How do discriminatory social norms relate to the gender dynamics of international migration?
Synthesis of the online discussion

Migration continues to attract policy attention at the international and national levels, with an increasing number of migrants crossing borders in hope of better opportunities. This is reflected in the many discussions about international migration in the context of the post-2015 development framework, where questions such as the integration of migrants are of prime importance for both domestic and foreign policymakers. Today, more and more women emigrate independently: although it is known that female migration has generally been understood as influenced by factors such as family reunification or for economic reasons, it is also important to consider discrimination against women as an additional contributing factor.

To contribute to these growing debates and in particular to better understand female migration, Wikigender hosted an online discussion entitled "How do discriminatory social norms relate to the gender dynamics of international migration?". From 2-15 September 2013, Wikigender brought together a range of perspectives on the linkages between discriminatory social norms and migration, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Scalabrini Migration Center (SMC), Wikiprogress and Wikichild.

The discussion was centered around three main questions: "How do gender norms relate to migration?"; "What are the impacts of gendered migration patterns?"; and "What are the policies and data needed?" (Box 1). A total of 35 comments identified how discriminatory social norms[1] relate to the gender dynamics of international migration and proposed a number of ways to better analyse migration patterns, improve migrant women and girls' well-being and increase the positive impacts of female migration.

The main messages emerging from this discussion are:

◆ Social norms and practices influence women's decision to emigrate and their choice of destination.

◆ The ability to send remittances to families in origin countries strengthens women's position in the household and contributes to increasing the welfare and well-being of families back home.

◆ More comprehensive data are needed on female migrants and their experiences in destination countries.

◆ Policies need to take into account the leading role female migrants can play in both countries of origin and destination in improving social and economic outcomes.

◆ A mix of policies and interventions are needed to reduce gender-based discriminations in the family, the labour market and for younger migrants.

1. Discriminatory social norms are the formal and informal laws, social norms and practices that restrict women and girls' access to resources, opportunities and power (see www.genderindex.org).

Box 1: Wikigender Online Discussion "How do discriminatory social norms relate to the gender dynamics of international migration?"

How do gender norms relate to migration?

- How do discriminatory social norms and practices (for example, women's lower status in the family, violence and discrimination against women or restricted access to resources) relate to female migration? Do they act as an incentive to migrate for women?
- Which discriminatory social norms and practices hinder female migration the most and why? What can be done about it?
- Do social norms play a role in female migration in terms of choice of destination?

What are the impacts of gendered migration patterns?

- What role do social networks play in enabling female migration?
- How does female/male migration impact on family dynamics in both the country of origin and destination?
- How does increased female migration impact on gender norms in origin and destination countries?
- Do you have examples of more restrictive social norms imported by migrants to their communities of origin?

What are the policies and data needed?

- What are the good practices (policies, initiatives, campaigns or programmes) that ensure female migrants' human rights in both the country of origin and the country of destination?
- What are some of the key indicators that are or could be collected to better understand the social and economic outcomes for female migrants? How can this be measured?

The following sections of this paper provide a synthesis of the comments made on Wikigender around the three leading questions and sub-questions listed in Box 1. The above five main messages will be included in an Issues Paper by the OECD Development Centre on "Discriminatory social institutions and female emigration in developing countries" and presented in the OECD-hosted Wikigender platform and newsletter.

How do gender norms relate to migration?

For this question, participants identified a range of "push and pull factors" for migrating and gave several examples of social norms at play in the migration process. Participants discussed how some of the discriminatory social norms shape women and men's decision about migration and issues concerning international, regional and rural-urban migration.

Discriminatory social norms as push and pull factors

While participants agreed that women and men migrate mainly for economic reasons and to find better living standards and opportunities, they also listed other reasons such as family reunification and climate-related disasters. In particular, participants

noted that the many gender social norms or gender-specific discriminations can be a push factor influencing women's decision to migrate. These include: discriminatory inheritance laws leading to insecure access to land and property for women; unequal labour division in the home; lack of access to quality education or decent jobs; various forms of violence against women, including practices such as female genital mutilation or early marriage;[2] or restricted civil liberties. Such discriminatory social norms can influence a girl or a woman's decision to migrate to a city, to a neighbouring country or a different region of the world, depending on their financial resources, decision-making power within the household and policies in their country of origin. In particular, some countries put in place measures or policies that do not allow female migration due to protection issues, for instance in the case of domestic workers.

> *"More people now live in cities than ever before, and three million people are added each week to cities across the developing world. At the same time, we must consider that young people under 25 make up half of the world's urban population (…) and 80 percent of urban adolescent girls are recent migrants."*
>
> Keshet Bachan. Data cited from Plan 2010, "Because I am a Girl: Digital and Urban Frontiers" report.

2. One participant quoted: "In Ethiopia, 23% of migrant adolescent girls reported that they migrated to Addis Ababa to escape early marriage" (Erulkar et al., 2006).

Participants also discussed the factors that attracted female migrants to a particular country. Positive social norms in destination countries were identified as an important pull factor. Overall, many agreed that more family and women-friendly policies in the destination country were important selection criteria. For example, one participant said that as a member of the LGBTQI[3] community, she would migrate to a country that does not discriminate against women and, in particular, the LGBTQI community. Others agreed that well-implemented legislation on violence against women or legislation that punishes perpetrators of violence adequately is another important reason for women to immigrate, especially if their priority is to escape sexual violence in their country of origin.

The economic argument was another pull factor raised by participants. For example, the demand for a particular sector of employment was mentioned, such as in the case of domestic workers in certain regions of the world like Asia, Europe or the Middle East. It was argued that migrant women aspiring to better education and employment opportunities are also attracted by the better working conditions available in high-income countries.

However, participants also concurred that there are a number of discriminatory social norms that are perpetuated by the diaspora in destination countries. The "network effect" and tight-knit communities means that women who migrate do not necessarily escape practices such as FGM or honour killings.

> *"Skilled migration is also gendered: women migrants are mostly in the health care sector (nurses mostly) while men migrants are in engineering, ICT. In this regard, the demand for skilled/highly skilled migration mirrors the persisting gender patterns of the occupational distribution in the general population."*
>
> **Marla, Scalabrini Migration Center.**

Several participants also mentioned cases of modern slavery or forced domestic labour in industrialised countries. For example, one participant shared the following figures from the French *Comité contre l'esclavage moderne*: 90% of the cases of forced domestic labour that lawyers dealt with in 2010 concerned women and 82% of them came from Africa.

In addition to being identified as both push and pull factors, participants also discussed how social norms are shaped by migration patterns. The next section will examine participant contributions on the impacts of gendered migration patterns for women and men, families and communities in both origin and destination countries.

> *"Research in Guatemala and in Colombia shows that 63% and 70% of the main recipients of remittances, respectively, are women."*
>
> **Juan Vázquez, OECD Development Centre's Americas Desk. Data cited from IOM and UN-INSTRAW 2007; IOM et al., 2007.**

What are the impacts of gendered migration patterns?

The discussion provided an opportunity to discuss the broader positive and negative implications of both female and male migration. For example, a participant pointed out that with changes in reproductive preferences, more women are now entering the labour market and able to engage more in their professional life by having smaller families. Therefore, if women are discriminated against in the labour market in the origin country, this can sometimes lead to their decision to emigrate, so they can fulfil their career aspirations in a different country.

One participant stated that while in many cases female migration empowers women and their families, the emigration of highly-skilled women or "female brain drain" can be detrimental to the poorest countries, with a negative impact on infant mortality, under-5 mortality and secondary school enrolment rate. The participant added that in some cases, the prolonged absence of mothers from families can also have negative consequences on children's well-being.

Yet, it is important to note that most of the comments made by participants highlighted the positive effects of female migration. In fact, one participant shared the finding from a study that if emigration rates are lower than 20%, there can be a positive effect of skilled migration in countries of origin, because of the prospects on the return to human capital.[4] It was argued that migration could be seen as an opportunity to promote human well-being. Further, there was

3. LGBTQI stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex.
4. The source given for this comment was Docquier et al., 2009.

a suggestion to develop gender indicators to measure these outcomes, including human and social capital.

> *"There are multiple factors contributing to deskilling and many of them are linked to social norms. For example, in dual career couples it is common that migration decisions be made to cater to the career needs of the male partner (Cooke, F. L., 2007). In other cases, professions in which women dominate tend to be less prioritized by admission systems than those where men dominate and that can result in many skilled women being admitted as a spouse rather than with a job contract (OSCE, 2009)."*
> Blandine Mollard, Project Officer, Gender Coordination Unit, IOM. See list of resources for full references.

It was highlighted that women who migrate for economic reasons make a difference in their families' lives. First, women who migrate to work as domestic workers or in the healthcare sector are able to send remittances back home, which increases positive outcomes for their children in terms of health and education. Second, the point was made that women are the main receivers of remittances in countries of origin and that remittances are an important external source of finance among migrants in Latin America: for example, women tend to send regularly a higher proportion of remittances and for longer time-periods than men. This gendered configuration in the process of sending/receiving remittances means that women's decision-making authority within the household is increased and thus positively impacts on families back home, as women become the main managers of remittances and decide how resources should be spent (e.g. usually for the education and health of their family members).

In addition, a couple of participants added that remittances can contribute to changing established social norms: in the case of early marriage, parents that rely on their daughters' remittances are generally less likely to make them return home to marry; another example was given from Colombia, showing that remittances can also change traditional gender roles: men who have experienced migration are more likely to spend time on household chores than those with no experience of migration.[5]

Finally, one participant emphasised the "capabilities" approach in reducing discrimination

against women, which would allow women to achieve their freedom to migrate but at the same time make them less likely to migrate.[6] This suggests that if policies in both countries of origin and destination ensure the human rights of women are respected and invest in women's capabilities to achieve the outcomes they desire, then their decision to migrate is not governed by discriminatory social norms. This approach shows how reducing discrimination against women can be beneficial at both ends of the migration spectrum. The next section gives some recommendations drawn from the discussion as to where policy makers could also focus their attention.

What are the policies and data needed?

Participants shared ways to address some of the issues encountered with the impacts of female migration and discriminatory social norms impeding women to migrate in good conditions. The following sections highlight a few of the policy recommendations and initiatives which were suggested throughout the discussion.

Policies

Family-friendly policies

One participant suggested that national governments should put in place some policies to address the care deficit in industrialised countries as well as family-friendly policies so that households are able to better balance their family and employment responsibilities – especially in the case of domestic workers who leave their families behind to care for other families in those countries, thus entering a "global care chain". This echoes another comment made by a participant who emphasised the important role of social norms that underpin and structure labour markets and societies. For example, women are often still

5. The source given for this comment was Trejos et al., 2010.
6. The source given for this comment was Sen, 1985.

seen as the main caregiver within the family, and therefore indirectly discriminated against. This social norm partly explains the demand for domestic work in industrialised countries and at the same time indirectly discriminates against those women who wish to pursue high careers and achieve financial independence, while also keeping their family responsibilities.

Policies in destination countries

Facilitating the integration of female migrants in destination countries was highlighted as a priority area for national governments to ensure that their rights are respected. It was mentioned that many migrant adolescent girls are in vulnerable situations due to lack of information about their rights and the difficulty to adapt to a new culture while facing pressure to respect the social norms of their country of origin. One participant commented that policies should strive to reinforce cultural exchange and promote migrants' culture in the destination country and vice versa.

It was also discussed that policy makers should implement policies promoting good working conditions for women such as gender parity in the workplace (e.g. equal pay and equal career opportunities) in order to foster female labour force participation. This includes putting in place the right conditions for female migrants to find employment that matches their level of education and experience.

"47% of India's women aged 20 to 24 [are] married before the legal age of 18, with 56% marrying before the age of 18 in rural areas."

Salema Gulbahar. Data cited from UNICEF's "State of the World's Children" 2009 report.

Policies targeted at adolescent girls

As several participants mentioned, young girls are increasingly migrating to cities, neighbouring countries or other countries, either to escape harmful practices such as FGM, the social pressure to get married early, or to search for better economic opportunities. Adolescent girls are especially vulnerable as migrants, since they can sometimes become victims of gender-based violence or exploitative forms of labour and have little access to basic services or awareness of their rights. Participants suggested that there should be more policies and programmes targeting young migrant girls, especially given their potential. For example, one participant gave examples of how a migrant girl can have a positive impact on her family back home through sending remittances and increasing the well-being of family members. Another participant said that data need to be collected on internal migration and especially on rural to rural migration for adolescent girls, as girls with lower education and autonomy in rural areas are more likely to be married early and subject to violence when sent to another village. Therefore, participants stressed the need for policies that prioritise rural adolescent girls to ensure they have access to education and skill building opportunities, as well as to other avenues for economic and social empowerment.

The power of new technologies

Several participants pointed to the potential of new technologies and, in particular, mobile phones to track diaspora trends and collect data

on migrant women and girls. For example, it was suggested that mobile phones could help collect data on migrant women and girls' migration experiences. Also, one participant shared the example of an SOS system run by the Centre for Migrant Advocacy in the Philippines. This system allows overseas migrant workers to get help 24 hours a day and 7 days per week. Mobile phones and social media also allow migrant domestic workers to seek assistance, protection and legal services. Finally, in addition to accessing information, women and girls can benefit from an array of mobile phone applications such as mobile banking, healthcare or remittances. See more examples on how new technologies can be harnessed in the list of resources.

> *"Even though it's not always the case, I think that data on migration is more and more disaggregated by sex. So very often, the data IS there but rarely analyzed from a gender perspective to shed light on how men and women experience migration."*
>
> Blandine Mollard, Project Officer,
> Gender Coordination Unit, IOM. Data cited from Trends
> in International Migrant Stock (2013)

Data

Participants proposed solutions to improve existing data and information on female migration. In particular, there was a consensus for the need to clearly identify who the migrants are, where they migrate and why. These data were seen as critical to assess and better understand the social and economic outcomes for female migrants. Other suggestions were as follows:

◆ Indicators should be disaggregated by sex to make sure that female migrants are counted, as well as by class and age to improve data quality.

◆ Countries should collect, map and share information on migration profiles through immigration cards and systematically report on trafficking cases.

◆ More data on rural-urban migration are needed.

◆ Although generally not available, further supporting data collection on return migrants could be essential for a better

analysis of migration patterns through immigrant surveys and interviews with female migrants.

◆ Another suggestion was to measure outcomes for female migrants through a human well-being approach by including objective, subjective and relational measures that are important to female migrants. Objective measures such as health and income, subjective measures such as life satisfaction and relational measures such as human and social capital should be considered.

Conclusion

Throughout the discussion, participants stressed that social norms play an important role in women's decision to emigrate and in their destination choice. Interestingly, the many examples provided are evidence that discriminatory social norms can be seen across various policy domains. For example, social norms based on traditional gender roles also shape the labour market and this has implications for the "global care chain" phenomenon. The discussion emphasised the important role that national governments can play when designing policies that do not discriminate against women, such as labour and family policies. It also confirmed the need for more sex-disaggregated data on migrants in general as well as qualitative data and research to better understand the experiences of migration by both men and women.

In this report we attempted to highlight the main themes and solutions reflecting the views of participants, who included international organisations, policy analysts, gender and migration experts, development practitioners, international and local NGOs, as well as civil society.

A list of all the resources shared by the participants can be found at the end of the report. For sources of information and to read all contributions, please see the online discussion page on Wikigender.

Resources shared by the participants

PAPERS, STUDIES, ARTICLES

◆ Anti-Slavery International Working Paper (2005), "Trafficking in Women, forced domestic labour and domestic work in the context of the Middle East and Gulf Region".
http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2009/t/traffic_women_forced_labour_domestic_2006.pdf

◆ Caritas Internationalist Background Paper (2010), "The Female Face of Migration".
http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/backgroundmigration.pdf

◆ CITIGEN Policy Brief (2011), "Migrant Women Domestic Workers and Freedom of Communication in Taiwan : a case for barrier-free access to mobile phones as a basic right".
http://www.gender-is-citizenship.net/sites/default/files/citigen/CITIGEN_Policy_Brief%20_TT_Final_8Dec2011.pdf

◆ Cooke, F. L. (2007), "Husband's career first: renegotiating career and family commitment among migrant Chinese academic couples in Britain". Work, employment and society 21(1): 47-65.
http://wes.sagepub.com/content/21/1/47.full.pdf

◆ Dumont, Martin and Spielvogel (2007), "Women on the Move: the neglected gender dimension of the brain drain", IZA Discussion Paper series No. 2920.
http://ideas.repec.org/p/iza/izadps/dp2920.html

◆ "From Overseas Worker to IT Outsourcing Stalwart, Myrna Padilla Exemplifies Transformation": a former domestic worker puts up a business outsourcing company in the Philippines
http://moneysense.com.ph/success-stories/from-overseas-worker-to-it-outsourcing-stalwart-myrna-padilla-exemplifies-transformation

◆ IOM (2012), "Crushed Hopes: underemployment and deskilling among skilled migrant women".
http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=41_7&products_id=892&zenid=52f8dd2a7396bbe88519f47e652b49c0

◆ Oishi, Nana (2005), "Women in Motion: Globalization, State Policies, and Labor Migration in Asia". Stanford: Stanford University Press.

◆ OSCE (2009), "Guide on Gender-sensitive Labour Migration Policies". Vienna.
http://www.osce.org/node/37228

◆ Population Council (2013), "Girls on the Move: Adolescent Girls and Migration in the Developing World", a Girls Count report on adolescent girls.
http://www.popcouncil.org/publications/books/2013_GirlsOnTheMove.asp

◆ PowerPoint PPT: "Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision" (Slide 11).
http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/documents/World_Migration_Figures_Strengthening_Evidence_Improving_Policy_OECD_UNICEF.pdf

◆ UNICEF (2009), "The State of the World's Children: Maternal and new-born health".
http://www.unicef.org/sowc09

◆ Wikigender, "Global Care Chain".
http://www.wikigender.org/index.php/Global_Care_Chain

◆ Yaro, Joseph A., "Migration in West Africa: patterns, issues and challenges", Centre for Migration Studies, University of Ghana.
http://www.waifem-cbp.org/v2/dloads/MIGRATION%20IN%20WEST%20AFRICA%20PATTERNS.pdf

WEBSITES

◆ French *Comité contre l'esclavage moderne* (accessed 23/10/2013)
http://www.esclavagemoderne.org/0010-qui-sont-les-victimes-et-les-exploiteurs--/13-page.htm

◆ The Centre for Migrant Advocacy SOS sms system in the Philippines
http://centerformigrantadvocacy.com/support-help/sos-sms

◆ The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), available at www.genderindex.org

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Fishing has always been an important activity in coastal regions of Somalia, which is why IOM is providing skills training on fishery and fishing equipment to migrants and IDPs in Bossaso.

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A group of migrants, with the backing of IOM, and CSAGA (a Vietnamese NGO) performs "inviting myself to hope", a fusion between classical theatre and abstract rhythmic dance elements, to tell authentic stories from their own lives as survivors of domestic violence.