

PRESS RELEASE

Gender-responsive policies necessary to make migration and development work for women

[Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 11 March 2010] **Women are the new face of migration, migrating independently in larger and larger numbers. Six case studies from four continents show that migrant women face different difficulties and make different gains. All of the studies show the need to overcome obstacles to gender equality to reach women's full empowerment and for the origin and destination countries to be able to link migration and development.**

UN-INSTRAW and UNDP hosted a panel discussion at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on Thursday March 11, 2010 at 1:45 PM in Conference Room B of the Temporary North Lawn Building. The organizations launched the reports and provided a space for policy makers, government representatives, donors, UN representatives, women's NGO's and migrant organizations to share their experiences and insights about the research and the potential for using remittances for gender-sensitive local development.

Today there are over 200 million migrants in the world, half of whom are women. Knowledge on the connections between migration and development has increased in recent years, but research and debate on the gender dimensions of this issue, including in particular the role of women within migratory flows, continues to be scarce.

"There is different evidence of women's empowerment in some of the countries we studied," said Amaia Pérez, Social Affairs Officer of UN-INSTRAW. "For example, in the cases of Senegal, Dominican Republic and the Philippines, women have their proper associations and projects, both in origin and destination countries. These serve as a very good base on which capacity building and projects can be built, if the links between women in the two countries are improved and their initiatives supported."

Case studies in Albania, Dominican Republic, Lesotho, Morocco, the Philippines and Senegal have analyzed the participation of women in migration processes. The objective of the joint investigation, conducted by UN-INSTRAW (International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is to connect the issues of development, gender equity and migration and make recommendations to key actors, including policy makers. The studies identify and promote options in the utilization of remittances for sustainable livelihoods and the building of social capital in poor rural and semi-urban communities.

Studying the phenomena of migration and remittances from a gender perspective in these countries has yielded an understanding of the differences between women and men's migratory experiences, the ways in which gender relations are influenced or reinforced, and which factors promote greater gender equality. The case studies show that in order for women's participation in the migratory process to contribute to development, both in origin and destination countries, it is necessary to move beyond isolated micro projects and enact public policies that eliminate obstacles to women's autonomy. The rise in women's independent migration can increase their decision-making power, but certain factors must be taken into account in order to guarantee gender equitable development, including: the

division of reproductive labour, access to education and equal pay, access to land and credit, and the guarantee of their rights of association and labour.

In the Dominican Republic and the Philippines, where women have pioneered migratory flows, the ease of their labour market insertion in destination countries has been the primary driver of women's migration. In both these cases, women send an equal or greater portion of their income than male migrants even though their salaries are lower. Their remittances are more frequent and sustained over a longer period of time, and they send to a greater number of recipients in their country of origin, including to women.

The cases of Albania and Senegal reflect the migration model of family reunification and reveal factors that limit or favour women's empowerment, such as integration policies in destination countries. The case of Lesotho illustrates the impact of men's unemployment in the South African mines as well as the few development options available in the country of origin. There, HIV/AIDS is both cause and consequence of migration: women migrate to compensate for the lost income of ill or deceased family members, and migrants are often at greater risk of infection. This causes changes in household structure, division of labour and livelihood strategies, which in turn, increase the economic vulnerability of households and change patterns of employment and migration.

Finally, the Morocco case study shows that the local employment crisis drives men's emigration, which is closely followed by women's internal or international migration. The feminine migration model in Morocco varies according to whether the women come from the rural or urban areas, the latter being more likely to migrate autonomously.

All six cases highlight the need to overcome obstacles to gender equality in order to link migration and development. The different cases show that remittances can lead to the empowerment of women senders and recipients, since they give senders more weight in the family economy and recipients an opportunity to undertake their own investments.

The existence and vitality of transnational social networks depend on the economic, social, historic and cultural context of the community of origin and the integration in the destination country. The participation of women in these networks varies according to the country, but is indispensable if gender equality is to be incorporated into co-development initiatives.

"There is increasing evidence that investing in women's empowerment and gender equality accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty," said Mette Bloch Hansen, UNDP. *"Most states do not include gender equality as a variable in their economic analysis and policymaking. We cannot continue to formulate economic policies labour market or migration policies without recognising these linkages."*

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A media kit with the full studies, facts and figures, photos and human interest stories can be found here: <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/media-center/media-kit/4.html>