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Dear Colleagues,

Another WGGI pillar has left HQs. Delbert Field had the outstanding privilege of having been the sole male on the WGGI since its inception in 1995 until 2004 when other male colleagues decided to join. While we now have the luxury of having five male members, we felt it important to acknowledge all the work Delbert carried out for the WGGI over the years as well as for his good advice. We wish him well in his new post in IOM Bogota.

In this last quarter of the year, there are still several projects to be finalized. Our priorities will be to prepare the WGGI page on IOM's new website, send out another Fact Sheet on Gender Issues in the workplace, and continue working on the updating of our policy brochure.

We should like to thank those who contributed to this issue, especially as they shared multiple articles. Please remember that the special flavour of this Bulletin lies in the articles from the field.

The Working Group on Gender Issues

NEWS FROM THE FIELD



**LESSONS
FROM
BEIRUT**

**(Article
on page 2)**

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

ASIA

MRF Manila

Ruffy Villanueva, PBMP
Public Information Assistant,
wrote this article:

“A Glimpse of Women Workers’ Plight in Lebanon”

Assigned to be part of the team that coordinated the return to Manila of Filipino migrants displaced by the recent hostilities between Israel and Lebanon, our small team received returning Filipino migrants in Manila from their trip back from the Syrian capital of Damascus.

In batches, we would meet them at the airport where they ended their long journey back home to flee from the dangers of the war that was not their own, or escape the abuse in the hands of their foreign employers.

Just being at the reception more than 10 times, we saw how women outnumbered the men. How among 450 passengers could you see only four men?

While one may argue that evacuation procedures prioritizing women and children may be behind these numbers—their sheer number is clearly an indication of how more and more women brave going offshore for whatever

reason that is important to them.

Joanna (*not her real name*), like many other returnees, struggled to hold back her tears as she expressed gratitude for her safe return to the Philippines.

She had been working in Beirut for two years to support her two children whom she left behind in the northern Philippine province of Isabela.

When rockets started to descend upon Lebanon, she feared she would never see her kids again.

“We have been sleepless there for days out of fear. The explosions would shake the house where I was staying, but my employer kept on saying that it was nothing, that we were safe and that there was no need to leave,” she shared.

Joanna said she had to ask her mother, who is based in the Philippines, to make up a story about her father getting sick, and talk to her Lebanese employer to tell him that Joanna was needed at home.

Only after much prodding did Joanna’s employer let her go.

While some joined the exodus back to the Philippines to escape the dangers of the war, others took the opportunity to escape the lives that they had in the hands of their foreign employers—articulating untold truths on

the plight of women working abroad.

Some told stories of how they went to Lebanon with promises of high pay, only to be given a measly amount for days and months of hard work away from home and away from their families.

Some told of the abuse they endured while working abroad—of how their employers would beat them up, and forcibly take their travel documents to force them to live out their contracts and continue working under harsh conditions.

For a few who arrived in stretchers and wheelchairs, their physical conditions were enough to tell stories of the pain they had to endure in their desire to give their families a chance at a better life.

But despite all the hardships and risks of many dangers abroad, many Filipino women continue to hold on to the golden promises of working overseas.

While it is generally understood that women comprise half of some 175 million migrants worldwide, the pattern seen from the arrivals of Filipino migrants from Lebanon illustrates migration patterns being globally observed today—that women migrants are more present and more visible than ever before; and are, thus, making bigger contributions to the development of both the countries where they came from, and the countries where they work.

With such a huge impact on development both in their countries of origin and countries that receive them, it is only fitting that efforts be undertaken to ensure that their rights are protected, their needs addressed, and their dignity upheld... that women migrants be rightfully enabled to continue playing more active roles in the vast arena of global development.

MRF Dhaka

GFP Samiha Huda writes:

Officer-In-Charge training on “Basics of Human Trafficking and Victim Care & Support” organized by IOM Dhaka and Ministry of Home Affairs

IOM Dhaka has just completed two exciting training sessions in a male dominated profession with a few women police officers. The first one was a 2-day training course for *Officers-in-Charge (OCs)* of Police Stations on “Basics of Human Trafficking and Victim Care & Support”, under the project entitled “Counter-Trafficking Interventions in Prevention, Protection and Prosecution for Victims of Trafficking in Persons in Bangladesh”. The second one was a Training of Trainers (ToT) for the religious community leaders on safe migration.

The Ministry of Home Affairs and IOM jointly organized two-day training sessions for the Officers-in-Charge of 583 Police Stations throughout the country. The

training was much appreciated as informative and timely. The participants enjoyed this training and appreciated the interactive and participatory methods applied by the trainers (IOM staff members). Victim care and support is one of the areas where a lot of discussion took place. All the participants requested to increase the duration of the training for better understanding of the issue. A lot of good recommendations also came out from these training, which would help us design new interventions in combating human trafficking.

IOM has also been implementing a project entitled “Capacity Enhancement and Outreach Programme for Safe Migration in Bangladesh” with the support from the British High Commission. The first phase of the project (that ended in September 2005), aimed at raising awareness among potential migrants of Bangladesh on safe migration. The second phase of the project aims to build on the success of the first phase and enhance the outreach component by utilizing diverse partners in raising awareness, including religious leaders. Religious community leaders (*Imams*) have a great influence on people who seek their advice on a regular basis and hence are very effective in spreading awareness issues in rural Bangladesh. This project aims at enhancing the understanding of migration issues of Imams and by focusing particularly on the target ar-

reas, ensure that Imams are mobilized as resource persons in raising awareness at the grassroots level.

Recently, 20 officials and trainers from the 7 Imam Training Centres (ITCs) were given a ToT based on the adapted version of the Training Manual on Safe Migration. This was done with the idea that they will provide further training to the Imams, through 10 sets of 2-day trainings at the various ITCs and more 1-day trainings of *Imams* from prominent mosques at the district level to ensure safe migration.



Officers-in-charge training

* * *

Intern *Humaira Malik* wrote:

Poverty and Trafficking of Women and Children

Shibgonj is a small village in the Rajshahi district. Bordering with India, it comes at the end of the list when the question of development arises. In the village, it is hard to find a house where poverty has not sketched its dark marks.

The families within the village totally depend on agriculture. Few families have land of their own, the rest are landless farmers. Most of the farmers cultivate others' land and after the harvest they have to give away half of their crops to the owner. Besides agriculture, small enterprises are there but this is on a very small scale.

A village where poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are so prevalent, cultural myths and beliefs have also made their mark. Male dominance, as one of the key components of the culture, has socio-economically marginalized women. Female members in the village are often engaged in non-remunerated economic activities. That is, they work to add value to the products but the final product is mostly sold by men. The contribution of women in the economic activities is often overlooked. Failure to enjoy the benefits of the final product makes women dependent on men for basic necessities. Dependence on basic necessity makes women more vulnerable to be victims of exploitation.

The custom of dowry is very much in-built in the Muslim culture in Bangladesh, Shibgonj is not an exception. To get one's daughter married, dowry is a must. Some parents have to sell their assets and possessions to get their daughter married. It is believed that parents who pay more for the dowry get a better groom for their daughter. Parents who do not have the

smallest belongings have to wait for the perfect man who would marry their daughter without dowry.

The custom of dowry, women's lack of access to paid economic activities and being an agro-based border village with India has made some of the families, especially women in Shibgonj, vulnerable to exploitation, including trafficking. Traffickers in the disguise of grooms target these vulnerable families and marry their daughter without a dowry. It is fairly common in the village to get daughters married to a boy who lives across the border without a dowry. A family who fails to get their daughter married within the village because of dowry feels lucky to find a groom. Families knowingly send their young girls to India with the groom.

As part of my internship in IOM, I had a chance to interview five female survivors of trafficking in persons who have socially integrated in Shibgonj. Out of these five respondents, four of them were rescued by fleeing. To shed light on how dowry leads to trafficking, a case study and findings from my research work are discussed briefly in the following sections.

Social integration defines where survivors are accepted by the family as well as the society. It defines where the survivors live their life without being accused for their past or without being blamed.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for the survivors interviewed. In Shibgonj, out of five, four of them do not have three proper meals a day to eat. Everyday they are physically or verbally abused by their own family members. Two respondents have children from the trafficker and manage to barely live by working as day labourers or *biri* makers (Raw tobacco wrapped around paper).

The survivors are not only being socially marginalized but also economically exploited. One of the survivors informed that she earns her living by making *biri*. Traders cross the border with raw materials for *biri* (Tk 10-15 for every 1000 *Biri*) and make vulnerable women, especially single females manufacture it. It takes around two days to make 1000 *Biri*. Traders not only exploit the available cheap labour but also push the workers to work with hazardous raw materials. Moreover, the locals also do not miss the chance to take advantage of the group. They hire vulnerable women to do household or field work paying half of a man's wage. Men in the village ask double the normal dowry to marry a woman whose husband has left her or victims of trafficking.

Munni¹, the village girl, was married off to an Indian boy at the age of 16 as her father did not have enough money to give a dowry for her wedding. She was taken to India by her husband. After going there she came to know that her husband

¹ Fictitious name

was of a different religion (a Hindu in fact) and already had a wife and kids. She was forced to work in a bangle factory and was only paid for food; moreover she was tortured by the husband. Somehow she managed to come back to Bangladesh by getting the money from begging. However, she was sent back to her husband as her father could not afford to feed them. After a while she returned to Bangladesh again. Munni now lives in Shibgonj with three children and works as a house worker. Once trafficked and trapped, Munni is now looking for a better livelihood option by becoming an active member of a non-governmental organization in her village.

The interviewed female survivors of trafficking believe that sustainable livelihood options will enable them to be economically empowered. It is true that they are back in society but they die everyday of poverty, ignorance and disgrace.

THE AMERICAS

IOM Bogota

GFPs Carolina López Laverde and Linda Eriksson, IOM Colombia and Fernanda Ezeta, IOM México, wrote this piece:

Report from a meeting on the Advancement of Women in Latin America

The *“Thirty-ninth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the*

Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean” took place in Mexico City from 11 to 12 May this year with the purpose of following-up the agreements reached during the last meeting in Mar de Plata, Argentina, in September 2005; and to discuss the success and sustainability of the national mechanisms for the advancement of women.

The meeting was attended by IOM Mexico and IOM Colombia in order to promote the discussion around the subject of migrant women and in order to offer the organization’s technical expertise in this area, more specifically in the area of trafficking in human beings.

In this sense, the agenda was divided into two main parts: the first one inviting all member countries, UN agencies and other international organizations to present the advances made since the last meeting on the subject of the empowerment of women and on violence against women. As at the last meeting, there was an evident absence of actions taken in the area of migrant women, but several countries mentioned measures taken in the field of combating trafficking in human beings. Another subject raised of interest to IOM was the subject of remittances in which INSTRAW mentioned the collaboration with IOM Colombia.

The second part was dedicated to the discussion of the comparable advantages and

sustainability of the national mechanisms for the promotion of a gender perspective in policies and positive actions for the empowerment of women.

At the end of the meeting it was possible to conclude that there was no major novelty in the discussions around the subject of migrant women and migrant women were only treated marginally. Nevertheless, it was recommended that IOM continue to participate in this kind of meeting as it was important to make the organization’s work known and to promote the inclusion of migration and mobility and how it affects women in particular.

* * *



Written by Elin Bos, Counter Trafficking Practicing, and Monika Peruffo, Counter Trafficking Programme Coordinator

“Don’t let anyone shatter your dreams” – A campaign to prevent trafficking in persons in Colombia.

In Colombia, a complex situation of internal conflict, involving illegal armed groups, drug cartels and internally forced displacement drives many Colombians desperately to strive for better opportunities for themselves and their families. They dream of a better future. Unfortunately in reality, while pursuing their

dreams, many Colombians are caught as victims of networks of human traffickers.

According to a recent IOM study, more than 210 victims of human trafficking between 2002 and 2004² were registered in Colombia. But this number is merely the tip of the iceberg. Many victims do not denounce this because they either do not consider themselves victims of trafficking or they do not dare to denounce out of fear of authorities or their traffickers. Most of the cases of trafficking that have been denounced are for sexual exploitation, mainly forced prostitution, of Colombian women inside Colombia and to foreign countries like Spain, Japan, Ecuador and Panama. Sexual exploitation is one of the most recognized modality of this serious crime. Other modalities of forced labour, like domestic service, construction work, garment work and agricultural work are generally not recognized as trafficking in persons. This could explain the low number in denunciations by victims of labour exploitation. Another increasing modality of trafficking in Colombia is servitude marriage and illegal human organ trade.

Against the background of this appalling situation the IOM Mission in Colombia, with the financial support of

² Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, Policía Nacional, Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (2006) Dimensiones de la trata de personas en Colombia, Colombia.

the Royal Embassy of the Netherlands and the cooperation of the Inter-agency Committee Against Trafficking in Persons in Colombia, the Inter American Development Bank and the Ricky Martin Foundation, decided to take a leading role in the struggle against trafficking in persons in Colombia. After conducting thorough research to understand the circumstances that can lead a person to become a victim of trafficking and to better define the profile of the potential victim of trafficking in persons, IOM designed a prevention campaign called ***“Don’t let anyone shatter your dreams”***. The research discovered that the profile of a potential victim of trafficking includes a tendency to assume high risks in order to fulfill goals; a willingness to take short-term risks in exchange for short-term rewards; and a negative influence from the family and social networks that push a person to accept high risk offers. It also established that a potential victim of trafficking might not always be a passive actor, but a person with full knowledge and concrete plans when making decisions to fulfill their personal goals.

“Don’t let anyone shatter your dreams” is designed and directed to people who have one or more of these characteristics. The aim of this campaign is to reach the Colombian population through TV commercials (with the participation of Grammy award-winning superstar Ricky Martin), post-

ers, radio commercials, a clown theater play, stickers, a short film and a media tool kit, to warn them, while striving for their dreams, about the risks of becoming victims of trafficking. The main instrument of the campaign is a national, anonymous hotline against trafficking in persons 01 8000 – 52 2020 and +571 - 600 1035 (international) that provides free information and assistance and is also an indicator of the impact of the campaign.

For more information on IOM in Colombia and the prevention campaign ‘Don’t let anyone shatter your dreams’ visit our website: www.oim.org.co

* * *

Strengthening the internal IOM gender mainstreaming strategy

Written by GFP Carolina López Laverde in coordination with Linda Eriksson, Programme for HIV, Aids and Gender.

Gender inequity has been a constant reality throughout the history of Colombia. Women have been constantly discriminated against in the private and public sphere that has been aggravated by internal violence. Due to its consequences on the lives and living conditions of Colombian women, it has become necessary to start including this perspective in a more systematic way.

IOM Colombia has been working on systematically including a gender perspective since

2002. It decided in 2006 to focus more on internal training and review of the internal project and programme procedures. A survey that was sent to all IOM staff members in Colombia asking for feed-back on these strategies, reinforced the need to do so. One of the first steps taken was the organization of two national workshops targeting principally project developers and decision-makers. Both workshops were lead by the gender expert Florence Thomas, a French woman who had lived in Colombia for forty years during which she had participated in the promotion of the advancement of women in a major way.

The workshops had two main objectives:

- 1) to sensitise to the need and importance of ensuring a gender perspective within all programmes and projects managed by IOM in Colombia;
- 2) to provide tools for assuring a gender perspective within programmes and projects managed by IOM in Colombia.

In order to do so, the workshops were divided into two parts: the first included a presentation on the situation of women today and historically, with inclusion of real situations, numbers and statistics from several IOM projects in Colombia; and the second included an exercise on using a checklist on minimum requirements regarding gender inclusion in project design. This checklist was developed on the basis of

a checklist designed together with the UN Working Group on Gender Issues in Colombia, and was applied to some current IOM projects in the country. During the workshop, the participants also decided on minimum gender indicators in different fields of action such as *inter alia* education, health, income-generation, housing, trafficking in human beings, international migration.

These two tools – the checklist for designing a project proposal with a gender perspective and the list of gender indicators for monitoring and evaluation – have been implemented in each new project formulated by the IOM Mission in Colombia since may 2006.

In order to reinforce this strategy, the next step is to organise a series of regional workshops with all field personnel and main counterparts in the field in order to present these tools to them and train them in their use.

EUROPE

IOM Minsk

GFP Pavel Kholod writes:

Gender mainstreaming at IOM Minsk

The International Organization for Migration in the Republic of Belarus regards gender mainstreaming as an essential priority and a cross-cutting issue in all phases of project development, imple-

mentation and assessment. The gender dimension is always, to a certain degree, integrated into projects implemented by IOM, which must be gender-sensitive, thereby ensuring sound gender balance and non-discrimination between the sexes. For this reason, a proper balance is maintained between female and male staff members of the IOM Mission in Minsk, including employees in the key posts.

As gender mainstreaming stands high on today's IOM agenda, two GFPs were appointed in Minsk this year to help raise the general level of gender awareness among the rest of the staff, put in charge of all gender-related issues within the office, and share information they regularly learn from updated versions of gender sensitivity tool kits around the office. At least twice a year IOM Minsk contributes information to the Gender & Migration News Bulletin, a quarterly prepared by HQs. IOM is also involved in the activities of the UNCT Gender Theme Group, convened to exchange opinions, information and experience on gender issues between the UN-affiliated structures in Belarus, featuring a new forum to cooperate in the areas of joint programming, information campaign implementation, staff training, resource mobilization and potential project expertise from a gender perspective.

Currently in the pipeline: In the autumn, IOM Minsk will host an internal seminar on gender mainstreaming for staff

members from its Counter Trafficking Unit, Gender Focal Points and other interested persons. The seminar will attract Belarusian experts in gender issues who will share their knowledge and experience with local staff, which will hopefully facilitate the incorporation of the gender dimension and any practices into IOM's everyday activities.

- Overall, there are 19 staff members in the IOM Mission in Minsk, out of whom 11 are female and 8 are male.
- The overwhelming majority (18) are general service staff and only one is professional (male).
- All four units - CT, CBMM, Admin and Operations - are headed by women.
- The two top positions - that of Chief of Mission and National Coordinator of Projects - are both held by male staff.

As concerns my motivation to serve as GFP, I would say the only true motive behind accepting this proposal was general interest in this crucial and poignant issue, along with the willingness to learn more about gender mainstreaming (of which I had little, if any, idea before) and, by using this knowledge in my professional practice, to get more involved in the Mission's day-to-day work.

Pavel also shares these interesting statistics:

BELARUS GENDER-RELATED STATISTICS

Position in power

53% Belarusian inhabitants are women. Nonetheless, 87% of high-ranking managers in the governmental structures are men and none of the permanent commissions of the House of Representatives are chaired by women. Investment into the gender equality policies is called to increase the influence of women's presence in governance.

(UN Bulletin Belarus #1, 2006)

Employment

Among people under 45, 24% of working women and 19% of working men have higher education. Nevertheless, women make up 68% of the officially unemployed.

(Statistical compilation "Women and men in Belarus", UNDP Belarus, 2003)

In 1999, 20% of employers were women and 80% men.

(UN Bulletin Belarus #1, 2006)

Salary

According to official statistics the average salary of women is 80% of men's, which is higher than in many developed countries. This can be explained by the high level of education of women.

(UN Bulletin Belarus #1, 2006)

Lifespan

Men's life expectancy at birth is 62 years, 12 years less than women's. The equivalent indicators for EU countries are on

average 75 years for men and 81 years for women.

(EUROSTAT news release, 6 May, 2006)

Feminization of professions

In 2002, women made up 80% out of the total labour force in secondary schools. At the same time, only 49% held positions of school principals. Considering that in 2002 the average salary of teachers was 20% lower than the average salary in Belarus is a sure sign of the feminization of teacher's profession and of a potential poverty risk of this group.

(UN Bulletin Belarus #1, 2006)

Alcoholism

86% of people suffering from alcohol abuse are men. However, the number of women suffering from this disease is growing continuously. In 1995, there were 35 incidents of female alcoholism recorded out of 100,000 people. In 2002, this number doubled to 70.

("Sex/Gender – manual for civil servants", UNDP 2005)

Domestic violence

Every third woman has suffered from physical violence at the hands of her husband or partner. Every fourth woman has experienced sexual violence; the victims are often under-aged.

("Towards a gender-balanced society – analytical report on the situation of women in Belarus", EHU, 2005)

Education

74% of pedagogy students and 72% of medical students are women. At the same time, 71% of technology students and 69% of architecture and construction students are men. The traditional division between "male" and "female" fields of activities and pro-

fessions creates a vicious circle that results in a continuing disproportion of educational profiles.

(The National Report of the Republic of Belarus "Status of achieving the Millennium Development Goals", 2005)

GFP Roman Pavlyuchenko adds :

I can also add to Pavel's comments in that when I joined IOM in 2002, the number of staff members amounted to eight persons. Out of these only two were males. It is also funny that one of the reasons for my employment was "manual power" which I could provide as a man (I was told about that in a humorous manner later). For example, since 2002 we started to organise lots of events and someone had to carry all the handouts and supplies. Later, that imbalance was discussed many times by staff members. And each time while opening a vacancy we searched hopefully for strong male candidates. At the same time some staff members were of the opinion that women in Belarus are more qualified than men (the UN stats confirms it). Finally we managed to find two really strong male candidates and employed two male drivers that improved the situation. Now there is a more comfortable and interesting atmosphere in the office. From management's viewpoint, the strongest sides of females and males can be put to use in that men are better at organising things, they

can fully concentrate on a particular event while women are better at working on document and reports, can fulfil several tasks at one time. Men are good at communicating with law-enforcement whereas women are better in non-military bodies.

IOM Belgrade

GFP Aleksandra Galonja writes :

NATIONAL ACTION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN SERBIA

From the beginning of 2006 the Gender Equality Council (GEC) within the Government of the Republic of Serbia and NGO Association for Women's Initiatives (AWIN) started the process of developing a National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAP) as a strategic long term framework for action by involving women's networks into a 10- month long process of dialogue, negotiation, policy analysis, and policy development. The main goal of the project supported by UNIFEM was to create the NAP by the end of 2006 covering the period 2007-2010 through the large consultative process following the Beijing+5 platform of action.

More specifically, GEC and UNIFEM, working in close cooperation with AWIN, agreed to cooperate on the following:

- Develop a strategy for advancement through a

wide consultative process during 2006 covering six areas:

- Women and Education
- Violence Against Women
- Women and Economics
- Women and Decision-Making
- Women and Health, and
- Women and Media
- Strengthen cooperation between women's organizations, governmental institutions, as well as with United Nations agencies and other international organizations in Serbia;
- Improve the institutional capacity of GEC as well as build the capacity of organizations and networks to advocate for adoption of policies and legislation to protect and fully realize women's human rights.

Members of women's networks as well as professionals were invited to join the process by working in one of the following groups:

In order to involve a wide range of attitudes, concepts, ideas and issues concerning women in the process of defining goals, mechanisms and the action plan, the governmental council for gender equality has been organizing public debates on proposed groups of issues.

The identification of women's problems in society as well as the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, improvement of the overall position of women, the empowerment of women and the integration of gender mainstreaming into formal institutions and procedures were pre-

conditions for NAP creation and would be grass root elements in its further development and implementation.

NAP is considered as a turning point in public policy and a basic instrument/mechanism for the mobilization of all relevant social resources with the intention of acquiring gender equality de facto based on international and European standards and recommendations on gender equality and non-discriminative policies as well as on UN, International Labour Organization, European Council and EU recommendations.

GENDER QUIZ

The answer to the question in the last issue of who said:

“One is not born a woman, one becomes one”.

**Simone de Beauvoir
French existentialist philosopher and writer**

This issue’s question is, who said:

“My theory is that men are no more liberated than women”.

* * *

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

WGGI Head, Denise Glasscock wrote:

MIGRANT WOMEN: SECOND CLASS MIGRANTS?*

Why is it that we rarely hear or read about the over 95 million women who constitute half of the 195 million international migrants in the world today? When we do, it’s usually to hear about sordid tales of victimization when women get caught up in trafficking networks. There are indeed horrendous tales of sickening abuse and exploitation of hundreds of thousands of women, but not all migrant women fall prey to traffickers, fortunately. What happens to the other millions who succeed in their mobility? Who make something of their lives and support their families back home? Who remit billions of dollars to their countries of origin? Who become successful entrepreneurs or executives or even politicians? Who are important actors of change and development?

So little in terms of hard information and analysis is available on them. But why? It’s frustrating when sitting in countless meetings to hear participants repeat there is not enough data or sex-disaggregated statistics on migrant women, not enough gender analysis on migration and migrants, not enough re-

search carried out on the economic and social empowerment of migrant women - and this year after year. Why not just get on with it if these gaps have been recognized? It’s not because there is always something more urgent and important to research on migration because after all, what could be more important than determining what half of the global migrant population does and accomplishes and what impact those movements and accomplishments have on economies and societies?

When you ask yourself these simple questions, there is but one answer for me: ongoing gender discrimination and inequality. At the risk of oversimplifying, gender inequality lies at the heart of why little mention is ever made about it being a push factor for women’s mobility or even less how it impinges on the dissemination of the achievements of migrant women.

There is much talk in this 21st century on the feminization of poverty and the alleviation of that poverty through the development of goals. But only one Millennium Development Goal makes explicit reference to women – that of promoting gender equality and empowering women, while recognizing and hailing the enormous potential of women in development. It’s all very well to state that gender is cross-cutting and as such is implicit but how can there be resolution on such a fundamental problem without a clearer understanding of the vital role of the feminine fac-

tor through significant data, information and analyses?

We know what can happen when migrant women are given a chance to succeed in their mobility and are empowered:

- Women's roles change in the family, the community, and the workplace and consequently in the dynamics that drive migration. With less access traditionally to resources and less decision-making power than men, women can be empowered by migration. As economic decision-makers, they are emerging from the margins as key players in the migration equation.
- Education, work experience and economic independence abroad can release women from traditional roles and enable them to exercise their rights more effectively. This empowerment thus also contributes to promote gender equality.
- Women become aware that their voices count within the family as much as those of the men. This reinforced position within the household sometimes leads to a better balance between the partners and to a reduction of domestic violence. This independence can also be perceived through the self-respect generated by being a source of family income.
- Migrant women transfer almost as many funds to their countries of origin than migrant men. Their remittance patterns demonstrate that their money is used more re-

liably for improved community welfare.

- Migrant women have also become significant agents of change, modifying the family structural relationships in their communities of origin. By becoming the principal sources of family income, they help conceive strategies for the transition between the standards and values of their societies of origin and those of the host societies. They also become role models for younger generations.
- Through the creation of micro-enterprises, migrant women become entrepreneurs and therefore, economic actors helping to meet the needs of their families through a sustainable business.

But this knowledge is not really based on any hard empirical or systematically gathered evidence. If we had that kind of information, it could be used to create much more effective development policies which would take the achievements of women migrants at micro-level and expound them one thousand fold to make a real difference in the eradication of poverty.

The cascading effect of such development policies would be to help realize gender equality. It would also prove to governments – of both origin and destination countries – the full potential of female migrants as an economic force to be reckoned with as well as acknowledging them as agents of development. This latter would allow for the full promotion of female migrant organizations in de-

velopment projects to alleviate poverty in their countries of origin, particularly through the use of remittances and the circulation of skills. Women's associations in the diaspora are not a recent phenomenon but to recognize them as fully-fledged players in development would be tantamount to recognizing new key partners within civil society.

So coming back to my simplistic reasoning, I would dare to submit that ongoing gender inequality - that same inequality that keeps women out of the boardrooms or most other positions of power - prevents coordinated efforts by governments, international agencies, or academia (although this to a lesser degree) from not only effectively improving and facilitating the mobility of migrant women but also from devoting more resources to actually profiting from and making better use of the potential of migrant women in development.

The bottom line is that migrant men and women move for different reasons and with different means. Both genders can succeed in their mobility if given a chance, but first and foremost, government policies should play a positive role in the empowerment of women migrants by promoting gender responsive policies, legislation and programmes to take into account not only the impact they have on men and women but also how they can meet the different needs of the two sexes.

Governments, development agencies and international organizations should develop strategies to enhance the positive impact of migration and particularly of migrant women towards the achievement of the MDGs. Therefore, the UN's High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development provides a critical opportunity to mainstream the gender dimension of migration into the international agenda.

The time for excuses is over, it's time for action.

***written for *Migration*,
September 2006 issue.**

MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Gender, what does it mean? When asking people what the word gender means, often the first reaction is: 'gender is women'. This probably stems from the fight of the first feminists to draw attention to women's issues and rights. However, gender is not only about women.

The following poem could be helpful in understanding the concept of gender:

For every Woman

By Nancy R. Smith

For every woman who is tired
of acting weak
When she knows she is strong,
There is a man who is tired of
appearing strong
When he feels vulnerable.

For every woman who is tired
of acting dumb,
There is a man who is burdened
with the constant
Expectation of "knowing
everything".

For every woman who is tired
of being called
"an emotional female"
There is a man who is denied
the right to weep and be gentle.

For every woman who feels
"tied down" by her children,
There is a man who is denied
the full pleasure of parenthood.

For every woman who is denied
meaningful employment
And equal pay,
There is a man who must bear
full financial responsibility for
Another human being.

For every woman who was not
taught the intricacies
Of an automobile,
There is a man who was not
taught the satisfaction of cook-
ing.

For every woman who takes a
step toward her own liberation,
There is a man who finds that
the way to freedom
Has been made a little easier.

Courtesy of DAWN³

**Opinions expressed
in this document are
those of the authors
and do not necessar-
ily reflect the views of
IOM.**

³ DAWN: Development Alternatives with Women for a new Era