

Women, migration and development: Investing in the future

Insights from the conference jointly organised by CARE International,
EMPHASIS and ODI, 17 and 18 July 2014, London



“South-south migration is larger than south-north migration and will increase in the future. In a turbulent global economy, remittances have been growing strongly and are three times the size of official aid”

Dilip Ratha, Chief Executive Officer KNOMAD (Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development), World Bank

“So-called developed countries have been experiencing structural changes that have led to the feminisation of migration”

Allison J Petrozziello, Gender and Migration Specialist, UN Women

“You (EMPHASIS, CARE International) have made a real change on the ground and we’re proud to say we’ve funded that”

Albert Tucker, Big Lottery Fund

Introduction

In 2013, there were 232 million people or 3.2% of the world's population¹ living outside their country of birth. Migrant workers are a key feature of today's globalised economy with migrants contributing significantly to both destination and source economies. Global remittance flows are estimated at USD\$581 billion in 2014 (up from \$542 billion in 2013), of which \$436 billion was received by developing economies.²

At destination – whether this be in the global South or North – labour migrants contribute to the growth and development of the economy, while remittances from migrant workers significantly contribute to the economies of developing countries. Migration is therefore a key part of poverty reduction and development, with many social and economic benefits for many countries. However, migration is often discussed negatively, stigmatised or ignored, which puts the rights, livelihoods and even lives of migrant women and men in danger. In particular, there is a danger that the migration process and the discourse around it instrumentalises migrants and does not take account of their human rights, especially those of women.

With the increasing number of women in the workforce, there is a growing trend of 'feminisation' of migration. Nearly 50% of international labour migrants are women³ who usually find employment in traditionally female-dominated occupations such as domestic work and care-giving, which are poorly paid and lack adequate protection. Because women migrant workers are employed largely in these unregulated sectors, much of the exploitation they experience – including violence, harassment, stigma and discrimination – is suffered behind closed doors. In addition to lack of labour rights, women also

lack access to services and to financial inclusion. Consequently, the contributions made by women migrant workers are often invisible.

A gendered focus on labour conditions and public health is therefore crucial to protecting migrant rights. Economic measures such as guaranteeing safe channels to send remittances are key to migrants' economic empowerment – and particularly for women migrants, where recognising women as economic actors can be a step towards changing gender roles and addressing power relations within family and society. Female migrants face more stigmatisation, discrimination and risks of gender-based violence than men; it is therefore imperative that migration is viewed with a gender perspective in order to protect and address the specific needs of, and risks faced by, women migrants, whether in their source countries, during transit, while in destination countries, or on reintegration to their source countries.

On the 17th and 18th of July 2014, the **International Conference on Women, Migration and Development: Investing In The Future** was convened by CARE International and hosted at the Overseas Development Institute in London. The objectives of the conference were to:

- highlight the challenges faced by vulnerable migrant workers, especially women
- advocate, based on CARE and others' experiences, for strategies, policy and practical responses which need to be taken to protect migrant workers' well-being, particularly with respect to safe mobility and access to healthcare
- recognise women migrants' contribution as economic actors and advocate for policies and planning processes that ensure their protection
- advocate for recognition of the role of migration as a key development enabler in the post-2015 development agenda.

CARE and ODI presented the findings from their five year EMPHASIS (Enhancing Mobile Populations' Access to HIV and AIDS Services, Information and Support) programme in South Asia. EMPHASIS, a project which started as a HIV and health intervention, was successful in surfacing and addressing other aspects such as safety and dignity of migrants,

1. UN press release (2013), 232 million international migrants living abroad worldwide – new UN global migration statistics reveal, <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/wallchart2013.htm>

2. World Bank press release (2014), Remittances to developing countries to stay robust this year, despite increased deportations of migrant workers, says WB, www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/04/11/remittances-developing-countries-deportations-migrant-workers-wb

3. Global Migration Policy Associates, www.globalmigrationpolicy.org/gender.html

economic empowerment, financial inclusion and safe remittances, access to education for migrants' children, and women's empowerment. The conference was a response to the call at the May 2014 Stockholm Global Forum for Migration and Development both for civil society/government cooperation around regional systemic approaches to migration and for urgently needed programmatic data and evidence on migration. EMPHASIS is considered among very few projects globally which comprehensively cover the migration experience from source, through transit, to destination countries. The EMPHASIS Learning Series report,⁴ which provides a comprehensive overview of the EMPHASIS programme, was launched during the conference.

The significant contribution of this conference was to bring perspectives together to debate ideology, theory, ideas and experience on the ground regarding what works – and what does not – in the migration cycle. Along with solid evidence from EMPHASIS, case studies and projects from different parts of the world were presented and discussed at the conference. At a time when the global migration discourse is in need of concrete data, evidence and practice, the conference has made a vital contribution to the global dialogue on migration.

Changing public perceptions on migration is important. It is now time for collective action from government, civil society, media and donor agencies. We must work together for the safety and dignity of thousands of migrants and potential migrants who already face huge challenges.

Conference insights

1. Action needs to be taken to ensure the contribution made by migrant women and men – and the challenges they face – are reflected in the development agenda

- Promote regional comprehensive approaches to migration that seek to ensure the safety, dignity and rights of migrants, especially women migrants, at source, during transit and at destination,

ensuring both source and destination countries reap the benefits.

- Ensure that migration – with a focus on gender concerns – is a core part of the post-2015 international development agenda, and is incorporated in targets or indicators where it is directly relevant to the achievement of other development goals.
- Urge states to ratify and implement relevant international and regional conventions and standards to protect migrant workers, such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the ILO Convention 189 on The Rights of Domestic Workers.
- Promote social dialogue⁵ between government, employers and workers in the formulation and implementation of migration policies and legislation.
- More nuanced research is needed on both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of women's contributions across the migration cycle to create an enabling environment for gender-responsive policies and programming and to recognise women as economic actors.

2. Specific recommendations

Healthcare access is a key aspect/intervention for the well-being of migrant men and women

- The EMPHASIS project demonstrated that health is a highly effective intervention point for addressing wider issues, such as livelihoods and women's empowerment.
- Strengthen existing health services, including setting up information and referral networks across the continuum of mobility (source, transit and destination) that connect existing public and private health care facilities and build linkages with community-led groups and grassroots organisations.
- Access to anti-retroviral treatment (ART) should be made available free of cost to migrants throughout the mobility continuum, regardless of legal status,

4. CARE International (2014) EMPHASIS Learning Series: Towards safety, dignity and better health of migrants, <http://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/EMPHASIS-Learning-Series.pdf>

5. See ILO website, Social dialogue, www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/decent-work-agenda/social-dialogue/lang--en/index.htm

and the ART regime should be made seamless across national borders in accordance with WHO guidelines.

- Programmes to prevent and reduce HIV should not exclusively focus on HIV service provision but address the social determinants in a comprehensive and context-specific manner.

Supporting women's access to financial services and remittances is key to achieving positive development outcomes

- Develop migrant-friendly financial products and services, reduce costs for sending remittances, and expand migrants' access to financial services both at origin and destination, including simplifying banking procedures.
- Raise the level of financial literacy amongst migrants as well as of remittance recipients to increase familiarity with banking procedures and reduce obstacles to remitting through official channels.
- Promote productive use of remittances through promoting women's decision-making within the household.
- Advocate with governments and international organisations on banking rules and regulations to foster financial inclusion of migrant workers.

Safe and decent working conditions for migrant women are particularly important given their concentration in the informal economy

- Engage with the public and the private sector to promote better working conditions (including minimum wages, regulated working hours, and leave entitlement), wider coverage and transferability (from country of origin to country of destination) of social security benefits, recognition of skills, and better safety and health conditions.
- Advance on formalising the informal economy, especially those sectors dominated by women such as domestic work, and also to ensure that migrant workers enjoy equal treatment and opportunities compared to national workers.
- Promote fair and safe recruitment, improving recruitment processes and practices and regulation of recruitment agencies.

- Repeal discriminatory restrictions on women's migration, such as those that discourage women from migrating for work to certain countries or that restrict them to certain occupations, and instead focus on ways to promote safe migration and an enabling work environment for women.

Ensure safety and dignity of mobile populations

- Strengthen capacity and accountability of duty-bearers at source, transit and destination to guarantee the safety and dignity of mobile populations and reduce violence, harassment and discrimination.
- Inform and engage with migrant groups and stakeholders to create space for dialogue to increase accountability and change public perceptions of mobile populations.
- Sensitise key stakeholders (transporters, rickshaw pullers, hoteliers, employers) so that they can play a positive role in promoting safe mobility.
- Multilateral agencies (eg ILO, IOM, other UN agencies) should take a lead in facilitating the dialogue between sending and receiving countries.
- Sending and receiving countries should ensure that there are effective protection measures, grievance redressal mechanisms, and access to justice available to migrant workers at destination in case of rights violations.

3. Particular focus is needed on the role of the media, migrants' voices, narratives and evidence in the debate about migration

- Community-based organisations and research institutions can play a substantive role in generating and supplying reliable evidence to the media in order to help create an enabling environment for shifting public perceptions and influencing policy responses. Although figures are important, qualitative evidence is particularly valuable in gaining an appreciation of the contextual reality of migrant workers.

Conference participants

The conference brought together the EMPHASIS programme team (including representatives from CARE International, ODI and the grant provider the Big Lottery Fund) with representatives from the International Organisation for Migration, International Labour Organisation, Global Forum for Migration and Development, World Bank's Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development, and UN Women; government representatives from Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Canada and the UK; the private sector; and international thought leaders in the academic and civil society spheres. Joining virtually were 150 online participants.

Conference agenda

The strategic context: the growing relevance of migration in the development agenda and introduction of the EMPHASIS project. *John Plastow, CARE International UK; Albert Tucker, Big Lottery Fund; Prabodh Devkota, EMPHASIS; Jill Helke, IOM.*

The story of EMPHASIS: the reality of migrant workers' actual experiences and the EMPHASIS model for addressing vulnerabilities of cross-border migrant populations in South Asia. *Tahseen Alam, EMPHASIS; Nabesh Bohidar, EMPHASIS.*

Migration, a perspective from South Asia: the migration profile in South Asia, and challenges faced by migrants; policy and good practices at the national levels; exploring the scope for improved regional cooperation on migration. *Dr Piyasiri Wickramasekara, Global Migration Policy Associates; Md Neazuddin Miah, Government of Bangladesh; Narayan Prasad Kaphle, Government of Nepal; Dr Irudaya Rajan, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs; Dr Fiona Samuels, ODI.*

Promoting safe and effective participation of women in migration: the need to develop a better understanding of the contributions of women migrants, and recommendations for migration policies and good practices that promote women's empowerment. *Gibril Faal, GFMD; Dr Priya Deshingkar, Migrating Out Of Poverty Research Programme Consortium; Allison J Petrozziello, UN Women; Eve Geddie, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants; Nabesh Bohidar, EMPHASIS.*

Achieving fair and dignified work for migrant workers: the vulnerabilities of migrant workers (especially women migrants) in the informal sector, and the policy mechanisms, good practices and role of governments, civil society, media and the private sector to protect the right to decent work. *Doris Bartel, CARE USA; Dr Gloria Moreno-Fontes Chammartin, ILO; Miriam Moya and Tom Aston, CARE Latin America; Neill Wilkins, Institute for Human Rights and Business; Cathy Riley, CARE Nepal.*

Accessing healthcare for migrants: the challenges that both cross-border and international labour migrants experience in accessing health services at destination, good practices, and initiatives that have improved access for migrants. The need for integrating migrant health and health care issues in national and regional-level policies. *Dr Samantha Watson, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Barbara Rijks, IOM; Dr Hiranthi Jayaweera, University of Oxford; Dr Elizabeth Shlala, London School of Economics; Dr Jahangir Hossain, CARE Bangladesh.*

Migration and remittances: trends and outlook for migration and remittances worldwide. *Dilip Ratha, KNOMAD, World Bank.*

The role and responsibility of the media and civil society organisations in influencing policies and perceptions around migration: the importance of creating an enabling policy environment for addressing migrants' well-being and using the media as a tool to do so. The roles and responsibilities of media in addressing perceptions of migrants and the contributions of the media on influencing public opinion. *Ayesha Kariapper, CARE International UK; Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, journalist and author; Awale Olad, Migrants' Rights Network.*

Concluding remarks: *Lex Kassenberg, CARE Nepal.*