

Gendered analysis of the outcomes of migration: research agendas and policy proposals

By PARVATI RAGHURAM (Open University)

There is now a large literature on female migration and its impacts on women, their households, on the economy of sending countries and on the households and institutions where they work in the destination countries (Piper, 2009; Piper and French, 2012). Much of this literature adopts a critical edge, showing the difficulties that women face as migrants, in order to outline a set of policy outcomes for addressing these difficulties.

However, the outcomes of migration can be diverse and there are clearly lessons to be learned about how to maximise the benefits of migration for women. With this in mind, this special issue sets out to ask the following questions: What do we do to ensure that women do benefit from migration, whether in terms of enjoyment of rights or successful integration? What are the difficulties or challenges that one faces in ensuring that women do benefit from migration on an equal footing? What enabled women to benefit from migration in certain contexts? And what can be learnt from this?

The papers in this issue address these questions by presenting a variety of circumstances and factors impacting on migrant outcomes. They range across contexts and continents. Unusually for the literature on migration they include both forced migration and voluntary forms of migration. They also highlight the range of actors who can help to impede or accelerate and enhance the benefits of migration. Their findings could serve to stimulate re-adjustments to public sector strategies and policies regarding migration outcomes, notably concerning women. The rest of this introduction focuses on how these issues are addressed in the papers.

The first paper in this issue is by Danièle Bélanger and Giang. Based on a survey under-

taken with 499 migrant returnees who had moved from Vietnam to Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan between 2000 and 2009 they show the need for a dynamic and highly contextualised approach to migrant outcomes. The paper points out that moments, types, and levels of precarity differed between women domestic workers, women factory workers and men factory workers. Women undertaking factory work fared worse than domestic workers suggesting that the benefits of working in the formal sector may be outweighed by the nature of the contract depending on the destination. The impacts also differed at different times during the migration process. In the pre-departure phase the issues were of costs, how migrants sourced the money required to allay the costs of migration, training, which sector they worked in and the final destination. During the 'labouring process' the factors influencing outcomes were how long they stayed and what sector they worked in. The authors found that the group least likely to face problems was female domestic workers. One possible reason for this was the role of migrant associations that have helped to improve the experiences of migrant domestic workers in Taiwan. Their analysis on return suggest that an adequate period of stay is crucial for ensuring that the migrant's aspirations are met and that the whole experience is deemed successful. Bélanger and Giang's paper implies the need for more research on migrant women employed in sectors other than domestic work, especially in manufacturing. The large number of variables that influence the outcomes of migration also means that there is need for much more nuanced policy making.

The positive findings about domestic worker migration are also corroborated by the research

presented in the paper 'Making the Most of Remittances: Obligations, Aspirations, and Precarity among Indonesian Women Migrants in Singapore' by Theresa Devasahayam. Based on 25 interviews with Indonesian women working in the domestic work sector in Singapore she shows the benefit drawn from the multiple uses of remittances and how these uses change over time. She too points out that the length of the contract for which domestic workers are employed is a key variable as it takes time to pay off the costs of migration and to have an overall positive balance of outcomes. She shows that given time almost all migrant women did benefit financially and many returned with self-confidence and economic independence.

Further to the impacts on the women themselves, on which the papers above focus, migration has larger scale repercussions. These are addressed in the following paper 'Gender Implications of Care Migration for the Operation of Care Diamond in Ukraine' by Alissa Tolstokorova who shifts the analytical lens from migrant women to the outcomes of gendered migration for the receiving state, communities and families. She draws on 25 in-depth expert interviews and 40 semi-structured interviews (28 female and 12 male) with Ukrainian migrants who moved to provide care in Italy, Germany and Austria. She utilises the concept of care diamond (Razavi, 2007) to elaborate on the prospects and problems of care delivery by the state, the market, community sector and the family, the four corners of the diamond, in Ukraine. All four are shown to be locally specific (Raghuram, 2012) but also inherently dynamic (Kofman and Raghuram, 2009). The market sector has attempted to fill this gap but without a concerted and comprehensive policy on the care demands in Ukraine the effects of the outflow of care-givers on the country are likely to be severe. Tolstokorova points out that although much of the labour migration she investigates is driven by the care demands in Northern Europe, which Ukrainian migrants fill, similar issues of a care deficit compounded by an ageing population are also pertinent in, and important for, Ukraine. She therefore argues for the need to see the outcomes of migration in broad

terms that go beyond the migrants and their families.

Mariangela Veikou in a paper titled 'Integration: a hot button issue. Contextualising Multiculturalism and Integration in Amsterdam' explores the significance of the community sector in shaping migrant outcomes. Based on qualitative research on Muslim migrant community organisations in Amsterdam, and particularly on the intimate stories of migrant women from North Africa, she shows that dominant frames for interpreting 'successful migration', which increasingly call for integration of migrants into the destination society through state-driven prescriptive uniform processes, need rethinking. Her empirical work suggests that the women have identified varied ways of solving problems and have used their initiative to 'integrate' on their own-terms. For Veikou, this 'bottom-up integration' holds promise for improving the outcomes of migration in the long-run as it is much more attuned to the fluidity of interactions at the grassroots level.

Very often, the nature of migration (forced versus voluntary) and the skills of the migrant are assumed to be the basis for successful outcomes. In a knowledge-economy where women and men are expected to move rationally to fill labour-market demands in highly skilled sectors the voluntary migration of skilled workers may be seen as the most successful form of migration. However, as Andrews, Klodawsky and Siltanen show us in their paper 'Soft Skills and Hard Prejudices: Pathways to Improving the Life Chances of Recent Immigrant Women in Ottawa, Canada', the benefits of such migration to the migrant are not always clear-cut. Despite the fact that women (and men) migrating to Canada are sometimes more highly educated than native Canadians they still appear to suffer significant short and long-term labour market disadvantages. Due to what they term 'hard prejudices' women do not necessarily seem to have benefited from migration; in fact, they may even have lost out. The authors provide an example of how this disadvantage, ascribed to soft skills that are place-based and sometimes tacit, may be made more explicit. The paper outlines some ways to address this as part

of a programme of training. Using the example of the City for All Women Initiative in Ottawa they show the elements of a successful programme that has increased the benefits of migration for women. These benefits derive from: meaningful employment and employment-related training, and empowerment and a capacity to measure outcomes. The paper also illustrates how these strategies might be translated into policies and highlights the role of public sector strategies in destination countries for maximising gendered migrant outcomes.

Issues of training and skills development that are discussed by Andrews et al, take a different form in the context of forced migration as Gail Hopkins shows us in her paper titled 'Casamance Refugee Women's Engagement with Development Programming in the Gambia'. Drawing on interviews and focus-groups with rural and urban refugees from Casamance who have moved to the Gambia Hopkins suggests that the level, content and variety of skills, the phasing of skill training and its relation to food aid are all important considerations in ensuring that even in the context of forced migration there is a possibility of having positive outcomes.

The last paper in the issue also focuses on forced migrants. Through the case of Iraqi refugees in Syria Giorgio Heinrich Neidhardt explores the issues facing women who move with and without their husbands as well as those who are left behind. The paper suggests that the independence of women in these circumstances must not be celebrated because it arises out of

social exclusion. Against the grain of much of the literature on migration in this part of the world, this paper suggests that affiliations within the Iraqi diaspora are not primarily based on ethnicity and religion but rather on social and economic factors. One of the paper's key findings is that although the migration may be forced, the ability to move back and forth is vital to enabling migrant families to survive and thrive. This finding has implications for border policies in contested areas. Another implication of Neidhardt's findings is that the support offered by organisations such as the UNHCR should encompass the development of community resources. Families and communities thus appear to be key resources in improving migrant outcomes and the role of the state and of larger organisations should be to support and enable these functioning social units.

Together these papers expand our understanding of the outcomes of migration on men and women but also on families, communities and the state. A key message that emerges thereof pertains to the need to consider migrant women and men as drivers of their own development, not mere beneficiaries, who require specific knowledge and skills to unlock the full potential of migration. Furthermore, the papers provide a set of research questions that will guide future research in this field. They also offer policy proposals for improving these outcomes in diverse contexts. They highlight examples of 'best practice' in policy-making which can be adopted and modified in other contexts in years to come.

References

- KOFMAN, E. and RAGHURAM, P. 2009. *The Implications of Migration for Gender and Care Regimes*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).
- PIPER, N. (ed). 2009. *New Perspectives on Gender and Migration: Rights, Entitlements and Livelihoods*. London, Routledge.
- PIPER, N. and FRENCH, A. 2011. Female migration outcomes: Human Rights perspectives, *Diversities*, 13(1).
- RAGHURAM, P. 2012. Global care, local configurations: challenges to conceptualisations of care. *Global Networks* 12(2): 155-174.
- RAZAVI, S. 2007. *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context: Conceptual Issues, Research Questions and Policy Options*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

Note on the Author

Parvati RAGHURAM is Reader in Geography at the Open University. She has published widely on gender, migration and development. Much of her more recent work explores the migration of skilled and lesser skilled women, particularly those moving from the Indian subcontinent as doctors and IT workers. She has also been exploring the use of 'care' as a concept in social policy, postcolonial theory and feminist ethics. She has co-authored *The Practice of Cultural Studies* (Sage), *Gender and International Migration in Europe* (Routledge) and co-edited *South Asian women in the diaspora* (Berg) and *Tracing Indian diaspora: Contexts, Memories, Representations* (Sage). She co-edits the *South Asian Diaspora* with the Centre for Study of Diaspora, Hyderabad.