

# Gender migration in developing countries sociology essay



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## Introduction

Looking at migration through the lens of gender can show us how futile it is to try to divide up experiences of migration as either forced or voluntary, positive or negative, empowering or restrictive.

Gender is often mistakenly used to signify 'women only'. The debate on the 'women and gender' question represents an attempt to introduce an analysis of how power relationships between men and women impact their lives. In the early feminist analyses, all gender references concerned women, men had no gender. Such analysis about the basis and the boundaries of the categories 'woman' and 'man' were problematised in post structuralist and post modernist frameworks of analysis. Gender, it is argued is not about women or men as separate and independent categories, but is a relational concept. It focuses on understanding how the terms of man-woman and masculine-feminine are mutually constituted and interdependent, that is, they presuppose each other'.

Migration is an enduring theme in human history and has its own pros and cons. In one-way migration and development are simultaneous procedures and is a part of every civilization. Migration/displacement has been occurring due to varied reasons, mainly political, social, religious, economic and environmental. In the earlier centuries migration was mainly driven by natural disaster, calamities and economic reasons. Industrialization and urbanization is another main cause of migration, which today is being further facilitated by globalization. Conflict, violence today seems to be never ending and so are its effects on human beings. However, till recently,

conflict, war-torn victims and conflict induced displacement/migrant experiences were initially not been made a part of the accounts of war as they were seen to represent no real elements of valour. The need of the hour is to focus on the victims of conflict and make their experiences central to an understanding of the war story.

Migration/displacement is mainly perceived as being male movement with women either being left behind or following their men folks as dependents. However figures suggest that women have been displaced in almost the same as men. Despite the rising numbers of women, they are not given equal importance as compared to men since they are still not perceived as equal actors. A review of existing studies on displacement and rehabilitation reveals little information on the gender dimensions of the problem. Almost all analyses on displacement and policies on relocation assume the household or the family to be the smallest unit of convergent interests where all members share the benefits and burdens of policies. Yet there is evidence today that the burden of change is far greater for women and that they have even less access to the benefits of development than do men.

Migration however can generally be placed under two broad categories- Voluntary migration and Involuntary or forced migration.

Today when we talk of migration, forced migration seems to dominate the picture and hence is a major cause of concern.

**In my paper my focus area would be gender and migration.**

The term conflict is understood with broad framework that includes the entire spectrum of inter-state wars, internal conflicts, ethically driven <https://assignbuster.com/gender-migration-in-developing-countries-sociology-essay/>

insurgencies and secessionist movements. The main focus is on the consequences of these conflicts in terms of internally displacing people or rendering them as refugees, it is important to briefly address the changing character of warfare to understand its implications for causing forced migration.

There is a clear distinct shift in the emerging discourse on conflict analysis from traditional warfare military contests between nation-states to defend their territorial integrity and independence to the 'new wars' or intra state conflicts where the state is only one among many other players in a conflict that includes guerrilla groups, ethically mobilized armies and insurgencies.

'Forced displacement is the clearest violation of human, economic, political and social rights and of the failure to comply with international humanitarian laws'. People have often been uprooted from their homelands due to political, religious, cultural and/or ethnic persecution during conflict.

Displacement disproportionately disadvantages women, because it results in reduced access to resources to cope with household responsibility and increased physical and emotional violence.

## **International migration**

In 2000 there were 175 million migrants in the world, meaning one out of every 35 persons in the world was an international migrant (including both refugees and international migrants).

Numbers of international migrants have more than doubled since 1960, and as a percentage of the world population have risen from 2.5 in 1960 to 2.9

per cent in 2000. A significant part of the increase was due to population  
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movements following the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, USSR and Yugoslavia.

25 percent of all international migrants are in Asia, 23.3 percent in North America, 18.7 percent in Europe, 16.8 percent in USSR, 9.3 percent in Africa, 3.3 percent in Latin America and 3.4 in Oceania.

The Philippines is the largest exporter of migrant labor throughout the world, the majority of whom are women. Mexico is the second largest exporter. The majority is male who leave to work and earn living for their family.

In 2000 there were 17 million refugees in the world or 9.7 percent of all international migrants. While there are as many women as men in refugee camps, in several countries more men apply for asylum (UNRISD 2005).

## **Internal migration**

Combined internal migration within China and India alone exceeds total international migration worldwide.

Internal migration in most commonly from rural to urban, from poorer to more prosperous rural areas is also significant and more common in some countries, for example India. Here where rural workers travel to more prosperous green revolution states, it accounts for roughly 62 percent of all movements in India 1999-2000.

In most in Latin America, women migrate internally in larger numbers than men.

Rural to urban internal migration in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) is still largely male-dominated, although women's migration is on the increase, in part due to relocation of light industries such as textiles to areas where labor is cheap.

There are 25 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in more than fifty countries, half of these in Africa (UNHCR 2004)

## **GAPS & LIMITATIONS OF STATISTICS**

Statistics on migration have their limitations. Irregular migration (that does not conform to legal requirements) is hard to document. The predominance of women migrating as “dependent spouses”, the invisibility of women's labour (e. g. domestic labour), restrictions on their right to work and involvement in activities that are deemed to be criminal offences or against public order (e. g. sex work) mean that a higher proportion of women are statistically invisible and undocumented (UNRISD 2005). By far the most international migration takes place among countries in the southern hemisphere and goes largely unreported (GCIR 2005). In general, less information is available on internal than on international migration, and sex-disaggregated statistics on internal migration are particularly rare. Migration among African countries is possibly the least well-documented migration flow globally. More research and documentation has been done on gender and migration in Asia than in other regions.

## **Gendered movements: causes and impacts**

Individuals may migrate out of desire for a better life, or to escape poverty, political persecution, or social or family pressures. There are often a

combination of factors, which may play out differently for women and men. Gender roles, relations and inequalities affect who migrates and why, how the decision is made, the impacts on migrants themselves, on sending areas and on receiving areas. Experience shows that migration can provide new opportunities to improve women's lives and change oppressive gender relations – even displacement as a result of conflict can lead to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities to women's benefit. However, migration can also entrench traditional roles and inequalities and expose women to new vulnerabilities as the result of precarious legal status, exclusion and isolation.

Migration can provide a vital source of income for migrant women and their families, and earn them greater autonomy, self-confidence and social status. At the same time, women migrants, especially if they are irregular migrants, can face stigma and discrimination at every stage of the migration cycle. Before departure, women can be faced with gender-biased procedures and corrupt agents. In fact, gender discrimination, poverty and violence, can provide the impetus for women to migrate or enable women to be trafficked in the first place. During transit and at their destination women can be faced with verbal, physical and sexual abuse, poor housing and encampments, sex-segregated labour markets, low wages, long working hours, insecure contracts and precarious legal status. And upon return to the source country they may be faced with broken families, illness and poverty.

## **EFFECTS OF MIGRATION**

Migration, both international and internal, can bring gains and losses.

Migration entails a complex, often contradictory class positioning, whereby a <https://assignbuster.com/gender-migration-in-developing-countries-sociology-essay/>

migrant might experience social upward mobility vis-a-vis the place of origin but social downward mobility vis-a-vis the host environment. If women are trailing spouses they may find it more difficult to establish a footing in the new community and maintain

their status within the family. Some women migrants experience downward social mobility by engaging in jobs that are beneath their educational qualifications – such as the numerous examples of domestic workers from the Philippines in Canada, Hong Kong, Europe and elsewhere.

NGO work on migration from mainstream and gender-focused NGOs has similarly been much stronger on migration in the context of conflict, including promoting and protecting the rights of women displaced by conflict. National-based organizations, including gender and women-focused organizations and migrants' organizations, have focused on lobbying governments on emigration and immigration policies (including asylum) and working to secure and protect the rights of migrants including ensuring access to basic services and housing. Also, women's organizations have placed a particular emphasis on preventing trafficking, especially trafficking for sexual exploitation, and on upholding the rights of those trafficked. Few organizations, including labor unions, are prioritizing work on trafficking for other types of labor exploitation, including those likely to involve men

## **METHODOLOGY**

Closer interaction as research is considered to be an interactive process, a communal exercise where people, the subject of the research, are equally involved with the research process from the conception of research. The



whole process, it is felt should eventually create a non-hierarchical base for intervention and sharing.

A variety of feminist research methods including ethnographic research, in depth interviews, dialogue, oral history, textual analyses, consciousness-raising techniques i. e., role-playing and establishment of networks and communication.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Are opportunities equal for both men and women in home country?

Do sex segregated labor markets mean only men can find jobs, or that job for women are restricted to less skilled and lower paid jobs?

What compels women to migrate? Is it poverty and seeking economic betterment or gender discrimination or violence?

Since displacement is a traumatic experience for everyone undergoing it, how does it affect women differently?

Are women migrants more vulnerable to exploitation and sexual violence?

What are the legal rights of the IDPs including men and women? And why they need protection for their rights?

What are the measures taken to help the dislocated migrants?

Do the IDPs get the guarantee of security anywhere they are?

Does migration change gender relations? And if so, in a positive or negative way?

## **HYPOTHESIS**

Gender is an integral part of the migration process. The impacts of migration for women and men depend on many factors, all of which have gender implications. These include: the type of migration (temporary, permanent, irregular, regular, labour, natural disaster- or conflict-induced, independent or as dependent spouse); policies and attitudes of the sending and receiving countries; and gender relations within the household. Gender affects how migrants adapt to the new country, the extent of contact with the original country and the possibility of return and successful reintegration.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

Levels of development may lead to migration or encourage people to stay put. Migration has the potential to challenge and support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the same time. Yet migration does not feature prominently in development debates and the MDG framework. In fact it is only recently that the links between migration and development, and in turn the MDGs, have been recognized by both the migration and the development “communities”. Gender, in turn, influences how development and migration impact on each other. Gender dimensions of migration, it has been suggested, are important to the achievement of the whole range of MDGs and not just the gender equality Goal. Working for greater gender equality in migration not only benefits women migrants but also increases the development impact of migration, moving us closer to meeting the MDGs.

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## **TIMEPLAN**

I plan to submit my proposal by the end of December 2009. I will do literature review and analytical work on daily basis. Personal interviews with the IDPs will be conducted in November.

The ILO is the standard-setting agency of the UN working on migration (outside of conflict) and has two Conventions on Migrant Workers. While these conventions are not specifically gendered, ILO (along with United Nations Development Fund for Women [UNIFEM]) has a significant commitment to the rights of women migrant workers and has a strategy to mainstream gender in all ILO work. Their Gender Promotion Programme (GENPROM) has produced ' An Information Guide – Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers' and 10 Reports on Women and Migration across 10 countries revealing that migrant women are not aware of their rights. The new ILO 2004 Action Plan on Migrant Workers includes specific coverage of women in domestic service and the informal economy who are most at risk of rights violations and falling outside of labour legislation.