

On behalf of INSTRAW, it is with great pleasure that I address this Conference of Women Leaders. The issue of migration and its impacts is one of the most pressing issues for both the international community and national authorities, and its importance will continue to grow throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In 2002, some 175 million people lived outside their country of origin and this figure is projected to reach 230 million by 2050 (UNFPA, 2004). Neither economic recession nor increasingly strict border controls in the recipient countries have reversed the constantly increasing trend toward international migration. Women are a growing part of migratory movements. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in most destination countries the number of women migrants has grown at a faster rate than that of their male counterparts, such that women currently represent almost half of the total international migrant population and in some countries they account for up to 70% or 80% of the total.

Migration for economic reasons is becoming increasingly common as globalization and unequal economic growth create labour shortages in developing countries while closing off employment opportunities in developed countries. A main feature of this development of global capitalism is a new international division of labour, where class, gender and ethnic differences operate with more force than ever.

Remittances - the money earned by migrants working abroad that is sent back home - have emerged as the second largest source of external funding for developing countries, and their volume continues to grow. According to World Bank estimates, in 2004 remittances received by developing countries amounted to some US\$126 billion, almost twice the amount of Official Development Assistance (US\$72 billion) and 76% of total foreign direct investment (US\$165 billion). According to some estimates, if informal transfers were also taken into account, the estimated value of remittances could double. This flow of money and its potential have caught the attention of governments as well as financial and development institutions. An increasing number of projects and programmes

are specifically targeting remittances, identifying and implementing initiatives aimed at maximizing the impact of remittances for poverty reduction and local development. Remittances represent long-distance social links of solidarity, reciprocity and obligation that connect women and men migrants with their relatives and friends across national borders controlled by States.

As active participants in migratory movements, women constitute almost half of remittance senders – through which they contribute to the maintenance of their households and to the development of their communities of origin. However, gender inequalities differentiate the migratory experience for men and women. The decision to migrate, the networks utilized or the individual migrant's insertion into the labour markets of the destination country, to mention only a few factors, are all affected by gender differences. In this regard, the money remitted, the frequency of remittances, the channels used or the impact of remittances on the development of the country of origin are equally impacted by gender.

Despite the growing number of women migrants and the importance of remittances for the material well-being of many families in developing countries, very few studies analyze the relationship between gender and remittances. This gap is particularly worrying in view of the evidence that integrating a gender perspective into international development policies and programmes increases their effectiveness and sustainability. A critical review of the flows and impacts of remittances from a gender perspective is crucial for the design and successful implementation of programmes intended to harness the development potential of remittances.

Through its research programme, INSTRAW has begun to examine the gender dimensions of remittance flows. We recently launched a working paper: ***Crossing Borders: Gender, Remittances and Development*** during an Inter-American Development Bank forum on remittances. The Institute has since been active in trying to bring a gender perspective to events, programmes and projects that are organized around the issue of remittances. The two units of analysis considered by INSTRAW to allow greater understanding of the gender dimensions of remittances are:

1. Household and migratory networks; and
2. Growing feminization of international migration

In this context, one of the survival strategies adopted by households in developing countries is migration to developed countries where a growing service economy and a crisis of the reproductive model demand an inexpensive and vulnerable labour force, a requirement which is perfectly met by migrant women. Migration has become a private solution to a public problem for both women from poor countries and their employers in rich countries.

In order to maintain contact with their families and communities of origins, migrants expand their relationships across geographical, political, economic, and cultural boundaries, creating transnational families and communities. Within these social fields of interaction there is a constant flow of resources and discourses that question and transform traditional ideas of identity and belonging. The study of these migratory networks shows the diversity of women's family and community strategies as well as the complexity of gendered divisions. Migration, viewed from this angle, is based on household strategies in which both the migrant and non-migrant family members interact; those who have left and those who remain. By focusing on the hierarchies of gender and age within households, feminist critique has revealed how the sexual division of labour shapes the migratory experience, the conditions of settlement in the recipient countries, and the relationship that women maintain with their households and countries of origin.

Transnational relationships are a fundamental element that conditions, facilitates and explains the migratory process. Those who have migrated return to their countries of origin, send money and gifts, and transmit images of the 'here' and 'there' in which the diversity of social spaces are compared, intermixed and rethought. In addition to money, an enormous volume of ideas, resources and discourses that influence and transform social identities, households, and power relationships, also circulate within transnational networks.

The effects of remittances sent by migrants to their countries of origin are highly complex and depend upon a series of variables such as the characteristics of the individual migrants and their households - both in the country of origin and the destination country - their motivations, the way in which the money is utilized, and the overall local context and economic environment. Other contextual factors such as access to credit, infrastructure and business opportunities also influence the impact of remittances on development. It must be

noted that the effects of remittances go beyond the economic realm. Very few studies have analyzed the role played by remittances in the transformation of ideas about gender roles, which are questioned from the moment in which women send remittances as heads of households. The receipt of money by households and the utilization of this money also have an impact on gender relations that cannot be ignored. What most of the research seems to ignore is the fact that the amount of money sent to the households by migrant men and women, how it is sent and the form in which it is utilized, are not only determined by the market economy but also by the political economy of the household. Power hierarchies of gender, age, authority and resources within households play a crucial role in determining the dynamics of migrant families and social networks, which also influence the flows of remittances. Understanding remittances and their effects requires, therefore, a gendered analysis of the household.

The economic and social roles that women acquire through the sending and/or receipt and management of remittances can catalyze transformations in gender relations and can in turn stimulate social, cultural, economic and political change. The few studies that have attempted to analyze the influence of gender on patterns of sending remittances have not revealed conclusive results. As a result of the dedication to the household and care for family members that characterizes the feminine role, it is expected that women establish longer-lasting and more intense contacts with their relatives, mainly when it comes to children, where ever they may be located. From a gender roles perspective women's greater propensity to lead processes of family reunification and their consistency in sending remittances can be better understood. One study of both male and female overseas workers from the Philippines revealed that almost all migrants, regardless of their sex, send money back to their households. However, the study also indicated that men send more money than women do and, therefore, the income level of the households of migrant men is significantly higher than those of migrant women.

In order to understand gender differences in the sending and impact of remittances, we must take a variety of factors into account in both the destination and origin countries. In the destination countries, immigration and integration policies and the legal status of the migrant, gender patterns in the labour market, exiting social agents such as migrants' associations, and policies for co-development and women's empowerment have a profound impact on migrant women's ability to earn and send enough money for remittances. In the

origin country, household composition and power dynamics, the local economic, social and political context, and women's access to credit and other financial resources impact whether they will receive remittances and how they will use them.

The role that remittances sent and managed by women play in the balance of power within unequal gender relationships is a key element to be considered in the evaluation of development and social change processes. Monetary remittances contribute in a decisive manner to the improvement of women's economic status in both countries of origin and destination. But in addition to money, ideas, images, beliefs, and values also circulate between these countries. These additional elements have been termed "social remittances" and although they are more difficult to value and measure than monetary remittances, they can also have a profound impact on development and promotion of equality, including gender equality. Gender not only influences physical movement across national borders, but gender relations are themselves reaffirmed, negotiated, confronted and reconfigured within transnational contexts. Migrant women send money to their households; thereby acquiring new roles and transmitting new images, which have an effect both on their families and their communities. Women who stay behind also experience changes in their roles, as they assume more responsibilities and acquire greater autonomy in deciding how remittances are to be used. Any attempt to analyze the link between migration and development cannot exclude the impact that migration and more specifically remittances, have had on social relations, gender roles and on the empowerment of women.

For development to be both human and sustainable the different needs and interests of men and women must be considered and future research on migration and remittances must answer the **following questions**:

- How does the growing feminization of migrations affect the flow of remittances?
- How do gender roles influence the patterns of sending and using remittances?
- How do the sending and management of remittances influence gender relations?
- When it is said that remittances contribute to development of poor countries, what type of development is meant? Does it include meeting the different strategic needs and interests of men and women?
- The emphasis on the productive use of remittances has strong gender implications. In each specific context, what is the impact on the lives of men and women that

mobilization initiatives of remittances towards investments and activities that generate employment: How can these initiatives contribute to gender equality?

- What are the most effective means for mobilizing the Diaspora so that collective remittances contribute towards gender equality?
- How can developed countries contribute so that migration and remittances become a tool for the development of the countries of origin?

In this regard, some **future directions for research** include:

- Analysis of how migration and work policies in developed countries influence the access and mode of insertion of women migrants into their labour markets and evaluation of the impact that the different types of labour insertion have on remittances;
- Analysis of the changes, breaks or continuities in gender dynamics and inequalities that migration supposes for women, both in the countries of origin and destination;
- Gender analysis of the initiatives, programmes and policies for channeling remittances towards productive investment;
- Realization of case studies to analyze remittances and their impact from a gender perspective within specific social, economic and political contexts;
- Systematize and disseminate good practices and experiences in the area of remittances and development with a gender perspective;
- Development of guidelines and recommendations for migrant sending and receiving countries for the integration of gender perspectives into proposals for policies and projects that link remittances and development.