

## Testimony

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before the

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

April 28, 2008

Rayburn House Office Building

Thank you for this opportunity to testify this morning about the situation of women migrants in the region covered by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Policymakers throughout the world, including those in the OSCE region, are seeking to make migration a win-win situation – for host countries, source countries, and the migrants themselves. In thinking through strategies to increase the benefits of migration, it is important to keep the gender dimension in mind. Women have been an important component of international migration during the past four decades.

As of 2005, about 49.6 percent of the world's migrants were women, up from 46.8 percent in 1960 (UN Population Division, 2005). See Table 1. Significantly, the proportion of migrants who are women has grown to 51 percent in more developed regions. The highest proportions of women are in the OSCE region. See Table 2. Women migrants now represent 53.4 percent of the total migrant population in Europe.

Table 1: Total and Female Migration Worldwide

Year	Total Number	Number Female	Percent Females
1960	75,463,352	35,328,232	46.8
1965	78,443,933	36,918,332	47.1
1970	81,335,779	38,426,955	47.2
1975	86,789,304	41,104,314	47.4
1980	99,275,898	46,884,139	47.2
1985	111,013,230	52,364,718	47.2
1990	154,945,333	75,967,491	49
1995	165,080,235	81,396,614	49.3
2000	176,735,772	87,757,603	49.7
2005	190,633,564	94,518,611	49.6

Source: UN Population Division, Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision

A gendered perspective is essential to understanding both the causes and consequences of international migration. Gender inequality can be a powerful factor in precipitating migration, particularly when women have economic, political, and social expectations that actual opportunities at home do not meet. Globalization, with its emphasis on communications, trade, and investment, has increased knowledge of options within and outside of home countries, and it has opened up a range of new opportunities for women outside of their own homes. However, globalization has also failed to live up to its potential, leaving women throughout the world in poverty and without economic, social, or political rights. Migration may be the best, or indeed, the only way out of such situations for women.

Table 2: Female Migration by Region

Year	Europe	% Female	North America	% Female	Oceania	% Female	Developing Countries	% Female
1960	6,887,508	48.4%	6,314,272	50.5%	947636	44.4%	19540899	45.3%
1965	7,986,849	47.9%	6,477,648	51.0%	1164970	45.7%	19612154	45.6%
1970	8,952,343	47.7%	6,682,297	51.5%	1408949	46.5%	19676490	45.8%
1975	9,610,296	47.7%	7,961,360	52.1%	1590626	47.4%	20192414	45.5%
1980	10,532,755	48.1%	9,516,254	52.6%	1797341	47.9%	23230729	44.8%
1985	11,472,293	48.9%	11,490,119	51.9%	2026597	48.4%	25490745	44.4%
1990	26,054,101	52.8%	14,082,196	51.0%	2333442	49.1%	33166105	45.7%
1995	29,158,218	52.7%	17,028,799	50.8%	2517766	49.8%	32172947	45.8%
2000	31,063,667	53.4%	20,371,617	50.4%	2554147	50.6%	33032561	46.1%
2005	34,264,611	53.4%	22,439,437	50.4%	2583959	51.3%	34260698	45.5%

Source: UN Population Division, Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision

In an early and seminal work, Thadani and Todaro (1984) described four principal types of female migrants, distinguished by their marital status and their reasons for migrating: 1) married women migrating in search of employment; 2) unmarried women migrating in search of employment; 3) unmarried women migrating for marriage reasons; and 4) married women engaged in associational migration with no thought of employment.

The migration experience is highly gendered, particularly in relation to social and family relationships and employment experiences. Traditionally, most women have migrated internationally to join husbands or fathers who paved the way for them. As a result, their ability to remain in the destination country is often contingent on their familial relationship. When marriage to a citizen or permanent resident is the only, or principal, route to admission, marriage fraud may result. Further, when migrant women are dependent on their husbands or children from legal status, they may find it difficult to leave abusive situations.

Today, more women are migrating on their own as principal age-earners. Their experience is gendered as well. They tend to take jobs in what are familiar female occupations. At the lower

end of the skills spectrum, women migrants pick fruits and vegetables, manufacture garments and other items, process meat and poultry, work as nursing home and hospital aides, clean restaurants and hotels, and provide myriad other services. Domestic service is a common occupation for migrant women. Women migrants from a wide range of countries provide domestic services in receiving countries in almost all parts of the globe. They may migrate through official contract labor programs that match workers and employers, or they may obtain such employment after migrating, often through informal networks.

Highly skilled women also migrate. Some are in traditional female occupations, such as the health professions, particularly nursing and physical therapy, and teaching. Others conduct research and provide expertise to industry and academia, design build, and program computers, or serve as managers and executives in multinational corporations, to name only a few activities. While highly skilled women generally represent a small proportion of female migrants, they can represent a large proportion of women with professional degrees. Recent research on Mexican migration, for example, shows that 38 percent of Mexican women with PhD degrees have migrated (compared with 32 percent of men with PhD degrees); 29 percent of Mexican women with Master degrees have migrated, compared with 19 percent of men (Lowell et al., 2007).

Female labor force participation among immigrants varies considerably among various destination countries. In general, labor force participation by female immigrants is lower than among natives. Unemployment rates among women immigrants in the labor force are generally higher than among native women as well, although, again, there are differences by country of destination. In the OSCE countries with significant numbers of immigrants, female unemployment rates among foreigners ranged from a low of 4.5 percent in Norway to a high of 29.9 percent in Finland. See Table 3. Reflecting a trend typical with non-migrating women, the earnings of female migrants tend to be lower than that of male migrants.

Many women who migrate find themselves at risk of gender-based violence and exploitation. Whether labor migrants, family migrants, human trafficking victims, or refugees, they face the double problem of being female and foreign. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that gender does not operate in isolation from race, ethnicity, and religion. Since many migrant women differ from the host population in these respects, they may face additional discrimination.

The migration experience goes well beyond these vulnerabilities, however. Migration is also an empowering experience for many women. In the process of international migration, women often move away from traditional, patriarchal authority to situations in which they can exercise greater autonomy over their own lives. When women from traditional societies migrate to advanced industrial societies, they become familiar with new norms regarding women's rights and opportunities. If they take outside employment, they may have access to financial resources that had never before compensated their labor. Importantly, however, it is not only the role of women that may change dramatically through international migration. Men's roles change as well. Men often must adjust to their wives' and daughters' new participation in the labor market, and with the greater economic autonomy that accompanies wage earning.

Table 3: Unemployment among migrant and non-migrant workers by gender in selected OECD countries

Country	Total labor force (% foreign)		Unemployment rate 2000-01 (%)			
	1995	2000	Nationals (male)	Foreigners (male)	Nationals (female)	Foreigners (female)
Austria	9.7	9.8	3.9	8.4	3.9	8.6
Belgium	7.9	8.4	4.6	14.2	7.0	16.5
Denmark	0.2	2.8	3.6	12.2	4.9	7.2
Finland	0.8	1.3	10.0	24.2	11.2	29.9
France	6.3	6.1	7.1	17.1	10.7	23.9
Germany	9.1	8.8	7.2	13.4	7.8	11.7
Greece	1.7	3.8	7.2	7.6	16.2	17.6
Ireland	3.0	3.5	4.1	5.1	3.8	6.2
Italy	0.5	1.1	8.0	7.4	13.9	21.3
Netherlands	3.9	3.7	1.9	4.7	2.9	7.0
Norway	2.7	3.2	3.7	5.3	3.4	4.5
Portugal	0.5	2.2	3.1	8.4	5.1	9.6
Spain	0.8	1.4	9.3	12.9	19.8	17.2
Sweden	4.2	4.8	5.5	16.1	4.6	13.0
Switzerland	18.6	18.3	1.3	4.3	2.6	6.4
United Kingdom	3.6	4.2	5.5	16.1	4.4	7.9
Australia	23.9	24.5	6.7	6.6	5.8	6.9
Canada	19.2		10.3	9.9	9.5	11.6
United States	10.8	12.4	4.9	4.4	4.1	5.6
Average	6.7	6.7	5.7	10.4	7.5	12.2

Source: International Labor Organization, 2004, p.43

In other respects, migration can reinforce traditional gender roles. This is particularly the case when women are expected to preserve cultural and religious norms that appear to be under attack. Immigration rules can also reinforce traditional roles. Because many migrant women obtain legal residency status through family reunification or formation, their ability to exercise rights may be limited by their spouse's willingness to support their immigration claims. Migrant women who are victims of spousal abuse, for example, may be unwilling to leave the abuser if he controls access to legal status. In recognition that immigration laws can make women and their children vulnerable, some countries have legislation permitting abused women to petition on their own for legal status.

Just as migration can affect gender roles, changing gender roles can influence immigration policies. The growing participation of native-born women in the labor force in Europe and North America has increased demand for foreign women to provide childcare, elder care, and domestic services. New policies are also under development to provide work authorization to spouses of executives, managers, and professionals, in recognition that many of these highly sought migrants will not move if their spouses (male or female) are unlikely to carry on their own professions.

Female migration affects the source countries within the OSCE region as well as the destination countries. In recent years, there has been increased focus among governments in the interconnections between migration and the development of source countries. The nexus between migration and development is two-sided: underdevelopment affects migration and migration affects development. In the long-term, the best solution to unwanted migration is “stay at home” development. In the best case scenario, migration should be voluntary on the part of the migrant and the receiving community, not forced by economic or political insecurity in the home community. Similarly, migrants should be able to return voluntarily to home communities that are economically stable and safe. No one strategy is sufficient to overcome the economic and political problems that compel present day international movement. Rather, most experts recommend a combination of trade, investment, and aid, including remittances from those who have already migrated, to reduce emigration pressures in the mid to long term.

What have been less addressed are the pressures for emigration related to gender roles and relationships. Gender inequality is a powerful barrier to economic, social, and political progress. To the extent that women are unable to exercise their rights at home, or fear for their safety and security, migration may be the only way to protect themselves and their families. Until women can secure credible protection of their human and civil rights, migration will not be a truly voluntary act on their part.

A particularly pernicious form of migration that preys on women and girls is trafficking in persons, a phenomenon that particularly affects OSCE countries as source, transit and destination countries. Human trafficking is the third largest and fastest growing criminal industry in the world. It affects millions of people around the globe and reaps billions in profits. Trafficking is generally thought of as the movement of a person from one country to another. However, trafficking within countries is also common, and perhaps occurs to an even greater extent than transnational trafficking. The international regime to address human trafficking issues has evolved during the past decade, with the adoption and entry into force of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (hereafter called the Palermo Protocol) in 2003, which supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. A complex set of institutional frameworks have developed as well, offering a wide array of programs to address the three basic components of an anti-trafficking strategy: prosecution of traffickers, prevention of trafficking and protection of trafficking victims. Gaps still exist, however, in the organizational capacities to address, in particular, the prevention and protection issues that arise in the trafficking context.

It should be noted, however, that the OSCE has one of the most developed institutional structures to address trafficking within its region. Among the relevant offices are: Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, which supports the development and implementation of anti-trafficking policies in OSCE participating countries and coordinates the activities of OSCE bodies, promotes cooperation among the participating states, and raises the public and political profile of trafficking in persons; Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which assists countries in preventing trafficking by supporting the establishment of a national referral mechanism, improving victim identification and assistance, and enhancing trafficking victims' awareness of their rights; Office of the Coordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, which aims to address both the supply and demand of trafficking in human beings by promoting self-regulation of the private sector, raising awareness of trafficking in countries of destination, in particular western countries, and creating economic empowerment opportunities for potential victims of trafficking in countries of origin; and the Secretariat's Action against Terrorism Unit, Conflict Prevention Center, Strategic Police Matters Unit, Border Unit, the Office of the Senior Gender Advisor and field offices, which are also engaged in combating human trafficking.

Even though economic, social and rights-oriented development is the best long-term option to reduce unwanted migration, it is unlikely to offset migration pressures in the short to medium term, and, in fact, may stimulate increased movement as more people gain the resources and knowledge needed to migrate. During this interim period, migrants can contribute to further economic development in their home countries through their financial resources as well as their skills, entrepreneurial activities, and support for democratization and human rights. Individual remittance transfers continue to be an important source of income for many families in developing countries. As of 2005, the World Bank estimates, international remittances to developing countries exceeded \$200 billion per year (World Bank). Considering that Official Development Assistance (ODA) seldom exceeds \$100 billion per year, migrants are contributing more financial resources to their home countries than are the wealthy countries' development agencies (OECD, 2002).

Too little is known about the remitting behavior of women migrants, but studies indicate that there may be significant gender differences in remitting habits. The evidence is contradictory, however. As one reviewer of the literature concluded, "While research often finds that women are less likely and/or tend to remit less than men when they do remit, this is not a uniform finding. What is more, some of the available research finds that women remit more both overall and as a percentage of income than do men – and women tend to have stronger networks with their families that is associated with greater remitting behaviors" (Orozco et al., 2006). The Orozco et al. study, based on a random survey of remitters in the United States and the United Kingdom who were sending to relatives in Latin American and Africa, found that women remit more monies than men to distant family members, including siblings and others, while men increase the amount of remittances only when sending to their spouse. The study also found that both men and women remit more the longer they have been sending remittances, but women remit more than men over time. Women were also more likely to send funds for items needed by households, such as food and clothing. These results are preliminary, however, because the survey did not have sufficient information about the composition of the receiving household. More research is needed on the dynamics in remittance-receiving households in order to

determine the extent to which women left behind by migrating husbands use remittances similarly or differently than men left behind by migrating wives.

Given the important role remittances play in reducing the poverty in developing countries, the cost of remitting money to home communities has been an area of particular concern. Transfer costs can be exceedingly high. The market appears to be responding to this situation, with greater competition leading to lower transfer costs, but more needs to be done in this area. Immigrants often mention that they use a few well-established companies because of their greater reliability, but this may be exacting high costs from migrants and developing countries. To date, the business is dominated by wire transfer companies rather than financial institutions that offer a wider range of services to customers. The greater entry of banks, credit unions, and microfinance institutions could help reduce costs and abuses even further. To the extent that credit unions and microfinance institutions, for example, reinvest transfer fees in the remittance receiving communities, the development potential could be increased still further. Microfinance institutions may play a particularly important role in enabling female-headed households that receive remittances to obtain remittance-based credit to start small businesses and undertake other income generating activities.

Diasporas also play an important role in stimulating development apart from remittance transfers. Migrants often form associations to raise and remit funds for infrastructure development, health and education programs, and income generation activities in their home communities. Migrant groups as dissimilar as Malians in France and Mexicans in the United States have supported health clinics, built schools, repaired roads, and invested in small business enterprises in their home communities. Research indicates that women are often precluded from the decision-making structures in these associations, however, limiting their ability to influence the ways in which the funds will be used (Jones-Correa, 1998). Given the research showing that women are more likely to support health and education, their active involvement in hometown associations might stimulate more investment in those areas that promote longer-term economic and social development.

Diaspora communities can also help stimulate political reforms that improve conditions in home countries. Mexican migrants in the United States have consistently pushed for democratization and better governance in their home country, and Mexican political candidates have responded by campaigning extensively in US communities. The new political leadership in a number of post-conflict countries has urged their citizens abroad to provide not only financial resources for rebuilding the country, but also technical expertise to help establish new democratic institutions.

This is not to say that the diaspora experience is always positive in stimulating respect for democratic values. Some returning migrants appear particularly reluctant to expose women and girls to Western values if it means undermining cultural traditions, observing vehemently that they would never allow their wives or daughters to migrate with them to Europe or North America. In some cases, returning migrants appear to have become more socially and religiously conservative as a result of their own migration experience.

Under other circumstances, however, return can be a positive force for development. Migrant women returning temporarily or permanently bring needed skills to their home countries.

Programs that identify women migrants with specific skills needed in their home countries, and facilitate the return and reintegration of those migrants, contribute to economic development. Similarly, organizations that support return migrants who plan to open small businesses upon reintegration can enhance local development processes. Women's skills may be needed for economic development, but they may also be required to help move the source country towards greater democratization and respect for human rights.

To summarize, the gender dimension of migration is only beginning to be researched and understood in relation to devising policies and strategies to promote development. As half of all migrants, women play an important role in remitting economic and social resources to their home countries, while often struggling to survive in their host countries. The next section outlines policies to maximize the contributions of women migrants and minimize the potential harms they may experience.

Destination countries in the OSCE, in cooperation with source countries of migrants and the migrants themselves, can play an important role in maximizing the development payoff accompanying the migration of women, while helping to ensure greater protection of the rights of migrant women. The United States, as the destination for the largest number of international migrants in the world, can play an especially important role in bringing attention to the situation of women migrants. Among the steps that can be taken is support for:

- Policies and programs to empower women migrants, and those left behind by male migrants, to participate actively in decisions that affect them and their families, including support for the formation of voluntary organizations composed of migrating women and women left behind by migrating male relatives. Such programs would include technical assistance and training for women interested in forming such associations, and financial support for the organizations composed of women migrants. Policy approaches could require that women's organizations be consulted before migration-related policies that affect women and their families are adopted.
- Improvements in the protection of migrant women's rights and their safety and security. In particular, governments should take steps to identify effective means to protect migrant and refugee women from labor abuses, sexual exploitation, trafficking, involuntary prostitution, and other exploitable situations.
- Improvements in the socio-economic status of migrant and refugee women to enable them to support themselves and their families in dignity and safety. Steps need to be taken to increase migrant women's access to employment, credit, education and skills training. Improvements are also needed in the access of migrant women to primary and reproductive health care services, including programs to address gender- and sexual-based violence, and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Policies to help reduce the cost of remittance transfers, particularly by providing consumer information and financial literacy programs for remitting migrants and their families.



- Programs to stimulate diaspora contributions to the economic, social, and political development of home countries, with particular emphasis on programs that enable women migrants to participate in decisions about diaspora investments and those that promote respect for the rights of migrant women or women who remain in, or return to, home countries.
- Identification of ways better to promote “stay at home” development that will provide women with employment opportunities, education, health care and other services, legal rights, and protection from violence in their home communities. Such programs would help ensure that migration is by choice, not necessity, and that women migrants who wish to return can do so in safety and dignity.
- Improvements in the collection of data on international migration, with particular attention to collecting gender and age disaggregated statistics. Additional research is also needed to increase understanding of the causes of female migration, the impact on women, and the impact of female migration on source and destination countries.

There are numerous regional and international forums in which governments are discussing migration with their counterparts in other countries. In addition to pursuing these issues in the OSCE, which has held several workshops and conferences on international migration during the past few years, the United States should continue to bring the topic of women and migration to other regional consultative mechanisms, such as the Regional Migration Conference in the Americas. The United States has not been active to date in the discussions of the new Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), which is emerging as the principal venue for multilateral discussion of migration issues. The GFMD is a government-led initiative to identify effective practices in migration management. Representing both source and destination countries, including most members of the OSCE, it provides a useful forum for ensuring that progress can be made in implementing the recommendations listed herein.

I would be pleased to respond to your questions.

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