Need and Necessity for Inclusion of Women in Migration Studies, (Empirical and Theoretical Evidence)

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Abstract : Different scholars have successfully indicated the way women have been excluded in migration studies. It is so evident that both empirical and theoretical reviews show the magnitude of women exclusion in migration studies. The fact that women are excluded in migration studies does not explicitly show the need for their inclusion. One would ask a question: Is it necessary that women should be included in migration studies? This paper answers this question with a big ‘YES’. It does so by reviewing literature through which it serves to show that there is necessity to include women in migration studies. The need for inclusion of women in migration studies is empirically verified basing on the fact that women do migrate and are affected by migration whether they migrate or not. This leads into the need for a critical explanation (using a gender lens) on factors for women migration; women decision making over migration and their experiences as migrants. Women migrants are disadvantaged in towns/cities since they are used as a source of cheap labor as part of an economic development strategy. Theoretically it is also vivid that women are important subjects in migration studies. Ravenstein’s Theories of Migration (1980s) relate distance covered in migration by capitalizing on the fact that females move shorter distances than males. Different theories of poverty do also substantiate the necessity of linking women poverty and migration.

1. Introduction
Existing literature has indicated the way women have been excluded from migration studies basing on both empirical and theoretical evidence. Models of international migration that disregard gender have a difficult time explaining migration patterns. In any international migration model, considerations of gender are likely to become increasingly critical as the female share of international migration rises. The gender composition of world migration reflects a complex interaction among social, political, and economic conditions, migration histories, labor demands in destination countries, and household and community dynamics. As Kanaiaupuni (2000) states: “Migration is a profoundly gendered process, and the conventional explanations of men’s migration in many cases do not apply to women”. Theoretical models and empirical findings focusing on male migration do not adequately describe migration by females, and studies that do not distinguish between males and females may yield findings that are biased for both genders. Furthermore, research that does not consider structural differences between the genders may yield unreliable policy prescriptions. Basing on the above synopsis, the necessity for inclusion of women in migration studies is based on three major scenarios: migration is necessarily a gendered process; there is rise of female share in international migration and migration patterns need a gender lens to be adequately explained.

2. Methodology
This paper forms part of a research work on the ‘influence of patriarchy ideology on Women Rural-urban migration in Tanzania’ that has been carried out by the author in selected areas in Dodoma region and Dar es Salaam city. The article is based on the information obtained through a desk review of the scientific literature, and research reports on migration in general and the position of women in migration studies in particular. This implies that the whole analysis and discussion relies on the literature review.

3.0 Empirical evidence on need and necessity for Inclusion of women in migration studies
In this section (3.0) it is put clear that women have a position in migration as they are part and parcel of migration spectrum as individuals left behind, prospective migrants or as migrants. However, migration processes are reciprocally related to the social construction of gender in which both men and women are subjects of reference. Consequently, it becomes important for incorporating gender into understanding of migration.

3.1 Essence of the need for inclusion of women in migration studies

The essence of the need for inclusion of women in migration studies is very important as a starting point for calling upon such women inclusion in migration studies. Women should be included in migration studies due to the fact that they do migrate and are affected by migration whether they migrate or not. Women are acknowledged as independent agents in the migration spectrum (Halfacree and Boyle 1999; Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003; Anthias and Lazaridis 2000, Mbonile and Lihawa 1996; Vaa 1990). Whether voluntary or involuntary, internal or international, migration has social, cultural, economic and political implications for individuals, families and communities in both countries of origin and of destination. Whether women migrate or not, they are affected by migration as either migrants or individuals left behind.

Basing on the fact that women do migrate, factors for women migration and experiences of women migrants require to be critically explained. The underlying causes of female migration do not differ very much from those of males such as those associated by the push and pull theory. This occurs regardless of whether female migrants are single or married at the time of migration, and particularly given the variability of marital status women like men tend to move to areas where economic opportunities are better (Lihawa 1995). In Tanzania, during the colonial era men tended to migrate alone while the women remained on the family farm. Due to lack of entitlement right to resources ownership, some women moved to the town, and since it was difficult to get waged employment, prostitution became the only means to earn money for some women. From 1950’s many women moved to town to unite with their husbands or relatives (Book 1987).

3.2 Looking at women in migration through a gender lens

In Gender and Development (GAD) theory, the analysis starts by assuming that the behavior, roles, and relations between men and women are conditioned by societal structures and expectations, and therefore have to be addressed as a totality and not in isolation. It is on this background that there is a need to look at migration by attempting to put the position of men and women on equal footing and seeking to examine the impact of gender on migration. Since feminist voices have become more audible in geography (Bondi, 1990), ‘feminist ethnographers’ contributed substantially to bringing gender into focus in migration studies (Mahler and Pessar, 2006).

Instead of relying on quantitative data to generate insights about gender and migration, by the mid-1990s sociologists had effectively turned to qualitative methods to understand the dynamics of gender and migration. At the same time, their studies shifted their lens away from women to gender in the migration process. By addressing methodological and theoretical critiques of early reviews, the new scholarship showed how migration processes are reciprocally related to the social construction of gender.

According to Curran and Saguy (2001), men and women migrants differ in terms of the motives, risks and norms related to the migration project. A migration decision process is regarded as a family project (Curran, 1995), with migration studies in Albania showing that the decision is pioneered by men and followed by family reunion (King and Vullnetari, 2003; Bonifazi and Sabatino, 2003; King and Mai, 2004; Cattaneo, 2009). Given that migration has the potential ‘to change the dynamics of the interplay between position, status and power’ within or outside the household (Rao, 2009), the interaction between migration and gender may be heavily influenced by the evolving positions of each person in a household and their power relationships (Curran, 1995; Lauby and Stark, 1988). According to Hugo (2000), when women move from rural to urban areas there is an increased potential for empowerment, as they are often separated from the extended family and can engage in paid employment outside the home. As a result of migration, women thus experience an increase in ‘autonomy, self confidence and agency’ (Ghosh, 2009). The benefits of migration can, however, vary for migrant women depending on their motivations, expectations, educational level, background characteristics, social status and the presence or otherwise of their husband in the household.

3.3 Importance of incorporation of gender into understanding of migration

Therefore, the incorporation of gender into understanding of migration is important in different aspects:

i. It leads into understanding of migration and constructing useful theories which take into account many different types of migration, including temporary, permanent, illegal, labor, and conflict-induced migration. The aim is to
question the near-invisibility of women as migrants, their presumed passivity in the migration process, and their assumed place in the home.

ii. Taking gender as a social construction that organizes relations between males and females greatly reveals the causes, processes and impacts of migration for women specifically. Knowing how these play out at the interface of migration and poverty is important for achieving the third Millenium Development Goal (MDG) – to promote gender equality and empower women, as a way of enhancing economic growth and reducing poverty.

iii. It contributes in giving explanation on critical pieces of gender and rural-urban migration that have largely been ignored in different studies. This is by giving insights in influence of gender on opportunity costs of migration, impact of migration and remittances on household investment and expenditure, production and technology choices; the gender characteristics both at home and destination areas (in town) and how they determine the patterns and effects of migration.

iv. It shows the substantial ways in which gender fundamentally organizes the social relations and structures influencing the causes and consequences of migration.

3.4 Relationship between gender and migration at global level.

Looking at migration through the gender lens shows how useless it is, to try to divide up experiences of migrants as forced or voluntary, positive or negative, empowering or restrictive. Real-life stories of migrant might include a family from Niger faced with famine moving for survival; a daughter in the Philippines sent by her family to work as a maid and required to send her earnings back home; a Bangladeshi woman divorced by her husband who runs away from home to escape sexual abuse; a transgender adolescent in Brazil thrown out by his family moving to the nearest city to seek out a transgender community; or a Serbian woman who has willingly migrated for sex work, but has been deceived into believing that she will earn good money rather than be trapped in conditions of virtual slavery (UNIFEM, 2004). This indicates that much as there are different social interactions, gender connects well in the studies of migration.

The behavioral approach assumes that both men and women are influenced by the ideologies and cultural norms that determine gender roles, which make them prone to adapt to the expectations that are placed on them (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). The household approach implies that the power relations and decision making structures in the family mould the aspiring female migrant. This helps to know reasons a family may have on selecting what child to send as migrant to town; and how socio-cultural hierarchies and power in the family influence migrants. This leads into need to find out how women’s roles being deeply rooted in the socio-cultural patterns of gender division of labor influences female migration process and how this can explain their extent of participation in migration (Rodenburg, 1993). In line with the behavioral approach, women’s position in their families is likely to affect both their wish to migrate and the likelihood of their decisions to migrate being accepted (Davin, 1999).

3.5 Experiences of women migrants in town (women at work in town)

In the literature, migration is increasingly reported as a process which men and women experience differently (e.g. Bilsborrow, 1993; Boyle and Halfacree, 1999; Chant; Chant and Radcliffe, 1992; Piper, 2005; Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Although economic motive as been regarded as the principle force in female migration as in males (Standing, 1983; Fields, 1976), less is known on how gender relations influence response and position of individuals in economic activities.

The global economy has produced not only the feminization of poverty but the “feminization of working poverty.” Although more women than ever participate in today’s workforce, the great majority occupy low-status jobs and are unable to lift themselves out of poverty. More women take jobs in the informal economy that lacks job security, benefits, or protection. Around the world, women are working in export processing zones, as domestic workers, as street vendors, or as suppliers at the bottom of a multinational supply chain. Feingold argued that grassroots strategies are needed to address problems related to the fact that women are used as a source of cheap labor as part of an economic development strategy, while labor standards around the world are declining.

Cathy (2008) points to the labor movement as an alternative pathway for addressing the needs of women in the global economy while promoting gender equality. The sudden emergence of a global economy dominated by cheap labor led to the formation of new economic development strategies which have serious implications for women workers. One consequence is rural-urban migration, Cathy (2008), noted. In Mexico, for example, some women moved from rural areas to export manufacturing zones along the urbanized Northern border with the United States. These women migrated to find employment, which in turn provided them with a new sense of independence,
understanding the underlying factors for marginal female migration in Tanzania, aimed at looking for cheaper goods (UNCHS 1996). Consumption, spending more time shopping to men, also by taking greater cuts in their savings. Women tend to modify their lives more than men. Even in terms of the more available opportunities, women are disadvantaged relative to men and have been particularly vulnerable to the downward pressures on incomes (Rakodi 2002). Moreover, they almost always earn less than men, even within the informal sector (Frayne 2004). As Kanji (1996) points out, women-run businesses start smaller, grow significantly slower and live shorter than those of their male counterparts. Women tend to be concentrated in less lucrative informal sector activities, and [and] women are working longer hours for less profit. In short, women tend to modify their lives more than men, also by taking greater cuts in their consumption, and spending more time shopping to look for cheaper goods (UNCHS 1996).

Mbonile and Lihawa (1996) on Rural-Urban female migration in Tanzania, aimed at understanding the underlying factors for marginal labor female rural-urban migration in Tanzania and the main adjustment problems faced by female migrants once they move into urban areas. The study established that most of female migrants in marginal job such barmaids and house girls are from the less developed region in Tanzania (such as Dodoma region). This indicates that women do migrate and they face problems as migrants different from men. This creates a base for a need and necessity for inclusion of women in migration studies through critical examination of gender in migration.

3.1.7 Gender, Migration, and Development

Women in development, as connected to migration

Agencies like Department for International Development (DFID) are increasingly seeing migration as a potentially important livelihood strategy for poor women and men – and one which can provide development to both sending and receiving countries. And yet, if both women and men are to benefit from migration, a shift to a gendered human rights approach is needed which ensures that development policy and practice are not limited to the economic aspects of migration (remittances or diasporic investment for example), but that they address a broader development picture which includes culture, human rights and equality. This requires a much closer look at factors such as invisibility, lack of protection, illegal status, poor labor standards, violence and stigma. Such factors are critically gendered in terms of the different needs of men and women in relation to health, employment, resources, information, and power over decision-making.

4.0 Theoretical support for need and necessity for Inclusion of women migration studies

4.1 Ravenstein’s Theories of Migration (1980s)

His theories do established the fact that females move shorter distances than males though the reasons are not clear.

4.2 Theories of Poverty

Migration can result from poverty, but it is not always the poorest who migrate, because of the costs and opportunities involved (World Bank, 2005). And poverty may result from migration, both for the migrants in destination locations and the families left behind, often mostly affecting women and children. At the same time, female migration can indirectly help alleviate poverty by raising the productivity, education and health of the females and their families, all key to reducing inequality and poverty in the home. In several developing countries rural poverty indicated by low agricultural output and income push many migrants from rural areas towards areas with greater employment opportunities (Mbonile and Rugumamu, 2002). This being the case, there is a need of relating poverty, gender and migration. In here, we get to know how social relations (gender relations) between men and women create poverty among them that may be a pushing factor for migration on one hand or a determining factor of migrants (both men and women) type of experiences in their areas of destination. When migration studies associate poverty and migration, this makes it necessary for inclusion of women in such studies. Different theories of poverty substantiate the necessity of to link women poverty and migration. This is as follows:

a) Entitlement Theory

Basing on Entitlement Theory (Sen 1981), it has to be put clear how entitlement relations affect migration in the rural areas. How the nature of access to and control of available resources among men and women may cause stress that lead into migration. According to Lindberg (1996) issues
such as customs, traditions and religious rules affect entitlement relations. Entitlements refer to the complex ways in which individuals or households command resources which vary between people over time in response to shocks and long-term trends. Entitlement must be enforced and an individual’s or a household’s capacity to do so will determine their control of resources or means of subsistence. Poverty can thus be defined as the failure of certain capacities that are important for the well-being of an individual or a household. These failures can depend on the social, cultural, political or environmental conditions in certain localities (Krokfors 1995). Some women in rural areas are poor due to lack of entitlement over resources, which may lead to taking migration as the best option to combat the situation.

b) Simple Reproduction Squeeze Theory of poverty

Simple Reproduction Squeeze Theory of poverty (Bernstein 1979) describes a situation of increasing costs of production and decreasing returns to labor which is referred to as “simple reproduction squeeze”. The gap to be covered here is the gender aspect of it; how both men and women face this squeeze in such a way that it leads to their migration. Who produces what will determine the impact of falling prices on poverty level of both men and women in rural areas. The dimensions of poverty cover distinct aspects of human capabilities: economic (income, livelihoods, work), human (health, education), political (empowerment, rights, voice), socio-cultural (status, dignity) and protective (insecurity, risk, vulnerability) (OECD 2001). Secondly, poverty should be defined not only as a state but also as a process in which people’s choices and the level of well-being they have achieved are narrowed.

Livelihood Framework

An examination of the livelihood framework through a gender lens, gives a room for understanding how women have been for a long prospective migrants due to poor access to resources in rural areas. According to the livelihood framework or approach, a household’s livelihood strategy, and so its level of well-being, depends on the assets or resources it has access to; the factors that mediate their access (for instance, gender relations or how markets operate); and contextual factors (such as macro policies or shocks). Basing on the entitlement theories, we get to know how gender relations permeate within the livelihood framework through five vitalassets: The livelihood approach distinguishes five “vital” assets. These are human, natural, physical, financial and social assets or resources. This can be substantiated by explaining at least two of these assets:

(i) Human resources: capabilities, skills, experience, labour, knowledge, creativity, health, etc. These are important to the fulfillment of productive and reproductive tasks. Capacity to work is the main asset of the urban poor. Lack of skills and education affects the ability to secure a livelihood in towns more directly than it does in the rural areas.

(ii) Natural resources: land, water, pastures, etc. Natural assets may be less significant in an urban setting (Meikle 2002), but with increasing reliance on agriculture (both urban and rural), access to land, security of tenure and function is largely an important “asset” to urban dwellers (Payne 2002), directly or indirectly.

Most of rural women have poor access to such resources. Thus migration for women becomes a livelihood promotion strategy out of which they expect great access to different resources. According to Omari, 1988, land is regarded as one of the factors that encourage female migration. This gender related scenario needs to be incorporated in economic motives for migration for both females and males.

Conclusion

The requirement for inclusion of women in migration studies should not be of choice but of great necessity. This is due to the fact that women like men are part and parcel of the migration process. This is when we look at women as migrants or as people left behind when others migrate. The beneficial inclusion of women in migration studies requires one to think widely and critically by looking at gender as a continuously permeating aspect in the migration process. By so doing it becomes evident that migration processes are reciprocally related to the social construction of gender. Women like men do therefore get involved in the migration process depending on how the social construction of gender influences their need for and experience in migration. Theoretically (Ravenstein’s Theories of Migration, 1980s), women are acknowledged to be involved in migration, though this theory does not go further to trace the gender origin of the nature of such women involvement. On the other hand theories of poverty do relate poverty and gender. Since gender is related to migration, poor women are subjects of migration studies by considering poverty as a triggering factor for migration or a determining factor on how women experience life as migrants in destination areas. However, since gender relations may be cause for prevalence of poverty among women in rural areas, studies on migration requires tackling issues of women in migration differently from those of men. This will enable one
to solve problems of poverty and migration from a gender lens.

References


