CONSIDERING THE GENDER DIMENSION IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION IN ASIA

Barbara Bonciani (University of Pisa, CNR-IRCES)

10th Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP 10), Bruxelles 27-28 September
Panel 2: Climate Change and Environment: impact on migration
Why do we have to consider prospective of gender in climate change and migration?

- Discussion within policy and academics regarding climate change and migration is often gender neutral (WEDO, 2008). Consequently important differences in the climate change impacts of women and men are neglected.

- **Environmental impacts are strongly gender specific.**

  *Within the framework of livelihood climate change may differently shape both migration’s cause and consequence by gender.*

  - Several factors, such as lower socio-economic status, the traditional role of women traditional in society and the use of migration as a coping strategy: all influenced their chance of survival

- Women are not only the victims of climate change, but also part of the solution.
Migration is a way of adaptation to climate change: challenges

- Migration can be a positive climate change adaptation measure that creates livelihood opportunities, supports economic development and disaster response though remittances and thus reduces future displacement.

- Climate-induce migration is a highly complex issue which needs to be understood as a part of global migration dynamics and female migration drivers (environmental and social-economic factors are interrelated).

- Women comprise about half of all international migration, although this differs from country to country.

- Women migrations can provide significant benefits to the regions of origin. In this framework remittances can usually complement adaptation funding.

- Globally, the countries that receive the highest number of remittances are on the Asian continent: India, China, Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia (these countries in 2016 receive the 37% of the total, around US$ 217 billion) In the Philippines economy remittances from overseas workers make up about a 10th of the gross domestic product.
Female migrants in Asia increasingly move to the Middle East and middle income countries.

- **Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka** are the main countries of origin.
- **Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, China** are the key destinations.
- **Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand** are the destination of 97% of intra-ASEAN migrants.

**Women’s labour migration flows**

Source: ASEAN, 2015.
Migration is a way of adaptation to climate change: challenges

- Migration can be a positive climate change adaptation measure
- Women often lack adequate support to make migration a positive adaptation strategy.

### TABLE 1. MAIN CHALLENGES RELATING TO MIGRATION OF WOMEN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PRE-MIGRATION STAGE</th>
<th>IN TRANSIT</th>
<th>AT DESTINATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchal and gender</td>
<td>Women are exposed to exploitation and abuses in transit</td>
<td>Women often experience poor living and worked conditions</td>
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<td>norms and lack of family</td>
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<td>support</td>
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<td>Lack of information in</td>
<td>They suffer for a lack of proper documentation</td>
<td>They suffer for sexual and physical abuse</td>
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<td>terms of procedures for</td>
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<td>seeking employment</td>
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<td>Difficulties in managing</td>
<td>They rarely have local contacts, skills or local language knowledge</td>
<td>Often they are underpaid and they suffer for a lack in labour and social</td>
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<td>the finances to pay for</td>
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<td>protection</td>
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<td>their migration.</td>
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Source: IOM, 2015
### Migration as a way of adaptation to climate change: challenges and opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Migration as adaptation strategy</th>
<th>Case studies</th>
<th>Environmental drivers</th>
<th>Main consequences for women</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female - oriented</td>
<td>Philippines, Sri-Lanka, Indonesia</td>
<td>Cyclone, drought, soil erosion and other climate stresses reduce livelihood conditions in those countries.</td>
<td>• By sending remittances, women play an important role as <strong>agent of development</strong> for the countries of origin.</td>
<td>• Women are engaged mostly in informal economy and irregular migrant channel</td>
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<td>• Women remit a higher proportion of they earnings and more frequently (IOM &amp;UN-INSTRAW, 2010).</td>
<td>• In countries of the Gulf and East Asia, labour laws do not cover domestic workers.</td>
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<td><strong>Remittances improve the adaptive capacity of communities.</strong></td>
<td>• Women need to be protected against exploitation and abuses.</td>
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Migration is a way of adaptation to climate change: challenges and opportunities

- Climate change in Asia produces different migration responses that affect women differently:

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<td>Male-oriented</td>
<td>Nepal, Bangladesh</td>
<td>In <strong>Bangladesh</strong> 130 million people live on the coast at approximately 1.5 meters above the sea level. Each year an estimated five million people are displaced by cyclone and floods in Bangladesh.</td>
<td>• <strong>Overburden of women responsibilities</strong> when partners migrate in search of work and income.</td>
<td>• There are still limited options for women to earn income.</td>
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<td>In <strong>Nepal</strong> mountain people and their livelihoods are particularly vulnerable to climate and other drivers of change (UNEPWCMC 2002).</td>
<td>• <strong>Feminization of economy</strong> with women responsible for most economic activities, as well for their households.</td>
<td>• Women are excluded from resource management institutional forums.</td>
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Till now, we said that we need to focus on the female dimension of migration (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)),

We said that it is necessary to create a gender-sensitive climate change policy. How can we realize it?

How and why should we empower migrant women?

What role do Asian immigrant women have in the global fight against climate change and in the environmental protection policies?

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To create a gender sensitive climate change policy, we have to consider the link between Women and Nature. As showed by many studies (Donini, Eurispes, Swg, Piccardo...):

Women deeply recognize the need to care for the environment, the "Οἰκία" (the “house”, the ancient Greek concept that brought to the terms of "ecumene" and modern "ecology“)

- Women are culturally ORIENTED to the “CARE"
- Women instinctively PROTECT the land, any kind of resources... for their family
- Women tend to MANAGE RESOURCES with intelligence and prudence
- Women TRANSMIT the concept of hygiene and waste to children
When Climate Changes arise, Women initially ADAPT (lack of water, drought, monsoons, pollution, global warming, diseases, natural disasters, overpopulation...)

• They **have a STRONG ADAPTIVE ABILITY**

• They adapt **when the man migrates**. It is an **ADDITIONAL PRESSURE** for the women. They are loaded more, **they have to do the work of man in addition**

• They **seek and find SOLUTIONS** as long as they can as long as the environment allows it

• Then..... **If a woman DECIDES TO MOVE AWAY it is because she has NO ALTERNATIVE**

• But...they can **feel forced** in some way
The woman point of view

- The questions are: **What feelings** do they feel? **Is it for them a constraint or an opportunity? What do they leave behind?**

It is necessary to ask these questions directly to women.... to understand

- **the inner world of immigrant women**
- their strong attachment to the land
- **the conflicting feelings (from the desire to create a new life to the desire to maintain the link with their land)**

A difficult choice

- **Their choice to migrate** is always made considering the needs of all the members of the family

- For women it’s **always a heavy burden, a painful choice** (even if the only one possible)
Guidelines

- Aware of these fundamental aspects, **WHAT ARE THE GOALS?**

- **WHAT** should be the CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY (oriented to women who are **about to migrate** or those who have **already migrated**)?

- First of all, we need to **MAP THE RISKS of women**

- Then, we have to **EMPOWER women affected by climate change**, (as the EU Gender Action Plan GAP say).
• Why?

• Because women, **besides being victims**, are **POWERFUL AGENTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

• Because woman **DEEPLY KNOW the environment**.

• Because women have a **great PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE** (ranging from **agriculture**, **forestry** and **fisheries** to **energy infrastructures**...)

• Because women have a **key role to find EFFICIENT SOLUTIONS** (different from men but really practical)....
• We should LISTEN carefully to asian women facing climate change and women involved in migration.

• We need to INTEGRATE GENDER CONCERNS and PERSPECTIVES (Cancun agreement from COP16)

• We must RESPECT the CULTURAL DIMENSION of women involved in migration due to climate change. Far from an up-down perspective. It is due to respect deeply the history and the cultures of immigrant women
• We must **DISSEMINATE and REWARD** the **GOOD PRACTICES of women** to **motivate** other women, to **make visible the importance of women involvement** in a gender-sensitive climate policy (as the Goldman Environmental Prize)

• We need to **MONITOR** the **RESULTS of women involvement**. We must **KEEP TRACK OF PROGRESS MADE** in advancing gender-sensitive climate POLICY
These GENDER ASPECTS of climate change related to migration mentioned till now, ARE BEGINNING TO BE RICONIZED

They can be found in some policy documents. (COP15 in Copenhagen)

However, THERE IS still A LOT TO DO concerning the climate change policies.

We have to IMPLEMENT concretely THE AGENDA OF INTERNATIONAL INSTUTUTIONS on the empowerement of immigrant women. (COP20 in Lima)
We must **IDENTIFY VALID STRATEGIES** (UN Sustainable development goals SDGs)

to **SUPPORT “CLIMATE JUSTICE”** (COP15 in Copenhagen)

to **PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS** of immigrant women

to **FIGHT against the EXCLUSION** and the **MARGINALIZATION** of weak women (we refer to the work of the Task Force on Displacement under the UNFCCC)

**IMMEDIATE actions are needed.** Leaders have to **ADOPT A SENSE of URGENCY** to provide a concrete answer to climate change because everyday **immigrants women** face **difficult decisions.**
• We have the OPPORTUNITY TO TRANSFORM this common problem in fruitful international COOPERATION, the CHANCE for mutual KNOWLEDGE and SHARING

Thank you for your attention |

Barbara Bonciani: Barbara.bonciani@sp.unipi.it
Serena Gianfaldoni: corsorisoroseumane.gestionale@unipi.it