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Gender, Migration, Remittances and Development

Women have been for the most part invisible in the treatment of migration and the issue of international migration is largely absent from many of the key women's rights agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or the Beijing Platform for Action.

Women have always been present in migratory flows, traditionally as spouses, daughters, or dependents of male migrants. Nowadays women are increasingly migrating as the main economic providers for their households – meaning that they migrate autonomously as breadwinners - a contribution that has served to increase their visibility within migratory flows. Women currently constitute 49.6% of global migratory flows, though the proportion varies significantly by country and can be as high as 70% to 80% in some cases.

This feminization of migration has also produced specifically female forms of migration - such as the commercialized migration of domestic workers and care-givers, the migration and trafficking of women for the sex industry, and the organized migration of women for marriage. In migrating, women are often making a conscious decision to place their families' well-being above their own happiness and their need to be with their loved ones.

The global demand for migrant labour now prioritizes women's specific skills and traditional roles, such that: a) paid domestic work is increasingly performed by women who leave their own countries, communities and often their families; b) domestic service draws not only women from poor socio-economic classes but also women of relatively high status in their own countries; and c) the development of service-based economies in post-industrial nations favours the international migration of women workers. In the developed world, the combination of women's increased participation in the labour force and the failure to develop family-friendly labour policies and child, elderly, and disabled care options have lead to a strong demand for migrant women workers. Migrant women are thus a central support system for women's freedom in the developed world – and they make a contribution that is under-recognized and under-valued.

Gender identities are characterized by fluidity, movement an

Remittances have become the most important stabilizing economic force for many developing countries. According to World Bank estimates, in 2004 developing countries received US\$126 billion in remittances, twice the amount of official development assistance (ODA). This volume has increased consistently over the last decade, and projections show that it will continue to increase. Although remittances are private money they contribute not only to the survival and well-being of households in the developing world, but have also become an essential tool for poverty-reduction and the achievement of the MDGs.

Although there is growing interest in the pote

INSTRAW launched the results of their case study on the gender dimensions of remittances in the Dominican Republic in September 2006. The objective of this study was to contribute to efforts aimed at maximizing the potential of remittances in developing countries through the integration of a gender perspective in the study of the flows, uses and socio-economic impact of remittances within recipient households and communities. The study analyzed gender dynamics and the impact of remittanc

Colombia - This project is being undertaken in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and a number of organizations that have joined together to form Alianza País. UN-INSTRAW's participation consists in providing the methodology for the research, undertaking the field work in Madrid, and the analysis of data acquired from the research. The case study results will be released in early 2007.

Philippines – UN-INSTRAW has received funding from the International Fund for

- How do families and children cope with women's migration?
- How are transnational families and relationships evolving?
- Are diasporas participating in the development of their countries of origin?
- To what extent do remittances contribute to household poverty alleviation and/or community development?

The main objective of UN-INSTRAW's research on gender, remittances and development is to effect a change in policy, programming and projects that seek to harness the development potential of remittances so that they take women's participation, contribution, needs and priorities into account. The results of UN-INSTRAW's initial research activities will thus be used to formulate policy recommendations and capacity-building materials on the gender dimensions of remittances that will enable policy-makers and development practitioners to place women's and gender issues at the centre of the international