Migration, Remittances and Gender-Responsive Local Development

The case of Albania

The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) promotes applied research on gender issues, facilitates knowledge management, and supports capacity-building through networking mechanisms and multi-stakeholder partnerships with UN agencies, governments, academia and civil society.

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Migration, remittances and gender-responsive local development: The case of Albania
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Preface

The feminisation of migration is a phenomenon that stresses not only the moderate increase in the numbers of women migrating, but also the ways in which women participate in migratory processes. In the past, most female migrants moved as dependants of husbands or families, whereas today a greater variety of women are leaving autonomously to work and live abroad as primary income earners. Growing interest in the study of the feminisation of migration has created a knowledge base of experience and tools that lend themselves to the integration of gender equality into migration-related interventions.

Meanwhile, remittances – another significant feature of migration – are gaining international attention. The monies sent from migrants in destination countries to families and communities in countries of origin are an important motivator for working abroad. Although individual migrants generally send relatively small sums of money, the accrual of remittances amounts to considerable financial flows.

Recognizing remittances' impact on national economies and the global financial world, governments and international organisations have taken interest in their potential to affect development. However, this potential to support and enhance human and local development has yet to be fully understood. A gendered approach to studying this phenomenon highlights how gender affects migrants' experiences and how migrant women in particular can contribute to dialogues, policy planning and interventions for sustainable development.

The study of remittances is an important aspect of the United Nations Development Programme's work on human development and poverty reduction, as well as its work in assisting governments to seek novel ways to harness remittances' development potential in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Remittances are the only means of survival for millions of poor households worldwide; remittances allow them to afford not only the basic necessities that are otherwise lacking or inaccessible, but also a degree of economic empowerment. Building on this topic, UNDP dedicated its 2009 Human Development Report, *Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development,* to applying a human development approach to the study of migration. While not a substitute for broader development efforts, migration can be a vital strategy for households and families seeking to diversify and improve their livelihoods.

Since 2004, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) has sought to understand the gender dimensions of migration, remittances and their potential for development. The Institute utilises a gender perspective to analyze how factors such as gender inequalities in access to work and divisions of labour determine the relationship between migration and development. Within this framework, remittances serve as a key component to comprehending and facilitating sustainable solutions.

This series of studies, 'Migration, Remittances and Gender-Responsive Local Development', focuses on the sending, transfer, receipt and utilisation of remittances, and affirms that gender influences and shapes the movement and experiences of migrants and their communities in both origin and destination

countries. The mapping of key actors and the discussion of historical and current migratory patterns and remittance practices in each country provided a useful background that allowed for an analysis of collective and social remittances. Utilizing a gender perspective and an emphasis on human development, this project adds another layer of necessary investigation that builds on the migration-development nexus.

With this publication, UN-INSTRAW and UNDP are committed to producing applied research that promotes the facilitation of gender-responsive policies and practices related to migration and development. The recommendations generated from the research serve as key guides for national level policy dialogues attended by key stakeholders, including migrant organisations, government agencies, financial intermediaries and NGOs. These dialogues are important platforms where research results can be translated into action plans that highlight co-development. Over time, the inclusion of gender analysis into the formulation of effective and sustainable migration and development strategies will contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

UN-INSTRAW and UNDP present this global series on gender, remittances and development in order to facilitate the development of policies and practices that incorporate the needs and contributions of migrant women, their households and communities into development agendas, thus bringing about gender responsive local development and sustainable livelihoods and futures.

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Executive Summary

ALBANIA

The complex links between globalisation and development have made contemporary migration a key area of investigation. It is estimated that over 200 million women and men have left their countries of origin to live and work abroad. Occurring simultaneously are equally intensive internal movements, primarily from rural to urban areas. Demographically, many country-specific flows have changed, both in terms of numbers and composition by sex. Studies on the feminisation of migration[1] have revealed women's significant role and impact as actors in the migration process. Despite the rapid increase in the volume and diversity of knowledge on the migration-development nexus, research and debate on the gender dimensions of this issue, including the role of women within migratory flows, continues to be scarce.

In 2007, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW) began a joint project entitled "Gender and Remittances: Building Gender-Responsive Local Development. " The project has sought to enhance gender-responsive local development by identifying and promoting options for utilizing remittances for sustainable livelihoods and for building social capital in poor rural and semi-urban communities. The research phase of the project has been implemented in six countries: Albania, the Dominican Republic, Lesotho, Morocco, the Philippines and Senegal.

The *strategic aim* of the project is to generate action-oriented research that will be used to:

1. Increase awareness and improve access of women-headed, remittance-recipient households to productive resources, while augmenting their assets and strengthening their capacities;
2. Provide relevant information to local and national governments to identify and formulate policies that will optimise remittance utilisation for sustainable livelihoods and for building social capital; and
3. Contribute to enhancing key stakeholders' capacities to integrate gender into policies, programmes, projects, and other initiatives linking remittances with sustainable livelihoods and building social capital.

The six case studies aim to narrow the knowledge gap on the gender dimensions of migration and remittances through an interlinked analysis of migration and development. Particular attention is

[1] "In addition to the net increase in the proportion of women among migratory flows, primarily to highly-developed countries in the North – the term feminisation 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" that travel with their spouses or reunite with them abroad. In other words, over the last two decades, a significant amount of women – who now migrate independently, assuming the role of economic provider – have joined the migratory flows that were previously dominated by men" (Perez et al 2008).

paid to the impact of remittances (financial, in-kind and social) on gendered development processes in countries of origin and amongst transnational households spanning the origin and destination countries.

This case study research examines the gender dimensions of migration and remittances in the context of Albania and the destination country of Greece. This report reflects two research components. First, a critical review of relevant literature on Albanian migration, remittances, development, gender and a discussion of the key policies and practices of national and international development actors form the background to this report. Second, empirical data collected through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods constitutes the heart of the analysis. The transnational aspect of migration has been incorporated by integrating data collection and analysis in an area of origin (a cluster of three villages in the region of Korçë, south-east Albania), and an area of destination (the city of Thessaloniki in neighbouring Greece).The findings are based on 350 quantitative questionnaires with remittance-receiving households in rural Albania, 45 in-depth interviews, two group discussions with remittance-receiving households in Albania and remittance-sending households in Greece, and 14 in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions with local, regional and national stakeholders both in Albania and in Greece.

Albania represents the most dramatic instance of post-communist migration: around 1 million Albanians — a quarter of the country's total population — now live abroad. Most migrants live in neighbouring Greece and Italy, with the United Kingdom and the United States becoming increasingly popular destinations since the late 1990s. Many Albanians also moved internally during this time, principally from the northern and southern rural highlands to the urban coastal areas.

Remittances — particularly from abroad — have been one of the most important aspects of this migration, not only for individuals and households, but also for the country as a whole. Reports from the Central Bank of Albania on total annual sums indicate that between 1992 and 2003, remittances rose from US$200 million to US$800 million annually. World Bank figures indicate that remittances totalled $1.48 billion in 2007. Representing between 10 and 22 percent of the country's GDP, they have surpassed the amount of foreign direct investment, as well as the amount of aid received from international institutions. In 2004, remittances amounted to more than twice the revenue from exports. At the household level, remittances have been crucial to economic survival and poverty alleviation, and have ensured a necessary supply of capital for small businesses. However, very little attention has been paid so far to the intra-household and country-wide gender aspects of these significant monetary transfers.

In the Albanian context, international migration generally represents a male-led typology, i.e., men migrated first and women followed as 'dependents'. The first post-communist migrants of the early 1990s were overwhelmingly men; women — especially from rural areas — generally stayed behind. Even when women migrated, their accounts and experiences of those early migration years have received little attention. However, by 2001, Albanian migrant women in Greece constituted around 40 percent of all Albanian migrants there. A maturing of this migration — after the family reunification process through which most Albanian migrant women arrived in Greece — has been reflected in the considerable presence of children.

Given that Albania has a strong patriarchal society, how have migration and its accompanying monetary and social transfers affected gender relations and roles in rural areas, as well as the processes of local development? The interconnections between migration, remittances and gender affect local development and are shaped by it in several ways. First, the gender norms of the origin society and the type of migration options available to Albanians in the 1990s favoured the migration of men to Greece over that of women. Female migration to Greece increased rapidly through family reunification, particularly following male migrants' regularisation starting in 1998. This increase was also affected by the crisis in the Greek care sector, as more Greek women entered the labour force while the Greek welfare state did not provide alternative substitutes for their domestic and care work. This was taken over by Albanian migrant women,

a situation reflected also by the study data, according to which the majority of women were employed in the domestic and care sectors. Men, on the other hand, worked overwhelmingly in construction, agriculture, and manufacturing. They had also secured higher shares of semi-skilled work.

Second, Albanian migrant men (particularly husbands and sons), continue to be the primary remitters from Greece (almost 99 percent of the sample). This reflects not only their numerical dominance in this migrant community, but also the patriarchal norms of the Albanian society. In Albania, migrants' wives were the primary remittance recipients/administrators in nuclear households; in families that included the parents of migrant sons the remittance recipient/administrator was more often the father (around 40 percent of the sample).

Given that gender relations in southeast Albania have been generally more egalitarian than in other parts of the country (such as the north or the northeast), and reflecting a certain degree of change due to migration, a rather nuanced picture results from this research. For example decision-making about the use of remittances generally involved women and men, but women were often *de facto* in control of the finances. Particularly in *de facto* female-headed households, women had gained a certain degree of empowerment through the day-to-day administration of finances. However, the husbands continued to exercise a strong influence in strategic intra-household decision-making processes.

Many women also earned money locally, usually through work on their own small farms. In spite of the opportunities migration and remittances had created, many rural women felt overburdened by the volume and diversity of tasks and responsibilities they had to face on their own, especially dealing with the emotional and developmental needs of their children. Furthermore, not much change had taken place with regards to reproductive tasks such as caring for children and the elderly, which are predominantly performed by women. Similarly, the research results suggest that though Albanian migrant women are empowered by their strengthened household economic roles from their own earnings, they continue to be disempowered by the Greek immigration policies that perpetuates patriarchal patterns of dependency and gender discrimination.

Though most remittances are generally used to finance the household's basic consumption, they also fund the health and education of family members and pay for improvements in living conditions through better accommodations. In addition, significant sums have been invested in agriculture, particularly in creating and expanding apple orchards, livestock farms and large-scale vegetable cultivation. These investments not only generate income for remittance-receiving households, but also provide local employment opportunities for other families in the origin country. In addition, skills and knowledge related to the investments contribute to a growth in the community's capacities. However, these processes are strongly marked by gender: most skilled tasks are performed by men, who generally also own the land and the farming enterprises. Most local businesses are also registered as being owned by men, even though women may be performing the majority of administrative and operative tasks.

The research results also suggest that those who are becoming bridges of transnational entrepreneurial activities are also primarily men; women's positions are not prominent in these public arenas of power negotiations and opportunities. The situation is similar in migrant organisations, where decision-making is generally concentrated in the hands of men while women perform secondary supportive roles. Similarly, most associations in the rural areas of origin were comprised of men, a situation that was taken as a given considering their firm role as heads of households. Any future project that includes women in local development needs to consider these gendered power dynamics as they manifest themselves in private and public spaces. A gender-sensitive approach would first and foremost need to address the women's limited participation in public spaces of political power and decision-making. Second, it would avoid 'instrumentalizing' women by increasing their burden of tasks, and would instead seek to provide

wider spaces for their political participation and for their voices to be heard. Third, it would also avoid the risk of reinforcing gender stereotypes.

There were no significant signs of locally implemented co-development policies or practices between Greece and Albania in the study area. As with most initiatives in the region, migration-related development initiatives strongly addressed the immigration agenda of Greece rather than the development agenda of Albania. Furthermore, Albanian migrant organisations were often excluded in such programmes, or were the token consultative partner with a significantly limited role. Truely co-development policies should aim at local development as an end in itself, not as a tool to stem further irregular emigration, which has generally been the case so far.

Sustainable development should address all aspects of human development, i.e. conditions where women and men can exercise freedom, equality and social empowerment, including – but not only–through pursuing the option of migration. Co-development policies and initiatives that consider migrant women and men as actors of development should be based on the recognition of their role as stakeholders in host societies. This is reflected in the access they have to citizenship rights through enabling their regularisation in the host country and their equitable incorporation therein as dignified citizens with rights and responsibilities.

Similar to previous research, the study findings emphasise the importance of policies — and their effective implementation — in creating a viable and sustainable business environment and achieving a higher quality of human development. Responsibility for such provisions rests primarily with the Albanian national and local governments. Gender-responsive local development, through the inclusion of migrants' remittances are not a panacea for ailing rural societies. Migrant women and men are already bearing the heavy burden of substituting fragmented and inadequate social and labour policies and systems in origin areas like rural Albania through financing the survival, health and education of their families. It is the responsibility of governments to provide adequate structures wherein further investment can lead to growth and improvement of freedoms and capabilities.

1 INTRODUCTION

The complex links between globalisation and development have made contemporary migration a key area of investigation. It is estimated that over 200 million women and men have left their countries of origin to live and work abroad. Occurring simultaneously are equally intensive internal movements, primarily from rural to urban areas. Demographically, many country-specific flows have changed, both in terms of numbers and composition by sex. Studies on the feminisation of migration[2] have revealed women's significant role and impact as actors in the migration process. Despite the rapid increase in the volume and diversity of knowledge on the migration-development nexus, research and debate on the gender dimensions of this issue, including the role of women within migratory flows, continues to be scarce.

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processes in countries of origin and amongst transnational households spanning the origin and destination countries. This case study research examines these dynamics in the context of Albania and the destination country of Greece.

Contemporary migration in Albania is a reflection of significant political and socio-economic changes and events in the country in the 1990s. It is all the more poignant following 45 years (1945-1990) of almost complete isolation of the country and its people from the outside world by one of the harshest communist regimes worldwide. During this time emigration was banned as it was considered an act of treason, while internal movements were highly regulated. This was a break from the migratory past of Albanians, who had moved far and wide in search of work for centuries. Some were also forced to flee as a result of various wars, internal blood feuds and foreign invasions. One of the latter episodes was the emigration of around 200,000 Albanians mostly to southern Italy, following the Ottoman conquest of territories inhabited by Albanians in the 15th century. Returning to the post-communist migratory movements, three periods, characterised by large-scale emigration, can be distinguished. The first, marking the country's exit from the communist oppression (1990-1993), was signaled by the 'embassy occupation' in July 1990 when about 5,000 people climbed over the walls surrounding the Western embassies in Tirana and camped inside them requesting protection. They were eventually granted this and were transferred to these Western countries by air or sea. Meanwhile thousands of others boarded ships bound for nearby Italy or risked the trek through the mountainous passages to neighboring Greece. The second episode followed a period of destruction and near civil war as a result of the collapse of pyramid investment schemes. From 1993-1996 the Albanian economy grew rapidly as a result of migrant remittances sent mainly from Greece and Italy. Because the financial system was underdeveloped, and there was high demand for loans, private 'investment' schemes flourished. Their high interest rates – which at one point reached 50 percent – could not be sustained, with the result that the default on payments caused panic and the country descended into turmoil. The third event marking large-scale migratory movements is related to the Kosovo crisis (1999-2000), which produced an influx of half a million ethnic Albanians from Kosovo into Albania. This refugee exodus destabilised the fragile economic and demographic situation, especially in the north of the country. When Kosovar Albanians moved onwards to other European asylum destinations, many Albanian citizens mixed with them. In the intervening years of these episodes and since 2000 emigration has continued, but at a steadier pace. As it becomes clear from the above discussion, a mixture of economic, political and social reasons stands at the root of Albanian migration.

In regards to migration and gender, international migration in the Albanian context generally represents a male-led typology, i.e. men migrated first and women followed as 'dependents'. The first post-communist migrants of the early 1990s were overwhelmingly men; women – especially from rural areas – generally stayed behind. Even when women migrated, their accounts and experiences of those early migration years have received little attention. However, by 2001 Albanian migrant women in Greece – the destination country of interest in this research – constituted around 40 percent of all Albanian migrants there. After the first regularisation in 1998 many families were reunited in Greece, thus increasing the numbers of migrant women and children.

During the last two decades, Albanian migrants have reached a number of countries in Europe as well as North America; yet Greece and Italy remain the primary destination countries. The geographical and cultural proximity with both countries and a history of cross-border movement have enabled this ongoing relationship. Furthermore, both countries present similar features in terms of how they absorb migrants into their economy and society, identified by King (2000) as the southern European immigration model.[3] This model is based on specific characteristics of southern European economies and societies which demand cheap, flexible labour for informal labour markets

(particularly in niche areas such as agriculture and domestic work), because indigenous workers reject such jobs and low birth rates cannot meet the local labour needs. Albanian migration to Italy and Greece displays such features. Especially in Greece, Albanians migrate primarily as lower- skilled workers and are employed in construction, care work and service jobs.

Mountain pass to Greece from South-east Albania. Throughout the early and mid-1990s, small groups of young males walked for several days, sometimes the whole length of Albania, before crossing the border clandestinely via mountain paths in remote places like this one.

This study is structured into eight sections. The first section provides an overview of Albania beginning with gender relations in the country and followed by subsections on the case study locations of Korçë, Albania and Thessaloniki, Greece. The second section reviews the characteristics of Albanian migration to Greece, and provides information on the evolution of movement, employment abroad, integration of Albanians into Greek society, and the transnational migrant networks that strengthen their communities. The third section offers insight into common household typologies before and after migration. The transnational household is an important unit of analysis which allows for a richer understanding of the process of migration and remittances. The following section exhibits the core of the research study by analyzing all aspects of remittances and their impact on the lives of migrants, their families and communities of origin. The fifth section continues to look at the impact of remittances on local development, which is a key perspective that this report hopes to tackle, as the debate on remittances and development continues to evolve. An articulation of key actors is also included to present relevant stakeholders. In the next section, public policies in Albania and Greece are reviewed to illustrate the various laws pertaining to migrants and to identify the ways in which the potential of remittances can be further utilised and incorporated into national development strategies. Lastly, recommendations from the study results and from relevant literature are laid out to call for more action to protect migrants and to bring about gender responsive local development from remittances.

1.1 Methodology

The research is organised around the study of transnational households, an approach which is

3. The key features of this model are: i) heterogeneity of migrants' nationality, ii) highly gender-specific flows from various countries, iii) migrants originate from urban as well as rural areas and a proportion is highly educated, and iv) there are high levels of clandestinity and irregularity. There is demand in the domestic and care sectors which is filled by immigrant female labour (King 2000: 18; see also King and Zontini 2000)

based on the concept that migration decision-making is a household rather than an individual matter. However, gender relations within these households and within the wider local communities of origin and destination are analysed and discussed from the perspective of individual men and women. A combined quantitative and qualitative methodology has been employed. This consists of a household survey in rural south-east Albania with families who have at least one migrant member living in Greece, and a set of in-depth interviews carried out with a selected group of these respondents, with returnees from Greece, as well as migrant families from this rural area who live and work in the Greek city of Thessaloniki. In addition, local, regional and national stakeholders were involved in the research process through a number of in-depth interviews and round table discussions. The latter served as platforms to garner and exchange information at various levels of policy-making and intervention, as well as amongst various types of stakeholders, such as government representatives, academics, community leaders, international development agencies, local non-governmental organisations, migrant groups and the private sector.

2 COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Albania is a small country in south-eastern Europe with a population of just over 3 million. It has been for centuries – and remains today – one of the least economically developed countries in Europe, with an income of $3,254 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in 2007 (UNDP Albania 2008). Post-communist transition has been a difficult process, particularly in regards to the economy; however, it is slowly moving forward. The country is characterised by a significant informal economy. While agriculture continues to be one of the main forms of employment, it only contributes a small percentage to the overall GDP. Migration has produced an influx of remittances into Albania which has constituted between 10 and 22 percent of the GDP since 1992 (Gammeltoft 2002: 189; Ghosh 2006: 19; King 2005: 149; Piperno 2005; Uruçi and Gëdeshi 2003; Uruçi 2008). Socio-economic development (especially in the post-communist years) has been uneven. Differences by region, such as the northern and southern mountainous areas of poverty and insecure livelihoods versus the more prosperous and vibrant coastal plains, reflect challenges and reasons for migration. At the same time, other factors, such as ethnicity, reveal social and economic inequalities. For instance, the Roma and Egyptian communities are amongst the most marginalised in Albania as well as in the migration process.[4] Political and economic factors significantly influence cultural and social practices behind the movement and experiences of migrants.

2.1 Gender Relations in Albania: Situation of Women

Gender relations differ from region to region. Although these have slowly evolved over the years as a result of changing regimes and the current processes of migration, Albanian society is still guided by traditional and patriarchal norms. Generally, there continues to be a preference for sons over daughters and women follow patrilocal custom by moving to the childhood homes of their husbands upon marriage. The youngest son and his wife are responsible for taking care of his elderly parents and this has impacts that will be discussed later in the section on remittances. Prior to World War II, more than 90 percent of females countrywide were illiterate – especially in rural and north-eastern areas – and the country had only 21 female teachers, whilst less than 3 percent of secondary school students were females (Hall 1994: 83; Logoreci 1977: 157-8). During the communist years women experienced significant changes and achievements due to the government's plan to emancipate women. Achievements included an increase in literacy, a greater inclusion of women at all levels of education, more female political candidates, and inclusion in the labour market.

The collapse of the communist regime affected women quite adversely. The 'substitute social orders' that

4. Roma and Egyptians (locally known as Evgjit) are the two main 'gypsy' communities in Albania.

emerged were strongly based on the re-invention of tradition and the regeneration of patriarchy (Mai and Schwandner-Sievers 2003: 224). Thus, as Nixon (2006) suggests, this post-communist transformation was accompanied by 'highly oppositional gender roles', which were reflected in the widening of the gap between the public and domestic sphere. The first became overwhelmingly the domain of men wherein manliness was 'idealised as strong, decisive and profit-making', while femininity was increasingly associated with 'values of domesticity, caring and childrearing…'. As women's emancipation as a concept was stigmatised by association with the communist past – which was seen as having sought to destroy the family – it became widely rejected (Brunnbauer 2000; Nixon 2006). These factors, combined with the transition from a centrally-planned to a market economy, and thereby the loss of secure albeit poorly paid jobs, resulted in a gradual erosion of the previously won achievements, especially related to women's political participation and employment.

As far as employment is concerned, women continue to stand well behind their male counterparts, in terms of pay, types of jobs, and opportunities for employment, especially in urban areas and especially for the lower-skilled sections of the society. For instance, whilst three-quarters of working-age women (15-54) were in the labour force in 1991, by 2002 less than half of women in this age group were formally economically employed. For working-age men this indicator was reduced from 85 percent to slightly less than 75 percent over the same period of time (Moreno-Fontes Chammartin and Cantú-Bazaldúa 2003). Women also earn significantly less than men – about 68 percent of male wages on a monthly basis – both because they work fewer hours and because they earn less per hour (World Bank 2006). In addition, men own 92 percent of all property in the country, and receive approximately 84 percent of GDP (UNDP Albania 2008: 13).

Albanian women who remain in the villages perform many productive and reproductive tasks. Here, a woman in Pojan is shown weaving.

2.2 Case Study Location: Korçë, Albania

This research project focused primarily on the migration corridor between villages in south-east Albania with Thessaloniki, Greece. The three villages were Pojan, Zvezdë and Kreshpanj, all located in the district of Korçë. Korçë is the most important regional pole of the south and south-east, located along one of the principal transport and trading routes that link Albania with the Balkans and the European Union through Macedonia and especially Greece. In fact, more than a quarter of all foreign enterprises in the Korçë region are Greek, making it one of the most important centres of Greek investment in Albania (Belba 2005: 88).

The Korçë region is known for large-scale emigration. A significant share of these movements come from its hinterland – especially mountainous villages, which have lost as much as 30 percent of their population in the last 15 years – towards the (peri-) urban areas of the region itself (Korçë

Municipality 2005: 15; Korçë Regional Council: 2005: 24). Many have also moved to more distant places internally and abroad; in fact, the Korçë district scores high as a top sender of both internal and, especially, international migrants (Carletto et al. 2004: 27). Internally, almost 60 percent of migrants moved to Tirana. Of those who have gone abroad, the majority have moved to neighboring Greece.

The three study villages have been largely affected by contemporary migration in the last decade and a half of post-communist transformation. In terms of population, the villages are interesting for three reasons. First, the population is quite mixed, especially in Pojan, where communities of various backgrounds such as Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Egyptians and Roma live alongside one another. Second, sizable Egyptian (60 families) and Roma (35 families) communities live there, some of whom are by far the poorest in the area. Considering that these communities are probably the most marginalised in Albania, the area lends itself to the study of the effects of migration on such groups. Third, some of the Orthodox Christian population here lay claim to forms of Greek citizenship, a process which is intensified because of the practicalities of such belonging in terms of easier access to entry visas and stay and work permits in Greece (de Rapper 2005; Kretsi 2005). Finally, Pojan has experienced a certain degree of in-migration from more remote mountainous villages in the district.

2.3 Destination City of Study: Thessaloniki, Greece

Thessaloniki is home to a large number of migrants from the villages under research, and it is second only to Athens in terms of the size of the Albanian migrant community in Greece. Furthermore it is rather close to the origin villages, yet is a large metropolitan area, where cross-border dynamics of migration and the resulting transnational practices can be studied.

The character of the Thessaloniki economy has affected female employment particularly with regard to its share of manufacturing. This is related to the dominance of the industrial, especially manufacturing, sector in Thessaloniki. A significant part of this sector consists of family-run and labour-intensive small businesses, which are typical places of employment for Albanian women (Hatziprokopiou 2003: 1043-44). These firms are spread relatively equally all over the city, as are most commercial activities, entertainment venues and migrants' work places (Hatziprokopiou 2004: 330-31).

Finally, Thessaloniki's long history of multiculturalism, having hosted various populations from all over the Balkans and the Mediterranean, is regenerated with the recent immigration and settlement in the city of populations with diverse ethnic, social, religious and cultural backgrounds. In some cases these historical links have been revived and reshaped into vital transnational links based on historical and cultural bonds and facilitated by geographical proximity. At the heart of these fields stand the cross-border social networks which channel not only migrants' mobility, but also trade, transport, business and investment (Hatziprokopiou 2006: 85, 106-08).

Map No. 1. Origin and destination location of migration between Albania and Greece (Korçë and Thessaloniki)

http://geology.com/world/albania-satellite-image.shtml

3 CHARACTERISTICS OF ALBANIAN MIGRATION TO GREECE

Greece is one of the most important destinations for Albanian emigration. Albanian migration to Greece has followed three main routes: the two main road crossings at Kakavija (leading to Ioannina) and Bilisht (leading to Kastoria and Florina), and the short sea link from Sarandë to Corfu. A fourth route goes via southern Macedonia to Thessaloniki. Throughout the early and mid-1990s, small groups of young males walked for several days, sometimes the whole length of Albania, before crossing the border clandestinely via mountain paths in remote places (King et al. 1998). Few women joined these journeys, although women and children were more numerous amongst migrating Roma and Egyptians (De Soto et al. 2005). Following the regularisations, travelling between the two countries now takes place overwhelmingly through the official border crossing points. Much migration to Greece, especially in the 1990s, has been temporary and to-and-fro in nature, which has rendered the presence of Albanians in Greece difficult to estimate. However, it is important to emphasise that this migration is widespread all over Albania, with many families having one or more members working in Greece.

The majority of Albanian migrants in Greece is made up of males, but the gap has narrowed significantly as compared to the early and mid-1990s. Although Albanian migrant women may be empowered by being able to strengthen their economic role in the household through their earnings, they continue to be disempowered by the Greek immigration policy which perpetuates patriarchal patterns of dependency and gender discrimination. A growing presence of females in proportion to that of migrant males is often considered a sign of stabilisation in the host society. In the Albanian case this is confirmed even further by the presence of children, who, according to the 2001 Greek census, numbered around 50,000 enrolled in Greek schools in 2001 (Barjaba and King 2005). According to data provided by the Greek Ministry of Education, the number of Albanian children in Greek state schools enrolled during the school year 2002-03 was almost 70,000 (Baldwin-Edwards 2004: 18-20). Accounting for over 72 percent of all non-ethnic Greek foreign children in Greek state schools, this was higher than the share of the Albanian migrant population in Greece. Data on residence permits valid in January 2006 also recorded more than 90,000 ethnic Albanian children under the age of 16, constituting around 25 percent of Albanian population in Greece (Baldwin-Edwards and Kolios 2008: 4). A considerable, but not easily quantifiable number of older grandparents also forms part of this mosaic. The 2001 Greek census recorded around 10,500 Albanians of 65 years and older, or 2.4 percent of total Albanian presence there (Cavounidis 2004: 42). They are mainly involved in support with child-care and other household chores in the family, but sometimes provide such services for (older) Greek citizens in the informal labour market as well (King and Vullnetari 2006).

3.1 Employment

There is an obvious relationship between the spatial distribution of Albanians and the types of employment available. Urban areas such as Athens, Thessaloniki and the main islands offer the possibility of year-round

employment (albeit often in casual, temporary jobs); farming areas and tourist sites offer mainly seasonal work (King and Vullnetari 2003). In rural Greece, Albanians work in agriculture and general labour, especially during summer peaks of activity when demand for fruit-picking and other labour-intensive tasks is high. They also do many other 'smaller' jobs around the farm, for which they are not always paid. Immigrant (especially Albanian) labour has replaced virtually all wage labour in Greek agriculture, and is particularly concentrated in areas of intensive farming such as the plains of Thessaly or the olive groves of Corfu (Fakiolas 2003; Kasimis et al. 2003). Agricultural work in particular was taken up on a large scale in the early 1990s, but it still remains one of the few ways to obtain a (temporary) working permit for Greece, reflecting the needs of the sector and the importance of immigrant labour. Over time, Albanians also have found more stable types of rural work in sectors like animal husbandry, poultry farming, greenhouses and market gardening.

Many Albanians work in the largely seasonal tourist industry, located on the coasts and especially the islands. Both men and women are employed in tourist complexes, hotels and restaurants. They perform a variety of jobs as cleaners, kitchen staff, waiters, porters, gardeners, maintenance workers etc. In Athens, Thessaloniki and other cities, Albanians are employed as unskilled or semi-skilled labour in the construction industry, in hotels and restaurants, in small manufacturing or service related to clothing, removals, painting and decorating, and in personal services such as domestic cleaners, gardeners, baby-sitters, and caregivers of elderly people. A number of Albanian girls and young women (and also boys) are involved in the sex industry (Psimmenos 2000).

Not all the immigrants who are employed in these low-skilled jobs are unskilled. Many Albanians have undergone de-skilling, as they have been unable to find employment in their profession (Barjaba and King 2005; see also for Greece Hatziprokopiou 2006). This situation can be attributed to their immigration status, the lack of recognition of their Albanian degrees, and the bifurcated Greek employment market. This divided labor market consists of the 'primary' sector of secure and 'legal' jobs, taken mostly by the Greeks themselves, and the 'secondary' or 'peripheral' labour sector of low-status jobs, often taken by immigrants (Barjaba and King 2005).

The job market for Albanians in Greece

According to Greek census data for 2001, Albanian men are employed mainly in construction (42 percent of the total), and agriculture (23 percent), but also in industry (12 percent) and tourism (also 12 percent). For their part, Albanian women worked in tourism (19 percent), agriculture (15 percent) and industry (9 percent); more than half (52 percent), however, were reported as working in the census category 'other' which includes a large fraction working in domestic services as cleaners, hotel maids, caregivers for Greek elderly and of children, etc. (Baldwin-Edwards 2004). The vast majority of the jobs Albanians do in Greece are low-skilled and insecure. The situation reflects the pattern of employment in the bifurcated Greek employment market, which consists of the 'primary' sector of secure and 'legal' jobs, taken mostly by the Greeks themselves, and the 'secondary' or 'peripheral' labour sector of low-status jobs, taken often by immigrants (Barjaba and King 2005).

3.2 Integration

The Greek reaction to the immigration of more than half a million Albanians since 1990 has been significantly affected by constructions and images presented by the media, exploited in turn by politicians for their own political ends.[5] These have been generally negative. Initially welcomed, Albanians quickly became denigrated with a series of highly negative stereotypes, often described as 'cunning, primitive, untrustworthy' … 'dangerous' people and 'criminals' (Lazaridis and Wickens 1999: 648). The harsh stigmatisation and marginalisation of Albanians have been shaped by Albanian migrants' "visibility" in terms of numbers – they constitute 65-70 percent of all migrants in Greece, while the next most prominent group, the Bulgarians, have a share of only 5 percent. The marginalisation can also be attributed to Greece's perception of its past, its evolving role in the Europe of the present, and particularly the antagonistic Greek-Albanian political relations. In spite of the severe vilification and stigmatisation, Albanians have been able to negotiate their way round and through the exclusionary barriers presented before them, and have achieved a remarkable and dynamic socio-economic integration. Most Albanians learn Greek quickly and, at a local and personal level, through work and neighborhood relations, are able to relate in a dynamic way to Greek society (Hatziprokopiou 2003; 2006). They also play on the shared Balkan identity by changing their names or baptising their children in Greek churches. However, in trying to conceal their identity in order to become 'invisible' amongst Greeks and thus escape stigmatisation, they also have become vulnerable to the risk of losing their cultural and 'language vitality', leading to assimilation of at least the second generation (Gogonas 2007).

During the 1990s much migration to Greece was temporary and short-term. In addition, Greece was used as a stepping stone for acquiring short-term financial capital and experience for a more ambitious and longer-term move to another Western country, often via onward journeys to Italy; hence Greece was referred to as the 'key' and Italy as the 'door' (King et al. 2003). However, in recent years, as Albanian migration to Greece is maturing, upward socio-economic mobility is being accompanied by a process of settlement and stabilisation (Gogonas 2007; Hatziprokopiou 2003; 2006; Labrianidis and Hatziprokopiou 2005; Labrianidis et al. 2004; Pratsinakis 2005).

3.3 Migrants' transnational networks

Generally migration had strengthened pre-existing family networks since these became the first means of information for migration opportunities and then the first places of support for new entrants to Greece. The latter consisted of accommodation and food for the first days or weeks of arrival, help with job searches, networking etc. Yet networks did not always prove useful, as some either could not or did not provide any support. This sometimes caused previously close relations to break. In Albania, the extended family network or that of neighbors provided support in looking after elderly people or, sometimes young children of migrants who were left behind, but also looking after the empty houses of migrants. In return, remittances – financial or in-kind – would be given to the caretakers. When these were within the same households, services and the money would be part of the reciprocal duties amongst family members. When it involved neighbors (in the case of looking after houses), small presents such as clothes were given in return. However, in emphasizing the importance of such networks and the family, we must not ignore the fact that at times some of these very families became sites of violence and oppression, rebellion and resistance, especially for women and young men. For instance, in almost all the in-depth interviews with young migrant men in Thessaloniki, or with the parents of young migrant men in the study villages, the first migration episode of these young men was almost universally enacted and recounted in the following ways. They had

[5](Baldwin-Edwards and Apostolatou 2009; Barjaba and King 2005; and for the parallel process in Italy see King and Mai 2004; 2008)

left Albania as teenagers, without the consent and knowledge of their parents, or in the best-case scenario their father. They simply ran away from home because both parties knew the parents (i.e. father) would not allow such a migration in precarious circumstances of physical and psychological hardship – as most of these journeys were – at such young ages (some were 12 or 13 when they left). The decision was thus an individual rather than a household matter. These first attempts were signs of resistance and revolt against the patriarchal authority of the eldest man in the family.

Literature on Albanian migrants abroad has noted the limited role that associative life has played over the years, whether with regard to their integration in the host societies, or related to the development of their origin communities. Certainly the recency of post-communist migration has impacted the formation of groups. Whilst the various historical diasporas, primarily in the USA, Italy, Greece, Australia, Istanbul, Bucharest and Cairo, became centres of national agitation and inspiration, they were replenished with only a trickle of 'new blood' during the communist years – those few who managed to escape the Albanian 'fortress' (Vullnetari 2007). Apart from the diaspora in the USA, which became economically and politically relatively powerful in that country, Albanian communities in other countries became weaker and in some places like Greece they were almost completely assimilated. Contemporary Albanian migration to other countries such as the UK had almost no significant previous 'record' and could not thus build on cumulative experience and networks.

In addition, other factors have been noted by a number of researchers with regards to the 'weakness' of the Albanian associative life in the most important destination countries of Greece and Italy. The legacy of coercive collectivisation as well as of coercive methods of spying – everyone was presumed to spy on everyone – during the not-so-distant communist past has certainly played a part in the level of distrust Albanians have towards each other and towards community voluntary organisations. This contrasts with the high degree of trust placed in family members, which has remained over the years – especially during the 'iron fist' of communism and the turmoil and insecurities of post-communist transformations (Lubonja 2001; Murzaku and Dervishi 2003). Especially in Greece, migrants have had to deal with a high degree of exploitation, discrimination and marginalisation, which has allowed little space for their social capital to develop (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2005). The fact that almost all migrant organisations in Greece date from around 1998 – which is also the year of the first migrant regularisation – is quite telling in this context. And of course, matters of a more practical nature are also important such as how long migrant work schedules prevent opportunities to meet.

However, this is changing and there are encouraging signs of cooperation. By 2008 there were at least 100 Albanian migrant organisations in Greece (except those of ethnic-Greek migrants), 80 percent of which are based in Athens – reflecting to a certain extent the concentration of the Albanian community geographically, but also opportunities and spaces for such activities. Most of these organisations are small and there has been a certain drive in the past two or three years for their regrouping under 'umbrella-like' arrangements. Thus, by 2008 there were two such entities: a) The Albanian Migrants' League; and b) The Federation of Albanian Associations, each of which is constituted of 25 migrant associations. There are, however, other organisations which are not members of these 'umbrella' groups.[6] Most organisations suffer from disputes amongst themselves, as was evident from interviews and informal conversations with a number of the leaders and through focus group discussions in Thessaloniki. These antagonistic relations stemmed either from personal rivalries or deeper ideological factors (read: political persuasions). These are classic examples of transnational activity, or reverse social remittances, i.e. home-country politics are transmitted from Albania to the immigrants in Greece. Indeed, branches of

6. From in-depth interview with Ms. Dhimitra Malo, president of the Pan-Hellenic Network of Migrant Women based in Athens. Date of interview: 22 December 2007.

the three main political parties – Socialist Party (SP), Democratic Party (DP) and the Movement for Social Integration (LSI) – have been created in Greece, and are often used as vehicles for garnering migrants' support during electoral campaigns back home.

In the last five years there has been an increase in organisations which base their membership on the town, village or region of origin of migrants (although they are still far fewer than the typical Latin American Hometown Associations [HTAs[7]]). Although their actual membership may be low, it is estimated that an average of 200 migrants gather during each of their cultural activities in Greece. Most of these organisations have a core membership around a network of people who are family-kinship related, and especially in larger organisations the management is dominated by men in their 50s. Besides such HTA-type associations, there are also other groupings organised on the basis of professional interest, particularly of writers and artists.

However, in contrast to other migrant organisations, the Albanian ones almost always focus on cultural issues and the preservation of the Albanian identity. Fearing cultural uprooting, these organisations focus particularly on the socialisation of the second generation, especially through Albanian language classes. There are few Albanian migrant organisations which advocate for the civil, legal and human rights of this community in Greece and even less which focus on women's issues or have a female majority in their board of trustees and directors. In summary, there are four types of organisations:

- those which focus on cultural politics, usually with a common area of origin of members;
- those which deal with practical needs of migrants such as documentation, racism etc.;
- those of the ethnic-Greek migrants; and
- branches of the main Albanian political parties.

During field work in Thessaloniki, we found that most migrant organisations there seem to be elitist gatherings of highly-educated Albanians, whilst large-scale participation of average Albanian migrants is very low. The latter are mostly brought together for concerts organised by the various Albanian artists who travel to entertain their compatriots in Greece, or during festive gatherings on Albanian national days and other such events. Nonetheless, transnational socio-political spaces are being created, as narratives of 'homeland' are shared and reproduced, whilst social remittances flow in the opposite direction (Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2005; Maroukis 2005a).

7. Hometown Associations are migrant organisations in destination countries that maintain ties and material support to their regions, towns or cities of origin.

4 ALBANIAN MIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS

Since contemporary emigration in Albania was almost zero during the decades of communist rule, Albania is one of those few places where we can examine the impacts of migration on origin populations and their socio-economic development more clearly. Bearing in mind that Albania was a rather conservative and patriarchal society up to the 1990s, the types of households present in rural communities did not display much variation. The most common household type was the multi-generational family, where the elderly parents lived together with at least one of the married sons, his wife and young children, as well as other unmarried sons or daughters they may have had. Economic difficulties and restrictions on migration and building permissions during the communist era often made it impossible for married sons to move out of the common ancestral home, thus creating an even larger household. The other common type, which was especially promoted by the party-state, was the nuclear family constituted of two parents and their young children. Women-headed households were usually only the case when the husband died. If the couple was young, the woman would often re-marry and move away, whilst the children would be cared for by the paternal grandparents. Divorce was frowned upon and rates were quite low. When it did occur, again possibilities for re-marriage were sought.

4.1 Typology of remittance-recipient and remittance-sending households

The typology of migrant households in the country of origin varies from family to family according to access to work abroad and also to work permits. They often reflect traditional compositions of extended family structures and also gendered and generational cultural responsibilities of migrants. In Albanian families, the husband is usually the person who is formally the head of the household. If he dies, his widow replaces him in this role. However, in some households, especially when both elderly parents are very old and fragile, this may simply be a formality and they are addressed as head of the household out of respect. However, in practice one of the other members of the household takes over the responsibilities and duties. This may be the eldest son, or in his absence, his wife.

The following household types could be identified amongst the sample of remittance-recipients in rural south-east Albania:

Female-headed households

Type 1. These are *de facto* female-headed households, since within the family that includes the husband, the latter continues to be the head. These women live with their children in the villages, whilst their husbands live and work in Greece and return for visits several times a year. In these cases, the family looks forward to a reunification either in Albania or in Greece. When the husband has a

steady job in Greece and his residence and work permits are in order and he earns a good living, the prospects are more often to reunite the family in Greece. This is the most predominant type amongst the female-headed remittance-recipient households that participated in the study.

Type 2. Similar to the households above, this type describes situations where the woman heads the household temporarily. This is the case when the husband works in Greece seasonally,for up to six months during the year, but lives with his family in the village the rest of the time.

Type 3. This is when the woman is a widow. She may either be living:

- alone;
- with her young grandchildren of sons (and sometimes daughters) who live and work abroad (often in Greece);
- with her young grandchildren of sons (and sometimes daughters) whose mother or father has died and the other remaining parent has re-married and lives with their new family – often, such children are not easily accepted when the remaining parent marries a single partner;
- with the wife and children of her son(s) whilst the latter are working abroad.

These households may also include unmarried sons or daughters, or divorced daughters. They may also have other married sons and daughters living in the same village, other villages or towns in Albania who come and visit her, or lend a hand when there is a need, but live in separate households.

Male-headed households

Type 1. The most typical household consists of a multi-generational family where (elderly) parents live with their children and grandchildren and where there is at least one migrant son living in Greece who sends remittances.

Type 2. Elderly widowers or couples who are pensioners and who live on their own. All their children have emigrated to Greece (and other countries) and live there together with their spouses and kids, often in separate households. These parents may be living 'officially' on their own, and *de facto* are the 'responsibility' of the youngest son and his wife to look after them. However, in certain cases they may receive remittances from all sons (and sometimes daughters) in the form of 'gifts' or 'just for a coffee', although the youngest son may be the principal remittance-sender.

Depending on age and health, the older Albanians in the country of origin continue to engage in subsistence farming. Sometimes they may rent their agricultural land to other families in the village. Their income is thus a mixture of [meagre] old-age pensions, some farm produce they grow themselves or rent earnings from the land, and remittances from their children. Some of them may have lived in Greece with their (usually) son's family, and in some cases the husband may have been a migrant himself in the early 1990s, working for several weeks or months without documents in Greece, and then returning home. They may have also looked after the young kids of their migrant children, in order to support the migration project so that both male and female migrants can work and save some earnings.

Type 3. In very rare cases, it is the wife who has emigrated while the husband lives in Albania, sometimes together with the children. The study came across at least two such cases, one of which was a family of mixed Egyptian and Albanian Muslim background, wherein the wife worked in Greece, while the husband and their two teenage children lived in the village. In the other case the wife worked seasonally in agriculture in Greece while the husband managed their cattle farm.

Household typology: elderly couple in Albanian village, sons in Athens

Here is a typical example of households where only the older parents remain in the village. Nexhi (63) and Bedri (68) live on their own in Pojan. They have three sons all of whom are married and living with their families in separate households in the Greek capital Athens. Their income consists of their monthly old-age pension – a total of 15,000 lek/month [€120], some rent from their agricultural land, and some remittances that their sons bring them – around €100 twice a year when they come to visit. The sons, who are in their late 30s and early 40s, have been living in Greece for 15 years. They are now married and their own children are enrolled in the Greek education system – grandsons and granddaughter are between two and 12 years old. Both eldest sons have bought their own dwellings in Athens, which is a sign of settlement in the host country. On the other hand, they have also bought apartments or a building plot in Albania's capital, Tirana. This confirms that although settled in Greece, they have not severed links with their country of origin. This investment of their remittances in property is a measure of social insurance against their own old age and in the face of their insecure of immigration status in Greece. Thus, the sons and their families plan to live in Greece for the foreseeable future, especially because their children are at school. They visit their elderly parents once or twice a year, at which time they also bring some cash, and other in-kind remittances such as clothes, medicine, etc. The elderly parents themselves lived in Athens for two years, but returned to their village because they found life in Greece's capital difficult at their age. They did not speak the language, although they learned their way around on public transport quite well and were mobile within the city. It was mainly the husband who was bored and unhappy, because he had no work there. Granny, on the other hand, was quite happy because she was looking after her grandchildren and taking care of household chores.

Children-headed households

These types of households are a rare occurrence and mainly found within the Egyptian and Roma communities, and are of a temporary character. In such cases, both parents of a nuclear family migrate to work in Greece for a few weeks or up to three months, and the children are left on their own. Usually, the teenage son or daughter leaves school to look after the younger siblings and the household. They receive the remittances whilst parents are away and are sometimes assisted in the way they spend them by their grandparents or, in their absence, other relatives, who live in a separate household.

In **Thessaloniki**, **Greece**, the types of families were as follows:

Male-headed households

Type 1. This was the typical nuclear and sometimes multi-generational family consisting of migrant parents, children and at times grandparents. The eldest male in the family was the formal and most often *de facto* head of the household, although he may not always contribute the most income to the family.

Type 2. The nuclear family of parents and young children, joined by a migrant male relative, usually the brother of the husband.

Type 3. Young single men living on their own, or sharing a household with other single men who are their friends or relatives. This finding fits closely with statistical data drawn from the 2001 Greek census,

according to which 65 percent of Albanian migrant households in Greece lived in some conventional form of family living arrangements – either couple and children or couples without children – while only 14 percent lived in multi-member unrelated households (Baldwin-Edwards and Kolios 2008: 12-13).

The types of households presented in the destination country reflect the male-led typology of Albanian migration to Greece. No female-headed households were interviewed in the study despite the emphasis provided by a number of the interviewees on the gendered egalitarian nature of decision-making in their households. One exception was a female-headed household which was composed of two sisters – both of whom were highly educated – and a younger brother living in Thessaloniki. In an unusual way, the eldest sister had been the first migrant who had then served as a support point for the other sister and lastly for their brother who joined her in Greece.

4.2 Changes in typologies through migration

Most changes with regards to the typologies presented relate to the situation in Greece. This is a temporal, as well as a socio-economic change. In the early 1990s, Albanian migration was dominated by men, who lived together in Greece. The living conditions were often precarious, and they lived crammed in rooms of dilapidated buildings, in poor neighbourhoods with poor infrastructure (see for instance Iosifides and King 1998). In rural Greece, they would live in barns or sheds in the fields. After they regularised their status, and concurrently with the arrival of their family members (usually wife and children), they moved to more decent living compounds. This was accompanied by – and in turn was also due to – a continuous regular status, better paid and steadier jobs, better knowledge of the language, but also changes within the Greek society itself vis-à-vis migrants. Sometimes, a nuclear family would be the place where several other male relatives (brothers, cousins) and sometimes friends would find shelter. The only woman would cook and clean while men went out to work in physically demanding jobs. To a certain extent this is still the case today, although there may be only one or two such relatives residing with the couple and their children. At other times, two or more brothers (and less so sisters) lived together with their partners and children in one household in order to cut costs and put some money aside for a separate household later on.

4.3 Multi-generational migrant families: grandmothers

In the Albanian case of migration to Greece, grandparents, particularly grandmothers, play a significant role in the migratory project. Over the years, and after regularisation and family reunification, the most typical household in Greece is comprised of the husband and wife, and their young or teenage children. Sometimes, elderly parents will join them for a few months, or even one or two years, depending on their ability to obtain visas and residence permits. In such cases the grandmother will typically look after the young children and the household, whilst the grandfather may find a job as a security guard for building sites. This enables the middle-aged migrant couple to do paid work, and fosters the intra-generational family cohesion. The provision of childcare for migrant families puts these 'migrating grannies' (cf. King and Vullnetari 2006) in the middle of the so-called 'global/regional care chains' (for more on global care chains see Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hochschild 2001; and Pérez Orozco 2009; and for the Albanian situation Vullnetari and King 2008).

Most Albanian migrant women in Greece (and Italy) provide care for local Greek families, but need care for their own children during their work hours. This is provided by other Albanian migrant women – often grannies in their late 50s or 60s – who also look after the household chores. In addition, grandparents are often the only link migrant children have with their cultures of origin (see also Gogonas 2007). This

process is structured within Albanian traditional norms, as it is often the parents of the migrant son who emigrate to stay with the young migrant couple; upon marriage, daughters become part of their husband's household, and their (care) responsibilities are now for their in-laws. However, the care chain may break and result in care drain as some elderly parents, who are in their late 70s and above and who usually remain in Albania, may be in need of care themselves. In Albania, care provision from the state or other private institutions is very limited and inadequate, especially in rural areas. Families have traditionally looked after their young, the elderly and the fragile. However, with migrant sons and daughters-in-law abroad, many elderly parents are finding themselves 'abandoned' (King and Vullnetari 2006).

Two main factors regarding the social organisation of care should be emphasised. First, the economics of labour migration: looking after elderly and children abroad provides much more financial rewards than looking after one's in-laws, which is a moral obligation but often yields no money (Vullnetari and King 2008). In addition, some families decide that the cost of living in Greece for all the household members may be higher than the income earned, especially if the migrant wife cannot find a well-paid job. Thus, it might be more financially beneficial for the elderly parents to stay in the village in Albania, where the costs are much lower, and where €100 or €200 will go a long way in covering expenses. Second, the social aspect is crucial: families are not always a happy place. Conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law have always existed in Albanian households. Part of the benefit of migration considered from the point of view of young migrant women is their 'liberation' from the constant petty squabbles with their mothers-in-law (see also King and Vullnetari 2009). The various strategies employed – care at a distance, 'migrating grannies' or transnational grandparenting – are original responses to the complex socio-economic and cultural transformations taking place in Albania and its emigrant communities abroad.

4.4 Maintenance of transnational family cohesion

The families in both Albania and Greece maintain their links transnationally in a variety of ways. First of all, there are frequent telephone calls at least once a week. For instance, the vast majority of respondent families in the rural areas – more than 90 percent in the survey – have mobile telephones, and a third have a fixed telephone line. Secondly, there are the visits from emigrants to their families in Albania. Due to visa difficulties, visits in the opposite direction are less frequent. Migrants visit their families generally three times a year: during the Greek Orthodox Easter (March or April), during

Transnational grandmother Kadrie

Kadrie is 78 years old and lives on her own in the village. Both her sons live with their families in Greece. Her principal income is her meagre pension of 5,000 lek/month [€45], supplemented by some remittances that her sons bring with them when they visit. This is about €100 three times a year. Some nephews who live in the USA have sent her some medicine now and then, and some money as a present 'for a coffee' once or twice. Both her sons have bought a building plot in Tirana and plan to build a flat there together with some relatives, part of which they can then sell off to potential buyers, whilst at the same time securing a base for themselves in the capital. A few years ago she went to live with the youngest son and his family in Greece, but returned to the village after two years mostly because of constant quarrelling and even physical fighting with her daughter-in-law.

the Greek summer holiday in August-September, and for Christmas and the New Year (December-January). Those who live far away, e.g. in Athens or on remote Greek islands, may visit less. On the other hand, those who live nearby, especially around the border areas and as far as Thessaloniki, may visit even more frequently. Some migrants living in Thessaloniki make monthly visits, and effectively live between the two countries. Other visits may take place for special life-course events such as weddings, funerals, births, or in case of illness or death of a family member. Most in-kind and monetary remittances are brought during such visits, as hand carrying remittances is a cost-efficient and trusted form of transmission.

Greek immigration regulations condition the visits made by migrants and their families between Greece and Albania. The most common problem is the availability of up-to-date residence permits, as it may take up to two years for the Greek authorities to renew migrant permits. This bureaucratic ploy separates migrants from their families. Thus it is common for migrants to miss significant events in Albania such as the funerals of their loved ones.

The third way of maintaining transnational relations is through migrant relatives and friends, who visit parents of others who cannot or do not visit, and transport money, objects and affection between the two parts of the family. There is increasing use of the internet and e-mail between those in Albania and the migrants in Greece and throughout the transnational community. These channels of communication are used to a much lesser extent with relatives in the rural areas of origin. This is partly due to low availability of internet coverage in rural Albania – none of the respondents had an internet connection – and the low levels of computer-literacy amongst rural households.

5 REMITTANCES

Remittances have been very important for Albanian households over the last 18 years. As socio-economic and political processes and events triggered the movement of citizens to other countries, remittances have played a major role in the improvement of the lives of most families, while contributing to the country's economy. Contemporary migration is relatively recent, yet as time goes by changes have been seen in the ways remittances are being sent, used, and managed in Albania. In the case of Greece, regularisation enabled family reunification while other migrants later married and started their families there. In such instances, remittances to Albania decreased, as now only the elderly parents remained in the village. On the other hand, other inflows have certainly increased. Extension of stays in Greece allows for more financial resource accumulation, thus making more funds available for investment, a significant share of which is sent to Albania. Other changes are related to the use of remitting channels, which is evident in the increase in the use of formal channels such as banks, but not necessarily a reduction in the use of informal channels such as bringing it themselves or sending with friends during visits.

5.1 Amounts and Frequency of Remittances

The survey data show that the sums remitted per year from Greece to rural households in Albania continue to be significant. The estimated total amount of remittances sent per year to the survey respondents stands at almost € 1 million, with an average of more than € 2,600 per household.

A little more than half of the survey respondents received remittances every three to six months. This is indeed a clear pattern of remitting when combined with migrants' visits to their family members in Albania – usually three times a year. The sub-group of seasonal migrants who work in Greece for up to six months a year is included here; most of them bring their remittances when they return home at the end of the working season. The next most important group is that of migrants who remit once a year. This pattern may reflect the maturing of the Albanian migration in Greece, whereby migrants and their families have settled in Greece, and only their older parents have remained in the village – hence less frequent visits, and less remitting. Besides this frequency, 10 percent of the families reported that they send remittances as and when needed by the household in Albania.

While respondents have been categorised, the remitting pattern was in fact not always clear-cut and frequencies varied from month to month, and from year to year. This frequency also depended on the income of migrants and their cost of living, as well as other unexpected expenses. For instance, during the month when migrants have to pay their quarterly bills they may not remit at all. Remittances are also affected when migrants must pay for the expensive processing fees for residence and work permits, which substantially drain their earnings.

A breakdown of the data by sex reveals that households administered by wives receive remittances more frequently than the other types of households. Similar to the other household types, the wives receive the majority of the money every three to six months; however, they also receive remittances once a month and every two months – twice as much as the other group.

Table 1 Frequency and Administrators of Remittances

Cross-tabulation of remittance-sending frequency and remittance administrator being the wife or not, with Chi2 test of independence between rows and columns.

Pearson chi2(6)=26.05 Pr=0.000.

Frequency of transfer	Wife	Person other than Wife	Total
Twice a month	2 (2.0%)	1 (0.4%)	3 (0.8%)
Once a month	13 (13.0%)	14 (5.6%)	27 (7.7%)
Every 2 months	12 (12.0%)	19 (7.6%)	31 (8.8%)
Every 3 to 6 months	61 (61.0%)	133 (53.2%)	194 (55.4%)
Once a year	3 (3.0%)	55 (22.0%)	58 (16.5%)
Less than once a year	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.8%)	2 (0.5%)
As needed by the household	9 (9.0%)	26 (10.4%)	35 (10.0%)
Total	100 (100.0%)	250 (100.0%)	350 (100.0%)

Source: questionnaire survey n=350

Much like the frequency, the amounts sent are not always consistent and vary per household, per situation within the same household, and of course with changes over time. They depend on many factors which include whether the migrant is single or married with children, whether the family is with him/her in Greece, on their legal status in the country which gives them greater job and life security, on the migrant's type of job and their household earnings, and not least on the orientation of the family towards the future in their origin or destination country.

Table 2 Frequency distribution of categories of yearly remittances

Remittance sum per year in Euros	Count	Percent	Cumulative
less than 1,000	66	18.9	18.9
1,000- 2,000	139	39.7	58.6
2,001-4,000	76	21.7	80.3
4,001-6,000	44	12.6	92.9
6,001-8,000	19	5.4	98.3
8,001 or more	6	1.7	100.00

Source: questionnaire survey n=350

Table 3 Annual Remittance Amounts

Descriptive statistics for remittance amount per year (mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum) – entire sample and by remittance administrator.

Amounts are in Euros.

Sample	Count	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Entire sample	350	2,595.8	2,144.2	50	12,000
Remit administrator is wife	100	3,151.5	1,973.6	250	9,000
Remit administrator is father	143	2,518.4	2,115.9	150	10,000
Remit administrator is mother	98	2,226	2,325.1	50	12,000
Remittance administrator is 'other household member'	9	1,677.8	868.2	800	3,500

Source: questionnaire survey n=350

'Just for coffee '

Throughout the interview process, the concept of 'coffee money' was introduced by the respondents both in the Albanian villages and in Thessaloniki, Greece. This phrase describes one of the two most frequent forms of sending remittances to family members in Albania (the other one being labelled as 'wages' or 'pension'). The 'coffee money' consists of small sums – often around €20 or €50 – which are sent back as gifts, and not at regular intervals. The money is rarely used to buy just 'coffee', but it can cover an array of minor needs of the recipient. Often this is the most frequent form in which daughters remit to their parents, as they are not considered responsible for the latter's care and financial maintenance – usually the youngest son and his wife have these duties. 'Coffee money' is also sent by other, elder sons and their wives who may want to give their parents a small gift on occasions. Less frequently, some 'coffee money' may be sent to siblings or other relatives as tokens of love and care. The social and cultural aspects of these remittances reflect the importance of family in the Albanian context, notwithstanding distance through migration. The message conveyed through such gifts is that relatives working abroad still think about and value family members and friends despite the distance.

5.2 Transmission channels

In the early 1990s, the main means through which Albanian migrants in Greece sent money home was by bringing it themselves, through relatives and friends, or via a paid courier who was usually a taxi driver. Four reasons accounted for this: first, their legal status was overwhelmingly irregular at the time and choosing formal channels such as banks was not only impossible, but also quite risky. Second, formal channels of transmission were limited, bureaucratic and not widely available to migrants. Third, the geographical proximity of the two countries meant that taking the cash by hand during visits was feasible, and even desirable. Fourth, migrants often worked seasonally in Greece only for a few months, and preferred to bring the money with them when they returned.

However, these methods, especially the first two, had risks embedded in them. During the early 1990s, and again in 1997-1999 Albania was a country gripped by insecurity, political turmoil and reduced authority of the law. Especially after the arms depots were robbed in 1997 and thousands of light armaments circulated freely in the hands of the public, various gangs of brigands ruled the main roads, especially close to the border crossings with Greece. Returning migrants were targets since it was public knowledge that they brought back hard-earned cash. This was the point when the MTOs[8] such as Western Union and Money Gram, saw lucrative opportunities for business and started focusing on the Albanian remittance market by providing financial products and services. Later on, the Greek banks became aware of the potential of this market and entered the competition, which has, over the years, brought down transaction costs and transfer time. The following sections present information from the time of the survey in the winter and spring of 2008.

Hand-carry

More than 90 percent of the questionnaire respondents indicated that hand-carrying is the most common method of sending remittances to Albania. In-depth interviews in Thessaloniki also revealed that hand-carrying was the most preferred method. This usually takes places when the remitter returns for visits, or at the end of the working season (for those who are temporary migrants).

This is particularly pertinent between the two study sites because the share of regularisation amongst Albanian migrants, particularly for those from the study area of origin, has increased. This has enabled migrants to travel back and forth between Greece and Albania at least three times a year, as mentioned earlier. The geographical proximity between the two countries also permits this method. In addition, as migration matures, the male migrant is joined by his wife and children, leaving behind mostly older parents. As a result, amounts sent have also declined and migrants consider that it is not worth putting the small sums they send, such as €100 or €200, through the bank system.

Relatives or friends

This is the second most important way of transmitting cash to Albania: 27 percent of respondents in the survey said their migrant family member sent money through relatives or friends. As migration becomes further established, the majority of migrants live in communities where they are surrounded by relatives and friends, or acquaintances from the same or adjacent village. If a migrant is not able to travel to Albania for work or documentation reasons, she/he will always find some other trusted person within the community in Greece who they can trust to bring the money home. Particularly as Thessaloniki is so close to Albania, there are migrants from these villages who travel back and forth constantly. At other times, migrants will go to the bus station where passenger buses leave to go to Albania every day, and may by chance find someone they know who lives in the city and is travelling to the village. Migrants and their families who participated in this research emphasised that no monetary payment was made to the person who transferred the money. However, sometimes the sender would buy the transmitter a beer to say 'thank you', but most often 'the debt' incurred would be paid back through reciprocity.

Paid courier

This is a less expensive option when compared to MTOs, especially as it does not require any documentation. There are a range of such paid couriers that transport money for a fee, e.g. taxi drivers or bus drivers who usually transport people between the two countries, and also businessmen who may have a small

8. Also known as Money Transfer Companies (MTCs), MTOs are privately owned proprietary networks which provide domestic and international money transfers. The transfers are facilitated by small operators through electronic fund transfers via telephone, fax or email.

transport service firm running the same route. The typical scenario is that a migrant will go to the bus station where buses leave for Albania and give the driver a package with the name of someone who will go to collect it at the other end, for instance when the bus arrives at its destination in Korçë. In the early 1990s, Greek taxi drivers were quite privileged since they had the documentation to work on both sides of the border. This was considered the safest way to transport money, in the absence of other feasible options and in the face of the threat that armed brigands posed. Albanian taxi drivers have taken over much of this business now. However, trust is at the base of these informal transactions, and often the drivers are either from the village or area, or are recommended by a friend or relative. The third group is constituted of small business owners such as shopkeepers, who go to Greece to buy their goods, and whilst they are there they also transport money or furniture for a small fee. The money arrives at the destination within the same or the next day, depending on the distance between the start and the end of the journey. The services are usually carried out for a flat fee of €10 for any sum remitted.

Banks

During the communist rule the few existing banks in Albania were national ones. In 1991 a two-tiered banking system was introduced, with the Bank of Albania designated as the central bank with supervising and overseeing powers over the activities of all second-tier commercial banks, as well as of the Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) and the MTOs (Bitzenis and Nito 2006: 96). Gradually, the national banks were privatised, whilst other private banks entered the market, mostly from abroad. Two principal factors help explain the low use of banks in Albania: the legacy of the cash economy inherited from the communist years, and the collapse of the pyramid 'savings' schemes in 1997. During communism very few Albanians had bank accounts and most of these were savings accounts. The cash economy carried over into the transition years and by 2005 cash payments still accounted for 95 percent of all retail transfers (Hernández-Cross et al. 2006: 11). The fiasco of the pyramid 'saving' schemes destroyed the population's nascent financial experience and trust in the local banking system that had been emerging in the early 1990s. Its consequences are felt ten years on, especially by rural residents and those who lost large sums.

Besides these factors, until recently banks have been perceived by migrants and their families as too bureaucratic, complicated and limited. Whilst banks have branches only in urban areas, most of the population lives in the countryside (although the latter is changing as a result of the large-scale post-communist internal migration). The disadvantages are increased by their limited opening hours whether in Greece or Albania. This is quite inconvenient, especially for migrants in Greece, as they work long hours each weekday and often on Saturdays. In Greece access to banks remains problematic for migrants with irregular status. Migrants with bank accounts prefer only to transfer larger sums through banks while they send smaller amounts of €50-200 more frequently through other means. In the survey, only six respondents or around 2 percent of the sample responded that they used banks to receive their remittances, and only one of these by using a debit card.

Bank Initiatives

Some banks have tried to design some of their offerings in order to reach even the poorly serviced rural areas in Albania, or cover areas where their own branches are not present. For instance, American Bank of Albania (ABA) aims to meet this dual objective by working in partnership with the Albanian National Post Office (Posta Shqiptare), which has 541 offices throughout urban and rural Albania. Amounts of up to €500 can be sent daily at a cost of €6 (from October 2008, the ABA is known under the name of Intesa Sanpaolo).

Another product that has been designed especially for the Albanians in Greece is the possibility (for those living far away from ABA branches in Greece) to deposit or to send money to Albania, using the Agricultural Bank of Greece's (ABG) network. Once the money is deposited in the nearest ABG Branch, it is then either credited to the migrant's account with ABA in Greece or is remitted to

American Bank of Albania advertising in Korçë: 'Transfers Greece-Albania: only 6 euro commission'

Presence of MTOs

The world's largest two MTOs are also present in Albania, namely Western Union (WU) since 1998, and MoneyGram (MG) since 2004, which operate either through their own branches or through local partners. They have a total of 300 outlets between them and by 2005 had captured 78 percent of the total formal remittance transfer market in Albania (Kring 2007: 15). The fees charged by MTOs remain relatively high. However, their instant service is very appealing and useful to many migrants and their families who need to transfer money fast. A transfer of €150 between Greece and Albania costs €14.50 through MG and €15.25 through WU, both for delivery within 10 minutes. These fees have remained the same in 2008, i.e. around 10 percent by WU and 7.5 percent by MG per transferred amount.[9] Respondents considered that using these companies is very expensive, but efficient and fast, especially when the family needs the money urgently, or as one of the respondents put it, when the transmitter wants to be sure that the money will arrive 'absolutely' within the same day. It was this speed and the guarantee of service that was valued the most by those who had used a variety of channels for remitting.

Around 10 percent of survey respondents said they received remittances via MTO. A range of reasons were given, with the most important being that the family in Albania urgently needed the money , either because they are poor, or because a particular need such as illness or death had arisen. Especially for families living in dire poverty such as the Egyptians and Roma, this method ensured a regular money supply for those back in the village who had no other income source to fall back on. For instance, most families would explain that there was no need to pay so much for the MTO transfer when the family in the village had enough to get by until the migrant returned home with money. It appears thus that the poorest pay the higher prices. Others used MTOs when transfers were needed regularly, for instance when the migrant parents had left their very young children to be looked after by grandparents in the village, and sent small amounts each week, in order to ensure that there was money to cover their needs at all

An MTO comes to Pojan

Considering the usefulness of MTO services, as well their economic potential, a small local firm in one of the study villages entered into cooperation with the Albanian representative of the Western Union, UnionNet, to offer remittance transfer services in the village of Pojan. This opened in the summer of 2008 and is located in a small business point at the centre of the village, which also provides landline telephone services and cable TV. Besides being fast, this service is now also closer to migrants' families' homes (previously, the nearest place was in the town of Korçë).

9. Agencies' own promotional material in Greece.

Western Union Services in Pojan

5.3 Profiles of remitters and recipients

First, women are in the majority as respondents – and therefore as remittance administrators – in the age groups between 16 and 55 years of age. The weight of this group is boosted by the presence of wives of male migrants in nuclear families. This is even more poignant for the age groups between 16 and 45, but especially for the 36-45 age group where of 53 respondents only one is male. Second, if remittance administration is used as a proxy for gendered decision-making within the family, we observe that the more patriarchal model of decision-making is stronger in older ages – around 60 percent of decision-makers in the age-group 46-55 are women, but this share falls to 30 percent for the next age group of 56-65. This information would suggest that male emigration is emancipatory for women who remain in the villages because they are now administering the household finances. However, the in-depth material suggests that this is not always the case. Not only do men continue to hold on to a high degree of decision-making even when they live abroad, but women often feel overburdened with all the responsibility of the household and looking after the children and their education.

5.4 Patterns of remittance sending and receiving

The following are the types of remittance patterns observed amongst respondents:

- From migrant husband to his wife and children in the village. The sender is the husband and the recipient is the wife. The migrant is in Greece long-term.

The family is usually nuclear: parents and young children, but sometimes the husband's parent(s) may be living with the family. However, they may be very old, ill and fragile. Thus, the duties and responsibilities are taken over by the wife. Remittances to these types of households are amongst the highest sums sent amongst the survey respondents.

Husband to wife remittance transfer

Donika lives with her four children in the village, whilst her husband works away in Greece. She has no other income except for his remittances, since the children are still young and someone needs to look after them. Furthermore, she cannot be near livestock for medical reasons, thus she cannot look after a cow or sheep to supplement household income. Other types of employment in the village are lacking. When asked about the remittances her husband sends her, she replied:

> … Remittances vary per month and season. E.g. I can tell you now that he has not sent anything recently because he has been unemployed for three or four months… of the winter. During the summer it's about €500-€600 up to €1,000 every month or every two months. Because he also has his expenses where he lives, he is like a separate household [in terms of expenses]: has to pay rent, buy food, this and that. We are like two households… So around October or November we start feeling the strain because there is less work then, and we start tightening our belts a bit more than during the summer…
>
> [Donika, 37 years old, Albania]

- From migrant husband to his wife and children in the village. The sender is the husband and the recipient is the wife. The migrant works seasonally in Greece.

This group of migrants forms a significant proportion of the population in the villages. It is partly composed of those who are not able to receive long-term permits, and those who for various reasons do not want to go through the tedious and nerve wracking process of obtaining the longer-term documents in Greece. The majority of these migrants have been working in Greece since the early 1990s, moving to-and-fro. After the 1998 regularisation, and especially after 2000, they decided to stay in the village and continue working there in farming, or run a small business. However, remittances from Greece continued to be crucial in order to survive and even to make any farm or business worthwhile. Usually, however, seasonal migrant households are much poorer than those of long-term migrants, since remittances are also much lower.

Seasonal migrants, in contrast to long-term migrants who usually have two-year residence and work permits, go to work in Greece under a different programme. They apply each year for a seasonal short-term visa at the Greek embassy in Korçë, sponsored by a Greek employer, usually a small farmer. Once they arrive in Greece, the migrant extends the work permit to the maximum period of six months, which allows him/her to work in Greece. These permits are tied to employers. However, once they complete the work for which they are hired in their sponsoring farm, they may go to work elsewhere in Greece, making use of the network of friends and relatives who may be there holding the long-term permits. These people will assist with other work which is better paid, such as in urban areas (often in construction), will accommodate them etc. Those who do not have the necessary network return home after work has dried up in the main farms, even though they could have used an additional one or two months on their work visas. The majority of respondents in the village who held such seasonal work visas worked in agriculture, and only rarely did they move elsewhere to supplement their income. The majority who work in farming tend to farm beans or work in fruit (apple or peach) orchards in rural Veria, an area in north-western Greece.

Seasonal work of an Albanian in the orchards of Greece

> He [her husband] works in peach orchards… near Veria… Then, when that finishes there, he goes elsewhere and does welding jobs, wherever he has found job opportunities, all sorts of work… His job is not guaranteed, so he takes whatever comes before him… They are issued their visas towards the end of May and he leaves in mid-June…. He then returns at the end of six months, sometime in December.
>
> [Monda, 45 years old, Albania]

Earnings of seasonal migrants are amongst the lowest and the work is precarious and not regular — they do not work every day and often work abroad only three to four months a year. It is thus very difficult for a seasonal migrant to be able to bring back good money (although some do). They earn around €18-€25 per day for a 10 hour working day or around €350 per month, and may bring back €1,500, or a maximum of €3,000 for the entire work season. Sometimes (meagre) meals and accommodation in a barn are provided by the employer. Often, the money they bring back is enough to pay for the family's expenses through the winter. Sometimes families have to borrow to be able to survive until the time comes when the migrant returns to Greece in the spring, earns some money and sends it home in the first instance. Usually, the migrant will send money back home through friends, often about €150 or €200 once a month and then bring the rest of the money with him when he returns at the end of the season. It is only when both husband and wife work in Greece (seasonally in this case), leaving their children with their parents or in-laws, that they manage to put aside enough financial capital to be able to invest in building a house of their own, and then furnish it. After this project has been completed, or at least is well under way, only the husband will emigrate.

In seasonal migrants' households, remittance money is often combined with other income from activities in agriculture, or sometimes planting an apple orchard. Both husband and wife in such families may also work as day labourers for other village families in agriculture, if and when there is work available.

- From migrant son to his parents, when the son is single. Usually, the father receives the remittances, unless he has died, in which case the mother does.

There may be unmarried sisters and brothers in the household. Usually remittances from young single men can be quite substantial. On their part, the household usually has other income-generating activities, often some subsistence farming, an apple orchard, or some livestock.

- From migrant son to his wife, children and older parents. The recipient is usually the father, except when he is very ill or has died; in this case the recipient is the mother.

Not all married migrant men have been able to arrange family reunification with their wife and children. Sometimes the problem lies with the very high level of difficulty posed by the requirements of the Greek government for this process. At other times, the wife remains behind in order to look after his elderly parents. In such cases, the father usually receives the money, but, if he is ill or had died, it is the mother who does, and decides on its use – respondents reported – in collabouration with the migrant's wife.

A husband hand-carries the remittance home

> My husband brings the money with him when he comes to visit, he doesn't send it. When he comes here in April, in August and for the New Year,three times a year… He may bring €2,800 or €3,000, sometimes €2,500, other times €3,500. There is no fixed amount, it depends on how his work goes… Myself and my mother-in-law, we the women manage it.
>
> [Elda, 34 years old, Albania]

- From migrant son and his wife to his older parents. The sender is usually the son and the recipient is usually the father, except when the latter has died; in this case the recipient is the mother.

When the migrant son and his wife live in Greece together with their children, the sums sent to his parent(s) are reduced drastically, and become infrequent. On the one hand expenses in Greece increase as the household focuses on living and working there, whilst at the same time expenses that elderly parents in Albania have are minimal – besides the basics such as food and bills, their greatest expenses are usually mutual visits to relatives for occasions such as weddings or funerals. This is especially the case when parents are very old and do not work the land. When they have a cow or plant something in the field, they may use part of the remittances to pay for the mechanised processes of land cultivation or buying seeds. Most investments in the home, other repairs or major investments are carried out by the migrants themselves when they come to visit, with the money they bring with them. When the migrant couple lives in Greece alone and has left one or more of their children with the grandparents in the village, remittances are more frequent and regular – often every month, sometimes twice a month, in small sums of about €20-€50 each time, and often through an MTO.

- From migrant brother to another sibling.

These cases were very limited in the survey, but more abundant information was provided during in-depth interviews, especially with migrants in Thessaloniki.

- From migrant parents to their children.

This was the case amongst a few Egyptian families who would emigrate for two or three months to work in the neighbouring villages in Greece, whilst the eldest teenage child would be left in charge of the household and other younger siblings. He or she would receive the money sent by the parents, but would sometimes spend it according to the advice of an older relative such as an aunt or a grandmother.

5.5 Migrant women remitters

Thus far, the profiles of remittance senders and recipients have been mostly reflective of the typology of male migration to Greece. Men remitting to their wives, parents, and other family members could also be viewed as a product of typical breadwinner models. As indicated earlier, Albanian society continues to be patriarchal and patterns of social organisation remain patrilocal; such traditional responsibility to the household is practiced and honored during the migration process as well. However, such arrangements are evolving and the following examples reflect not only changes in remittance patterns but also changes in gender practices.

Migrant Women's Families and "Just for Coffee"

As noted earlier, "just for coffee" is a common saying used by migrants to describe their remittances as presents instead of being a necessity of survival. For female remittance senders the term 'just for coffee' often represents a transformation in common cultural forms of support. Albanian tradition requires that once a woman is married, her care responsibilities transfer from her own parents and siblings to those of her husband. In many cases Albanian migrant families contribute to supporting only the husband's parents, while some women often are not permitted to send money to her parents even if they are also working in a remunerated job. Therefore, money sent 'just for coffee' is a way some women offset contributions to their own families because such transmissions are considered typical and often expected; they do not indicate a level of support meant for maintaining a household. However, ideas regarding support from remittances as coming only from sons to their parents are also changing, which is discussed further in this section.

Some married daughters may also send in-kind remittances more often than monetary remittances. Items such as medicine, a TV, a fridge or a washing machine were mentioned. Married sisters also send such in-kind remittances to their married sisters living in the village, especially clothing and furniture.

- From migrant daughter and her husband to her parents.

Often daughters will bring small sums during visits, or sometime send these with relatives, as a present, 'just for a coffee'. As the daughters are not expected to maintain her parents, her remittances are considered temporary and presents. These cases were rare in the survey questionnaire, and were also conditioned by the way the questions were constructed, whereby information was solicited on the primary remitter, and less so for other remitters. However, the in-depth interview material revealed some interesting stories in this context, especially from migrants in Thessaloniki.

Moustached men vs. today's migrant women

> As for my wife's family, when we go there to visit, my wife gives a present [he uses the Greek word dhoro, meaning present] to my in-laws. Of course, it goes without saying. How can you not when you are together husband and wife in the family, and we will take something to my father but not to her father? And I'm talking about decent [e rregullt] families. If you are a moustached man [*burrë me mustaqe* – meaning a patriarchal man; this comes from the movies during communism where patriarchs were portrayed as old men with a bushy moustache], an Albanian man like that, then I don't know. But today women play a big role in the family… Today they may even have more rights than men.
>
> [Alket, 42 years old, Greece]

Another migrant, who has been living with his wife and sons in Thessaloniki for more than ten years, expressed similar thoughts about remittances sent to his 74-year-old mother and mother-in-law:

> Just as I send money to my mother, my wife also sends money to her mother… So, there is no difference, because she works and I work. There is no reason why things should be different, why one should send only to the parents of the husband…We send the money as a kind of a pension… every two to three months, whenever we can find [trusted, known] people who travel there we send the money with them… We send them each around €1000, so that they can have enough to live on… When they have bought something [a piece of furniture] we may send them more…
>
> [Berti, 47 years old, Greece]

A transnational family's web of responsibilities

Berti's wife comes from a daughters-only family, in which the youngest is unmarried and looks after the mother. So, the care responsibility has shifted somewhat to the only son-in-law to a certain extent. Berti's brother, Urim (51), who also lives with his family in Thessaloniki, brings some more clarity into the situation when he tells the story of his family. His wife also sends remittances to her mother, but not as much as they send to his mother. After all, his wife's brothers live in Albania and they live well, especially as they also have relatives in Greece. Why does he send less money to her mother than his mother? 'Well – he says – this is what we have inherited that the son helps his family more. She [his mother-in-law] has her own sons, and they might get upset if I do [remit] as a son-in-law [jokingly]'. But when he speaks of his own mother, he said that she receives money from all four children: two sons in Thessaloniki, one in the village and a daughter in the USA.

> We [him and his wife] give her about €100-€150 or sometimes €200 every three to four months… usually when we go there, but we also send it with one of us [brothers] or relatives who travel. This depends on the papers we have… For instance, from January until March of this year we have gone there [to the village] four times… We send according to our abilities, everyone has their own finances… others may send more… Our sister in America may send more, and rightly so, because there is more money over there…
>
> [Berti, 47 years old, Greece]

A woman's remittance as *dhoro,* or gift

> I didn't send them money like a pension [regularly], but when someone would go there, I would send €100-€200 as a dhoro… once a month, or once every two months, as and when we found relatives who traveled. If they traveled frequently, we sent them less, if some time had passed we would send them more. I would say: it's been a while we haven't sent them anything, so let's send them €200. Then, when I also started working, besides money we would buy them clothes, we took them food when we visited etc.
>
> [Irena, 37 years old, Thessaloniki]

In this category of remittance patterns, some higher sums are sent if the parents are looking after the children of their daughter. The primary use of remittances was to cover the child's needs, but also to help the mother and other family members living in the household generally.

- From migrant (single) daughters to their parents.

In the survey there were two such cases of women supporting their parents, both of whom were unmarried women between 25 and 26 years old. One has completed eight years of compulsory education and works as a sales assistant in a supermarket in Greece. She remits €200 each month to her family in Albania through paid couriers, and when she visits herself. The recipient is the mother. The other lives in Greece with her younger sister aged 22 and brother aged 18. She was the first to migrate and had her siblings join her later on, whilst her parents and grandmother live in the village. She has a nursing degree from Albania, but works in a factory in Greece; her sister also works in a garment factory, whilst the brother is employed

in construction. Between the three of them they remit €2,000 per year and bring the money with them when they come to visit three or four times a year. The eldest daughter gives this money to the father.

- From migrant sister to another sibling.

There was at least one case in the survey and three cases from the in-depth interviews wherein the sister and her husband had helped her brother or sister in Albania.

Table 4 - Principal uses of remittances

Percentage	Use/Expenses
95% 96.6 men 93.6 women	Current household expenses such as food, clothing, payment of rent, services of water, electricity and telephone.
82% 74.3 men 87.6 women	Maintenance of life-stage cultural traditions such as weddings, births, funerals, religious celebrations, and birthdays, thus securing the social respectability of the family.
55.4% 42.6 men 64.8 women	Purchase, construction, repairing and general improvement of the house.
54.3% 51.4 men 56.5 women	Purchase of furniture and/or electronic domestic appliances, including small generators to substitute the failing electricity supply. A significant share of respondents mentioned that many of these products were also brought back from Greece as in-kind remittances.
55.4% 61.5 men 51 women	Coverage of medical expenses, which was more pronounced amongst mother and father recipients than wives.
33.7% 36.5 men 31.6 women	Investment in farming businesses.
30.9% 37.8 men 25.7 women	Contributions for social security – for both families and migrants themselves who intend to return to Albania and who have not accumulated enough social security credit from work in Greece.
23.7% 26.3 men 21.8 women	Savings for household needs, such as for emergencies related to health.
22.9% 14.9 men 28.7 women	To finance the education of (young) family members.
15.1% 7.4 men 20.8 women	Paying back debts which were not related to migration. Two groups are included here: 1) The poorest who receive informal loans from friends and relatives to pay for their daily consumption needs. Often they will buy food on credit from the local shops and pay this money back after the migrant has sent the first batch of remittances. Egyptian and Roma households were some of the most important users in this category. 2) Those who have received loans from formal institutions such as banks and MFIs to finance a (usually agricultural) business, and use remittances to service these loans.
12.3% 8.1 men 15.4 women	Poor households also used remittances to pay back migration-related debt, usually for visas, transport and smugglers. The group consisted of a significant share of Roma and Egyptian migrants.

Percentage	Use/Expenses
6.9% 5.4 men 7.9 women	Leisure purposes. Changes influenced by evolving patterns of remittances and migration have brought about spending on activities such as going out for a meal as a family when the migrant man comes to visit his wife and children. Some of the more affluent families go on holidays by the seaside and so on.
3.1% 4.8 men 2 women	Purchase of urban land for construction of houses or investment. However, the survey does not capture the sums remitted for this purpose and which the migrants administer themselves. The in-depth interviews showed that these are quite substantial sums and are often sent formally from one bank account of the migrant man in Greece to his bank account in Albania.
2.6% 3.4 men 2 women	Investment in non-agricultural business which reflects investment opportunities in rural areas, investment and business climate in the country more generally, and the limited income-generating opportunities locally.
0%	None of the respondents was paid specifically for the care of children they provide for their family members – sons and daughters. Obviously, the remittances sent are used to cover the needs of these children, and would not be otherwise coming were they not staying with the carer. But it is important to emphasise the informal character of these arrangements, which are based on a combination of reciprocity and altruism.

5.6 Investment

Most investments made by migrants in the research are in construction, repair and general improvement of the house where the family lives. This takes place most often in the villages of origin. Migrants also use remittances to invest in purchasing or building property in urban areas, especially in the capital. Significant sums of money are earmarked for this purpose, sent from one bank account of the migrant in Greece to another bank account he holds in Albania. These sums are not captured by the survey in the villages, because the money did not pass through the channel of older parents. These homes act as a form of capital and social investment. On the one hand, they offer a source of income through rent or future sale. On the other, they may be retirement homes for the migrants, or homes for their children, upon return to Albania. As such, they serve as a future safety net.

Pre-migration structures in south-east Albania

Remittances are often invested in construction of homes like this one in south-east Albania

Other remittances are invested in business. Through in-depth interviews with returnees and local stakeholders, as well as general observations, we learned that the vast majority if not all of the businesses in the area had been set up using remittances from abroad, usually from Greece. Some remittances had been used to re-emigrate to Italy, from where more money was sent to be invested locally.

A significant share of the population has invested locally in agriculture. This ranged from the small farmer who sold some milk from his one cow in order to diversify the family's income, to the more sophisticated apple, onion and potato growers, livestock farms (mainly sheep and some ox and pig breeding),and bakeries. Usually only family members worked in these small agricultural businesses, but some of the farmers who cultivated large areas of land hired day labourers during the most intensive times of work such as planting and harvesting. In two cases, workers numbered as high as 25 and 50 workers at a time, but usually there were less than ten. The majority of these were women – farmers preferred them because of the higher quality of their work in comparison with men's. Many of them were Roma and Egyptians and the poorest living in that neighborhood. Therefore, local farming supported by remittances contributed to the availability of some jobs, particularly for rural women. Yet the preference for certain labourers also reveals the vulnerabilities of populations who do not have similar access to migration or even local work based on gender, class and ethnicity.

The non-agricultural sector where remittances were invested was constituted primarily by small grocery shops, some bars and cafeterias, a few warehouses, one petrol pump station, transport vehicles such as minivans and heavy-duty trucks, and hairdressing salons. Yet, some larger enterprises are being developed such as a marble-carving factory, which employed other people locally besides the family members. Thus, the importance of financial remittances in local economic development is significant in these communities.

On the other hand, investments were also made in human capital through financing education of younger family members, healthcare and payment of social security and pension premiums.

In addition to money, migrants also transfer other types of remittances such as in-kind, social and collective.

5.7 In-kind remittances

Almost half of the survey respondents replied that they received one type or other of in-kind remittances. The statistical importance of types of in-kind remittances was for clothes, food, medicine and electronic appliances in that descending order. Food is usually brought back when migrants visit and is designated not only for the family members, but also for the visiting migrants to use during the time they are in the village. Explanations given were that some products from Greece were of a higher quality (at a particular time of year), as Albania is considered as a dumping ground for expired solid and other food products. Sometimes the migrants had become used to a particular product or cooking ingredient which they could not find in Albania.

What to bring? Clothes, medicine, lemons and a water pump…

> Besides money, we also send clothes, because they are cheaper here… I also buy some medicine for my mother here because she has problems with her blood pressure… Food… When we go we stay there two or three days and take food with us, especially so we can use ourselves whilst we are there. Not that there is no good food there, food there is usually tastier without any doubt. But, we buy it here because it is sometimes cheaper. For instance, the tomatoes may be more expensive there at this time of year, the lemons or olive oil are usually cheaper here… I have also taken water pumps there, heaters, because they are cheaper here… Some relative may ask me to buy this for them and I do, I don't do it for the entire village…
>
> [Urim, 50 years old, Thessaloniki]

5.8 Social remittances

Whilst most of the literature has overwhelmingly focused on financial remittances, the social dimension of the impact of migration on sending communities has been neglected and rarely explored systematically (Hugo 2005; Piper 2005). Such non-financial impacts are often referred to as 'social remittances' (Levitt 1998). These 'ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities' (Levitt 1998: 927) are key to understanding migrants as agents of social and political change, as well as the ways in which migration affects change for those left behind (Nyberg Sørensen 2005); indeed, social remittances might even be more important than financial transfers in the long run (Kapur 2004). Moreover, there is a connection between social remittances and the patterns of utilisation of monetary remittances; for instance a switch might occur from wholly consumption-oriented expenditure to investment in business as a more 'entrepreneurial' spirit develops amongst the wider migrant or family network.

In the Albanian context, emigrants are connected to their origin country and act as transmitters of knowledge, ideas and practices through a number of ways. In other words, transnational practices are increasing and there is an emergent transnational social space, especially encompassing Greece and Italy (Chiodi and Devole 2005; Maroukis 2005a; 2005b). First, migrants follow events in Albania through ethnic mass media on satellite TV, newspapers etc. Secondly, they share knowledge and ideas with their family members and friends in Albania through videos, telephones, letters and sometimes the internet. Third, they visit Albania either on holiday or for special family occasions. Those living closer to the border may do this more frequently. There are also emerging practices of trade encouraged by migrants' links to business partners in the countries to which they emigrated. These ideas and practices that migrants bring with

them, or transmit through various channels of communication, impact gender and generational roles, ethnic identity, class and social status, as well as demography, political and social participation and human rights in Albania. As a result of living abroad, migrants have developed certain expectations of what is acceptable and what is not, particularly regarding the role of governments, standards of services, etc.

During the research, several changes due to migration were observed. First, there are the skills and ideas which migrants, especially those who travel often, bring back. Some of these skills have been successfully

The apple doesn't fall too far: Remittances in the orchard

> When I go home I take pesticides for the apple trees, pumps and pipes for the watering system. I have built a watering system myself with the plumbing methods that I use where I work here… I also take pesticides with me. My father calls me and tells me that we need this and that. I take these from a pesticide company here, I tell them I want this and that, they wrap it up in a package for me and I take it to Albania. I have to pay about €20-€30 for the load to the taxi driver or someone else who I travel with… We have plans to build a cooling storage for apples. I have inquired here [in Greece] so that we can export the apples, as I used to work for a supermarket chain here… I have started talks with them… We'll see.
>
> [Besmir, 24 years old, Thessaloniki]

Besmir is not only investing financially in agricultural products – his family has planted 1.2 hectares of apple orchards – but he is also applying knowledge that he has gained in Greece to their agriculture business. In addition, he has turned his employment opportunities into learning and networking opportunities, especially as he aims to target the Greek market by exporting his produce. What he needs is support and advice of how to maximise the potential of his business.

Whilst some ideas and practices, such as agricultural innovations, are welcomed in Albania, changes in matters such as gender relations, notably the expectations for women's behavior, take longer to occur. Migrant women who return to rural villages are frustrated by the pervasive traditional norms which limit their mobility and affect social perceptions of them.

Resistance to gendered social remittances

> Do you know what they tell us? They tell us this, the father tells his son: 'listen here my son, I have raised you and I know you well, but since you went to Greece, I don't know but you seem to keep your wife's side all the time, you listen to her a bit more'… We are talking here about those in their 50s and 60s you understand, who are used to a certain way of life. Try and convince him otherwise. They just stare at us and listen to us because they don't see us for a long time and miss us a lot… They won't grasp what we are telling them, explain to them the life we have here in Greece and the conditions we live in. That all those who live abroad in Greece, Italy or anywhere else have a similar experience: my wife comes back at six in the afternoon. Who will cook and clean for me? If the child is young, who will look after it? But they don't understand that…
>
> [Alket, 42 years old, Thessaloniki]

> They don't change, they won't change... I went to Albania last summer with my husband. Kosta left for Greece earlier and I stayed a few more days. During these days I would go often to Korçë because I was keeping an eye on the flat we have there, I would go to visit my brother-in-law etc. When a neighbour would see me in the street she would say: are you going to Korçë? Yes, I am taking this minivan to Korçë. Are you going there alone? – she would continue. I can say that Thessaloniki is as big as merging the spaces of Pojan and Korçë together. Here I go around everywhere, wherever I want. The same when I went to work. They [her neighbours in the village] were 'concerned' that I went to Korçë on my own. My sister who is here in Thessaloniki lives as far away from where I live as the distance between Pojan and Korçë. I take the children and go there every Saturday and Sunday. My husband is at work, I call him and tell him: your lunch is ready, now I am going to visit my sister. Ok, he says. It's not a problem. He never says: how will you go there on your own? Whereas there it was a bit… I was hurt and felt uncomfortable when they asked me: are you going there alone? I was obliged to be accompanied by someone else to go to Korçë.
>
> [Irena, 37 years old, Thessaloniki]

The combination of financial and social remittances has changed expectations about living standards and what constitutes a good and 'normal' life. This has been especially crucial in generating more emigration amongst the young generation. This dependency-cycle of migration may continue for as long as factors such as local unemployment, limited prospects, denied freedoms and poor infrastructure plague Albania, while employment abroad and dependency on remittances form the basis of survival and livelihoods for local communities.

6 IMPACT OF REMITTANCES ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Remittances constitute an important element not only in the lives and economies of individuals and households, but also of the local community at large. First, there is economic improvement through the infusion of significant sums of external money into the local economy through investing in building, consumption, healthcare and education, and local agricultural and non-agricultural businesses. Second, there is improvement of living conditions for migrant families, and also for the non-migrant families. The trickle-down effect is felt by daylabourers when they are hired locally by migrant families, or by local business-owners and ambulant traders when remittance money is spent in their shops and bars. Third, the quality of products and services provided locally has improved since most migrants employ their skills gained abroad when they repair and build their homes, work in construction locally, or equip their farms with modern watering systems and mechanised tools. In fact, many households which cultivate large areas of land have bought their own small tractor, and an intensive process of mechanisation has been underway. However, the migration experience also has changed thinking since along with the increase of remittances there has been a growing mentality of investment in local income-generating activities.

However, some negative aspects could also be observed. There is, for instance, a significant degree of inequality in these rural areas between migrant and non-migrant families. Although the questionnaire survey does not capture this, it was evident through observations on the ground, as well as in-depth interviews with families which had access to certain, less beneficiary, types of migration. The Roma and Egyptian communities remain the most marginalised in that respect, although some Albanian families lived in dire poverty too. Money is of course not everything and the human and emotional cost of migration was only too obvious during conversations with those remaining behind. Family separation, especially when migrants could not travel back because they lacked documentation, was a significant sacrifice that was considered as the price being paid for a better future. Although a significant number of households has left the villages for good, these rural areas are far from abandoned and present considerable potential for development initiatives.

6.1 Effects of remittance reception on gender relations

The effects of remittances on gender relations within this study reflect a diversified picture which is indicative of the more egalitarian society found in south-east Albania. Expectations vis-à-vis the gender roles within the family have not changed much in the rural south-east Albanian study area: men are expected to be the principal breadwinners by going out and earning money, whilst women are expected to look after the children, the household and elderly parents especially if they are ill and fragile. Women in rural areas also work in farming alongside their male family members, although the latter are considered at all times as the primary members of the family who have responsibility for such work. Working women are not a new phenomenon in Albania. Although we have discussed the patriarchal nature of Albanian

society, during communism rural women worked in the agriculture cooperatives alongside men. What has changed due to migration is that while the husband is working abroad, women have to shoulder a heavier load of work at home by looking after the children single-handedly and also continuing to work in the field.

In female-headed households, which represent a significant share of survey respondents, migration and remittances have had a mixed impact. On the one hand, there is more prosperity and an increased standard of living through the money that husbands remit from Greece. This certainly makes for easier home-making, a better future for the children, and a more agreeable life for the entire family. On the other hand, several of the women felt there were many negative sides to the story, which did not necessarily empower them. First, the emotional and human cost of family separation is a major issue amongst families of migrants. Couples see each other a limited number of times a year, and even then only for a few days. This is difficult for both the husband and the wife, but especially for the children, who grow up not having a father figure present in their everyday life. The mother is left with the task of dealing with the emotional needs of the children on her own (in nuclear families). Secondly, women feel empowered to a certain degree since they are able to make various decisions themselves, yet at the same time they must also bear the weight of maintaining their households and they cannot share the burden of responsibilities with their husbands. Third, women do not always make decisions about how to spend remittances sent or brought by their husbands, despite evidence that there is some degree of equality. Fourth, few women stay at home and only look after the children; the majority combine motherhood and the role of homemaker with agricultural work, whether it is tending to vegetable plots, livestock or apple orchards. When other members of the family such as in-laws or grown-up children are not there to help, they form informal alliances with their relatives for support with the most intensive tasks such as planting and harvesting. Women who live in very poor households usually do not have (enough) land of their own. In such cases when work is available, they work as day labourers in farming either in their own village or in the villages nearby. A few worked in small Greek-owned garment factories in Korçë, whilst a significant number of Roma and Egyptian women worked together with their husbands seasonally in rural Greece. Those who have a shop, a hairdressing salon or a bakery work there instead.

Remittances may also play a positive role because they increase the possibility that young women will attend higher education and thus increase their chances of being more independent and mobile than those who do not. Such development of human capital is very important for households, although it might not necessarily translate into development for the local (rural) areas. There are, for instance, a number of young women who have graduated from the university and cannot find employment, so they spend their days indoors. Once out of school, they have few occasions to go out and associate with their friends, especially as no entertainment opportunities exist locally for women except for informal chats and coffee in each other's houses. The predominant mentality that equates young women with the family's 'honour' needs to be changed if women are to enjoy spaces of emancipation and liberation. Older women – mothers and grandmothers, not to mention mothers-in-law – help to create this suffocating environment as much as men.

In spite of migration, and perhaps also because of the predominant typology of migration from this area – men first, women following as spouses, young women migrating as part of the family – women who are the principal economic migrants, whether single or married, remain rare occurrences and are not particularly well regarded. However, for women whose husbands may have secured longer-term papers and who have a steady job, the prospect of reunification in Greece is very appealing. This is all the more so considering that employment opportunities for women locally are very limited, and agriculture has a low social status and is not well remunerated. Furthermore, particularly younger married women want to enjoy some of the social benefits that come as a result of migration, including greater freedom of movement and opportunities for entertainment.

6.2 Remittances and entrepreneurship

Most of the businesses in the study area had been set up with remittances, or following the return of the migrant from abroad. However, the majority of them are registered in the name of the husband. For instance, of the 38 registered businesses in Pojan only seven were headed by women, and of the 29 registered in Zvezdë only five were headed by women. Several local key stakeholders cautioned that although the business was in the name of the husband, and employing one person, usually both husband and wife worked in it, and in an estimated 80 percent of cases women actually did most of the work, as well as the accounting, administration, etc. Since the husband was registered as the only person working in the business, he was also the one who was insured through the compulsory premium system for self-employment; *de jure*, these women were employees who worked in the informal economy. Indeed, some of the respondents would ironically note that such women are simply 'employees' of their husbands, as the husband is the one in charge, whilst they only clean the shop and sell the products standing there all day long. In such cases the word *argat* was used, which in Albanian has negative connotations of servitude and exploitation inherited from the semi-feudal Ottoman times. Nowadays, this word is usually reserved for day labourers who work in manual and low-status jobs.[10] Donika, 37, living in the village said:

> Women are oppressed when compared to men here in Albania… especially here in the villages…. It's more difficult in the villages… the ancient mentality has not moved a lot.

Although a significant number of households has left the villages for good, these rural areas are far from abandoned and present considerable potential for development initiatives. Research participants saw great potential in farming, especially large-scale, of a number of fruit and vegetables. Locally there was an increase in the cultivation of apple orchards, which allow households to earn handsome sums of money, sometimes equaling those brought from Greece. Since this type of agricultural work is considered more skilled, it is less stigmatised by at least the middle-aged villagers. The psychology around farming is also changing: there is more interest in farming when one considers himself a landowning farmer and an employer. There are signs that these well-off farmers seek to reclaim a pre-war status as part of the land-owning class. These farming enterprises, however, need significant capital before they can run on their own.

As local fruit and vegetable production increases, so does the potential to invest in agro-businesses that use these produce as raw material. As such, examples were given of cooling storage warehouses where produce could be collected and stored for sale internally in Albania and even for export; fruit-processing factories for making jams, pickles, compote; expanding existing or increasing dairy processing factories, etc. There are some initiatives which have started in this direction. However, these are all capital- and knowledge-intensive businesses, which are out of reach for most poor villagers. The most the villagers were hoping to use their remittances for was to repair their house or build a new one. Of course not everyone intended to become an entrepreneur or employer. Many would be happy if local employment were available where they could become day labourers or contract workers. In conclusion, it is necessary to provide fertile ground – the framework, infrastructure, business support – to long-term migrants (and other investors) to start such businesses as those mentioned above in order to stimulate local economic and human development.

10. Whilst many farmers who hired such labour used this word, a few amongst them explicitly added a context in which they affirmed their position as farmers, as the rich boss, in the ranks of social order in this village.

6.3 Migration and development links (co-development and public policies)

Implementation and planning of co-development policies

Throughout the research there was no evidence of co-development policies or programmes that were being carried out between Albania and Greece, not only at local level, but also at national level. As with most initiatives around the country, development initiatives between these two countries strongly addressed the immigration agenda of Greece, rather than the development agenda of Albania. There are a number of projects being carried out that link both countries, but where migration is included, they are considered to meet the development and immigration objectives of Greece. For instance, most of these initiatives aim to reduce unwanted immigration from Albania to Greece, through training of border police, insertion of 'voluntary' repatriated returnees in Albania, etc. Furthermore, Albanian migrant organisations were often excluded from such programmes, or were the 'token' consultative partner with a limited role. Truly co-development policies should aim at local development as an end in itself, not as a tool to stem further 'irregular' emigration, which has generally been the case so far. Sustainable development should address all aspects of human development, i.e. conditions where men and women can exercise freedom, equality and social empowerment, including – but not only – through emigration. Co-development policies and initiatives which consider migrant men and women as actors of development should be based on the recognition of their role also as stakeholders in host societies. This is reflected in the access they have to citizenship rights through enabling their regularisation in the host country and their gendered incorporation therein as dignified citizens with rights and responsibilities.

6.4 Links of the diaspora and migrant associations

Transnational networks: linking Thessaloniki and rural Korçë

While many migrants knew that migrants' organisations existed in Thessaloniki, others cast doubt on the ability of their leaders to promote migrants' rights instead of their own personal interests. Equally, migrant associations in Greece feel that little is done in terms of formal cooperation between themselves and local development organisations in Albania. The few initiatives that exist started in Albania, and these projects are considered as serving the agenda of these NGOs rather than satisfying the need for mutually beneficial cooperation on both sides of the Greek-Albanian border.

In Albania, membership in formal organisations was also weak, and where it existed, it was often token. Although various respondents were members of a number of interest groups, often these had been set up by foreign development agencies and had remained organisations simply on paper: for all intents and purposes they were defunct. Yet other villagers took some local initiative to repair and maintain their street, or neighborhood, whereby they collected money informally amongst themselves and completed the works.

Generally, whether inherited from the communist past, or from the more distant tribal and semi-feudal pre-communist history, these rural dwellers expected the local and national government to do everything for them. However, some nascent activities were noted, and they can hopefully be nurtured in the future. For instance, in two neighboring villages, a group of young migrant men living in Greece had gotten together, collected some money and given it to the chief of the village towards the electricity bill and other repairs of the village street lights. The chief of the commune mentioned during his interview that there had been growing interest of migrants to contribute towards public works, in particular for some initiatives that local organisations had taken up.

A transnational initiative for orphans

The Association for Orphaned Children and Youth aims to raise awareness of the plight and improve the situation of orphaned children in the villages under study and others around. Amongst other activities, the NGO organised a New Year's evening party with a group of such children in December 2007. A migrant couple from the village who live in Italy had organised their own network of friends and acquaintances in Italy, as well as a big pharmaceutical company where they both work (Schering-Plough), to collect money and presents for the children. They brought these themselves to the village and participated in the event. This initiative had found much support locally and inspired other migrants who had started to enquire how they also could contribute to such matters.[11] This same NGO had enabled a group of orphaned children to have a holiday in Greece, with the intermediary of 'The Union of Friendship between Korçë and Thessaloniki', which is part of the Epirote House Federation. However, the links had faded over time and unfortunately there was no more contact between the two. One of the most encouraging activities was the organisation of day trips for mothers (widows) to spend time together by the lake in the town of Pogradec, by leaving aside for one day the drudgery of life to relax in a different environment

11. From in-depth interview with Ms. Marjeta Jani, director of The Association for Orphaned Children and Youth, 5 March 2008.

7 ARTICULATION OF KEY ACTORS

Key stakeholders in development in Albania consist of the donor community, the Government of Albania (GoA) and the NGO sector.

Stakeholder	Description
Donor community	•There are 45 donors operating in Albania. • A Donor Technical Secretariat (DTS) exists to coordinate donors' activities at national level. It is led by UNDP, World Bank (WB), the European Commission, and the Organisation for Security and cooperation in Europe (OSCE). • The DTS works with its government counterpart, the Department of Strategy and Donor Coordination (DSDC). • The One UN project (consolidation of the activities, efficiency, funding and collabouration of UN agencies in the country) is being tested in Albania and works together with the GoA's DSDC. Cooperation is also extended to related agencies such as WB, IMF and IOM.
National and Local Government	• External Aid is managed by the DSDC and accountable to two inter-Ministerial Committees: Strategic Planning headed by the Prime Minister and Government Modernisation headed by the Deputy Prime Minister. • The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MOLSAEO) is the authority in charge of coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the National Strategy on Migration and the National Action Plan on Remittances. • The MOLSAEO also coordinates activities on gender issues. The gender-related activities are coordinated through the Sector of Gender Equality in the Directorate of Equal Opportunities Policies of this ministry. The Directorate has established a network of contact focal points on gender at national and local level. In addition, the Directorate also works closely with donor agencies and the NGO community in Albania. Other line ministries and government departments have benefited from a number of projects aimed at mainstreaming gender into their policies and practices, with the technical and financial assistance of international donors.
NGO Sector	• By the end of 2005 there were over 600 active NGOs which worked on activities ranging from service provision to advocacy to think-tanks. • A large number of NGOs have gender-related projects, and many are involved in various aspects of development, but very few are engaged with migration issues. • The development of this sector has followed donors' agendas and the majority of NGOs are thus highly dependent on donor funding, suffer from lack of long-term strategies and visions, and operate on a project-basis. Cooperation in the form of alliances, forums and networks is sporadic and project/initiative-related, often because this is a requirement of donor funding.

8 PUBLIC POLICIES

Public policy-making in Albania over the last 17 years has not only been a matter for the Government of Albania, but has been highly influenced by the international development organisations, otherwise known as the donor community, and to a lesser extent by the civil society or the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

The Government of Albania's National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2007-2013 is a roadmap that sets out Albania's national development and EU accession priorities.[12] It is based on converging 20 sectorial and 11 cross-cutting strategies, including regional development, migration, gender equality, etc. EU accession has become extremely important in framing Albania's priorities, including migration matters, especially after signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU on 12 June 2006.

The Albanian Government's policy on migration during communism was centred on closely-managed internal flows and a ban on international moves. This changed as soon as the regime fell. The political programmes that followed dealt increasingly with emigration: first as an issue of foreign policy focusing on enabling Albanians to move abroad through temporary employment agreements (1991); as a diaspora issue focusing on ethnic and cultural rights and less on employment and legal protection (1996); and as a domestic and foreign policy concern by actively pursuing employment opportunities in Albania on the domestic front and collabourating with the Greek and Italian governments for the regularisation of Albanian migrants there (1997). In 1998 the Government moved towards a 'Holistic Approach towards Emigration Management' wherein various issues are touched upon such as mapping and documentation of Albanian emigrants abroad, addressing their regularisation, strengthening consular services abroad, reviewing the legislation on emigration, adhering to international conventions, as well as preventing irregular migration (ACPS 2002: 10). In 2001, the Government began to regard emigration as a diaspora issue, and prioritised concerns about migrants' regularisation and xenophobia against them in host countries; emigration also became a foreign policy concern, with the facilitation of visa regimes prioritised as one of the components of foreign relations with other host country governments (ACPS 2002).

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement was finally signed in 2006 after years of efforts and 'homework', but the process of ratification of this agreement by the national parliaments of every EU country has been slow. Most Albanians see entry into the EU as an end to having to wait in long queues behind foreign embassy walls for an expensive and difficult-to-get visa. However, the issue is much more complicated. Around 17 years ago Albanians gained their freedom to move abroad, but then the 'abroad' did not want them any more as migrants: after the first post-communist multi-party elections, they were no longer considered refugees. Since around 2000, successive Albanian

12. EU accession acquis is a set of requirements that aspiring countries must fulfill in order to qualify for full EU membership.

governments have imposed tight rules and regulations in order to stem irregular migration towards neighbouring countries through apprehension of Albanians at the border before they cross to the other side. This time the process is not considered an infringement on Albanians' human right to leave their country and is not condemned by democracies in the 'West', as was the case – and rightly so – during the communist rule. Currently, it is carried out on 'orders' (agreements) from the same Western democracies which use Albanian border guards to police entry of Albanians into their own countries.

Thus, while legal routes of migration have increasingly narrowed for the lower skilled, who are also the most in need of earnings from abroad, elimination of irregular migration has become a priority for Albania to come closer to the EU. In recent years, this has resulted in an increased rate of expulsions from Greece and increased payments to smugglers – around €2,000-€3,000 for a single entry and up to €5,000 for a two-year Schengen (EU) visa (Kanellopoulos and Gregou 2006: 27-28).

8.1 National Strategies

The National Strategy on Migration

In 2004, a concerted effort was made to address the issue of migration in a holistic and coordinated way through the National Strategy on Migration (NSM) and its accompanying National Action Plan (NAP). The NSM was prepared by the Government of Albania with technical support from the IOM, and co-financed by the IOM and the European Commission under the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) 2001 programme. It was signed by the Albanian Council of Ministers on 19 November 2004. On 30 December of that year a working group was brought together to work out the details of the strategy in an action plan. Considering the multi-dimensionality and multi-disciplinary nature of migration, the group consisted of representatives from all the various line ministries that were related to migration.

The NSM and the NAP on Migration cover an array of issues grouped under four principal goals: mobility (expanding legal channels for emigration, return); development (addressing the root causes of migration, remittances and 'brain gain'); protection (of migrants abroad through advocacy for their rights and action against abuse, improvement of Albanian consular services for migrant citizens abroad, support of the creation and consolidation of migrants' diaspora organisations in host countries); and integration (developing further the legislative, policy and institutional framework with regards to emigration, return and readmission of Albanians and Third Country Nationals aiming to bring Albania closer to the EU) (Geiger 2007; Government of Albania 2005).

According to a study by a think tank in Tirana which monitored the implementation of the NAP on Migration (Onorato et al. 2007), the level of implementation has been very low and there have been major problems with the coordination and organisation of activities. They found that by early 2007, of the 63 measures stipulated in this document, only 17 of them (27 percent of the total) had been carried out, 12 of them (19 percent) were partially carried out, which means that more than half were not implemented as stipulated in the NAP. The rate for failing to carry out the actions stipulated in the plan was even higher: 77 percent. Of the 15 ministries consulted within the framework of the study, eight of them were unaware of the existence of the NSM and the NAP. Some went so far as to dismiss these documents as 'useless', since they were the product of another government which was no longer in power.

National Action Plan on Remittances

The National Action Plan on Remittances was one of the actions stipulated in the NSM. It was approved by the Council of Ministers on 7 November 2007, decision nr. 745. The NAP consists of eight measures

to be undertaken by a range of different actors including various ministries, the Bank of Albania, INSTAT and the Albanian National Post Office. The measures relate to the:

i. improvement of data and best practices on remittances;
ii. expansion of banking services in Albania and improvement of collabouration between Albanian, Greek and Italian banks with regard to remittance-based services offered;
iii. expansion of capacity of other financial institutions such as the MFIs in Albania, but also the Albanian Post Office, to transfer remittances or improve this service where it exists;
iv. improvement of legal status of migrants in Greece and Italy to facilitate their legal employment and access to the banking system in these countries;
v. improvement of knowledge and access of migrants before migration, while in host countries and upon return, of various financial services related to remittances, savings and investment; and
vi. increased capacity of the Albanian government and migrants' organisations in host countries to collabourate in co-development initiatives between these countries.

Although Albanian governments have vowed to work toward the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), one of which is to achieve higher levels of gender equality and women's empowerment, the NSM, NAP on Migration and the NSP on Remittances completely fail to consider gender as an analytical category (Nixon 2006).

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

Mobilising remittances to achieve sustainable development that includes women

The district of Korçë is an area with significant development potential, due to its geographical location, the geo-morphological and climatic conditions for farming, relatively educated workforce, and significant share of incoming capital through remittances. In addition, the agricultural sector – especially large-scale vegetable farming, tending of apple orchards and breeding of livestock – have developed particularly well in recent years. The combination of these factors makes this area relatively prosperous when compared to other more mountainous villages. For the majority of the population the issue is not one of survival, but one of development. This development has so far taken place almost entirely through private initiatives of migrant- and non-migrant households, as the impact of policies on rural, regional and national development, as well as those on migration and gender, appears to be limited.

Albania has adopted a number of macro-strategies covering migration, development, remittances and gender issues. This is to be commended, given that macro-level policies are important in shaping the gendered effects that both internal and international migration can have for a country. However, a number of obstacles seem to stand in the way of expected positive results. First, the various strategies are rarely linked together, and they and the implementing institutions seem to be working alongside, rather than in cooperation with, one another. Second, monitoring of the implementation of these strategies remains weak. In the few areas that this has been carried out by independent organisations, the level of implementation is very low, as seen in the case of the National Strategy on Migration and its accompanying National Action Plan on Migration (see Onorato et al. 2007). Third, policy outcomes have been particularly influenced by the conflictual character of Albanian politics, as well as the lack of continuity and stability amongst civil servants at most levels (Tahiraj 2007). Finally, and perhaps most relevant to the aims of this research, most policies do not employ gender as an integrative conceptual and analytical tool.

9.1 Infrastructural and structural reforms

Similar to previous research, the study findings emphasise the importance of policies — and their effective implementation — to create a viable and sustainable business environment and achieve a higher quality of human development. If the Albanian central and local governments are serious about harnessing remittances and attracting foreign investment for local and national development, infrastructure issues must take priority. Migrants, rural residents, returnees and key stakeholders who participated in this study repeatedly mentioned that reliable water and electricity supplies, adequate transport networks (especially in rural areas), strengthening the rule of law, settling the issue of land

ownership, and reducing bureaucracy for businesses are the most basic requirements to achieve such goals. In turn, any development initiative must address the priorities of various groups in society across gender, ethnic and generational lines.

For centuries, the life of people residing in the study villages has centred around farming and working the land. Agriculture continues to be the most important income-generating activity, and the only one for some very poor families. However, this sector generally suffers from a number of structural and local problems. Structurally, there is a lack of insurance markets for produce; a lack of information on trading prices; lack of large-scale and mechanised farming; inefficient controls at higher levels for the quality of imported products such as pesticides and anti-virus chemicals; and competition from cheaper imported produce. For farmer, the greatest challenge was finding adequate markets to sell their produce, which is often left in storage and wasted. As a result of World Trade Organisation agreements, the Albanian market is usually flooded by cheap imports from neighboring Greece and Macedonia, where farmers benefit from large-scale farming, mechanised processes, subsidies, and overall better institutional support. By contrast, in Albania land is fragmented into small plots, insecurity over land titles and ownership continues to affect future plans for investment, and mechanisation lags. This is improving, as seen in the consolidation of land through the purchase and rental land market in the study areas. The types of crops being cultivated are also being consolidated, with an increasing number of farmers now concentrating on large-scale cultivation of beans, potatoes and onions. As they emerge from almost half a century of centralised economy and planning, farmers are slowly coming to grips with the mechanisms of the market economy. Following coerced collectivisation during communism, most do not contemplate cooperative-type collabouration, thus leaving individual farmers very disempowered in the face of market forces. Most cooperation is undertaken at family and kinship level usually with regards to the planting and harvesting process, but this has not been extended as yet to collective trading.

Other sectors of the economy such as trading, construction and services have been growing, but these require capital investments which are not always available locally. Banks have made capital more available in recent years, especially for investments in farming and livestock. In spite of the potential this presents, unemployment remains high, especially amongst the Roma and Egyptians who usually do not have any land, some having sold it soon after it was distributed.

9.2 Regularisation and migration regulations in Greece

The migration agenda of host countries such as Greece is reflected in their immigration policies, and thus affects the potential for development of Albania. The research findings suggest that the significant benefits of emigration have come at a high human and emotional cost for individual migrants and their families. They, as well as representatives of migrant organisations and some key stakeholders reported the continued shameful record of the Greek government, institutions, media and many sections of Greek society related to the discrimination, exploitation and exclusion of – especially Albanian – migrant men, women and children. In recent years, this has begun to change, partly due to pressure from EU institutions and the more human rights-oriented sections of Greek society. Recognising Albanian migrants as part of Greek society would show not only empathy with the plight of migrants, but would also recognise the significant and crucial contribution these make to Greece. This demographic, economic, social and cultural contribution needs to be appreciated and capitalised upon by making migrants stakeholders in the country's development.

First, Albanian migrants should be given the right and adequate access to permanent residence and citizenship after so many years of living in Greece. Especially for those born in Greece, or who arrived

there at a very young age, this is essentially their homeland (Gogonas 2007). Granting migrants such citizenship rights not only mitigates the negative consequences mentioned earlier, but also shows the democratic values of a government that does not feel threatened by multi-cultural citizenry. Given that the legal status of most Albanian migrant women is attached to their husbands, immigration policy perpetuates the dependency of women on their male relatives, rather than acts as a tool for emancipation. As a result, immigrant women may not be able to separate when they are the targets of violent partners. Immigration policy in Greece should address the right of migrant women living there to obtain residence permits on their own accord. Third, family members of migrants such as spouses or parents should be able to live with and visit migrants in Greece, a process which should be accessible, affordable, and less bureaucratic. In turn, migrants' secure status would affect development in Albania positively, since they could focus on capitalising on their earnings and skills, rather than perpetually trying to maintain their legal status in the host country. In particular, certain segments of (semi-)skilled migrants present significant potential as bridges between the two countries, by acting as guides and advisors for Greek companies that seek to invest in Albania (see Labrianidis et al. 2004).

On the Albanian side, the Albanian government should firmly advocate on behalf of migrants' rights in destination countries, as well as negotiate secure and accessible channels of regular migration for men and women. While seeking eligibility for EU accession, the Albanian government has succumbed to the pressures of the EU and subdued the interests of its own citizens to those of host country governments. Thus, various bi- and multi-lateral agreements have addressed primarily the fears of Greece and other EU countries of irregular migration (for one example, see the negotiations of Readmission Agreements with the EU, IOM 2006a; 2006b). During such future agreements, it is important that the positive contribution of migrants – grounded in research – is made clear to destination country governments such as the Greek state. As this report demonstrates, the complex and multiple pathways that migrant families employ as part of their livelihood strategy exhibit agency and resilience, which, if supported by policy, could be rewarding for both countries at the meso and macro levels. In addition, Albania should simultaneously pursue an integrated policy whereby development is not predicated on labour export and migrants' remittances, but rather on the provision of sound and long-term socio-economic opportunities at home.

9.3 Development

Any future project that includes women and local development needs to consider gendered power dynamics as they manifest in private and public spaces. A gender-responsive approach would first need to address women's limited participation in public spaces of political power and decision-making. Second, it would avoid 'instrumentalising' women by increasing their burden of tasks, and would instead seek to provide wider spaces for their political participation and for their voices to be heard. Third, it would avoid the risk of reinforcing gender stereotypes. (For instance, some of the existing development projects in the study area targeted women as carers and cleaners without attempting to encourage the gendered sharing of various activities).Based on the research, and reflecting the feedback and suggestions of the local residents, returnees and key stakeholders for effective gendered local development, the following two-thronged approach is recommended. First, increase local income-generating activities through channeling private investments from migrants (and others) into the agro-business industry. Mechanisms should be in place to incorporate the present and future local farming and livestock capacity, thus optimising the use of remittances which have already been invested in this sector. This cooperation should aim to include the local associations such as those representing the interests of farmers. Mechanisms should be put in place to allow for women's meaningful participation in the associations, in consultative processes and advisory committees.

Second, promote collective remittances through strategic local planning of public projects. The process should be participatory, inclusive and transparent by: allowing a period of several weeks or months of consultation with the local community groups and other key stakeholders; putting in place advisory committees and boards of trustees with the participation of local residents, migrants, academics, independent advisors, business community, and NGOs; being accountable to the participants and the community regarding the financial expenditure, decision-making, and results; and encouraging the participation of women through affirmative action and a quota if necessary.

In order to increase the ability and capacity of women to participate meaningfully in these initiatives, training opportunities should be targeted at women, and especially the lower-educated, the Roma and Egyptians. These would include training in business skills, such as financial, human resource and project management; accounting; computer literacy; marketing; consultancy; driving; and supporting grassroots mobilisation and women's interest groups. The trainings need to be tailored for adult learners, and to employ participatory teaching methodologies; they should also be provided in the rural areas themselves and widely publicised, and employ a transparent selection process. In addition, campaigns should portray the image of men who share in gendered tasks as positive and aspiring.

Finally, a cautionary remark is in order. Gender-responsive local development through the inclusion of migrants' remittances is not a panacea for ailing rural societies. Migrants have done their best to ensure the survival and human development of their families through the remittances they send. They have substituted the problematic social, economic and fiscal policies and systems of origin countries by: financing the education, health care and pensions of family members; providing capital for farming and small family-run businesses; and generally ensuring the survival of their families and communities. It is the task of the government to create the structural spaces and frameworks where these and other private initiatives can securely and sustainably develop and prosper. Burdening migrants with more developmental expectations is not reasonable and should be considered only if governments are willing to shoulder the responsibility for local and national economic and human development.

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