of the children, while men do not tend to become involved in care. This transfer of reproductive work from one woman to another is a result of the sexual division of labour within the home, and leads to the creation of new links in the global care chain. Thus, Spanish women transfer domestic and care work to a foreign woman from a poor country – in this case, the Dominican Republic – who will in turn pass her domestic responsibilities on to other female relatives. When no other woman in the family can take on these tasks, Dominican women migrants will often consider hiring a Haitian woman to cover for their absence. Hence, the sexual division of labour and the feminization of migration together imply the redistribution of care and reproductive work from richer to poorer countries.

Households reunited in destination countries also face severe difficulties in combining paid work with care work. The positions held by migrant women usually involve very precarious conditions (long work-days and/or commutes, flexible schedules, etc.), which in turn, complicate the balance of their working and family lives. In addition, they have less purchasing power (i.e. fewer economic resources to purchase care services in the market) and greater problems in accessing public services (as mentioned above). Many possible solutions are explored, ranging from hiring another migrant woman (e.g. Ecuadorian women hired by Colombian women), to arranging the migration of another female family member, or the use of extralegal care services which often involve the work of other migrant women (e.g. leaving children at a neighbour's or friend's house for care, at a much lower fee than in the regular market).<sup>63</sup> Consequently, transnational and internal migratory processes connect, and global care chains become more widespread and complex. Our initial example (above) has proven extremely simplistic in the greater scheme of things.

63. These strategies, used to meet unavoidable needs, recur in destination countries which have a similar lack of public services. The difference lies in the greater or lesser "age" of a particular "migration generation". Thus, this type of situation has recently been coming to light in Spain, as reflected in this news article: "It has been known for some time that there is need for day-care places in Spain, and that the mass arrival of immigrants could end up converting this social problem – one among many, serious but not imperative – into a horrifying twenty-first-century drama that brings to mind dark, Dickensian portrayals of exploited, humiliated children" (Negras guarderías [Black childcare centres], 2008; our translation). Meanwhile, in France, a specific regulation has been enacted to legalize informal *crèches* in private homes.

### 6.1.2 Consequences for development

If we were to understand development in purely economic terms, the development-related significance of these care chains allows only a very limited response. On the one hand, and in the best-case scenario (i.e. considering that we have taken into account the impact in destination countries themselves), we could assert that the performance of the caregiving market is improved when it enables the flow of a mostly female workforce. On the other, we would consider the volume of remittances that these women send and their effect on their communities of origin. However, if we use a broad notion of development in general, and of economic development in particular, another question arises: What is the impact of the operation of these chains on care provision itself?

An economy is not only comprised of monetary exchange in the market. It is something more, the universal process of sustaining life: satisfying human needs (without forgetting non-human life), or in other words, providing the resources necessary to acquire capacities and freedoms. The single most important need of all members of society, throughout the course of their lives and in response to multiple needs, is care. Caregiving is the daily management and maintenance of life and health, the daily upkeep of physical and emotional well-being. It is, therefore, a daily expression of the functioning of a socio-economic system, and the access to opportunities for and degrees of development. To talk about care is to talk about the daily sustainability of life, the basis for all other socio-economic processes.

A perspective on the economy that is not limited to mercantile processes, but instead tries to understand how people's needs are satisfied, must recognize that there are many economic spheres besides markets (public provision of goods and services, community work, internal household production, etc.). It must pay special attention to unpaid work and non-material needs, aspects that are often ignored because they lack monetary value. It must bear in mind the increased income that results from unpaid work, both as a quantitative process (an additional source of income; transformation and adaptation of market-based resources) and a qualitative process (involving social and emotional aspects; responding to people's emotional situation and needs). Care work is an essential part of this process of income expansion; it covers material necessities (cleaning, meals, care, etc.), but also those emotional and societal needs (for recognition, company, information, belonging, etc.) which are often disregarded by economic analyses.

Despite its crucial importance, care work – historically allocated to women – has been systematically rendered invisible. This invisibility recurs in different forms: the lack of a salary; the absence of data to be measured and concepts to be used in understanding the phenomenon; the deficit in associated social rights; the non-existence of social regulations that would determine labour conditions and recognize the capacities involved; the lack of social appreciation, etc. Care work suffers an invisibility which is reproduced on many levels, and closely associated with the fact that it was work done cost-free in the domestic sphere. When part of this work is assigned a salary within the home (by paying for domestic labour) or even outside the home, the invisibility takes on a new form rather than disappearing. For instance, the modern-day paradigm of invisible caregiving in Europe is no longer the housewife with neither income, retirement rights nor holidays – instead, it is the live-in domestic worker, a woman migrant, who works without contract and in an irregular migratory situation. Socio-economic systems have always resembled the structure of an iceberg: caregiving was the base of the social structure, which remained invisible as the protagonists did not have full access to citizenship benefits.

By considering the socio-economic structure in this manner, asking ourselves about the impact of global care chains on development becomes a lot more than investigating the effects of migration on destination countries' labour markets, and of remittances on home countries. It is a question of asking ourselves what the impact is on society's provision of care in home and destination countries. Such impacts must be assessed in the households which themselves form part of care chains, on the understanding that they participate in the process of creating sustainable ways of living. One of the most controversial aspects in this area is the impact of women's migration on their children who are left in the home country. Because of the particular attention this phenomenon has received, we will dedicate a specific section to its analysis. However, in addition, the effects will be evaluated at a collective level, analysing the role and impact that these chains of societal organization have on both home and destination countries.

### **a. The impacts of migration on children left in home countries**

The impacts of labour migration on the children who are left in home countries have become highly controversial.<sup>64</sup> In recent years, the number of alarmist headlines in the media have multiplied (e.g. "Greater aggression and depression detected in children of migrant parents")<sup>65</sup> attributing numerous problems to the departure of migrating parents. These problems range from various cognitive and emotional difficulties in small children, leading to teen pregnancy, drug use and gang activity among adolescents. To date, however, there is limited empirical evidence, and the findings of many studies are mutually contradictory. Research conducted on the academic performance of children of Filipino labour migrants is an example of this. Some studies, like that of Battistella and Conaco (1998), found that the performance of migrants' children was poorer than that of children of non-migrants, especially when the mother had migrated. Others carried out since, however, show no significant differences, or even conclude that migrants' children have a better scholastic performance than children of non-migrants.<sup>66</sup>

The contradictory results may be explained by opposing theoretical positions, the characteristics of different cultural contexts, or methodological factors (that may or may not be related to certain ideological bases, such as the greater importance attributed to motherly – rather than fatherly – care in children's well-being). Some of the methodological factors quoted are: the use of transectional designs that limit an understanding of the phenomenon's evolution over time; sampling problems; and especially, the difficulty in comparing between studies and samples (see Bryant, 2005; UNICEF, 2006). Many studies, for example, which report negative impacts collected their data only from children of transnational families, without using control groups of children of non-migrants. This is especially significant in contexts where there is a high proportion of female heads of households<sup>67</sup> (regardless of migration), or where intrafamily violence is a frequent problem. As a result, the children's difficulties reported in those studies are automatically blamed on the migration of the parent – commonly the mother – without establishing to what degree the children of non-migrants would present similar problems.

64. The number of children in this situation is striking: in the Philippines alone, an estimated 8 million children – 30 per cent of the total infant population – live in households where at least one parent has emigrated (Hochschild, 2005).

65. Flores, Gerardo (2008). Detectan mayor agresividad y depresión en hijos de migrantes [Greater aggression and depression detected in children of migrant parents]. *La Jornada*. 10 March.

66. See, for example, University of the Philippines et al., 2002, and Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004.

67. For example, in the Dominican Republic and in other Caribbean nations, around one third of households are headed by women. Jenna Nobles' 2006 study of Mexican households concluded that more than one third of children live part of their lives in homes where parents have separated, and that the proportion of children who live only with their mothers (as a result of their fathers' migration) is similar to the proportion who live with their mother after marital separation.

In her analysis of global care chains, Hochschild (2000, 2005) highlighted the injustice represented by the deficits in maternal love and care suffered by children in poor countries, while their migrant mothers provide love and care as nannies to children in rich countries. The care crisis in the North has generated “a care drain” in the South, which, in addition to affecting Southern children, also places a great emotional burden on mothers. Other authors point out that migration’s economic benefits have a positive impact on the material situation of the children left at home, which significantly affects their general well-being. Studies are almost unanimous on this fact, as children experience reduced malnutrition levels, improved general health, greater access to education, better housing conditions, etc. In the Philippines, for instance, 40.9 per cent of migrants’ children attend private schools compared to 14.9 per cent of non-migrants’ children; this helps to explain their better academic performance (Scalabrini Migration Center, 2004).

Parreñas (2003), among others, has suggested that under certain circumstances, the support of relatives and the extended family may compensate for the mother’s absence. She goes on to report that the emotional deprivation caused by separation does not necessarily have a negative impact on children’s general well-being, as long as their mothers’ contributions and sacrifices are recognized and valued, the children receive regular attention from their substitute female caregivers, and mothers maintain frequent contact while abroad (through visits, phone calls, etc). Likewise, Sørensen (2004) argues that migrating to provide better living conditions for children broadens “the accepted ways of loving and caring” for them. Without questioning the suffering that separation implies, Sørensen explains that family separation “is not necessarily traumatic or problematic, because global family networks simply constitute an extension of the family network” (2004, pp.100, 102; our translations).

The different conceptual approaches to family separations may be a result of different views of the nature and role of families. For instance, Hochschild (2005) notes that conceptual frameworks of families and parenting that are typical of the middle classes in contemporary, developed societies subsequently tend to be applied to Southern societies: examples are “intensive mothering” and the “romanticization” of the child. According to this social construct of childhood, children require constant love and care from adults – most especially from the mother – and childhood exists in a sort of artificial bubble that keeps them separate from the “realities” of adult life. In contrast, children in traditional societies in the South often help adults in their daily work activities, are cared for by extended families and other adults in the community, and grow up in an environment where family commitment and community support are valued more than constant demonstrations of love and care. Sørensen (2004) points out that in Caribbean countries, the long tradition of women’s internal labour migration has resulted in a predominance of matrifocal extended families. These are headed by grandmothers, who are traditionally children’s primary caregivers; this situation has changed little since the boom in international migration.

On the other hand, studies done with separated mothers and children due to migration reveal that the separation creates a heavy emotional burden for both, especially when they are apart for a long time. Mothers express their permanent concern for their children, with whom they try to maintain emotional ties by making frequent telephone calls, sending remittances and gifts, and when possible, making regular visits. Undocumented female migrants suffer acutely from the fact that they cannot visit their children, whom they might not see for many years. This raises the importance of finding solutions that would allow these women to freely enter and exit the destination country, as a way of strengthening transnational bonds with their families and reducing the negative effects of the separation (Piper, 2005).

The tendency to blame mothers for the difficulties, real or not, their children face as a result of migration<sup>68</sup> intensifies the separation anxiety – women migrants, too, have interiorized gender-based norms that define a mother’s role as constant service to their children and husbands. This makes them the primary, and probably only, person responsible for the household’s well-being.

The fact that women’s primary motivation in migrating is precisely the need to guarantee the family’s survival, and to ensure a better future for their children, does not prevent them from being stigmatized for “abandoning their children”; rather, there is an ambiguous and contradictory appraisal of female migrants. On the one hand, they are admired for their achievements as the breadwinners for the household; on the other, they are reproached for not fulfilling maternal roles. As this matter deals with some fundamental aspects of the gender-based organization of society, in some cases the impacts of female labour migration on families has been co-opted by conservative groups, whose family-centric discourse is constructed with the intention of restricting the general advancement of women. As a result, a broad range of social sectors in many countries consider it an undeniable truth that female labour migration leads to family breakup and invariably has negative effects on the children concerned. This demonstrates the importance of promoting new studies that contribute to a more precise understanding of the problem, as well as designing interventions that contribute to ameliorating the well-being of the children and migrant parents affected.

Nonetheless, while it is essential to understand the impact of migration on children, it is also essential to understand that any analysis of care chains must go further to avoid idolizing what Manalansan terms “stereotypical gendered conceptions of domesticity and affect” (2006, p.238). This author highlights the fact that most studies of global care chains take for granted that both ends of the chain are represented by heterosexual mothers, whose experiences define the affection and emotions deployed and negotiated, and reduce the meaning of affectivity. However, the situation is much more complex. Many of the women migrants employed in care work are not in fact mothers, yet their migration still implies reorganizing households in home countries. Their experiences also contribute to understanding how caregiving (and the associated affection) is organized in the households which hire them. Not all women participating in care chains are heterosexual, yet their sexual orientation does not exempt them from the gender-based mandate which assigns them caregiving priority by virtue of being women. Moreover, the number of migrant men in the care-work sector is increasing. Manalansan (2006) illustrates this with the growing number of Filipino doctors working as male nurses in the United States, which is similar to the growing number of Latino men caring for the elderly in Spain. Paying attention to these experiences would enable a more nuanced analysis of the gender-based construction of the domestic sphere and of caregiving, and would thus lessen the risk of implicitly naturalizing the role of women as mothers and caregivers.

68. In some cases, women are even blamed for problems resulting from the father’s migration. For instance, in the article quoted above (Flores, 2008), preliminary data are provided from a joint study by the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas) and the Zacatecan State Migration Institute (Instituto Estatal de Migración, IEM). These show migration is creating increasingly serious impacts for children in Zacatecas. Psychological disorders associated with migration “are a serious health problem and must be treated seriously”. Although in this case it is the children’s fathers who have migrated, it is the mothers who are blamed: “The teacher highlighted that the wives of Zacatecan migrants often had to earn their living, to the neglect of their children’s education.” (Our translations.)

Global care chain analysis tends to focus on children, those who remain in home countries and those cared for by third-world nannies in destination countries. In recent years, however, the fastest-growing care sector has been aged care, both in private homes and care institutions (Anderson, 2006). Although the elderly have received little attention, they play multiple roles in migratory processes in the societies of origin and destination (Escrivá, 2005).

- Elderly people play economic roles in facilitating their children's migration; receiving and managing remittances; and managing migrants' properties.
- Grandmothers act as caregivers and social reproducers for the children left behind by their migrant daughters.
- Elderly people are reunified by their migrant children into the destination country, where they often take care of the home and care for their grandchildren.
- Some elderly people themselves migrate to seek health-care services.
- Migrants' parents care needs must be addressed as they age; in a variety of ways, migrant children fulfil this role from abroad.

As Escrivá (2005) clarifies, not all migrants have children, or they do not have them in the home country. However, most do have parents who, sooner or later, will need care, especially if we consider the weak or non-existent social welfare systems in poor countries. The care of elders in transnational families is a topic that has rarely been studied,<sup>69</sup> yet it is likely to become more relevant as the parents of prior "generations" of migrants progressively age.

## b. Consequences for the social organization of care on a global level

Society's organization of care includes the following aspects, among others: (a) the distribution of care tasks and responsibilities among different social collectives; (b) the (in)visibility of different types of care (work);<sup>70</sup> (c) the presence of different agents (public services, the for-profit or non-profit private sector, households, other social networks); the reasoning behind their intervention; the responsibilities they take on; the context around their action; the means of recognizing the needs covered and the quality of care provided; (d) the social and labour rights of care work, and the rights to provide and receive care; and (e) the underlying ideology. Overall, these factors will enable us to understand the forms, composition and qualities of what UNRISD, within the framework of its "Political and Social Economy of Care" project,<sup>71</sup> calls the "care diamond" (Razavi, 2007) – that is, its capacity to provide necessary care in a specific context, and the transformations produced as chains become interlinked.

Households that hire migrants in destination countries clearly benefit from the work of migrant women (and some, very few, migrant men), which responds to daily concrete needs. It is the migrants' households themselves that can experience more serious difficulties in balancing paid work and caregiving responsibilities, especially

69. Of the few relevant studies published, most focus on North-North migrations (cf. Zechner (2008), Baldassar et al. (2007)).

70. As already mentioned, (in)visibility is a multifaceted condition that, ultimately, limits the social position of those most involved in care. It covers at least the following aspects: the (un)availability of data to measure care; the (non)existent concepts necessary to understand it; the (non)guarantee of social rights associated with care work; the (non)existent associated pay; the (lack of) social regulation and public debate around adequate care conditions; the (lack of) social appreciation; and the (non)existent channels established to transform care needs into a legitimate demand.

71. The project is described in detail at [www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/projects.nsf/\(httpProjectsForProgrammeArea-en\)/37BD128E275F1F8BC1257296003210EC?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/projects.nsf/(httpProjectsForProgrammeArea-en)/37BD128E275F1F8BC1257296003210EC?OpenDocument).



if migrants have reunified with infants or have children in the destination country. These greater obstacles to a work–life balance respond to several causes: the precarious working conditions (often implying long and/or flexible work-days); lower incomes (which impede purchasing care services); the lack of social networks (female migrants often particularly feel the loss of the solidarity networks that operate within the extended family in the home country); the difficulty in accessing public services (related to the stratified access to rights mentioned in the section on living and working conditions), etc. Despite the different balancing strategies involved and mentioned above, the results are not at all satisfactory, and obstacles continue to have a more virulent impact on migrants than on the broader local population. In other words, when hiring households at least partially resolve their work–life balance problems through migration, another group of households subsequently suffers these exact same difficulties. One could say that this latter group suffers from the near-structural impossibility of creating a sound work–life balance.

On a social level, the contribution of migrant women is crucial to cover, at least partially, the care deficit generated by the care crisis. However, two fundamental questions arise. First, whether the reorganization produced – clearly defined by the externalization and/or remuneration of care work, and an essential factor in the establishment of care chains – is enough to adequately cover the demand for care, or if it is producing a social dualization. Households with purchasing power (illustrated by what Saskia Sassen terms “professional households with no housewife”)<sup>72</sup> more easily access the services they need; yet other households receive insufficient or low-quality care services.<sup>73</sup> Second, it is uncertain whether or not the establishment of chains is part of a societal reorganization of care that will prove viable and equitable in the mid- or long term. Caregiving continues to be one of the most invisibilized pillars of development. As we have commented, the conditions of the invisibility change, but the invisibility itself remains: care chains are a paradigmatic example of this mutation. There is still no social responsibility for the provision of care which includes men, the State and the private sector. Inequality in society’s distribution of care work is perpetuated, and gender continues to be the key to its distribution. Caregiving continues to be mainly a female responsibility, even as inequalities between women continue to intensify. In other words, the sexual division of labour that allocates caregiving to women is increasingly marked by other axes of inequality: class, ethnicity and migratory status. It is a new sexual stratification of care work, without any improvement in its equal distribution or its appreciation by society.

Moreover, one could also to speak of a closure process which reacts to the care crisis, according to which the closing off is based on market expansion under the same conditions of invisibility, lack of social responsibility, and job distribution according to the axes of power of the previous model. The care crisis in developed countries brings the opportunity to restructure society’s organization of care work by systematically tackling the problems at its root: the invisibility of the work of social reproduction within the economic system; the non-participation of men in domestic work; society’s devaluation of work done by women, etc. Unfortunately, this opportunity is being missed.<sup>74</sup>

72. Quoted in Sassen (2003a), p.19; our translation.

73. In the care field, one of the few means of increasing productivity sacrifices care quality in terms of time, dedication, etc. In other words, care is one of the spheres where profitability and service provision are clearly in opposition. In this way, the combination of these two factors tends to be present either in the high cost of the service, or in reduced quality of attention. To this is added to the exploitation of feelings of responsibility for the well-being of others – common when caring for someone, regardless of emotional ties. This phenomenon – in which proper care provision is associated with high cost, and workers are expected to feel responsible although they are not offered adequate labour conditions – can clearly be perceived, for instance, in private nursing homes.

74. See Frassanito Network (2008).

Migration has a strong impact on households of origin, which are obliged to reorganize tasks and responsibilities, and to devise new ways of providing care despite physical distance (Parreñas, 2001, 2005). Regardless of these efforts, it is uncertain whether migration is having adverse effects in terms of family breakup and limited services available to some population sectors, especially children and adolescents<sup>75</sup>.

Beyond the impact on households, on a social level there is the concern as to whether migration tends to “export the care crisis” to migrants’ home countries, where the problems that migrant women resolve in destination countries are replicated in even more serious form. It is undeniable that the international migration of such a large number of women has serious implications for the societal organization of care in home countries, since it may also drive internal or interregional migration between these countries. Nevertheless, it is difficult to locate sufficient information to draw nuanced conclusions. The impact on forms of covering the general population’s care needs, or even the deficiencies and weaknesses in societal care organization from the outset, are not usually subject to systematic analysis.<sup>76</sup> Methodological problems are also closely interlinked to ideological biases. As previously mentioned, as these are essential aspects of society’s gender-based structure, the effects on the families of female labour migrants have not always been addressed with the appropriate breadth of perspective and rigor. In addition, mercantilist tendencies are recurrent: the caregiving sphere tends to be analysed with tools that were created to understand market dynamics, making it difficult to grasp the specific complexities of care.<sup>77</sup> It is therefore not possible to make absolute claims as to whether the care crisis is being exported, in what ways, for which reasons, through which channels. An initial response would mention the daily difficulties in achieving a work–life balance experienced by women who participate in care chains; the insufficient, inadequate care being provided in transnational households; and generally deteriorating provision of care needs in migrants’ home countries. A clear, final answer, however, cannot be reached regarding the general impact of global care chains on worldwide development in general, and on the societal organization of care as one of development’s essential components in particular. It seems unlikely, however, that we could currently speak of the existence of synergies with net-positive outcomes.

### 6.1.3 Care in the global development agenda

Whereas the socio-economic processes that take place in the public arena have been debated openly, and negotiated within institutional parameters that are

75. In line with this, one of the aims of the seminar-workshop on “Family, Childhood and Migration” was to define and prioritize possible political actions to deal with the impacts of parents’ migration on children. The session was held in Quito, Ecuador on 26-28 February 2007; it was organized by UNDP, UNFPA, IOM and UNICEF, with the participation of UN-INSTRAW.

76. The UNRISD project “Political and Social Economy of Care”, cited earlier, was specifically established to cover these gaps.

77. Many studies that argue that global care chains tend to generate a care deficit in home countries utilize the perspective of global value chains to consider care. These chains are comprised of scattered geographical nodes, with each one “representing a specific production process linked together in a sequence (chain) in which each stage adds value to its predecessor” (Yeates, 2005, p.6). The main advantage of this analysis is that it introduces asymmetrical relationships on a global level. However, it can be problematic to use a perspective designed specifically for market analysis to understand processes that transcend the mercantile sphere. Care does not necessarily have to be understood in terms of economic accumulation, nor emotions conceived as a limited supply that runs out when put to a specific use. As a result, the analyses that consider new forms of mothering or caring for parents – despite physical separation – show how affection and care are much more complex phenomena than such linear, accumulative approaches can account for. Clearly then, rather than reutilizing methodologies suitable for mercantile studies, it is necessary to provide concepts and tools that permit greater comprehension of these complex phenomena, such that an analysis of global power relations can be incorporated. (These relations may well include the possibility that improved functioning in some households implies deteriorated living conditions for others.) Such analyses should also attempt to understand the material and affective tools that households – generally extended, and in combination with other social networks – deploy to cover care needs in the broadest sense.

generally agreed upon, the transfer of care work to the private/domestic space has resulted in distribution of labour based on moral coordinates that ultimately naturalize a deeply unequal distribution between women and men. The absence of this issue from public development agendas is the corollary to the naturalization of this sexual division of labour.

The Quito Consensus, signed on 9 August 2007 by the governments of participant countries in the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean,<sup>78</sup> represents a key advance in this respect. It means the inter-governmental recognition of “the social and economic value of the unpaid domestic work performed by women, caregiving as a public matter which falls within the purview of States, local governments, organizations, companies and families, and the need to promote shared responsibility by women and men within the family”. Moreover, it establishes commitments to “adopt the necessary measures, especially of an economic, social and cultural nature, to ensure that States assume social reproduction, caregiving and the well-being of the population as an objective for the economy and as a public responsibility that cannot be delegated”.

It is urgent to follow this lead, to extend the public debate regarding the societal organization of care as part of local, national, and global development models. This debate must allow a revaluing of care, providing assurance that those who take on this responsibility have full access to citizenship rights. It is especially important to listen to women – the historical protagonists – and to recognize the diversity of their experiences, the universal nature of gender and other axes of societal organization, and the specific vulnerabilities of particular situations, e.g. domestic workers in destination countries, or transnational families.

We stated at the beginning of this paper that global care chains are a strategic instantiation of gender-based dynamics in the current global economy, and that they offer a privileged platform from which to debate the links between migration and development. We have granted it this status because it allows us to public debate questions that often remain hidden (that comprise, one could say, the hidden agenda of development). On the one hand, we are able to question the position that care occupies in society's structure and the priority that it is granted in development models at local, national, and global levels – the priority given to making everyday life sustainable within socio-economic systems and within the policies that define those systems. On the other, we can consider the role that gender plays as the central axis of social and economic systems – the positions considered suitable for women and men in the economy.

It is also considered a strategic instantiation because it allows for questions of a deeper nature to be raised in global development. Among them are:

- The intersection of gender with other axes of social hierarchization in migratory processes, and the formation of a new, gender-based, international division of labour as a consequence of the globalization process, one that is fostered by migratory policies in destination countries and is the expression of deeply inequitable socio-economic organization models.
- The sustainability of the models of development and women's liberation that radiate from the North. This includes transforming women's social expectations in a context characterized both by the absence of male responsibility and the necessary invisibility of care (in order to underpin the prevailing socio-economic structure). The result has been a profound crisis, which has largely been

78. The full text of the Quito Consensus is available from [www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/xml/9/29489/dsc1i.pdf](http://www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/xml/9/29489/dsc1i.pdf).

contained through migrant labour. When addressing these phenomena, we should ask ourselves to what extent these models are sustainable at a global level; and to what extent gender continues to be the organizational axis of care – increasingly, at a transnational rather than a national level – thanks to female migration flows.

- The rights that the development process must be predisposed to guarantee. Rights that, until now, had not been recognized as such, come to the fore. On the one hand, the right to receive suitable care, in general, and in situations of specialized or intensified need, in particular (e.g. for the ill, elderly, disabled or very young). On the other, the right to freely choose care: whether one desires to provide care or not; ensuring that care is provided in suitable conditions; and, specifically, that it responds to the specific situations of migrants (e.g. adapting work-permit and leave-of-absence regulations to permit caregiving appropriate for families who are geographically dispersed).<sup>79</sup>

Clearly, an analysis of the link between migration and development which focuses on global care chains allows us to raise new questions, and offers an analytical perspective that prioritizes human life as a fundamental concern of development processes.

## 6.2 Strategic instantiation 4: Co-development

The concept of co-development emerged at a time when the most pessimistic views of migration's effects evolved into approaches that tried not only to consider how to limit or minimize the negative effects on developing countries, but also suggested the possibility that migration could contribute to development in migrants' home countries. Co-development attempts to locate policy and programmatic solutions that will allow home countries to access benefits that reach beyond the macroeconomic stability provided by remittances, converting what could otherwise be migration's negative economic and social consequences into opportunities for development.

The term "co-development" was first coined by political scientist Sami Nair in 1997, as a result of work he completed on behalf of the French government. At that time, the government's immigration concerns revolved around the assessment that there was an excess of migrants in France. The political agenda accordingly focused on stopping migratory flows, and achieving the return of some of the migrant population settled in France to their home countries. These factors were strongly criticized by migrants and social organizations.

Indeed, co-development initially had a strong component of migratory control, and its ultimate objective was to stabilize and stop migratory flows. The fact that the ultimate aim of co-development is to restrict flows poses several problems: On the one hand, it turns co-development into a merely instrumentalist policy, insofar as aid is conditioned on the objective of preventing migration flows, instead of considering that development is a legitimate right in itself that should not be subordinated to

79. This right is a revision of the right to maternity, and it includes, although is not limited to, the so-called right to maintain a work-life balance. The right to freely make care choices implies a social guarantee of sufficient defamilization that would then complement the possibility of demercantilization; both are basic aspects of the welfare state. Demercantilization – a concept outlined by Esping-Andersen (1990) – refers to the possibility of breaking the tie with the labour market yet continuing to have an acceptable quality of life. We could say that this determines social protection against risks historically suffered by men: breaking the labour market bond. Defamilization – a concept devised by McLaughlin and Glendinning (1994) – is the extent to which a person can forgo providing care themselves, while knowing that the required care will be provided by other social actors. In other words, it refers to typically feminine labour situations, and the possibility of breaking free of unpaid care work.

the achievement of another objective (Abad Márquez, 2004). On the other, it lacks empirical support, as it has been shown that migratory processes tend to follow their own logic once underway; in addition, the initial phases of development do not restrain, but rather provide an incentive for, increased migration. It also becomes an unattainable objective, as “migration is a defining element of the exclusive development model; the only way to modify migratory tendencies requires that such a model be changed, which seems unlikely in the immediate future” (Malgesini et al., 2008, p.50; our translation).

Apart from this bias towards restricting migration, which was subsequently revised by Naïr himself, the initial proposal of co-development offers innovative approaches in comparison to those that preceded it. For Naïr (1997), co-development is:

“a proposal to integrate immigration and development in a way that both the country of origin and of reception benefit from the flow of immigration. That means to create a relationship by consensus between the two countries in which the contribution of immigrated people in the country of reception doesn't mean a loss for the country of origin”.<sup>80</sup>

Some noteworthy elements of this proposal are:

- **A “common interests” approach.** One of the proposal's key elements is the recognition that home and destination countries share “common interests”, as well as an acknowledgement that as much as the South needs the North to develop, the North also needs the South – as evidenced by the constant demand for workers from developing countries to cover labour-force gaps in strategic sectors of economies in the developed world. Therefore, it is a matter of finding ways to reduce the negative and increase the positive impacts of migration, so that migration can successfully benefit not only host countries but also migrant-sending countries, in terms of both economic and human development. Thus, their mutual interdependence should be valued and fostered. This implies establishing relationships of reciprocity and co-responsibility between migrant-sending and -receiving countries.
- **It is, in fact, a policy.** That is, it is a clear option for intervention that aims to provide guidance in a specific direction. For this reason, the role of States (of origin and destination) is crucial. Likewise, it calls on the need to include a greater number of actors in this policy, including local authorities, NGOs, migrant associations, universities, etc.
- **The central role of migrants as a “development vector”.** This is based on the assumption that any institutional initiative claiming to strengthen migration's role in development can only succeed if migrants themselves take an active part in it. It is therefore essential to encourage migrants' participation in co-development projects.
- **A new relationship between policies covering immigration and development cooperation.** It attempts to place migration management at the service of the home countries' development objectives. As Echeverri et al. (2007) state, it is a question of building “a new kind of relationship between development cooperation and migration policies. A liaison that can help compensate for the deficiencies of either field, as well as their possible ill effects” (p.16; our translation). The best coordination of migratory policies or interventions designed to foster a positive migratory impact on the countries and communities of origin should in no way be considered a substitute for current, official development aid, nor any other development policies in the home country, such as foreign debt relief.

80. This quote from Sami Naïr (1997) is taken from Vidal and Martínez (2008).

Currently, the term co-development is used in a variety of fields which cover very diverse topics. In fact, the term lacks conceptual precision, and it is often difficult to define its operative content. Its specific approach will depend, to a large extent, on the underlying understanding on the migration–development nexus held by individual countries, groups or organizations. It also depends on whether the policies or interventions undertaken in the name of co-development are based on the position that all participant actors have equal standing; this should include migrants, the origin and destination communities, diaspora organizations, as well as other agents such as social organizations, universities, international organizations, etc.

In general, the plan for co-development operates at two different levels. One broader level theoretically serves as a universal principle behind co-development policy; its main objective is to provide adequate immigration policies in order to enable development in migrant-sending countries. In other words, it aims both to associate migratory policies with achieving development objectives in migrant-sending countries, and to design coherent immigration and development cooperation policies. The second level is a more operative one where concrete actions – labelled as co-development – are usually undertaken; they are not, however, always congruent with the concept's general principles. Although it is complicated to group concrete co-development actions under the same umbrella (as their content varies depending on the direction that each host country decides to take), there are several axes of incidence that are usually included in co-development agendas:

- A range of actions aimed at somehow increasing remittances: to decrease commissions on wiring money; to promote access to banking services; and to encourage the investment of migrants' savings in productive projects in their home countries.
- Strengthening diaspora organizations (by providing advice, training, and support) so that migrants become protagonists in co-development intervention strategies.
- Circular migration programmes and assistance upon return.

Since remittances' potential for development in home countries has already been discussed in section 5, in this section dedicated to co-development we have chosen to deal with some aspects derived from the term's broader sense, and with others regarding the fostering of migrant organizations and their participation in co-development projects.

### 6.2.1 Migratory policies at the service of home countries' development

The first level described above – that of common interests – is the most controversial, and encounters greatest problems when put into practice. In fact, it often runs the risk of disassociating the discursive level (which calls for co-responsibility and establishes the prerequisite of establishing horizontal relationships and recognizing the mutual interdependence between home and destination countries) and the concrete practices subsequently implemented in the name of co-development. This disassociation largely results from the context in which actions must be conducted, which is evidently predetermined by the dominant development model and the type of relationships it imposes between countries. Therefore, one of the main challenges is to recognize that this interdependence exists between countries which are positioned unequally within the current global hegemony; as

such, it is essential to avoid the use of co-development proposals in promoting the “hidden agendas” of migrant-receiving countries which are better positioned in the global economic order.

Historical cases of hidden agendas being promoted under the praiseworthy label of co-development include: repatriating migrants to their home countries; attempting to stop migratory flows; or determining to raise the dominant global position of countries of destination (Stocchiero, 2005). Therefore, as Echeverri et al. (2007) state, co-development should be understood as a historical opportunity to recognize and value global interdependence without losing sight of the fact that these processes occur in a geopolitically determined framework. In order to question a country’s unequal negotiating power at a global level, it is essential to emphasize the benefits that destination countries obtain from migration, overturning the tendency of many co-development projects (and more precisely, of the “remittances for development” paradigm itself) to focus exclusively on benefits for home countries.

If the ultimate objective is to put immigration policies at the service of the development of migrants’ home countries, then some strategic issues must be considered – especially the considerations that abide in the policies of destination countries when it comes to determining the number and kind of foreigners who can legally live within their borders. To date, immigration policies are unilaterally designed by destination countries, whose criteria respond only to two main areas. First, they aim to fulfil or protect their labour markets’ needs (by increasing or limiting quotas segmented by qualifications and gender, in response to the shortage or surplus of the labour force in different sectors; also, by promoting or even forcing repatriation in crisis situations). Second, they are guided by security concerns.

One field where these unilateral decisions are particularly relevant – because of its negative effects on the development of various countries, and especially on women – is Northern nations’ active recruitment of health-care personnel (and, to a lesser degree, of workers in the education sector) from countries in the South. For several years, countries in the North have applied an intensive recruitment policy of foreign health-care personnel as a consequence of local staff shortages. Within this group, we should make special note of the situation of nurses, who form an important proportion of migratory flows from countries such as the Philippines, some English-speaking Caribbean islands, and several countries from the Southern African Development Community (SADC).<sup>81</sup> The high participation of qualified migrant women in the public service sectors (health care, education, social work) in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia must be understood, as Piper (2005) argues, within the context of structural changes in the global economy. The demand for migrants in the North’s health-care sector is closely connected with the reform of the welfare state and the care crisis described earlier. In the South, the migration of health-care personnel is directly related to the impact of structural adjustment programmes. Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique are cases that demonstrate how implementing these programmes produced thousands of public-sector layoffs, particularly of educators, nurses and other caregiving professionals – these sectors are highly feminized, thereby principally affecting women (UN-INSTRAW and SAIIA, 2007). Low salaries in home countries, combined with poor labour conditions, motivate health-care professionals to migrate to developed countries. There, contrary to the treatment offered to

81. The 15 current members of the SADC are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

other foreign workers imported for unskilled positions, the migration of health-care and education professionals is greatly facilitated: they receive automatic work and residence permits, the opportunity to apply for permanent residence, authorization to migrate with their families or reunify with them later, etc.<sup>82</sup>

"Data provided by the WHO show that there is a worldwide deficit of more than 4 million health-care professionals, and that '11 per cent of the world's population live in sub-Saharan Africa, where 24 per cent of the total morbidity load is registered, attended by only 3 per cent of health-care providers'. The same report highlights that one out of every four African doctors, and one out of every 20 nurses, currently work in OECD countries. [...] The World Health Organization states that a country with fewer than 2.3 doctors and nurses for every 100,000 inhabitants is suffering 'a severe health-care crisis' – this is the situation of 57 countries worldwide, of which 36 are found in sub-Saharan Africa" (Rodrigo Carrizo Couto, 2008; our translation).

"The migration of professional personnel has a major impact on the health sector in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2000, for example, nearly 16,000 African nurses have registered to work in the United Kingdom alone. Only 50 out of 600 doctors trained since Independence [1964] are still practising in Zambia. And it is estimated that there are currently more Malawian doctors practising in the northern English city of Manchester than in the whole of Malawi" (Global Commission on International Migration, 2005, p.24).

Box 15. The migration of African medical and nursing personnel

We should keep in mind that the migration of highly educated personnel cannot be automatically considered a drain on the human resources of developing countries. Depending on the context in the home country, this outflow can mitigate high rates of unemployment in qualified labour sectors. In addition, it can also have a positive influence in that these migrants later send remittances, and are likely candidates for temporary return programmes that serve to transfer knowledge and train personnel in their home countries (Sriskandarajah, 2005).

However, the African case is quite different, especially in regard to the migration of health-care providers and, in a less pronounced but still concerning manner, education workers. The drain of human resources drain from the African health-care sector to developed countries has severe repercussions for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); one goal is to improve maternal health by reducing maternal deaths by three quarters. The fulfilment of this goal essentially depends on most births being attended by doctors, nurses or qualified midwives, in order to prevent, detect and treat obstetric complications. Furthermore, in case of such complications, proper means should exist in allow women to arrive opportunistly at a fully equipped medical centre. For the same reasons, the shortage of medical and nursing staff in Africa increases health risks, as it has the world's highest incidence of HIV/AIDS. This will have a particular impact on women, in

82. The great difference in entry and residence conditions, depending on whether workers are required for qualified or unqualified positions, reveals the acute stratification of migratory flows in terms of gender and education. The facilities offered to imported workers for sectors such as new technologies or health-care services cannot only be explained in terms of their usefulness to the receiving economies: other occupational categories, equally useful and necessary, do not receive the same privileges. This is the case of female domestic workers, who are very useful in the societies that receive them and in great demand – but who survive through poorly paid positions, with shameful labour conditions, and in an irregular migratory situation. Gender inequalities are also evident in the recruitment of qualified workers: in most cases, nurses do not receive the same facilities as elite male workers. They do not, for instance, have the opportunity to migrate with their families; their professional credentials are usually undervalued; and they are consigned to welfare-type positions which are inferior to their qualifications (Piper, 2005). The unequal treatment given to nurses and other qualified women migrants, in comparison to their male counterparts, essentially responds to the inferior value assigned to predominantly female occupations in both home and destination countries.



that they suffer higher rates of HIV infection, and are more likely to provide care to others who are infected with the virus (UNAIDS 2006).

From a co-development perspective this indiscriminate demand for health-care workers by developed countries cannot continue without considering the severe impacts on numerous countries that provide this labour. At the same time, the nations affected by this “brain drain” lack the capacity to implement solutions on their own. In accordance with the principle of reciprocity and mutuality, developed countries should play a leading role in establishing several simultaneous measures<sup>83</sup> to prevent migration from becoming a factor that further impoverishes migrant-sending countries. The first measure should restrict the active recruitment of key workers from countries that have already been identified as lacking qualified personnel in sectors that are strategic for their development. In this respect, there is a precedent for such a code of best practice: the *Commonwealth Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health Workers* (2003) encourages businesses and agencies to hire responsibly, by avoiding the recruitment of professionals from specific sectors and countries. To achieve the desired effect, cooperation of the affected countries and between countries is required in establishing multilateral agreements that include the private sector, particularly international recruitment agencies (Sriskandarajah, 2005).

Likewise, it is necessary to affect the causes behind such migrations, by increasing the incentives provided to strategic personnel to retain them in their home country. In this respect, it corresponds to developed countries to take on an especially relevant role by increasing financial support to developing countries. This could not only train health-care and education workers (including training programmes in developed countries designed for people from developing countries), but also improve salaries and conditions so that greater numbers are attracted to the sector. This would increase the proportion of those who decide not to migrate, as well as migrants who choose to return either temporarily or permanently. Finally, as recommended by the Global Commission on International Migration (2005),

“countries that are currently recruiting skilled personnel from abroad must engage in better workforce planning and invest more resources in the training of their own citizens, so as to fill impending and projected gaps in the national labour market. It is irresponsible for the world’s more prosperous States to ignore these responsibilities and then to look for a quick solution to their human resource problems through the active recruitment of professional personnel from developing regions” (p.26).

### 6.2.2 Migrants as a co-development vector

As explained earlier, another innovative aspect of the co-development concept is the fundamental role granted to migrants in this process, as it considers them a “co-development vector”. Male and female migrants are encouraged to take on a central role in the projects implemented as part of co-development – without migrants, these projects could not operate efficiently, nor ultimately succeed. However, it is not about a question of fostering individual participation and leadership, but rather the collective initiative of the diaspora communities. Constructing social fabric between and within home and destination countries can allow migration to become more than “an immense package of private sacrifices and efforts”, and “an individualized escape from the living conditions in the home country” (Echeverri et al., 2007, pp.17, 25; our translation).

83. For these proposals, we have followed the recommendations provided in the research paper produced by Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah (2005) for the Global Commission on International Migration. The Commission was officially established in Geneva on 9 December 2003 by the UN Secretary-General and several governments; it subsequently closed on 31 December 2005. Likewise, we follow the recommendations the Commission established in its 2005 document, *Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action*.

Setting up collective remittances and funding collective projects depend on the leadership role of migrant populations. Collective remittances differ from family remittances (discussed throughout the paper) in that they are not sent individually between members of one family or affective network; rather, they are provided by migrants who are grouped into more or less formal structures, with the objective of getting a project underway and financing infrastructure in the community of origin (drainage, roads, libraries, etc).

According to our introduction to the key elements of the “remittances for development” paradigm, the promotion of collective remittances is also part of this paradigm. Although collective remittances initially seem to contradict the paradigm’s individualistic nature, this is not the case. The paradigm encourages this type of remittances to cover collective needs not addressed by family remittances, but it does so in a way that such initiatives tend to substitute public services. In other words, the paradigm does not aim to improve the coordination between public institutions and migrants’ networks (through local development initiatives in communities of origin, and co-development projects in destination communities); instead, it seeks to replace public institutions with collective – yet private – projects undertaken by migrants’ groups. In contrast to this perspective, the co-development notion discussed here considers that the challenge should be to promote collective action and to build organizational networks. Or, better yet, to revitalize and support the organizational networks that already exist: in the case of the successful experience of the *Programa 3 x 1* [3x1 Programme] in the Mexican state of Zacatecas,<sup>84</sup> one of the factors for the undertaking’s success was the previous existence of participatory networks. Accordingly, development projects based on migrant participation must emerge from and for the grassroots, while receiving institutional support. This leads to several important issues, outlined below.

There is a serious risk of migrant networks and associations being used by political parties for their own ends, which has occurred in certain diaspora communities (like the Colombian and the Dominican). In other words, governments in home countries make seek greater external influence by taking control of this type of networks. Migrant organizations must be therefore be solid, as a prerequisite for enjoying autonomy and being able to establish horizontal relationships with State institutions in both home and destination countries. Their commitments can cover joint monetary support; projects conceived and executed by migrants’ organizations and their counterparts in the home country (as in the 3x1 Programme, above); participative decision-making, open to migrants, around local development plans for the communities of origin, which can incorporate entrepreneurial initiatives by remittance-receiving households and returned migrants, etc. From a co-development perspective, destination States can play a crucial role by supporting the creation of migrants’ organizational networks with assessment and institutional strengthening. Similarly, increased efforts should be directed at strengthening women’s organizations and networks, as well supporting and ensuring women’s participation in migrants’ associations. This would help ensure that women’s agendas are included in the co-development projects led by these associations.

Nevertheless, diaspora organizations encounter various obstacles associated with the conditions in the home country (which largely determines the social characteristics of those who have migrated), and those of the destination country. One frequent problem is the reproduction in the destination country of the social conflicts and divisions that exist in the society of origin. As in the cases of the Somali diaspora in Italy, or the Colombian diaspora in Spain, these issues can be based on ethnicity, class, armed conflict, or war.

84. See <http://programa3x1.zacatecas.gob.mx/> for more information on the programme.

**Difficulties in organizing diaspora communities**

Organizing the Colombian diaspora in Spain is especially difficult for several reasons. Notable among them are: a limited organizational base, as most migration has only occurred in recent years; widespread distrust within the migrant community itself, as well as the reproduction of Colombian social divisions once migrants are based in Spain; Colombian migrants' strong, shared distrust of their home government, and, by extension, of any governmental initiatives proposed; the influence within the migrant group of middle-class concepts of merit and individual opportunity, which keep migrants distanced from the discourse of shared collaboration; and the little-mentioned fact that migrants' living and working conditions in Spain are themselves a significant obstacle to establishing organizations.

An additional fragmentation of the migrant community is the one which often exists between migrant men and women. Within migrants' associations, women's participation is not only more difficult because of their greater isolation or double work-day, but it is also affected by the masculine nature of these groups, where women are relegated to administrative tasks or organizing social events. For instance, Cranford (2007) has shown how Latina migrants have traditionally been excluded from leadership positions within trade unions in the United States as a result of discrimination in the diaspora community and in union structures. In fact, migrant women tend to participate more in the destination country's broader civil society than in their own diaspora organizations. The latter often become spaces where migrant men try to recover a sense of masculinity based on prestige and leadership, indicators of status which are often due to the downward mobility produced by migration in and of itself. The absence of women within migrants' organizations can result in their devising or participating in development projects that clearly lack a broader, gender-sensitive notion of development which takes into account the specific needs of women in the context of the home country. They may, therefore, tend to reproduce pre-existing gender-based inequalities, instead of questioning and dissolving them as part of the diaspora's contribution to their home country's development.

One last major obstacle for diaspora organizations is that migrants' participation in the destination country, and the establishment of organizational movements, demands certain prerequisites: stability, and recognition of labour and citizenship rights, neither of which are currently guaranteed. For women, this lack of rights is even more critical, because they participate in labour market niches defined by their precarious nature, lack of prestige and poor pay, which combine to further limit their participation. In the case of migrant women who have children in the destination country, their difficulties in maintaining a balance between working and caring for their children makes any kind of participation in organizational activities an almost impossible goal. This shows how taking steps to guarantee rights and dignified living and working conditions in destination countries is of itself an intervention that constitutes development (understanding, as we have mentioned, that the degree of development is reflected by the quality of daily life experienced by the migrant group); but in addition, it is a way of contributing to the development of home communities and countries. All this must be undertaken from the perspective of understanding migrants as subjects of development, in the twin dimensions of being beneficiaries and active subjects of the construction of development, and in making decisions as to which development model they wish to support and how they can set it underway.

7

**Conclusions**

This second addition to the “Crossing Borders” series is the result of theoretical reflections and empirical studies that followed the first, implementation phase of the gender, remittances and development research area opened by UN-INSTRAW in 2004. An important result of this first phase has been the exposure of the conceptual weaknesses and analytical contradictions of the dominant “remittances for development” paradigm. These, in turn, translate into deficiencies in the formulation and implementation of policies designed to strengthen the migration–development nexus. Upon critical analysis of how the paradigm is currently incorporating gender dimensions, it appears that most efforts to understand how gender factors influence the dynamics of migration – particularly in the sending and use of remittances – are done so in order to increase the practical efficiency of the model, rather than reducing gender inequalities as a development objective in and of itself. That is, it is common to include gender as just another variable, rather than a central theoretical concept: this ignores the magnitude of its impact on all economic and social processes. It is also common to take gender differences for granted – as has occurred with the demonstration of the greater effort required for migrant women to send remittances – and not as the result of social constructions which result in inequality and which must therefore be transformed.

These analytical limitations become more evident when considering the development concept that underpins the dominant model, as well as the practical outcomes that can be observed from current initiatives. The theoretical proposals and policy recommendations surrounding the migration–development nexus clearly reveal the longstanding contradiction between the rhetorical commitment of governments and international development bodies to human development, and the repeated application of reductionist development policies, based on economistic notions in line with the neoliberal thinking that guides current globalization processes.

As a result, a primary objective of this paper is to provoke critical reflection and political debate around the link between remittances and development. We have sought to do this by: indicating the dominant paradigm’s weaknesses in regards to remittances (when considered from a human development perspective), questioning some of its underlying assumptions, and proposing the axes of analysis that we consider fundamental to reorienting both debate and action. The conceptualization of local development is an important focus of this reflection, given its centrality in the dominant paradigm. Of particular concern is the tendency to disconnect the local sphere from the broader national, transnational and global contexts, thus leaving aside structural factors that operate in a complex, interconnected fashion in each one of these contexts, and consequently real opportunities for local development. A second objective, inexorably linked to the first, is to uncover what other questions – beyond remittances – constitute strategic issues that require deeper analysis in order to create a positive, gender-sensitive synergy between migration and development. These strategic questions have been selected in order to make visible women’s current role in migratory processes and, above all, to introduce into debate the gender inequalities which underpin women’s participation in contemporary labour migration.

The UN-INSTRAW case studies have served as a key point of departure to revise the dominant discourse, contributing toward the identification of these strategic issues as well as the axes of analysis based on our understanding of the principal analytical and methodological weaknesses of the “remittances for development” paradigm. In operational terms, the strategy of this paper consists of analysing *each of the strategic instantiations from the four fundamental axes of analysis*. This has permitted a holistic, comprehensive approach to the problem under study, an approach which has in turn been supported by a review of the available literature, bringing information and data to bear to support our analysis.

### Figure 8 . Strategic instantiations

- The impact of remittances on local development
- Migrants' rights: living and working conditions
- Global care chains
- Intervention proposals, based on a co-development approach

### Axes of analysis

- Gender: a central analytical category
- Development models: development as a right
- The spatial dimension of development: from the transnational to the local
- Migrants, women and men, as protagonists of development

This redefinition of the axes of analysis emphasizes the importance not only of mainstreaming a gender perspective, but also of applying a transnational perspective to the migration–development nexus; it also stresses that in no case should development be reduced to a process of commercial expansion. Migrations are complex social phenomena that cannot be fully understood without accepting the radically social nature of the migrant: the social subject behind the sending of remittances. Therefore, the individualistic and mercantilist notion of the subject who leads the “remittances for development” paradigm turns out to be extremely limited and warrants rethinking. By contrast, the human development paradigm, by defining development as a process of broadening the scope of people’s rights, integrates gender equality into the very concept of development; it also allows migrants’ human rights to be addressed as a privileged space which condenses the development opportunities of migration.

The four axes of analysis provided parameters to determine specific viewpoints for observing the migration–development nexus. These points or “strategic instantiations” are paradigmatic insofar as they exhibit the socio-economic dynamics which we seek to analyse and intervene in. Global care chains are an example of this. They are a strategic instantiation because they allow issues that are often hidden – largely due to the absence of a gender perspective in development processes – to be debated publicly. On the one hand, it shows the place that care occupies in the structure of society, and the priority care is given in development models at local, national and global levels; on the other, it reveals gender’s role as a “backbone” of social and economic systems: that is, the economic roles considered appropriate for women and men.

Global care chains are not a simple derivation or consequence of women’s labour migration –rather, they are an inherent part of it. The chains reveal the ways in which gender intersects with other axes of social hierarchy in migratory processes, and in the formation of the new international sexual division of labour resulting from globalization processes. The latter, promoted by the migration policies of destination countries, is an expression of profoundly unequal models of socio-economic organization, both in home and destination countries.

Once we understand the social organization of care as an integral element of development, we can make linkages from the impact of migration to different levels of development in both origin and destination countries; we can use a transnational perspective to question the sustainability of development models in migrants' destination countries. At the same time, considering care chains from a rights-based and human development perspective allows us to highlight rights which had previously not been recognized, such as the right to receive adequate care, to freely choose care, for care to be adequately paid, etc. Finally, care chains represent a field of analysis and intervention that is peculiarly interesting from a gender perspective, insofar as it forces us to understand gender relations as dynamic, flexible and likely to adapt and regenerate. We must ask how gender identities are redefined (or not) through migratory processes, how care chains can worsen inequalities among women, what transformations masculinities are undergoing through this process, etc.

### *The concept of development and human rights*

Throughout this paper we have argued that any approach to the migration–development nexus must depart from a holistic notion of human development. This implies a definition of economic development which is neither reduced to the pursuit of commercial expansion, nor understood as an end in and of itself. Instead, it refers to the conjunction of diverse means (commercial and non-commercial) to obtain the necessary resources that permit the wider goal of expanding people's freedoms and rights. In order to avoid the strong individualist bias of the "remittances for development" model, it is necessary to understand the access and enjoyment of capacities and freedoms in collective terms. The core of human development is the indispensable social process of guaranteeing collective capacities and freedoms, constituting them as rights that are recognized and exercised by the citizenry.

In contrast, the primary axis of the dominant paradigm is the understanding and promotion of monetary remittances as the cornerstone of migration's influence on development; especially insofar as remittances are accompanied by market-driven changes in the formal financial system. Entrepreneurial migrants and their families are seen as the protagonists of the local development process, which is facilitated by remittance flows: an approach centred strictly on individual initiative. This paradigm is profoundly mercantilist in three ways. First, it locates the development potential of migration in the hands of the entrepreneurial migrant who acts within the market, making this a markedly individualistic paradigm. Second, the dominant model emphasizes market mechanisms and overlooks the role of public institutions. Third, it is fully consistent with neoliberal policies, especially financial liberalization policies that are characteristic of the current period of globalization.

Interventions that seek to promote the productive use of remittances do not only focus on home countries; rather, they convert the local area into a privileged sphere of action. In this way, the links between what happens at each end of migratory chains – as well as the spaces in between – become blurred. Lack of clarity makes it impossible to intervene in the role of international migrations in upholding this particular globalization process. Even more problematic is the risk of losing sight of the need to act on structural, macro levels, since the local level cannot mitigate structural and/or systemic deficiencies that ultimately result in underdevelopment.

If development is to be understood as the right to enjoy the full range of human rights, a three-tiered approach is needed. This involves recognizing: (a) the denial of the right to development in home countries as a cause of migration; (b) the human rights situation of migrants in destination countries; and (c) the problems of transnational citizenship (e.g. rights related to human mobility should not be

understood as a simple set of rights that are recognized only within the nation-state structure). As we have seen throughout this paper, migrants are one of the least-protected social groups in terms of labour, social, political and legal rights. Within the migrant group, the most vulnerable individuals – who constitute the majority of labour migrants worldwide – are the poor, uneducated and those with irregular migratory status. Women are overrepresented in each of these sectors.

As the migration policies of receiving countries have become more restrictive, migrants' rights have been relegated to the background vis-à-vis the primary objective of satisfying the demand for labour in receiving countries under the most favourable conditions for employers. Migration restrictions, border control and deportation of undocumented migrants all operate as effective mechanisms for regulating the availability of labour and the conditions under which it can be employed. Thus the trend of fragmenting citizenship is reified: migrants are considered "full citizens" in terms of meeting obligations, but are not treated as true rights-bearers.

Migrants' rights do not form part of the development equation insofar as development is considered essentially an expansion of commercial activity, and migrants' agency is valued only within the sphere of the market. The lack of attention given to migrants' rights ends up instrumentalizing them as "pawns of global development" rather than beneficiaries of it. They migrate to maintain transnational families; the socio-economic systems of the wealthiest countries rely heavily upon their labour and other contributions; and, additionally, they are made responsible for development in their communities of origin. This instrumentalization is even greater for women, due to their increased participation in labour migration and remittance sending, and above all due to their leading role in receiving and managing remittances. Their instrumentalization is even more evident in the very criteria used to determine their protagonism within the local development model promoted by the dominant paradigm, particularly their greater disposition toward personal sacrifice to enable the well-being of the family (be that as remittance senders, receivers or managers). Just as migrant-receiving countries take advantage of gender inequalities to incorporate migrants into their labour markets as underpaid care providers, the dominant local development model reinforces these inequalities by incorporating women according to their social role as the ultimate guarantor of family well-being.

As a result, while it is true that women's prominence within migratory processes is receiving greater acknowledgement, the forms this recognition is taking present several risks. Women's agency is being understood in purely mercantile terms. Either their decision to migrate is considered only an economic one, neglecting other driving factors which are directly related to women's position; or, interventions are targeted only toward promoting women's participation in the market (e.g. focusing on the productive investment of remittances without considering other development goals, like working toward a more equitable distribution of unpaid labour). In addition, there is a tendency to sing the praises of the traditional family model, to the detriment of other forms of cohabiting; to disregard the experience of women who migrate autonomously, outside family projects; and to assume that the family is a harmonious space whose members have identical interests, ignoring the unequal power relations that shape every aspect of the migratory process. At the same time, little attention is paid to structural factors which, with an impact beyond that of individual initiative, strongly condition women's migratory experiences and their capacity to contribute to development. These are the factors which demand action, such as the sex-segregated labour markets in both origin and destination countries.

The lack of recognition of migrants' rights and the tendency to instrumentalize them as "pawns of development" can also be observed in the realm of co-development,



which emphasizes migrants' role as a "vector of co-development". In the first place, and in the majority of the initiatives formulated in the name of migrants, the original proposal of co-development has been abandoned in favour of the paramount objective of stopping migratory flows and/or promoting migrants' return. At the same time, the unilateral manner in which migrant-receiving countries define their immigration policies is a far cry from the notion – held by co-development – of shared interests between countries which send and receive migrants. This single focus is evident, for example, in the case of developed countries' active recruitment of health-care workers from developing countries, which has especially adverse effects for women. Second, projects funded through collective remittances tend to be oriented toward substituting or compensating for the lack of public services in the home country, instead of strengthening true development processes based on coordinated action with migrants. This should take into account their dual roles as beneficiaries of development and active subjects in its promotion, with a leading role in decision-making over what type of development model should be chosen and how it will be implemented. Finally, strengthening the role of diasporas in co-development initiatives must be linked to the facilitation of migrants' integration and citizenship in destination societies: a greater exercise of rights, without which it is not feasible for them to assume their assigned role as "co-development vectors". Likewise, any attempt at incorporating migrant women in diaspora organizations and development processes they may initiate or wish to participate in should be based on the recognition of gender equality as a human right and thus a constitutive element of development. Therefore, an analysis of power relations and discriminatory structures should be at the core of any analysis of the development potential of migration.

# 8

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# Migration and Development from a Gender Perspective