

# Gender and Migration & Development



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Information center in Kathmandu. © Helvetas/Swiss Intercooperation/Patrick Rohr

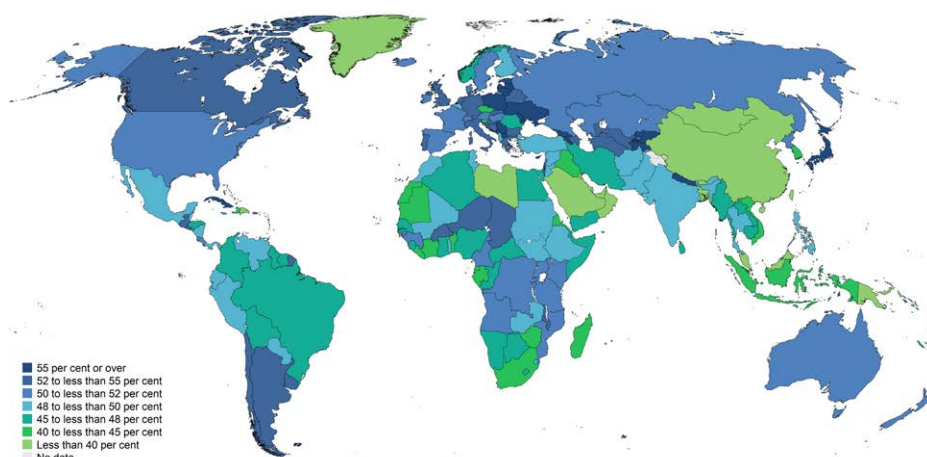
This guidance sheet is one of a series written to support SDC staff in ensuring that gender issues are taken into account transversally in different thematic domains - in this case, Migration and Development. This guidance sheet outlines key gender issues regarding migration and how these can be integrated in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of cooperation strategies and project interventions

One billion out of the 7 billion human beings on earth are estimated to be migrants. Out of these, one quarter are international migrants and three quarters are internal migrants. While the proportion of international migrants has remained constant, at about 3 percent of the world population, there are numerically more migrants than ever before. In 2015, the United Nations Department of Economic and

Social Affairs, UNDESA, estimated that almost half of all migrants are women. The International Labour Organisation, ILO, indicates that 150.3 million women and men out of international migrants are migrant workers. Wom-

en migrants have a higher labour force participation rate than women non-migrants, and account for 44.3 % of the migrant workers<sup>1</sup>.

Figure 1: Percentage of female migrants among all international migrants in 2015 (UNDESA)



## Key issues

**A. Understand the migration cycle**, and aim to intervene in support of women and men migrants wherever they are particularly vulnerable due to their gender. Female migrants often work in informal or isolated situations, due to “feminine” position such as care and household work, where Gender-Based Violence is often a particularly important issue. As well as access to basic services and rights may not be the same for migrant women as for migrant men.

**B. Women migrants can also make a positive contribution to development** in places of origin, transit and destination, if the necessary framework conditions are in place. Significant amounts through remittances are sent by women migrants to their place of origin and their labour contribution has been essential in meeting skills shortages around the care and health work needed to sustain economies. Programmes working on migration and development should focus on improving framework condition for both female and male migrants. This means having

safe and regular migration channels, informed and collective choices (i.e. with family members), as well as access to resources and services throughout the migration cycle within all dimensions.

**C. Consider all the family members** in situations of labour migration – not only those leaving, but also those left behind. There are emotional and financial impacts on all concerned that vary between women and men, and should ideally be addressed in a holistic manner.

# 1 Definitions

There is no universally accepted definition of a **migrant**. The International Organization for Migration, IOM, defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the caus-

es for the movement are; or (4) the length of the stay.

A migrant-centred approach in development programmes focuses on migration from a migrant's perspective along the **migration cycle**. SDC distinguishes between 3 stages: before, during and after migration. Particularly during migration two dimen-

sions need to be distinguished, the place of origin and the place of transit or destination. Those dimensions are often strongly interconnected. For example migrants are often linked with their family members left behind in the place of origin.

# 2 International rights framework



Figure 2: SDGs goals with targets directly related to migration

The positive contribution of migration to development is increasingly recognized in international debates and anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Figure 2 illustrates the SDG goals that include targets which are specifically related to migration. For example target 10.7 is to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. However, not all of them explicitly make the distinction between female and male migrants. Thus, in order to reach SDG 5, 8, 10, 16, and 17 a gender lens is needed to capture the specific needs of women migrants, who are most likely to be “left behind” in the progress towards the 2030 Agenda (ODI 2016). Two out of these five SDGs, SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, are of particular relevance in assuring the rights and wellbeing of female migrants and refugees (ODI 2016: 3–4).

Other political commitments through international conventions, declarations, laws as well as bilateral and multilateral agreements have been established to protect migrants and women in particular. Of special importance are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), specifically the general recommendation (GR) no. 26 giving specific attention to the rights of women migrant workers and GR no. 32 on gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, as well as the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention (C189).

# 3 Analysing gender in migration

Migration is not gender neutral. Women and men move for a combination of reasons and they face different challenges, opportunities and have different and intersecting vulnerabilities. On the one hand gender influences who migrates and why, and how decisions are made throughout the migration cycle. On the other hand, migration influences gender relations, power and behaviour either imbedding inequalities and traditional roles or challenging and changing them.

A comprehensive analysis should be conducted at different levels, taking into account the diversity of women and men and the gender identities that are constructed

and reconstructed throughout the migration cycle.

In order to understand the process of migration it is key to understand the whole cycle with its dimensions and dynamics. Female and male migrants might complete, re-start or not complete the migration cycle at all. The table below indicates some key questions following the logic of the migration cycle. The questions are aligned with the three dimensions of SDC's Gender Analytical Framework: i) gender roles and division of labour, ii) access to and control over resources, and iii) participation in decision-making.

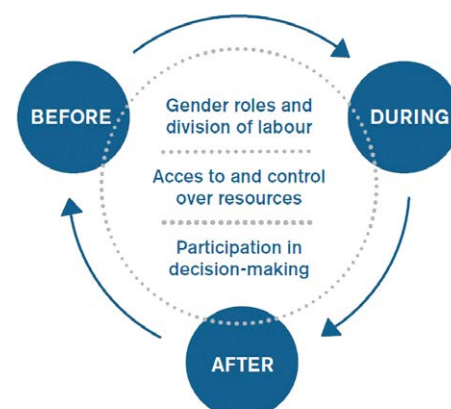


Figure 3: Interlinkages of a gender analysis throughout the migration cycle.

Migration cycle	Guiding questions
<p><b>Before:</b> This stage focuses at decision-making and the pre-departure preparation of women and men before they leave their place of origin.</p> <p>The reason for migrating is often a combination of factors, which may differ for women and men.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What push (place of origin) and pull (place of destination) factor may be motivating women's and men's migration?</li> <li>• Are gender inequalities in the place of origin a motivating factor behind women's and men's migration? What kind of inequalities exist and does migration reinforce them?</li> <li>• Who takes the decision to migrate? Who is involved in the decision-making process? Which factors are taken into account to base the decision on?</li> <li>• What roles are attributed to women and men in the place of origin? Who does what at a household, community and societal level?</li> <li>• Do both men and women have equal access to information and pre-departure trainings (incl. skills trainings)?</li> <li>• Are gender-sensitive migration policies for women and men adequate in the place of origin?</li> </ul>
<p><b>During - place of transit/destination:</b> The second stage looks at female and male migrants when they have left their place of origin, and once they have reached a place of transit or destination. Thus the place can change during the migration process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are differences and inequalities regarding the labour market and type of work available for male and female migrants in the destination places?</li> <li>• Are there any gender-specific obstacles to access services such as (sexual and reproductive) health, psychosocial, legal, protection, financial resources and humanitarian aid regardless limited mobility in transit or destination places? Especially for adolescent girls and women, do they have access to sanitary and hygiene material?</li> <li>• Are there measures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in the place of transit or destination, i.e. by providing separate and lockable toilets or through multi-sectoral services for survivors of gender-based violence?</li> <li>• How do gender roles influence the patterns of sending and spending remittances? Who decides on the management of remittances and how money is being spent?</li> <li>• What are gender-specific obstacles to the full participation of migrants in development projects or decision making processes, e.g. voting?</li> <li>• Do migrant organisations exist and if so, are there obstacles that might hinder full participation of migrant women or men?</li> <li>• How are factors such as bilateral migration agreements and structural adjustment programs affecting women and men?</li> </ul>



<p><b>During - place of origin:</b> Some migrants move individually and therefore leave their families behind, others migrate accompanied by their family members or closed relatives. Many female and male migrants during this stage stay linked with the place of origin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the female or male migrant moved individually or with family members or close relatives? Who is left behind?</li> <li>• Have there been any changes in gender relations and roles among family members left behind that can be attributed to migration? What is the impact for female or male (incl. children) left behind?</li> <li>• Do family members left behind have access to services, such as (sexual and reproductive) health, psychosocial, legal, protection, financial resources and humanitarian aid regardless limited mobility in the place of origin?</li> <li>• How do gender roles influence the patterns of receiving and spending remittances? Who decides on the management of remittances, who has access to remittances and how money is being spent?</li> <li>• What are gender-specific obstacles to the full participation of migrants in development projects or decision making processes?</li> <li>• How are factors such as bilateral migration agreements and structural adjustment programs affecting women and men?</li> </ul>
<p><b>After:</b> In this stage, the cycle concentrates on the return and reintegration of a migrant in their place of origin.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there stereotype perceptions about female and male migrants in the place of origin? How does that impact on women and men during re-integration?</li> <li>• In what ways has migration empowered or dis-empowered migrant women and men?</li> <li>• Are there gender-specific obstacles that migrant women and men face to being able to return home?</li> <li>• Are skills acquired through migration recognised and transferred in the home country? What economic opportunities do female and male returnees have?</li> <li>• Does the place of origin offer access to reintegration information or programmes – adapted to the needs and skills of both genders?</li> <li>• Are there services and support available, specifically for women and men who have experienced sexual exploitation or are survivors of human trafficking?</li> <li>• Are returning migrant women and men able to engage in decision making bodies tackling issues related to women's or men's gender-specific vulnerability, such as human trafficking?</li> </ul>

Table 1: Guiding gender-sensitive questions throughout the migration cycle. Including guiding questions by Petrozziello, A. (2013).

## 4 Gender-responsive interventions

When the necessary framework conditions are in place, in places of origin, transit and destination, migration can be beneficial for female and male migrants and their families. This means having safe and regular migration channels, informed and collec-

tive choices (i.e. with family members), as well as access to resources and services throughout the migration cycle within all dimensions. Increasing the benefits and lowering the costs of migration means that interventions need to be comprehensive, at

different levels, to involve multiple actors and stakeholders, such as governments, trade union, civil society organisation, including female migrant organisations, and to be viewed through a gender lens.

### 4.1 Before migration

**Informed decisions:** Informed decisions are key to empowering migrants towards a safe migration. Information may be shared in different ways through different channels. These include the radio, short movies, theatre, schools, skills centre, public places such as transportation stations, airports, official departments and specific information desks. In order to reach both women and men, the selection of channels should be diverse; for example, women may have had fewer educational opportunities than

men, and thus be more receptive to the spoken than written word. The information provided should include the full financial and social costs of migration, the process of migration, which are the approved and accredited recruitment agencies, customs and cultural issues in the place of destination, how to deal with challenges during migration, where to seek support if necessary, how to remit money safely and what consequences does it has for the family left behind.

**Financial access:** Migrants usually need to take a large advance loan, and often they and their families lack the basic understanding of what this entails, or the financial skills to deal with it. In particular women often lack access to financial institutions or loan possibilities and they face the risk of debt bondage.

**Consequences for the left behinds:** When men leave, many women left behind find themselves doing additional work and

taking over other “male” responsibilities. In other cases, when women migrate, they are no longer able to fulfil their role as caregiver. Therefore, another family member or relative has to take over. Often the responsibility is taken over by another female family member or other women, who are engaged or hired for the task. This chain reaction of involving women in female roles is the so called “global care chain”. Therefore, such issues need to be reflected before the decision is made to migrate.

**Pre-departure training:** Skills development for potential migrants can lead to higher self-esteem, and potentially higher salaries at the same time as reducing the risk of abuse and exploitation. However, access to labour markets should be promoted in a non-discriminatory way, avoiding the reinforcement of gender stereotypes as far as possible. Pre-departure training should be based both on the migrant’s needs and market demands in the place of destination, and be complemented by further pre-departure information on issues as mentioned above.



Saraswati Basnet, a migrant woman, welcomed in the shelter for migrant women in Pourakhi, part of the SaMi project in Kathmandu. © Helvetas/Swiss Intercooperation/Patrick Rohr

SDC supports the implementation of the project **Safer Migration (SaMi)** (2011- 2017) in Nepal which is implemented by the Government of Nepal and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation in collaboration with civil society actors, private sector and non-governmental service providers. The overall goal of SaMi is safer and more beneficial migration for women and men who voluntarily choose to go for labour migration. One activity is to provide interested potential migrant workers from 19 districts of Nepal with accurate and relevant information on safer migration so that they can make informed decision and to capacitate them to protect themselves from fraud, exploitation and trafficking. In addition, the project provides free of cost (semi) skills training to the potential migrants. In the context of Nepal, women migration is not promoted by the government and hence it is difficult to provide trainings for “female” sectors. However, SaMi has managed to convince the government of the importance of offering training for garment workers, which is now being offered to aspirant female migrants.

**Analyse the labour market:** As labour is gender segregated it is important to analyse the labour market in the place of destination, whether within or beyond the national borders. Women entering productive roles still often work in “feminine” positions such as care and household work or the garment industry, whilst men they tend to work in production or construction sectors.

**The private sector - recruitment agencies and employers:** The link between the departure point and the employment in the place of destination is often made by recruitment agencies and sub-agents. In order to avoid abuse, fraud and exploitation, these actors should understand their responsibilities towards migrant workers, and be regulated and monitored as well as approved by governments. Particularly

women working in isolated places such as domestic workers face vulnerabilities and difficulties to claim their rights.

## 4.2 During migration – place of transit or destination

**Access to basic service and rights:** Many female and male migrants do not have the same access to basic services and resources as non-migrants in the place of transit and destination. Also, even if they have access in theory, in practice cultural norms and language barriers may hinder them from obtaining support. Therefore, available services need to be made accessible for example by translating or using technical devices. Women working in the domestic sector may have particular difficulties in accessing such services; a mobile phone can be a lifeline in this regard. Other ways to improve access to protection services can be to collaborate with embassies and consulates having the responsibility to protect and support their nationals living abroad.

**Sending remittances:** Remittances are sent back to the place of origin regardless of gender. Women may send less

money because they often work in low wage jobs, but they tend to remit a higher proportion of their earnings. This may be because women tend to spend their money differently, and/or because they have less access to resources and possibility to spend it in the place of transit or destination

**Diaspora and social networks:** Migrants from a particular country or social group tend to gather informally or formally. Such diaspora groups or social networks can be an important source of information to adaptation to the new context. However, they need an enabling environment in order to be active and to contribute to newcomers in the place of transit or destination and to contribute to development in their place of origin. In general, support from a national in the country of transit or destination is more helpful to an arriving migrant in adapting

quickly and successfully.

**Recognition of skills:** Pre-departure training is only fully effective if the skills and qualifications are recognised. Recognition of skills can support migrants to avoid underemployment and to maximise their contribution.

**Private sector and employers:** Employers should recognise the emotional and financial difficulties faced by migrants, and be advised on how to ameliorate such problems as far as possible. It may be emotionally challenging for migrants to be separate from their relatives, in particular mothers may feel that they do not fulfil their role as caregiver. In addition, migrant women often having lower wages than men, may find it difficult to pay off their accrued debt.

## 4.3 During migration – place of origin

**Those left behind:** Women and men left behind also need access to basic services and knowledge of their rights, particularly when their spouse is abroad. In cases of divorce, women often lose their right to land, to financial resources, and are stigmatised by society. This is a growing problem in certain countries, for example Tajikistan, where couples marry young, the men migrate, and

eventually the marriage falls apart – often leaving the woman without any source of livelihood (and unclear civil status).

**Receiving remittances:** Remittances can undoubtedly increase the financial well-being of the household or community of origin. Therefore, offering financial literacy can play a significant part in helping

migrants and those left behind to better manage remittances. Even with financial literacy, migrants still need to have access to financial institutions and reliable channels for remitting money to the place of origin; women migrants often face more obstacles to access and manage financial services.

## 4.4 After migration

**Reintegration:** Returning to the place of origin can confront both women and men with new and changed social, economic and political settings. Challenges may include changed gender roles and dynamics, prejudices about women migrants experiencing sexual abuse, dealing with children and family left behind, or interacting with caregivers. Access to information about expectations, integration, social and economic opportunities may be key for some

migrants before or while returning to the place of origin. Survivors of abuse generally need special support in returning to their place of origin and re-integrating into their family and community.

**Recognition and transfer of skills:** During migration, both female and male migrants often acquire experiences and skills that go unrecognised, or are poorly recognised, once they return. Mapping such

skills, finding matches and economic opportunities for returnees to better integrate into their place of origin is an important part of supporting the successful integration of returnees. Female migrants that have worked in care and domestic sector find it difficult to get recognition of their skills. Skills recognition would formalise domestic worker's skills and experiences in order to better distinguish the acquired skills and to remunerate the worker.

SDC's project **Safer Migration (SaMi)** (2011–2017) in Nepal, as mentioned above also seeks to provide legal and paralegal services to those migrants who have been cheated, and is particularly active in identifying and supporting returning women migrants who have been victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.

**Women economic empowerment:** In patriarchal societies it can be particularly difficult for returning women migrants to stay engaged in the economic sector since it challenges the image of the men as main breadwinner. Therefore, a particular focus on women's economic opportunities is needed.

**Social and psychosocial support:** Supporting access to services, social inclusion, and economic opportunities is often key to the successful reintegration of returnees. Even if female and male migrants have had a positive experience while migrating, returning to their place of origin can be traumatic, both in personal adjustments and in coping

with community expectations/perceptions. Migrants who have survived exploitation and abuse are often traumatised, and are likely to need counselling. This can be particularly effective if combined with a more general psycho-social approach, raising awareness within, and providing support to, the whole community.

## 4.5 Throughout the migration cycle

**Gender-sensitive and regular migration policies:** Some governments have paternalistic policies in place in order to stop women from migrating as a protective measure. An example is to set age limits for women and age limits for their children. However, often

this leads to the use of alternative, irregular channels and increases the risk of human trafficking. Gender sensitive regulations and policies, as well as the regularisation of migration are key in protecting women and avoiding exposure to vulnerable situations.

In addition, the law should allow adult individuals to move according to their own volition, without being dependent on any other family member for permission.

In Sri Lanka, SDC implements the project "Decent work, protection and well-being for migrant workers and their families" (2011–2020), in partnership with ILO, HELVETAS and local organisations. The main focus of the project is to strengthen the capacity of government officials at both local and national level to provide better services to migrant workers and their families. A particular focus is on public servants at local level with a mandate to support migrants and approve the so-called Family Background Report (FBR), which prohibits women with children below 5 years of age from migrating. In the project framework, the officials are now being trained in order to provide comprehensive information and operate in a non-discriminatory and gender sensitive manner.

### Strengthen dialogues and agreements:

Besides international conventions and treaties that set standards for protecting migrants, participation of governments in bilateral, multilateral and specifically regional dialogues, such as the Colombo Process in South and South-East Asia, can promote the rights and protection of migrants. In order to reach comprehensive migration policies a multi-stakeholder approach should be strengthened. Facilitating dialogue and feeding the policy discussions with good practices can ensure migrants rights and protection.

**Advocacy:** The role of the local, national and regional civil society cannot be underestimated. Civil society can play an active role in lobbying for safe migration. Therefore, there is a clear case for supporting advocacy groups to promote gender-sensitive, rights-based and non-discriminatory policies that enable safe and regular migration.

**Capacity building on gender responsiveness and migrant's rights:** Recruitment agencies, official authorities, police, judicial and health personnel, and other services that come into contact with mi-



Women learning basic financial literacy skills and investing their remittances productively in Sri Lanka. © Helvetas/ Swiss Intercooperation/Patrick Rohr

grants should receive training and capacity building on gender-sensitivity and rights. Safe migration will only be ensured if all stakeholders throughout the cycle contribute and cooperate.

**Raise awareness:** Cooperation with the media can be a useful approach to raise awareness of migrants' potential in the places of origin, transit and destination. Improving the public perception of migrants can help in reducing the stigma, xenophobia and other risks faced by migrants.

## Forced displacement: gendered impact of displacement, resettlement, local integration and return

In conflict and disaster, both women and men are subjected to risks that lead to displacement. However, women and girls in particular are more often affected by Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV). The risk of abduction and forced recruitment by armed groups, whether as fighters, for sexual exploitation or other task, is the same for both genders. In the case of conflict-induced displacement, the average duration of displacement is 17 years. Displacement aggravates existing gender inequalities: families are separated, and there is an increase in female-headed households and socio-economic vulnerability, which heightens the risk of negative coping mechanisms (i.e. early marriage) and exploitation/abuse. Women and girls may have to take on additional roles (i.e. taking care of an injured family member, time-consuming collection

of water and firewood, income-generating activities as the new breadwinner) adding to their existing workload. SGBV increases, particularly for adolescent girls, while protective structures and services for survivors break down. An average of 18 to 20 percent of the reproductive-age female population is either pregnant or lactating and therefore faces specific needs; 60% of preventable maternal deaths take place in humanitarian settings while girls are 2.5 more likely to drop out of school than boys. Loss or lacking access to personal documentation (i.e. marriage, birth, death certificate of husband, land deeds) may negatively impact displaced women and children's access to rights and services, including citizenship. Women and men's access to information and humanitarian assistance also differs: women often face limited mobility due to

cultural norms, care-taking roles, lacking sanitary pads during menstruation or an unsafe environment. Ideally a displaced person can resettle, return or integrate locally. Women being resettled may face problems with divorce, child custody and are exposed to continued protection risks. Upon return, they may experience continued violence, stigmatization and discrimination in accessing housing, land, property and services. When being locally integrated, women and girls have to adapt to different social norms or find themselves marginalized (i.e. due to language skills, old age). Trauma and lengthy asylum processes further hamper the integration process.



## 5 Important aspects in monitoring and evaluation

- Collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data
- Ensure collection and storage of data of immigrants and emigrants, identifiable by sex and migration status. This is true for reporting, presenting and analysing disaggregated data. Furthermore, register all members of a household (and not just the household head) and provide personal documentation where necessary.
- Migrant-centred approach
- Even if the project focuses on one specific stage and one dimension of migration, keeping the comprehensive and migrant-centred approach along the migration cycle in mind is key to planning and designing projects on migration and development
- Include qualitative analysis
- In order to better understand the less visible aspects of the needs and dynamics of female and male migrants, qualitative case studies, life histories and participatory assessment tools are an essential part of sound monitoring and evaluation.
- Participatory approach
- Ensure participation of female and male migrants in humanitarian as well as development planning and response, and in decision-making.

## References

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### Endnotes

- 1 The policy brief by ODI (2016) "Women on the move: Migration, gender equality and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" gives a literature review and factual analysis on Gender and Migration. The policy brief and this guidance sheet complement each other. The latter focusing rather on the programmatic analysis and highlighting key issues in operationalisation throughout the migration cycle.
- 2 This guidance sheet considers all types and forms of migration.



Migrant and lawyer at Legal Aid Clinic in Kathmandu. © Helvetas/Swiss Intercooperation/Patrick Rohr

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