Contribution by the International Institute for Environment and Development and its partners to the UK International Development Committee's inquiry on Migration and Development

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About IIED

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is an independent, non-profit policy research institute working to promote more sustainable and equitable global development. We are based in London and work with an extensive network of colleagues and collaborators around the world. Set up in 1971, just before the UN Earth Summit, IIED can draw upon a well-established reputation for independence and honesty, providing innovative ideas to push policy forward in favour of more sustainable and equitable patterns of development. Our long-standing partnerships provide us with access to a range of actors, structures and processes at all levels, from smallholder farmers to big city slum-dwellers through national governments and regional NGOs, to global institutions and processes. This contribution draws on wide consultations with our partners, as well as from IIED's experience of work in the area of migration, development and poverty reduction.

Comments and suggestions on selected issues addressed by the inquiry

Development, poverty reduction and migration

1. *The links between development and migration* are complex. While there is little doubt that they are closely related, migration still tends to be seen as problematic because it is associated primarily with rural-to-urban movement, resulting in over-crowded cities and increasing urban poverty in many low-income nations. But this is too simplified a view: there are many types, directions and forms of migration, and people who move do so for different reasons, and in different ways. Direct control of migration has proved to be at best ineffective, at worst to increase the hardship of the most vulnerable groups of migrants. It is now generally accepted that policies should aim to maximise the benefits of migration and reduce its costs. But to do so, they must first clearly identify the specific needs and priorities of the many different groups of migrants, so that they can respond to them. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) do not explicitly refer to migration, although the targets of reducing poverty and reducing the numbers of urban slum dwellers (many of whom are migrants) are related to it. In some nations, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and especially the Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) are starting to give more attention to the relationship between migration, poverty reduction and development, but this is still insufficient. And in almost all nations, but especially in low and middle-income ones, reliable quantitative information specifically related to internal and international migration is, at best, patchy.

2. Overall, it is useful to think of migration as one of the many strategies that different groups of individuals and households use to make a living, or to improve their livelihoods. Increasing their options both in home areas and in destination areas and making migration a choice rather than the only possibility should be the ultimate aim of development policy.

3. *A first, essential step is to identify the broad categories of population movement*. These include economic, or labour, migration and internally or internationally displaced persons moving because of conflict or environmental disasters.

4. Voluntary economic migration is the outcome of the combination of opportunities and constraints. Industrialisation and the growth of the service sector offer new employment opportunities, usually concentrated in urban centres which, in turn, attract migrants. In low and middle income nations, these are often individuals with relatively high educational qualifications and skills, the financial resources allowing them to move to the more expensive urban areas, and especially the social networks that facilitate finding jobs and accommodation. But many migrants also move because of increased difficulties in making a living in their home areas. In the rural areas, these difficulties range from limited access to natural resources (land, water) and decreasing returns to agriculture, especially for small farmers. These migrants, often lacking skills in non-farming activities, financial resources and access to social networks, are more likely to move locally, either to other rural areas or to local urban centres, including small and intermediate ones.[1]

5. Aside this general distinction between better-off migrants who move to take advantage of better opportunities, and poorer migrants who are forced to move because of a lack of options in their home areas, there are other important distinctions that need to be taken into account in the formulation of migration-related policies. They include:

- *The direction of the movement*: it is often assumed that migrants move from rural areas to urban centres. This is certainly an important flow, and one of the main reasons for the growth of urbanisation in low-and middle-income countries. But it is not the only flow, and in some nations (for example, in Vietnam[2]) it is not the most important in terms of numbers of recorded migrants. Much movement is between rural areas – this is often short term and linked to the agricultural calendar. Because it does not require as many financial and social resources and new skills as rural-to-urban migration, it is often undertaken by the poorest rural groups. It also tends to go unrecorded because of its circular nature. Movement from urban centres to rural areas is often linked to retirement, but also, especially in many sub-Saharan countries in the 1980s and 1990s, to the retrenchment of public sector workers under structural adjustment programmes[3]. Seasonal movement by low-income urban residents for work as wage labour on commercial farms is often an important way to supplement incomes[4]. Movement from one urban centre to another is also more frequent than usually thought. Like all other directions of movement, it is largely determined by the location of accessible economic opportunities. In this sense, migration mirrors the spatial location of investment, and is affected among other things by the relocation of industries to secondary urban centres (for example, in the State of Sao Paulo in Brazil) and by the establishment of export processing zones (as in many Southeast Asian nations).[5]
- *The duration of migration*: much migration is not permanent, and in most cases does not involve a 'clean cut' with home areas. In many low and middle-income countries, economic migrants are keen to keep a foothold in their home areas.

[1] Tacoli, C and D Satterthwaite (2003) *The Urban Part of Rural Development: The Role of Small and Intermediate Urban Centres in Rural and Regional Development and Poverty Reduction* Working Paper 9, Rural-Urban Interactions Series, IIED, London

[2] Dang, N A, C Tacoli and X T Hoang (2003) *Migration in Vietnam: a Review of Information on Current Trends and Patterns and Their Policy Implications*, Paper prepared for DFID, London

[3] add refs

[4] Kamete, AY (1998) Interlocking livelihoods: farm and small town in Zimbabwe, in *Environment and Urbanization* 10:1

[5] Tacoli, C and D Satterthwaite (2003) op cit

This may involve retaining close links with relatives who look after their property, and often their children, and who receive remittances. This is especially the case for low-income rural-to-urban migrants, for whom insecurity of housing tenure, unstable and low-paid jobs, limited access to services, especially health and education, and in many cases rising crime rates, can be a strong disincentive to invest or raise their families in the cities[6]. Policies should aim to enhance security and access to services at destination; but at the same time they should strive to support these 'multi-local' household structures which are often a crucial safety net for poor groups.

- *Family and individual migration*: a large proportion of migrants is young and single and, especially for women, this may increase their vulnerability. But it is also important for policy formulation to have better information on the circumstances of married migrants moving with their families. This is because the need for services such as housing, health and education, is much higher for households with young children. Planning for local service provision in destination areas can benefit hugely from detailed information of this kind.

6. This short summary hopefully gives an overview of the complexity of migration, and of the fact that migration-related policies need to address not only population movement, but also its underlying causes and especially inequalities. But one important element of migration also needs to be emphasised, and that is that for many migrants, the decision to move is dictated in no small part by the desire to see the world and expand one's experience of it. This is a perfectly legitimate desire in most high-income nations – in fact, one that is often encouraged. Moreover, in high-income nations, population movements linked to changes in the spatial distribution of economic activities are not seen as necessarily problematic; in fact, geographical labour mobility is rather desirable. Hence, any assumption that aid should prevent migration by promoting local development is unfounded. Local development should be supported as an important aim in itself; and, by increasing economic opportunities, it may result in the attraction of in-migrants. But this does not mean that it will prevent individuals and households to look for different opportunities by migrating elsewhere.

7. There are important ways in which aid can support policies that aim to maximise the benefits of migration and reduce its costs. First, it can help develop information systems that serve as the basis for national and local planning. *The pattern and scale of migration in the next 25 years* are difficult to predict. While there is consensus that population movement has increased in the past two decades, it is difficult to quantify it with any accuracy. This is because a large proportion of international migrants are undocumented and thus 'invisible' in both sending and receiving countries. But quantification of internal migration is also problematic: large-scale surveys and national population censuses are often inadequate tools for the collection of data on population movement. Investment in improving international and national information systems on migration is an essential step towards better understanding. And detailed information on the different groups of migrants is key for developing local initiatives that improve migrants' lives, such as better service provision.

8. Second, aid can support national governments in better understanding the implications of the spatial dimensions of national development strategies. For example, large-scale, mechanised agricultural production is likely to result in the migration of small farmers out of rural areas if there are no local alternative

[6] Smit, W (1998) The rural linkages of urban households in Durban, South Africa; and Kruger, F (1998) Taking advantage of rural assets as a coping strategy for the urban poor, both in *Environment and Urbanization* 10:1

employment opportunities[7]. The location of export-processing zones (EPZs) close to urban centres benefits employers who can count on the proximity of a labour pool, but since workers in EPZs are usually mainly migrants, this increases pressure on local authorities responsible for service provision[8]. And the renewed interest in regional economic development through the establishment of 'growth centres' where investment in infrastructure is concentrated, needs to be grounded in a careful assessment of the implications for their surrounding areas. In too many cases, such policies have resulted in smaller settlements being by-passed, and their economic decline goes hand in hand with out-migration.[9]

Migrants as a development resource

9. Migrants often play an important role in the development of both home areas and destinations. Rather than mobilising them to complement aid, it will be much more effective for aid agencies, as well as national and local governments, to improve their understanding of migrants' existing contributions and support them.

10. Migrants' support to home areas ranges from financial support to relatives and kin to donations and investment benefiting the whole home community. In many cases, migrants also provide information on market prices and consumer preferences to relatives and communities in rural areas. In this way, they function as a vital link between urban markets and rural producers (see box 1).

Box 1. Migrants as a link between urban markets and rural producers

In the past few years, farmers in the plains around the town of Himo, in northern Tanzania, have increasingly invested in the production of tomatoes. Most of them lack access to information on market prices fluctuations, and their decisions are based on production costs. The majority grow their crops during the dry season, when costs are lower – but this creates a glut in both local and national markets, and producer prices are very low. Production during the rainy season requires higher investment, but as demand outstrips supply, producers can earn as much as ten times more than during the dry season. The few farmers who grow tomatoes during the rainy season rely on a network of migrant relatives who send information on retail prices in urban markets, allowing growers to negotiate with wholesale traders.

In Tamil Nadu (South India) rural migrants to the urban centres often work as vegetable traders, usually starting off as street hawkers. Relatively few of them become wholesale agents, but they are instrumental in influencing cropping patterns in their villages of origin and to persuade farmers to switch to vegetables in higher demand.

Sources: Diyamett et al (2003), op cit; Benjamin, S and R Bhuvaneswari (2001) *Inclusive and Pro-Poor Urban Governance in Bangalore*, University of Birmingham.

11. But it is also important to avoid generalisations on the developmental role of migration, since there can be negative as well as positive impacts. Box 2 describes the complexity of the impact of migration on home areas. It is because of this complexity, which is closely linked to the specific characteristics (historical, geographical, social, political, economic and ecological) of each location, that policy interventions need to be based on a careful assessment – and this can only be done by competent, accountable and democratic local governments.

Box 2. Migrants' mixed influence on home areas in Southeast Nigeria

Akwete, a small town in Southeast Nigeria, is an important area of out-migration. Migrants retain strong links with the town, and through traditional age-group associations make important contributions to the

[7] see Tacoli, C and D Satterthwaite (2003) op cit
[8] see Dang, N A, C Tacoli and X T Hoang (2003) op cit
[9] see Tacoli, C and D Satterthwaite (2003) op cit – add more refs?

community, such as the construction of schools, a town hall and water fountains. Many migrants also build homes for their retirement. While this has contributed to increasing employment opportunities in the construction sector, it has also encroached on farming land around the town. Many farmers have sold their plots, and agriculture is declining while non-farm activities other than construction (for example, agri-processing) have not emerged locally. As a consequence, the proportion of migrants and commuters to nearby urban centres has increased.

Source: D Okali, E Okpara and J Olawoye (2001) *The case of Aba and its region, southeastern Nigeria* Working Paper 4, Rural-urban interactions Series, IIED, London

12. The case of Akwete is not uncommon, and in many low-income nations migrants' investments in home areas seldom include productive activities. In most cases, this is because the lack of infrastructure and institutional support makes it difficult to make a profit.

13. Migrants' contribution to the development of their destinations is often overlooked, although evidence shows that migrants usually move to the most dynamic areas, where there are economic opportunities as well as demand for labour. In some cases, migrant workers can make an essential contribution to local economies. The example from Mali described in box 3 shows that this is often linked to specific local conditions of land tenure. Especially in West and Central Africa, the position of migrants in relation to land is complex. When land was in abundance, migrants were sought to clear the bush and contribute to agricultural activities, although under customary land tenure systems they never acquire full rights over land, even if they have cultivated a plot sometimes over several generations. As land has become scarcer, migrants have found that their access to land has become much more difficult. It is increasingly hard to acquire new plots of good quality, and rights over existing plots may be contested, especially when a change of generation occurs on either side of landowner or migrant.

14. As land tenure systems in much of sub-Saharan Africa are undergoing significant changes, national and local governments and aid agencies should include a better understanding of the position of migrants and their rights in this debate[10].

Box 3. Secondary land rights, migration and farming in central Mali

Secondary land rights include sharecropping, tenancy and borrowing of land under customary tenure systems (land management and allocation by traditional authorities such as village chiefs and village councils). Secondary rights are often seen as exploitative as they do not give permanent tenure rights to users. However, in some circumstances they can benefit both secondary and permanent rights holders. In the village of Baguinéda, in central Mali, where labour shortages are a potential problem, secondary rights allow small-scale farmers to hire migrant workers in exchange of temporary rights to cultivate own plots in irrigated areas. The system is highly structured, with specific days of the week allocated to work as labourers and others to work on the borrowed land. Two aspects are central to the functioning of the system: first, land tenure in the village is almost exclusively under the customary system and controlled by the village council, allowing for secondary rights allocation. Second, the strong demand from nearby urban markets for horticultural produce, in which the village specialises, makes cultivation of even a small plot relatively profitable and therefore attractive for migrants.

Source: GRAD (2001) *Potentialités et conflits dans les zones péri-urbaines: le case de Bamako au Mali* Working Paper 6, Rural-urban Interactions Series, IIED, London

15. Migrants who move to urban centres are often portrayed as putting pressure on services and infrastructure, while contributing little to the local economy. In more than one way this mirrors widespread perceptions of the burdens imposed by international migrants moving from low and middle income nations to high income ones.

[10] Lavigne, P et al (2002) *Negotiation access to land in West Africa: A synthesis of findings from research on derived rights to land*. IIED/GRET, London

However, detailed studies show that migrants play an essential role in urban economies, providing labour and a whole range of cheap services for both the more affluent groups (for example, as domestic workers, gardeners, child carers) and for the middle and low-income groups (for example street vending of food, mechanical repairs, tailoring). Despite this, migrant status often excludes these workers from public support initiatives and in many cases migrants are a significant proportion of the urban poor.

16. In Vietnam, household registration – a key tool in controlling migration – has been relaxed, but it still affects migrants' lives. Research in Ho Chi Minh City found that without permanent registration, migrants are unlikely to gain access to formal sector jobs and are instead likely to remain confined to the unskilled, low-paid and low-security informal sector. They are also not eligible for the services provided under the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction programme, which include low-interest loans, free health care and exemptions from school fees. Because they live in informal, low-income settlements, they are also often unable to access secure land and housing tenure or to connect to electricity, water and sanitation infrastructure[11]. Aid agencies can play an important role in supporting research that shows the positive role of migrants in urban economies. They can also greatly improve their living conditions by supporting the initiatives of grassroots associations of the urban poor through the provision of small-scale but flexible funds[12].

Remittances

17. In most low-income nations, remittances are a crucial component of rural households, and a key element of the continued links between migrants and their home areas. In many rural settlements in sub-Saharan Africa migrants' remittances are probably the most important source of family cash - often higher than income from farming - and are used to supplement consumption and to purchase consumer goods (radios, bicycles) as well as agricultural inputs and livestock. But while remittances are increasingly important for rural households, their amounts have generally declined in the last fifteen years or so, due to higher costs of living in the urban centres and growing insecurity in the urban labour markets. This affects especially the poorest groups, who are usually confined to low-skilled, low-paid and insecure activities in the urban informal sector.

18. Rural migrants are mainly young women and men, whose absence often results in labour shortages in home areas. In a number of African countries, there is an increasing trend towards more distant destinations for both women and men. This means that, because of the cost of moving, migrants stay away for longer periods of time and, crucially, are unable to return home for the farming season as is often the case with intra-regional movement. Small farming families do not have the means to resort to wage labourers, and often end up selling or leasing their land to wealthier groups. Especially in the more profitable peri-urban agricultural areas, farming is undergoing dramatic transformations, from smallholder, family production to commercial production relying on mechanisation and seasonal wage labour. This is likely to have significant repercussions on the poorest groups, whose livelihoods are increasingly based on the combination of agricultural wage labour and non-farm activities, with rising insecurity in both.[13]

[11] Dang, NA, C Tacoli and XT Hoang (2003) op cit
[12] for example, Mitlin, D (2003) A fund to secure land for shelter: supporting strategies of the organised poor, in *Environment and Urbanization* 15:1
[13] Tacoli, C (2002) *Changing Rural-Urban Interactions in sub-Saharan Africa and their impact on livelihoods: a Summary* Working Paper 7, Rural-Urban Interactions Series, IIED, London

19. The role of remittances in the development of home areas needs to be placed in the context of the deep transformations that rural areas in low-income nations are now undergoing. So on the one hand they are indeed a safety net for poor households – but within a context of the erosion of traditional livelihood systems. Such transformations are no guarantee of improved livelihoods.

20. On the other hand, it is true that for the wealthier households, remittances can be an important source of capital used to expand and diversify their economic base, either in agriculture or in services (for example buying land in the villages and in peri-urban areas, and in the construction of residential and commercial property). But remittances are only used for value-adding productive activities that can have a significant impact on local economic development – for example, processing of agricultural produce – when there is sufficient basic infrastructure and institutional support, including access to markets, to make it profitable.

21. Aid initiatives can support the positive role of remittances in poverty alleviation and local development, provided they:

- Do not focus narrowly on agricultural production alone, but adopt a wider approach to rural development, including the role of non-farm activities, changes in agricultural production systems and their impact on the livelihoods of different groups, and land tenure systems
- Ensure they are linked to the broader role of migrants as a development resource in both home and destination areas.

South-south migration

22. Cross-border migrants moving between Southern nations often face difficulties similar to those of internal migrants, albeit with more risky consequences. In many parts of West and Central Africa, migrants rely on derived or secondary rights to land under customary land tenure. Their vulnerability has repercussions on the region's economy. In Ghana, the Aliens Compliance Order was introduced in 1969, requiring all aliens without papers to leave the country within two weeks. Migrants, particularly from neighbouring Burkina Faso, had been of enormous significance to the development of cocoa production in Ghana through share farming contracts and as farm labour. On their expulsion, there were serious labour shortages for which local labour supplies could not compensate.

23. In Côte d'Ivoire, legislation introduced in late 1998 asserts that non-Ivorians cannot now be considered as full landowners. Migrants from Mali and Burkina Faso are estimated to make up 30 percent of the country's population and have been for 30-40 years central to the plantation sector's success. Migrants may now gain access to use of land on long term leases, but they cannot hold title to land. The consequences of growing land scarcity and new legislation restricting migrants' access to land have been increased levels of harassment as indigenous groups try to reclaim land they had previously 'sold' to Sahelian migrants, a unilateral re-negotiation of contracts in favour of Ivorians, and an outflow of migrants back to the Sahel. These events are linked to the civil war that ravaged the country in 2002-03, and to the current instability.

24. The trafficking of women and children across borders between neighbouring countries is an increasing and extremely concerning phenomenon. These transboundary trade systems are often seen as part of a broader trade in children, such as girls from rural to urban areas where they work as servants for a pittance. In

Southeast Asia, trafficking of women and children is often associated with prostitution and sex exploitation, although in many cases trafficked individuals are more likely to suffer from exploitation related to pay and working conditions. In West Africa, testimonies from children smuggled across national borders and forced to work in slavery-like conditions as farm labourers in cotton, maize and rice farms have recently highlighted the problems of unregulated transboundary movement. This usually takes place across land borders, often in forest areas or other sparsely populated regions, making it difficult to keep tight frontier controls. In addition, national borders in many cases are the vestiges of colonial demarcations which cut across areas where ethnic and kin relations and commercial exchanges can be very intensive and involve daily movement across borders, again making effective frontier controls difficult.

25. South-South migration is often, although of course not always, a type of movement which somehow 'falls between the cracks'. Migrants are often undocumented because moving may not involve crossing frontier check points; hence the size of the flows is also often undocumented, and because of this easily exploited by political groups. Because they are undocumented, migrants also have few rights, and especially women and children can be particularly vulnerable. DFID can play a valuable role in supporting South-South exchanges and shared learning from different regions, directly involving low and middle-income nations' governments. In the longer term, support to developing relevant regulations and controls will also be valuable.

Development coherence and policy on migration

26. Virtually any policy has an impact, direct or indirect, on migration patterns. While DFID and other donor and international agencies are showing increasing interest in migration, much remains to be done in understanding the impact of their interventions in support of development (especially economic growth) on population dynamics.

27. Aid initiatives may support increased agricultural productivity through mechanisation and land consolidation but fail to take into account the wider context of rural development. Such measures may increase out-migration from rural areas as they reduce the income-generating opportunities for the large number of small and family farmers in low-income nations. Investment in infrastructure such as roads and transport has been shown to increase out-migration if it is not accompanied by institutional support to the development of local economies. This is important, because there is clear evidence that most households in low and middle-income nations rely on both rural and urban-based resources for a living[14]. Supporting rural non-farm employment can be essential in providing people more choices – but it will not necessarily reduce migration. However, any poverty reduction initiative that does not include an understanding of the role of migration in the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable groups risks to be seriously flawed.

28. In many instances, local governments can play a key role in maximising the benefits from migration and reducing its costs. Local governments in destination areas, often urban centres, can improve urban management and the living conditions of migrants. Rural local governments can link up with migrant associations to maximise the household and community use of remittances by identifying their needs

[14] Camilla Toulmin et al (2000) *Diversification of livelihoods: Evidence from Mali & Ethiopia*. IDS Research Report no.47.

and priorities and acting on them. But to do this, decentralisation efforts need to address the underlying issues of local government capacity, accountability and revenue base. Most crucially, decentralisation cannot happen without support and clear political commitment to local decision-making from higher levels of government.

29. DFID should integrate an understanding of migration in all its programmes. However, this is difficult at the general level, since migration is not only complex, but tends to vary widely between and within nations and over relatively short periods of time. Country Assistance strategies and plans should include support to on-going information systems on migration (internal and international) and the identification of specific areas for intervention that are linked to the 'costs' of migration – these should include inequalities based on gender, ethnicity and migrant status, as described in this contribution.

Gender issues and migration

30. Single women, often young and moving independently from their families, are the migrant group that has grown in size most dramatically in the past two decades. In part, this is due to new employment opportunities, for example in manufacturing in export processing zones, in the international tourist industry and in the service sector, but also in the so-called 'entertainment industry', which ranges from waitressing in bars and restaurants to prostitution (and often a mixture of the two). Women and children are also the main victims of growing international trafficking, which is often linked to prostitution and sexual exploitation, and almost always to exploitative working conditions. Migrant women, especially if moving independently, are generally more vulnerable than migrant men in destination areas. Especially those who work in the 'entertainment' industry tend to move far away from home areas to avoid ruining their families' reputation, but this weakens their support networks.

31. There can also be significant gender-based differences in the reasons for migrating. One of these is limited access to resources in home areas: in many nations, daughters do not inherit land from their parents, although they are expected to provide unpaid labour on the family farm[15]. Migration is the best if not only opportunity to achieve financial and personal independence for young women. Married women's independent migration, both internal and international, is also more likely in nations where women lose access to family resources upon separation or death of their spouses, and this has important implications for the wide diversity of household structures and organisations in many urban centres (see box 4). In turn, different households have different needs for service provision, and local government planning requires detailed information.

Box 4. Migration and woman-headed households in Honduras

In Honduras, 26 percent of female heads of households in low-income urban *barrios* are migrants who arrived in the cities alone with their children. For rural women who find themselves without a male partner, either through widowhood or separation, economic survival is problematic since they usually have only limited access to land and employment. Young, separated women find it most difficult to survive alone financially, since on separation land rights tend to remain with men, hence the majority of separated women have to rely on income from wage labour alone, for which there are more opportunities in the urban centres.

Source: Bradshaw, Sarah (1995) *Women-headed households in Honduras* in TWPR 17:2

[15] Diyamett, B, M Diyamett, J James and R Mabala (2001) *The case of Himo and its region, Northern Tanzania*, Working Paper 1, Rural-Urban Interactions Series, IIED, London

32. Gender values also mean that almost everywhere, women are expected to feel more responsible for their relatives than men. So in the Philippines, parents tend to encourage their daughters, rather than their sons, to migrate as they can count on more regular and sizeable remittances. Evidence shows that, among migrants, women tend to send larger proportions of their incomes to their families, and this can increase their vulnerability in destination areas (for example, cheap accommodation is often in insecure locations; free health services are often not available for unregistered internal migrants and undocumented international migrants, and women who cannot afford to pay will do without).

33. Like all other types of movement, women's migration should not be seen only in negative terms. Despite frequent hardship, in many if not most cases it also fulfils a desire for greater financial and personal independence. But policies need to address the inequalities that increase women's hardship compared to men's. These include:

- The unequal access to assets in home areas, especially land and property, in the context of inheritance and divorce/separation regulations
- In many cases, the lack of proper protection of workers' rights in sectors with high proportions of migrant women workers, such as export processing industries in low and middle-income nations, and low-skilled, low-paid services also in high-income nations
- The still insufficient international effort to curb trafficking of women and children