

The Female Face of Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Abstract: *This paper examines the female face of migration in sub-Saharan Africa. In the last two decades, there has been an increasing amount of research on feminization of migration, which has begun to fill the gap created by the earlier focus on male labour migration. Women in earlier migration research were seen as companions to men, passive non-decision-makers in the migration process. Currently, Sub-Saharan Africa market demand influences who migrates. The article seeks to put in perspective the recent developments in female migration and to re-address the question of stereotypical female migrants. To understand the dynamics of these female migrations, the paper focuses on causes and changing configurations of emerging female migratory flows. More women are now migrating independently and as main income-earners instead of following male relatives. Further, women's migration experiences often differ significantly from men's. Female migrants are disproportionately young and single. There is less availability of work for women. Women particularly the younger ones from rural areas are migrating to work as domestics. Service jobs such as domestic work, child care, elder care, health care, are female-coded jobs in sub-Saharan Africa. Their wages are low and not subject to regular laws of supply and demand. The majorities are clustered in certain types of industry – particularly manufacturing and empirical evidence seems to indicate that some move into this sector from the domestic service and the informal sector. Women migrants are found to have more social and economic ties to places of origin. The paper suggests that Sub-Saharan African governments should pursue policies that empower migrant women, promote pro-poor employment strategies that favour informal and formal labour markets and those which take into account women's changing role in migratory flows and reflect the needs and priorities of migrant women.*

INTRODUCTION

While male migration has been the most predominant form of migration in Sub-Saharan Africa, female migration is also increasingly becoming common. In many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, the inadequate education facilities and the demand for female labour (housemaids) in urban areas have meant that more women are migrating in search of employment in urban areas. As households are in need of income and more employment opportunities are becoming available in urban centres, more women have been venturing for these opportunities. Women are a powerful lever of development, account for an always increasing amount of remittances and take care of entire families in their home countries. Until recently, migrating women were little noticed and rarely studied. Moreover, their rights are

not sufficiently respected as they often work in poorly regulated sectors and face violence, abuse or exploitation along their journey. This paper seeks to shed light on the prevailing situation of feminine migration in Sub-Saharan Africa and highlight their multiple causes and changing configurations of migration. It also underlines their vulnerability, and the need to respect, defend and protect their dignity. It culminates by exposing their potential role in socio-economic development.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF FEMALE MIGRATION

The following selected theories of migration may help shed light on feminine migration in Sub-Saharan Africa. Number seven of the 'laws of migration' published by the social geographer Ernest George Ravenstein in the 'Journal of the Statistical Society' in 1885 reads as follows: "Females are more migratory than males." Ravenstein then modified this inclination to migration over short distances. Unfortunately, it took more than a hundred years before the turn of the 20th to the 21st century, when this article and in particular law number seven, was re-discovered and recognized (see Donato *et al.*, 2006; Morokvasic, 2003; 2007).

Todaro's migration model (1969) postulated that migration proceeds in response to urban-rural differences in expected rather than actual earnings. The expected gain is measured by:

- The difference in real incomes between rural and urban job opportunities;
- The probability of a new migrant obtaining an urban job.

Todaro, in formalizing the mechanism in terms of purely economic motives or expected pay-off, argues that the wide differences between urban and rural wages for each occupational and educational group coupled with the fact that the long run probability that a migrant could secure a wage employment in the industrial sector (which is greater than zero), explains the motives behind the increase in city-ward migration.

Thadani and Todaro (1979) have argued strongly that autonomous female migration could be explained in terms of employment and income differentials in both the formal and informal sectors. They stressed that rather than focusing on economic factors alone, other considerations including the discriminant factors, mobility marriage, prescriptive marriage and sex role constraints are important explanatory variables, and should be taken into account in analyzing the determinants of female migration.

As a testimony to Todaro's model, Greenwood (1969) noted a positive correlation of migration with wages in destination areas and an opposite tendency with wages in origin areas in his study of Egypt.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF FEMINIZATION OF MIGRATION

Several studies show that, until recently, migration was dominated by single men (de Haan, 2000). The migration of females in the world is hardly two centuries old (Ravenstein, 1885). This is an indication that, the feminization of migration is one

of the recent changes of population movements. In Africa, female migration is also largely a new phenomenon. The traditional pattern of migration within sub-Saharan Africa which used to be male-dominated, long-term, and long-distance is increasingly becoming feminized. Anecdotal evidence reveals a striking increase in migration by women, who had traditionally remained at home while men moved around in search of paid work. A significant share of these women is made up of migrants who move independently to fulfill their own economic needs and not simply joining a husband or other family members.

The increase in independent female migration is not confined by national borders. Women – both single and married – are now migrating independently in search of secure jobs in rich countries, as a survival strategy to augment dwindling family income, thus redefining traditional gender roles within families and societies (Adepoju, 2006d). Professional women from Nigeria and Ghana for example now engage in international migration, often leaving their spouses at home to care for the children. Female nurses and doctors have been recruited from Nigeria to work in to other parts of the Sub-Saharan region and abroad, while their counterparts in Ghana are taking advantage of the better pay packages outside the region such as the UK and United States to accumulate enough savings to survive harsh economic conditions at home.

CULTURAL NORMS AND VALUES THAT SURROUND THE MOBILITY OF WOMEN IN AFRICAN TRADITIONS

Gender prescribes specific roles and status for men (masculinity) and women (femininity) respectively. Beliefs of what constitutes masculinity and femininity are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural contexts of every community and create an unequal balance of power between women and men.

In each society, norms and beliefs of suitable roles for men and women are enforced by that society's institutions and practices, such as marriage, polygamy, gender division of labour and decision making, among others. These culturally-defined gender values and norms evolve through a process of socialization starting from an early stage of infancy. This determines the extent to which men and women are able to control the various aspects of their social lives, i.e. their ability to make decisions, and conditions under which it takes place. This plays a critical role in determining their respective vulnerabilities in migration. For example, the gender role prescribed for women, or 'femininity', demands a submissive role, passivity in household decision making and ignorance of gainful opportunities outside their places of birth, thus limiting their ability to access information on the risks of migration or to negotiate for equal treatment in employment matters. The relative opportunity structure and the nature of the available employment for females were such that it confined females to the lower cadres due to discrimination and sex segregations in the organized labour market. Masculinity on the other hand requires that men be dominating and aggressive in decision making and in distance

migration. This was the main factor that made men migrate alone, leaving their wives behind.

The unequal balance between men and women results in their unequal access to migration information, resources and services. The traditional roles of women were related to child rearing, housekeeping, assistance on the farm and marketing activities. Education and age were other factors which influenced family formation, women status and role aspiration. It is these socio-cultural and economic environments in the communities that imposed restrictions on female migration at the origin areas. For married women, the structural cause for their migration was assimilated to that of their husbands. However, the situation is now changing. The current trend now is for a large number of women to be economically independent of their husbands. The migration of single women is usually associated with economic motives. Recent studies in Zimbabwe and Nigeria point towards attaining economic independence through self employment or wage income (Adepoju, 2006).

THE CURRENT TREND OF FEMININE MIGRATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

While many women visit their husbands in town or stay with them for a long term, many women are increasingly moving to urban areas as independent migrants. Gugler and Ludwar-Ene (quoted in Baker and Aida, 1995) indicate that women outnumber men in the urban populations of a number of countries.

The relatively new phenomenon of female migration constitutes an important change in gender roles for Africa, creating new challenges for public policy. In Africa, women tend to move shorter distances than men. Women migrants tend to migrate internally or just across borders than men.

In Southern Africa, Cohen (quoted in Dodson 1998) dismisses the stereotype that women are “left behind” as men migrate, contending that historically women have been more independent than most studies have acknowledged.

Female migration to South Africa for instance has increased significantly since the country’s majority rule in 1994, radically changing the past stereotype where male migration dominated (Dodson, 1998). A gender sensitive study of Basotho, Mozambican and Zimbabwean immigrants in South Africa identified more females than males in the age bracket 15-44 (Dodson, 1998). In west Africa, before the outbreak of civil war, an ongoing economic crisis in Cote d’Ivoire did not prevent female migration from Burkina Faso. This was possible because women gradually clustered in the informal commercial sector, which is less affected by economic crises than the wage sector, where most male migrants work. This emergence of female migrants as breadwinners puts pressure on traditional gender roles within the African family. The changing socio-cultural and economic circumstances are forcing communities to condone female migration.

African women, increasingly participate in migration as a family survival strategy.

At the same time, an increasing scarcity of traditional male labour has also promoted new roles for the women they leave behind. The gendered division of family labour has also been upset by the loss of male employment through urban job retrenchment and structural adjustment, forcing women to seek additional income-generating activities to support the family. This aspect has triggered rural-urban migration for females.

Not only the share of female migrants in rural to urban migration increased but there seems to be an increasing trend in family migration to cities. This seems to be due to the changes in agrarian structure and rural economy. This has particularly increased in landless households, thus leading to a decline in share cropping and a rise in small land holding. The deterioration in the status of women in marriage, plus their loss of control over their own economic production has stimulated the migration of women from villages to the towns where they can market their services. In recent years, rapid urbanization and the expansion of employment opportunities in both the urban formal and informal sectors have, in combination, facilitated female migration to the towns.

Women in Africa migrate either to join spouses or their parents. However, recent qualitative research has shown increasing trends in some cities like Nairobi, an independent move of women to cities for education as well as to avail employment opportunities. In Sub-Saharan Africa the numbers have risen from 42.7 percent to 46.7 percent. In South Africa alone, female migration has risen from 30 percent to 34 percent through the 1990s (Posel, 2003).

Migration in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa has become entrenched whereby autonomous female migration, and to a marked extent female heads of household is quite common. In Ghana and Kenya, the proportion of female headed families has reached 47 and 35 percent respectively, Mbugua (1992). In parts of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya for example, 60 percent of households are female headed, and practically all the heads are migrants from rural areas, (Vorlaufer, 1985; Oucho, 1990).

The National Migration Survey of Botswana in 1978-1979 had shown that although equal numbers of males and females were recorded as intrarural (intervillage) movers in the multiround sample, many more males (69 percent) than females (29 percent) migrated to towns, mines, and commercial farms (Case, 1992). By the 1980s, however, conditions in rural and urban areas had changed, and more women were migrating either with their husbands in family or associate migrations or as individual women in their own account.

Recent studies in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Nigeria and Mali have shown that, autonomous female migration is directed towards attaining economic independence through self employment or wage income: education facilitates entry of females into the organized labour market and autonomous migration is the vehicle that gives

them greater control over their productive resources (Vaa *et al.*, 1989; Oppong, 1980; Adepaju, 1984a).

Female migration flows to major cities in Tanzania have alarmed observers. The most comprehensive data was that collected by the National Urban Mobility Employment and Income Survey (NUMEIST, 1972). It shows that, in recent years, female migration rates were higher than those of men, although unemployment rates for women were also higher. Statistics show that while only 13 percent of those who migrated to towns in 1952 were unmarried, the proportion had increased to over 30 percent by 1970 (Bieneffield and Sabot, 1972). Sabot, (1979) reports that, women began to outnumber men among rural-urban migrants in Tanzania in 1970. This trend is likely to be higher now (Bryceson, 1980; Masoud, 2006). Statistics published by the UN Population Division (2008) indicate that, female urban migrants outnumber male urban migrants in Tanzania by over 10 percent.

RECENT REVELATIONS

The main revelation of the new set of global estimates by sex is that women and girls have accounted for a very high proportion of all international migrants for a long time (Zlotnik, 2003). Already in 1960, female migrants accounted for nearly 47 out of every 100 migrants living outside of their countries of birth (see Table 1). Since then, the share of female migrants among all international migrants has been rising steadily, to reach 49 percent in 1990 and nearly 50 percent in 2005. The improved access of females to education and training opportunities and the expansion of the services sector have enhanced their employability locally and across national borders. The share of female migrants in Africa also continues to rise as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Female migrants as percentage of all international migrants, 1960-2005

Regions	QUINQUENNIAL YEARS 1960-2005									
	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
World	46.8	47.1	47.2	47.4	47.2	47.2	49.0	49.3	49.7	49.6
Developing Regions	45.3	45.6	45.8	45.5	44.8	44.4	44.4	44.7	45.1	44.7
Africa	42.2	42.3	42.6	43.0	44.1	44.4	45.9	46.6	47.2	47.4
Eastern	41.9	42.3	43.2	44.3	45.3	45.8	47.3	47.9	47.9	48.3
Central	44.0	44.9	45.5	45.8	45.8	45.9	46.0	46.1	46.2	46.3
Southern	30.1	30.3	30.3	32.8	35.6	36.1	38.7	40.0	41.3	42.4
Western	42.1	42.7	43.0	42.6	43.5	45.4	46.4	47.6	48.8	49.0

Source: UN, 2007

For more than 40 years, female migrants have been almost as numerous as male migrants. In 1960 there were 35 million female migrants and 40 million male migrants; by 2000, although the total number of migrants had more than doubled, the gap between females and males remained about the same, 85 million female

migrants versus 90 million male migrants. Table 2 presents female migrants of sub-Saharan Africa in comparison to other regions of the world. Likewise a logical comparison can be done on gathered data for the whole continent of Africa versus sub-Saharan Africa.

Indeed, in 1960 the proportion of female international migrants in Africa (42.2 percent) and in sub-Saharan Africa (40.6 per cent) was less than the world average (46.8 per cent), but by 2000, that gap had narrowed considerably, and sub-Saharan Africa female migrants had overtaken their southern Asian counterparts (at 47.2 and 44.4 per cent respectively).

Table 2: Percentage of female migrants among the total number of international migrants, by major area, 1960-2000

Major Areas	DECENNIAL YEARS 1960-2000				
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
World	46.6	47.2	47.4	47.9	48.8
More developed Regions	47.9	48.2	49.4	50.8	50.9
Less developed regions	45.7	46.3	45.5	44.7	45.7
Europe	48.5	48.0	48.5	51.7	52.4
North America	49.8	51.1	52.6	51.0	51.0
Oceania	44.4	46.5	47.9	49.1	48.8
Northern Africa	49.5	47.7	45.8	44.9	42.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	40.6	42.1	43.8	46.0	47.2
Southern Asia	46.3	46.9	45.9	44.4	44.4
Eastern and South-eastern Asia	46.1	47.6	47.0	48.5	50.1
Western Asia	45.2	46.6	47.2	47.9	48.3
Caribbean	45.3	46.1	46.5	47.7	48.9
Latin America	44.7	46.9	48.4	50.2	50.5

Source: Zlotnik, H. (2003) The Global Dimensions of Female Migration

CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE MIGRATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Knowledge of socio-economic and demographic characteristics of female migrants in sub-Saharan countries is very important for the analysis of the causes, selectivity, patterns of their movements, and their implications. In this section, attention is directed to the most discussed characteristics that are of particular interest to population analysts: age, sex, education, and occupational status.

Age

Like the populations of developing countries in general, most migrant populations in sub-Saharan countries are young. Migrants often are younger than non migrants in the same area, for example, in 19 of 22 countries studied using Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) data on urban women of reproductive age, a larger percentage of migrants than non migrants were below age 25 (D'Avanzo, 1992; Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health Center for Communication Programs, 1996; Posner and Mbodji, 1989; Thailand National Statistical Office (NSO), 1993).

Female migrants are typically very young with many women making their first move as teenagers. Migration among women tends to peak at ages 15 to 24 (Brockhoff, 1995; Findley and Williams, 1991). As a result of rapidly accelerating numbers of female primary and secondary school graduates, for example, in Kenya (Gould, 1992), who are younger than their counterparts of two or three decades ago, they migrate to the urban centres. Young women usually find it easier than older women to migrate because there are more jobs and because they have not yet married and established families. A second, smaller age peak occurs at around age 45; however, women in their forties may be able to migrate more readily than women in their late 20s or 30s. Their family ties may have weakened after their children have grown, and they may also be widowed, divorced or separated (Findley and Williams, 1991).

Sex

Within developing countries and Sub-Saharan in particular, a growing share of rural-to-urban migrants are women, especially younger women (UNFPA, 1995). The trend reflects both the lack of jobs in rural areas and the increasing availability of jobs for women created by the labour-intensive manufacturing operations of multinational corporations in urban centres.

Women are beginning to comprise most of the flows to cities in Africa (Mamdani *et al.*, 1993; Peil, 1985) a reversal of earlier patterns in the region (Brockhoff, 1995; Findley and Williams, 1991). City growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa, unprecedented in world history, are considered excessive by virtually all governments in the region. While published estimates attribute half of Africa's urban growth to net in-migration, the total contribution of migration to city growth may be substantially higher as a result of the increasing volume, permanence, and youthfulness of female migration to the cities. One third of reproductive age women

in African cities resettled from rural areas in the past decade, and over 2/3 have migrated from rural areas since birth (Brockhoff, 1995).

Marital Status

In sub-Saharan Africa, three categories of women moving to urban areas independently may be distinguished; young unmarried women with little formal education who typically work at first as housemaids; educated young unmarried women in search of commensurate employment; and separated, divorced and widowed women whose position is precarious in patriarchal societies. However, the marital status of rural-to-urban migrant women varies widely by country, and there appears to be no pattern. In Senegal, Mali, and Kenya migrants are mostly single women (Findley and Williams, 1991; Gui and Sun, 1991; Mckinney, 1993; Yamashita, 1996). In some African cities, a substantial percentage of recent female migrants are unmarried or married but not living with their husbands (Brockhoff, 1995). In other countries of Africa—Ghana and Tanzania, for example—married women are more likely than single women to migrate from the countryside to cities (Findley and Williams, 1991).

Unmarried migrant women often marry once they settle in new places. In 17 of 19 sub-Saharan countries studied using DHS data, among women 20-to-24 years of age, higher percentages of female urban migrants than of urban natives were married. In some countries, however, the differences were small.

Occupation

Rural-to-urban migrants typically hold lower-status, lower-paid jobs than other city residents. Migrant women hold even lower-status jobs than migrant men and are more likely to work in the informal sector of the economy (Findley and Williams, 1991; Ramirez, 1993). In developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa women typically have a narrower range of job opportunities and are most often found in assembly industries such as garment manufacturing and in domestic services (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). Some have little choice but to become sex workers (Phongpaichit, 1992).

In Tanzania, women who migrate to towns are primarily those who involved themselves in household production or schooling. A few are those who engaged themselves in wage activities or non-agricultural self-employment. The majority were economically active in subsistence or cash crop agriculture in the rural areas. Upon reaching the urban centres, these women are more likely to be involved in multiple roles, supplementing low earnings from wage employment with earnings from self-employment. Single women are more likely to be involved in wage employment, while divorced and widowed women are over represented among the self-employed.

REASONS OF FEMININE MIGRATION

The absolute number of female migrants has been increasing rapidly. But the reasons for migration have also been shifting and diversifying. The main sectors of employment for women include agriculture (particularly seasonal work), domestic work, the service sector and trade.

Another particularly common, and growing, form of women's migration is motivated by opportunities for trading in other countries. Migration is a significant livelihood strategy for women and women-headed households. Indeed, the urban areas of the SSA are being increasingly integrated into transnational continental and regional informal trade networks. Informal traders or small entrepreneurs are amongst the most enterprising and energetic of contemporary migrants.

As gender attributes are usually assigned by cultures, the migration choices and constraints for females can vary vastly depending on their socio-cultural origins. One could argue that in the case of the sub-Saharan region, the high emigration of women has been possible *inter alia* the greater flexibility in gender roles in those societies. In Tanzania, women have found themselves compelled to migrate – either for work or marriage – because they are excluded from land inheritance (Black, 2004a)

Other circumstances that often lead to their leaving include the existence of an unwanted marriage. Daughters who refuse to accept marriages arranged by their parents are more likely to migrate to urban areas to avoid the imagined misery of an arranged marriage—usually to an older spouse. Similarly, conditions like conceiving from a man that was not one's husband was enough to make the woman run away to the urban areas where they would not be found to be punished either by the husband or his relatives. Losing a husband through death especially where women are younger than their husbands; and witchcraft, particularly, where they are blamed for misfortunes that befall the family; as well as being accused of theft were other social conditions that push women out of their rural homes in search of anonymity in the urban areas.

Women's exposure to information is another factor which deserves special mention. There is evidence of strong involvement of intermediaries in women's decision to travel, mostly relations and partners. Other main intermediaries include social networks, agents, and employers. Migrant networks facilitate migration. Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Hugo, 1993). Migrant networks involve flows of people in two directions. In the first place, they facilitate the flow of new migrants from their area of origin to their destination. There is also a contrary flow, as previous migrants return home on a temporary or on a more permanent basis. In a study conducted in Mwanza, female migrants indicated that information about the destination of their last move had come mostly from relatives, friends and acquaintances that lived in their areas of origin either before or at the time the

decisions were being made (Masanja, 2010). Social networks offer the required information about destination areas and assist new migrants in residential and employment matters.

Women, who bear the main responsibility for feeding their families, have increasingly turned to migration to satisfy their cash needs. Several studies have shown that different patterns of migration occur in different ethnic groups with different marital tradition. Serere, Diola, and to a lesser extent Oulof women in Senegal for example are more involved with labour force migration than are Toucouleur, Peul, or Soninke women, who virtually never migrate except with their spouses or families. The minimum age at marriage among Serere women is relatively as high as 16 or 17. Young girls aged 12-20 migrate to cities to seek employment as domestics. Their migration may be seasonal or permanent. Ciola women receive recognition for their hard work and are the owners of rice granaries that are essential in feeding their families. They also have greater matrimonial and sexual independence than most African women and are able to migrate freely in search of work. A 1987 survey indicated that 60% go to Dakar, 19% to Gambia, and 20% to other urban areas in Senegal. Almost 2/3 of migrants in 1967 were under 25; 67% of the women were single and 9% were widows or divorcees. They often share housing with other migrants from their ethnic group and village, significantly lowering their housing costs and gaining assistance in finding work and companionship in non working hours.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES DONE BY FEMALE URBAN MIGRANTS

Modern migrations are migrations of labour, not of peoples (Amin, 1995). This implies that, there is an overall trend away from labour migration, and towards commercial migration in Africa — that is, there is a wave of entrepreneurs who are self-employed, especially in the informal sector. A large proportion of female migrants in the Cote d'Ivoire for example can today be classified as commercial migrants.

A vast majority of the women migrants, particularly the young and single ones from the rural areas are concentrated in private domestic service, in new international tourist resorts and in other service jobs available in large cities (Khoo, *et al.*, 1984; Pryer, 1992). Here, their wages are low and not subject to regular laws of supply and demand. They remain isolated from political and social contacts, participating little in political matters.

Women migrants are also clustered in certain types of industry particularly textile and ready to wear manufacturing. This is a typical sector of employment for migrant women characterized by piecework which is basically seasonal and commands the lowest wage.

FEMININE MIGRATION AND EMPOWERMENT

For many, the migration experience seems to play a role in modifying gender roles and women's status and enhancing gender equality. Women who find employment

in urban centres or abroad gain access to financial resources that permits them to influence how funds are used in the household. They can also experience more autonomy over household decisions.

Though migration may be empowering for many women migrants, such empowerment cannot be deemed automatic. A significant number of migrant women experience downward occupational mobility, de-skilling and a re-orientation away from paid work and towards the domestic sphere. Furthermore, too many women migrants still today experience extreme exploitation and abuse in situations of trafficking, bondage and slavery.

VULNERABILITIES OF FEMALE URBAN MIGRANTS

It can be correctly said that, not all migrants can develop their asset base in their home area, either because they have limited access to resources – for example, women are often traditionally excluded from inheriting their parental land.

Immigration policies in many sub-Saharan countries still remain biased towards men, limiting women's access to support services and making naturalization dependent on that of a spouse. Research is however, beginning to bring women out of the shadows of migration and studies find that, they move not so much to follow husbands or partners but like men, to find work.

In sub-Saharan Africa, women produce up to 80 percent of food grown for local consumption, yet only 8 percent hold title to the land on which they work. This anomaly makes women migrate to urban areas as a survival strategy.

The low status of migrant women usually follows them to their destinations (urban centres). Their lack of education compared to men limits their opportunities and they most often find themselves holding marginal jobs characterized by low wages and little security. Employers tend to see migrant women as inexpensive docile and expendable. As a result of such conditions, women who migrate to urban centres often become prisoners of their low status both as migrants and as women.

On the job, they often have no voice or means to protest long hours and the violation of local labour laws and regulations. Even more importantly, women especially refugee women in sub-Saharan Africa are vulnerable to rape and other forms of sexual exploitation and violence.

Some countries like Algeria, Zambia, and Egypt are beginning to realize the importance of ending gender inequalities. But participation of women in the labour force throughout the world remains low, despite the fact that women in developing countries and sub-Saharan Africa in particular are usually the providers for the families' basic needs.

IMPLICATIONS TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Migration has become an important component of the development process in Africa. Literature still cling to the notion that, in many societies of Africa, male migrants not only maintain ties with family at home, but also with the home community itself, by participating in hometown-based organizations and contributing to local development. This paper argues to the contrary, that the majority of women migrants of all statuses and occupational groups, also maintain some connection with family and kin in their home communities, especially when close kin are resident there. These ties involve visitations, contributions of money and goods both from migrants to those at home and from those at home to migrants, and participation in organizations based on place of origin.

In-depth interview and survey data collected among migrants and return migrants in five communities in the Ijesa region of Yorubaland, as well as among migrants from those communities now resident in the large cities of Lagos and Ibadan, indicate that women migrant workers play essential roles in the labour markets and make valuable contributions to the economies and societies of receiving urban centres (Trager in Gugler and Ludwar-Ene, 1995).

Although it was found that, women of higher status who have the economic capacity were most actively involved in hometown affairs, recent research (Masanja, 2010) indicates that women of the middle status had that capacity too. These activities include membership in organizations, contributions and participation in local development efforts.

Migration and remittances have the potential to improve the well-being of both migrants and those left at places of origin. They also stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty directly and indirectly, while their effects on inequality are much more ambiguous. The significant empirical and theoretical advances that have been made over the past several decades highlight the fundamentally heterogeneous nature of migration-remittance-development interactions. Notwithstanding their often considerable blessings for individuals, households and communities, migration and remittances are no panacea for solving more structural development problems. If states fail to implement general social and economic reform, migration and remittances are unlikely to contribute to nationwide sustainable development. Migrants and remittances can neither be blamed for a lack of development nor be expected to trigger takeoff development in generally unattractive investment environments. Therefore, policies aimed at increasing people's welfare, creating functioning markets, improving social security and public services such as health and education are also likely to enhance the contribution that migration and remittances can make to social development.

Successful female migrants can invest in their home areas with a view to returning there upon retirement or earlier; in so doing, they may also inject financial resources and new skills into the local economy.

Migrants contribute substantially to the Gross National Product of sub-Saharan countries through their monetary transfers, which exceed official development aid in some countries. They also influence the destinies of their countries in various forms. Moreover, in the context of globalisation, migration and development have become interdependent processes, despite the policies of many countries to control migration flows.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Women's migration is increasingly being socially acceptable. Increased education seems to encourage more migration of women and in turn foster greater education of females. Likewise, gender empowerment, rapid urbanization and increase in economic opportunities are among other reasons for the acceptability of women migration.

From the foregoing, it has been noted that an important positive contribution of female migration to sub-Saharan countries is the money they earn and send back home. At the global and regional (sub-Saharan countries) level, female migrants send approximately the same amount of remittances as male migrants; however women tend to send a higher proportion of their income, even though they generally earn less than men. Migration also affects women who stay behind, as women play a central role as recipients and managers of remittances.

Remittances are an important source of income for sub-Saharan countries also: formal and informal remittances are estimated to be three times the size of official development assistance. Efforts to maximize migrants' contribution to development as regards monetary remittances (increasing the use of formal transfer methods, reducing the transfer cost of remittances, promoting migrant savings, optimizing remittance utilization for household and community welfare, and promoting entrepreneurship development schemes) are valid contributions and should continue to be encouraged. However there appears to be less preoccupation with factors affecting directly or indirectly the level of remittances such as: migration status, gender, working conditions and wages, and recognition of qualifications.

It has also been noted in this paper - that generally, women in sub-Saharan countries, work overwhelmingly in the domestic and care work, hotel and catering services, the entertainment and sex industry. In some countries the domestic sector is not covered by labour laws, hence the migrants are subject to working long hours with low pay, withheld wages, considerable insecurity and high risk of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. Governments need to pursue policies that empower women as well as migrant women to be able to address gender specific issues.

Female migration and poverty reduction have linkages. These linkages become of interest to academics and development practitioners in Africa given the on-going poverty reduction initiatives, in almost all sub-Saharan Africa countries, aimed at

achieving one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of reducing poverty, particularly feminine poverty by half by the year 2015. In this context, migration constitutes one of the strategies for attaining the goal.

There are apparent academic constraints regarding the overshadowed and stereotyped female migrants. There is still vivid scarcity of literature on migration that is devoted exclusively to women. This entails a need for academics to overcome unequal treatment and gender bias in migration studies by presenting the social reality. A deliberate shift is therefore needed toward a gendered human rights approach to migration.

Apart from the fact that independent rural-urban migration of women has been grossly neglected in African studies to date, migration is still not integrated into the development plans of most countries; hence, the importance of studying migration in relations to development processes, and revealing its various dimensions.

Sending countries or places of origin need to facilitate migration, internally and externally, both to enable safer migration for the migrants themselves and to foster the positive effects on the country's development. In addition, governments should take into account women's changing role in migratory flows, and reflect the needs and priorities of women migrants. They must also pay attention to rural development and give importance to agriculture, infrastructure, skill development training coupled with easy borrowing, so that the rural population specially the landless class can get employment opportunities in rural areas

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