Gender and Migration: An introduction to the gendered dimensions of migration
Statistics on women and migration

• In 2005, almost half (49.6%) of all migrants were women globally (source: UN)

• In Southern countries, women represent 51% of migrants

• In high-income OECD countries, they also represent 51%

• In 1960 women already made up 46.8% of all migrants
What do we mean by the ´feminisation of migration´ and what is driving it?

• Increasing stream of women who migrate independently in search of work; women as the initiators of migration in their family

• The tendency for some countries to have majority female migration streams such as the Philippines and other countries to have majority female migration streams in certain destinations ex: Latin American immigration in Italy

• Linked to the global demand, particularly in the North and the Middle East, for domestic workers, reproducing the traditional sexual division of labour, which has proved to be crisis resistant
• Research shows that with the exception of dentists and nurses, women are a minority of ‘primary’ applicants for skilled migration in Australia and Canada

• In the year 2002-2003, women represented 35% of primary applicants in Australia and 25% of primary applicants in Canada

• The family migration route thus remains important for the majority of female applicants
Global Care Chain: The transfer of Gender Inequalities

- “Care Crisis” in developed countries; breakdown of the previous model based on women´s unpaid and invisible care work

- Cutbacks in public services

- ´Outsourcing of care´: European female professionals outsource care; restructuring of the gendered division of household labour is progressing very slowly
Motivations for migration: it’s not just economics- push factors

• Qualitative studies on migrant women from Latin America show that the desire to escape from abusive marriages, or to leave discrimination and social stigma behind for divorcees, single, childless or non gender-conformist women are also strong push factors driving migration.
Case Study from Ecuador

• “Yes, for me it was that, there's no denying it, and we have to open our eyes to the fact, because I think it was that. My Mum wanted to get rid of him…she suffered a lot, she suffered a lot when she was with my Dad from blows, fights … it started when I was about 11, yes, he hit her“ (22 year old woman, daughter of migrant, interviewed in Quito)

• Research conducted by Margarita Barañano Cid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Case Study from Ecuador

• “Rejection by society mattered a lot to me in my country, my big obstacle was my family, that is, my family was a hundred per cent. Why? Because I still love and care for my family, and I would die for my family and I would give everything for my family. Yes, I know, on the phone they say, 'Yes, we love you, don't worry', but deep down, when I get back, it'll be, 'How embarrassing, my brother', they'll say, ‘how shameful”' (Interview with a transexual woman)

• Research conducted by Margarita Barañano Cid, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
How migration policy is gendered in the origin country: Age restrictions on female domestic workers from South Asia

- Bangladesh: Women must be at least 25 years old
- India: Women must be at least 30 years old or should have completed matriculation, security deposit of $2,500 for employers
- Nepal: Women must be at least 18 years old
- Pakistan: Women must be at least 35 years old
- Sri Lanka: Women must be at least 21 years old

Several South Asian countries have implemented temporary bans on female workers migrating to certain countries ex: Nepalese women were banned from working in the Gulf as domestic workers from 1998 to 2003
Gendered migration policy in the Philippines

- In response to the hanging of a Philippina domestic worker in Singapore in 1995, the Philippines adopted a new ´gender sensitive´ migration policy that provides mandatory pre-departure skills training to “vulnerable workers”
- Research by Robyn M. Rodriguez reveals that these seminars stress women´s duties towards their families and implicitly blame them for family problems occasioned by migration
Consequences of state gender stereotyping

• The age restrictions promote irregular migration and hence ironically increase women’s potential to be trafficked and exploited

• Perpetuates the social illegitimacy of non-family based migration
Gender and Ethnic Segregation of Destination Country Labour Markets

• In the Gulf, the *kafala* system of sponsorship ties migrant workers to their employers, many of whom confiscate all their travel documents.

• A dual economy is in operation based on both nationality and gender.

• Domestic work is mostly unregulated; although contracts exist in some countries domestic workers are completely outside the purview of the country’s labour laws.
The UK: Moving Backwards

• A change in 2012 in the UK’s policy towards foreign domestic workers will restrict their visas to a maximum period of six months, without the possibility of renewal

• Domestic workers will be tied to their employers; they can no longer change employers and if they do so they must return immediately to their countries (similar to the *kafala* system in the Middle East)

• The option to settle in the UK has been eliminated as well as the possibility to be accompanied by family members
• While all migrant workers are vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation in destination labour markets, the concentration of migrant women in the domestic/care sectors exposes them to higher levels of isolation and hence to the risk of abuse and sexual violence.
Spain: Moving towards greater recognition of domestic work as work

• From Jan 1st, 2012, all domestic workers in Spain (where migrant women constitute over 60% of domestic workers) will now belong to the general social security regime and not to a special domestic workers social security regime as before

• This means that their employers will have to pay social security contributions for them from the first hour worked, as opposed to from 20 hours under the previous law; benefits such as sick pay will now be aligned with that of other workers
The impact of family migration policy: Switzerland

• Swiss family migration policy places non-EU spouses of Swiss nationals in a position of both legal and economic dependency; they can work only if their employer can prove that a Swiss or EU national is not available.

• Family migration policy is designed on the assumption that foreign spouses will try to abuse the Swiss system; Swiss migration policy views foreign women as wives and mothers rather than as workers.

• During the first five years of marriage, residence permits are renewed for one year at a time only, giving foreign spouses a precarious legal existence and depriving them of full citizenship rights.
The impact of family migration policy: US

- The spouses of highly skilled H1-B visas holders are granted an H-4 visa that denies them the right to work and also the right to student loans.

- These women, many of whom are highly qualified, suffer from depression, isolation and low self-esteem while they wait for their husbands´ green card to arrive, a process that can take up to 18 years.
“mentally we get so low. No motivation, low self – esteem, no self-confidence. Even I have started stammering. Back home, I was a lifestyle journalist with a reputed International English magazine publishing group…Then the question arises, who we were? And, what we have become after coming here?... Many of us are women and nobody has heard our voices. We are not their potential vote banks but America should not forget that the Silicon Valley is made by the sweat and blood of H1B workers and sacrificed dreams and aspirations of H4 visa holders” (Source: H-4 visa, a curse)
### Percentage of women in highly skilled occupations, aged 15-64, by origin, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Native born</th>
<th>Non OECD foreign born</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD
What about the highly skilled?

- Highly skilled female migrants remain understudied; there is a lack of gender disaggregated data in Europe.

- The health profession has provided important opportunities for highly skilled migrant women; in the UK, female doctors constitute 26.2% of all non-EU trained doctors.
### Desire among highly-educated women to migrate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire to migrate</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Highly-educated women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Federation</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other CIS countries</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European countries not included in OCED</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Africa</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other African countries</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian countries</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and Central America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GallupWorld Poll Survey 2008-10
Gendered consequences of policies to attract the highly skilled

- The desire of many Northern governments to attract foreign workers in the ICT sector has led to heavily male migration streams, such as in Germany’s Green Card scheme (only 7.5% of the workers recruited under this scheme were women); sectoral bias

- From 1998 to 2000, just 10% of the computer engineers recruited in Canada were women
Gendered consequences of highly skilled migration policies

• The UK’s policy of assessing prior earnings in highly skilled streams (Tier 1) can disadvantage women due to the global pay gap.

• Canada has recognised the hidden gender selectivity involved in migration policy and instituted a gender-based analysis of immigration policy in 2002, mandating the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data for all of its policies and programmes.
Gendered consequences of highly skilled migration policies

- Although the impact of GBA (gender-based analysis) is still being debated, its introduction in Canada has resulted in a more gender sensitive highly skilled migration policy compared with Australia.

- Consideration of a general skill set in Canada as opposed to occupational skill alone (in Australia) and part-time work can help women who have taken time out for child bearing and rearing.
The impact of migration on the marriage market: a case study from Kerala

- The potential for migration to the Gulf and Western countries via nursing has led to the social upgrading of the nursing profession in Kerala, its extension to all communities, and an increase in demand for brides who are nurses.

- Many Malayali nurses now pay their own dowries and have the ability to sponsor other family members; this can lead to a shift in power relationships within the family.
Marriage migration and men

- Research by Katharine Charsley on Pakistani Punjabi grooms who marry British Pakistani brides show that they struggle with downward mobility, loss of social status, and must face the prospect, at least initially, of living with and being dependent on their in-laws, which places them in a structural position in the family akin to the traditional daughter-in-law role of subordination and vulnerability, thus undermining the migrant husband’s ability to perform hegemonic Pakistani masculinity.

- These grooms must adapt to their wife’s kin and their customs in the absence of family support.
Research by Ester Gallo on the impact of migration to Italy on the masculinity of Malayali men shows that being sponsored by their wives and working in Italian homes as domestics or gardeners both gives them an element of respectability as ‘legals’ while simultaneously threatening their masculinity.

In Kerala, the image of Italy is feminised; jokes about “waiting men.”
The romantic appeal of irregular migration

- Research among Pakistani men (Ali Ahmad) reveals that the high risks and cost involved with migrating illegally boosts masculine self-esteem and becomes a commodity in itself.

- Masculine capital
(the experience of being a migrant) “matured me as a woman, as a person, I think I learned to make my own decisions, which I didn’t do back there… and I learned that I can prosper even when I'm alone, so the fact that I proved that for a while I had to maintain my family also made me stronger“ (35 year old female Ecuadorian returnee, in Quito)

Source: Margarita Barañano Cid
"Yes, you are forced by necessity. When we had a car, with my husband, for example, he said to me, `Learn to drive’, my sisters-in-law, `Learn to drive’,… but no, for whatever reason, you're not that interested because your husband is there and he doesn't insist, but when he left, I had the chance… I learned, I taught myself that too. It also matures you a bit, because everything depended on him“ (Ecuadorian woman)

Source: Margarita Barañano Cid
“I learned to iron here, for example. I had never ironed in my life… Because back there, you can have a home help …I left the job because they gave me their shoes to clean; when it came to that I did feel like rubbish, a rag, utterly demeaning for me, so I said, 'Look, I'm not going to work past that point …I want you to know that I came here because I wanted to work, and I came here with money to see if I could adapt…”

(highly skilled Ecuadorian woman)

Source: Margarita Barañano Cid