

## **Biscuits in the Bread Basket of Europe: Gender implications of remittances for poverty alleviation and social sustainability in Ukraine**

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*Social sustainability means maintaining social capital. Social capital is investments and services that create the basic framework for society (UN)*

The process of transition to free market economy in Ukraine, same as in other post-socialist societies, was accompanied by unprecedented growth of the mobility of the work force and out-migration of the population for external employment, primarily to Russia and EU economies. The transition has put a large number of women on the move. Statistics evidences that females predominate in migration flows from and within Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). For example, in 2004 in Germany alone there were 10 Polish women immigrants for every 10 Polish men. The ratio was the same for Slovaks, 13 to 10 for Romanians, 18 to 10 for Czechs and 23 to 10 for Estonians and Latvians [1].

Currently there are grounds to speak about an increasing ‘ukrainization’ of migration taking place in Europe, which in many cases is accompanied by a tendency toward a feminization of the migration stream [2; 3; 4; 5]. This process may be accounted in a twofold way: first, the transition from state socialism to capitalism has had a huge impact on the lives and the position of women all over CEE; and second, the costs of transition were not evenly distributed among the population. Impoverishment had a clear gender and age dimension as women, young and the elderly turned to be more vulnerable and more affected by the consequences of transition to market economy and therefore faced a higher poverty risk than other groups of population [6].

As argued by UN-INSTRAW, in search for a framework through which the complexities of global migration may be understood at its best, the connection between gender and remittances emerges as a *key factor* in this global phenomenon that demands further examination [7]. Furthermore, it is recognized that integrating a gender perspective into migration policies and programs increases their efficiency and sustainability [8]. Nowadays the need for implementing sustainable development policies and practice in migration management is more pressing than ever in view of new risks and challenges created by global economic crises and demanding global solutions.

While analyzing gender implications of remittances for social sustainability in Ukraine I ground my study on the assumption that nowadays not only the issue of feminization of migration is gaining currency, but that “migration itself is a gendered phenomenon that requires more sophisticated theoretical and analytical tools than studies of sex roles and of sex as a dichotomous variable allowed in the past” [9]. Taking this stance into account I depart from a theoretical framework that looks at feminization of migration as a part of a new international division of reproductive labour crafted by globalization. Within this framework “feminization” refers less to an increase in numbers of migrant women, and more to the qualitative change in their role as providers. Furthermore, empirical research shows that women

play a leading role in remitting, as both their recipients and managers and as their senders. Thus, they become critical actors in the remittance-to-development paradigm, and understanding differential gender characteristics in remittance use, savings and investments becomes a major prerequisite for the success of local development programs [10]. Drawing upon this framework, the **key objective** of the paper is to make a gender-based analysis of the role of remittances for *social sustainability impact indicators*, which include [11]: poverty, health, education, labour issues and gender equality.

A gender-based analysis is essential for understanding the impact of remittances on wellbeing of family and household, community and society and allows to develop a new, sustainable policy model that could recognize the evolving complexity of economic mobility in conditions of accelerating globalization. However, available studies and assessments on migration and remittances in Ukraine have remained largely gender blind, with devastating results for state policies and strategies which do not take into account women's contributions to remittance flows and the differentiated impact of remittances and migration. This is why the **research innovativeness** of current paper is on the identification of policy options that might contribute to the development of coherent and socially sustainable gender-sensitive strategies for migration management, with consideration of gender implications of remittances for social sustainability in Ukraine.

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