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Migration, Development and Gender in Morocco

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1. Introduction

Moroccan males migrate from rural and urban areas to Europe, mainly France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, and Holland. The genesis of this migration shows that this is a recent phenomenon (Lapeyronni 1992, Berrada et al, 1994, Chattou 1998). The first waves of migrants left Morocco in the 1950s and 1960s; then migration to Western Europe increased in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, legal and illegal migration co-existed and were tolerated as Europe needed manpower (Chattou 1998). Consequently, the first waves of migrants relatively succeeded to improve their standards of living and take care of their families in both Morocco and the host countries. However, from the mid-1980s onward, the increase in migration was counterbalanced by the implementation of the visa and the Schengen agreement which reinforced control on migrants from Morocco to Europe. This resulted in the spread of new forms of illegal migration.

The extent of present-day male migration from Morocco to Europe is difficult to measure given its illegal side. Statistics show that the majority of these migrants are not accompanied by their families (see Hamdouch et al, 1981). The causes of migration have witnessed an evolution since the 1960s and 1970s: whereas the first waves of migrants were in search of a better income, present-day migrants are generally unemployed and leave Morocco in search of jobs. The change in the causes of migration reflects concomitant changes in the socio-economic structures of Morocco and the host countries.

The duration of migration has also witnessed change: whereas migrants of the first waves stayed longer in the host countries, present-day migrants stay for shorter times given the non-availability of full-time jobs (Chattou 1998). This resulted in more frequent visits to the native country (an average of one visit per year according to Hamdouch et al, 1981). A portion of migrants return (see Hamdouch et al 1981); this fact reveals the non-integration of these migrants in the European environment and their attachment to their country of origin. This is concordant with the fact that migrants leave their families behind¹.

The major causes of migration are unemployment and poverty. According to recent official statistics, the overall unemployment rate in Morocco is 14.5%². Despite Morocco's overall economic progress, poverty is on the increase as a result of globalization. In the eyes of migrants, the proximity of a prosperous Europe³ makes the dream of overcoming poverty possible to realize.

This paper aims at analyzing the impact of migration on Moroccan women. The choice of this topic is dictated by three major reasons. First, there is a scarcity of social studies on the overall economic and social situation of rural and urban women whose male breadwinners have migrated. Most of the relevant studies in Morocco are general in nature. Second, rare is research on the schooling of children whose fathers have migrated. Third, there is need for enhancing research on the social role of women in present-day Morocco, as well as for sensitizing ordinary people, intellectuals, and decision-makers to this crucial role.

¹ There are migrants who are intellectuals and "cadres", some of whom are well-off but migrate because they find Morocco rather underdeveloped and difficult to live in because it lacks facilities, and the prospects of the future are dim. These will not be considered in this paper.

² See the Moroccan daily *Al-Ittihad Al-Ishiraki* of February 12th, 2001.

This project has one major objective and three subsidiary ones. The main objective is to investigate, by applying a gender approach, how Moroccan women survive when their husbands, sons, brothers, etc. migrate.

The first subsidiary objective is to provide the socio-economic profile of the migrant and of the women left behind in rural and urban areas on the basis of an analysis of their situation. The second subsidiary objective is to investigate the impact of migration on the education of children. The third subsidiary objective is to investigate the impact of male migration on the economy of Morocco and see whether there are alternative solutions to the problems, such as finding ways of integrating women in the overall development.

This paper investigates the impact of male migration on women in the rural and urban areas of Morocco. When males migrate, they often leave behind dependent mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, and children. These constitute a large portion of Moroccan women which have attracted little interest on the part of both researchers and decision-makers. There is a total lack of statistics and follow-up so far as these women are concerned. In fact, although the issue of migration is always present in the mainstream media, it has not been objectively explored and hence, it has escaped control (see the Moroccan daily *Al-Ittihad Al-Ishtaraki* of April 12, 2001). Furthermore, although the repercussions of male migration have been dealt with in many publications (see selected bibliography), these studies are in the majority of cases quantitative, and focus on the environmental and socio-economic consequences of migration to the detriment of its direct impact on women. It is high time such quantitative approaches were supplemented by an approach which targets the qualitative aspect of migration and substitutes the classic quantitative approach with a gender approach.

³There is a wide discrepancy between the income of the inhabitants of the southern part and those of the northern part of the Mediterranean sea. The income per capita in Morocco is 19 times less than in Western Europe.

2. The overall theoretical framework and review of the literature

Given the nature of this paper, I will adopt a multidisciplinary approach where migration, development and gender intermingle.

2.1. Migration

Timur (2000) provides a good review of the evolution of international migration. According to the mainstream studies (Appleyard 1988, Anthias 1998, Bhabha 1999, among other), migration engenders complex consequences. The literature also shows that, although migration concerns a relatively small portion of the overall population of a country, it has an everlasting impact on the migrant, the family left behind and the host country (Thomas 1961, Hugo 1994, Cheng 1999, Timur 2000). After World War II, migration has greatly increased since the 1980s and is still on the rise (Boyle 1998, Castles 2000) because of the effects of globalization..

As to the nature of migration, the review of the literature shows that, theoretically, there are three aspects of the concept of migration: (i) a point of departure, (ii) a movement, and (iii) a point of arrival. This entails that four variables are to be taken into account: (i) geography, (ii) society, (iii) profession, and (iv) culture. There are two types of migration: (i) internal and (ii) external. I am concerned here with the second type.

According to Kubat and Noffmann -Nowoty (1981), there are many theories of migration but hardly any global explicative ones. This is due to the sociological nature of migration (see Duchac 1974). A review of the literature suggests that there are only partial, mainly classificatory, theories of migration. The latter are of intermediate scope. According to Duchac (ibid), it is more appropriate to speak of “models”, “schemas”, or “paradigms”, rather than “theories” of migration. Two explicative models are prominent in the literature: the first one takes migration to be a matter of individual choice, and the second

one considers it a reaction to a collective stimulus which transcends individual consciousness.

Of interest is the social science approach to migration (Massey et al 1987, Davis 1988, Sassen 1988, Kritz et al 1992, Faist 1997, Arango 2000). These studies explain international migration in global terms on the basis of economy, sociology and geography. The progress that has been made in the understanding of migration is largely due to empirical research which can cover better the diversity of migration as a concept..

In this project, we will start with an empirical research and a synthesis. The combination of the two theories given above is beneficial for a number of reasons: first, regions are variably rich or poor, and production factors (work, capital, natural resources) are not distributed equally (Amin 1974). Natural resources (land) are stable, but work and capital are mobile as a result of the adopted development policy. Given this, individual motivation is important.

On the other hand, according to the literature, migrant workers often neither choose to migrate nor do they choose the place where they migrate. This positivist attitude is found in Durkheim (1970) and Halbwachs (1970). Kubat and Noffmann-Nowoty (1981) insist on the relationship between the individual and the group. They differentiate between sciences of Man (soft) and sciences of nature (hard). The former are in perpetual movement whereas the latter are inert. Within this theory, people are continuously under the pressure of society, as they constantly need to conform to social norms. This difficulty is seen in people's movements, especially at periods when they depend on their family. When migration becomes collective, general in time and space, it is better to go beyond the individual, to the global social organization: a macro-sociological approach (of a marxist nature). This view is more adequate for Africa in general and Morocco in particular (see Amin 1974, Amselle 1976, Rey 1976, Santos 1975).

What does migration mean from this perspective? Is it the result of failure to socialize? Is it an attempt to defy social constraints? Is this act liberating or destroying? Is the migrant a social deviant? The answer is that migration is the most natural way of fleeing a difficult situation. This theory raises interesting questions: who migrates? does the migrant seek adventure? a better life? prestige? power? money? These and similar questions are related to the overall socio-economic status of a country and, thus need to include the issue of development.

2.2. Development

Borgias (1989) clearly links migration to economic theory and development. As a social phenomenon, migration is historically linked to both industrialization and urbanization, that is to development. The development theoretical framework used is basically that of Positive Reciprocity (Dutrenit, 1989). This theoretical framework is concordant with the migration theoretical framework. Reciprocity relations indicate individual transactions undertaken for participation in social activities. A person makes a number of transactions in all walks of life. This theoretical framework serves to evaluate individuals or groups according to two main variables: economic implication and social integration.

Economic implication entails participation in the identification of needs and solutions; it also implies the ability to understand strategies of managing these needs and solutions. Economic implication also presupposes the mobilization of material resources in order to contribute to economic activities and to active life. Economic implication necessitates individuals' acquisition of skills such as literacy, ability of management, access to modern technology, etc. A good example of economic implication is what is referred to as Micro-credit, which sets up a challenge to be faced by women if they are to gain self promotion in society.

On the other hand, social integration entails social well-being; in this case, the individual is identified according to a social context, in a family structure and in a given socio-cultural environment. Social integration is also a multi-faceted dimension which embodies the notions of socio-economic autonomy and empowerment.

The degree of social integration is a means of remedial to the marginalization of individuals. This concept is similar to the notion of inclusivity recently developed by the World Bank which integrates the economic, social and functional dimensions, as well as the notion of empowerment defined as the power to establish priorities and to work for their realizations. All this requires the acquisition of skills and competences for provoking social transformations (see Kabeer, 1994 and Ndir 2000).

Development issues are naturally linked to the role of women in a society and, thus, need to take the gender parameter into consideration.

2.3. Gender

Development is closely linked to education and gender. We adopt gender as a crosscutting approach. Education and gender are taken into consideration with the aim of measuring the extent of the impact of migration on women at all levels. It is only by understanding the effects of migration on women that it can be controlled. A gender-based global strategy, coupled with a futurist vision, must be adopted in the hope of enlightening decision-makers and NGOs as to actions to take.

The role of the concept "gender" in social studies, as well as in the construction of knowledge in general and in development in particular, is paradoxical. On the one hand, it is closely associated with established politics (women's integration in development). On the other hand, the equity between men and women that characterizes gender is sometimes difficult to implement

because of the burden of tradition. The official discourse brandishes women's promotion, non-discrimination and equality. However, women's "invisible" work and credibility depend on their social status. In Moroccan society, the dominant representations of women emphasize their responsibility for the household.

The gender approach, which is based on women studies, favors a comparative analysis between sexes and constitutes our aim in this paper. Mac Dowell (1983) highlights specificities of each sex instead of determining an a priori gender. A gender approach is privileged given that the study focuses on both sexes. The important thing is to show women's positioning in the development that migration creates, and that there is incompatibility between the social representations of women's roles and the roles that these women want to play. The major research questions so far as gender is concerned is: to what extent can a gender approach to the impact of male migration on women highlight the role that each sex plays in the overall development of Morocco?

The gender approach that is adopted here questions the "biological" dichotomous definition of gender and opts for a socio-political definition that highlights the importance of social processes in the construction of the gender categories. I argue that there is the fluidity of gender categories and that there exist social, moral, and physical constraints which establish symbolic or actual lines of demarcation between the sexes. This view is congruent with the postmodernist view of "multiple identities". Reflecting on this from a multidisciplinary perspective is bound to be revealing. I wish to underline three major characteristics of gender politics in Morocco: highlighting individual experiences, juxtaposing rural, urban and European areas, weak investments in gender approaches, and suggesting ways to validate the integration of individual experiences in methodological choices.

Given this multi-faceted nature of migration, it may, in principle, be studied from various angles: statistically from a demographic point of view, geographically, economically (social promotion), non-economically (motivation),

psychologically, and ethno -linguistically. The gender element cuts across these angles. It is, thus, necessary to adopt a multidisciplinary approach to male migration in order to understand its globality.

The literature on the overall theoretical framework that I will adopt is abundant and shows a regular evolution from works on general sociology (Marx 1974, Ibn Khaldoun 1967, Durkheim 1970, Malinowski 1968, Bourdieu 1980) to work on Moroccan sociology (El -Fassi 1979, Laroui 1978, Khatibi 1983), to work on Moroccan internal migration (Hammoudi 1970, Baroudi 1978, Naciriet Ameer 1985, Alioua 1987, El -Ghazali 1988, Malki 1990), to work relating to Moroccan international migration (Trebaus 1990, Berrada 1994, Courbage 1994), to migration, development and gender (Bourquia 1997, Mesdali 2000, Sadiqi (to appear), Ennaji (to appear), Zahid 2000).

In the section below, I will introduce the socio -economic profile of the typical migrant.

3. The profile of the migrant

The profile of the Moroccan migrant may be described taking into account the following variables:

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- age
 - geographical origin
 - class
 - level of instruction
 - marital status
 - socio-economic situation before migration
 - skills
 - size of his household
 - the duration of migration.

So far as age is concerned, migrants are usually young: Their average age is 28.5 years; 3/4 of them are between 20 and 39 (see Chattou 1998, Hamza et al 1993). As to their geographical origin, migrants may originate from rural or urban areas: 6 out of 10 were born in rural areas and only transited to the city on their way to Europe. Concerning class, most migrants belong to the poorest sections of the Moroccan society (slums, *medinas*). A great portion of migrants live in traditional houses. The average rate of migration per family is: 1.72 in cities, 1.12 in slums and 1.00 in *medinas* (see Chattou 1998).

Concerning the marital status of migrants, some of them are married before migration. So far as the migrant's level of instruction is concerned, it is usually weak before migration in comparison to the total population of the same age in Morocco. Urban migrants tend to have a better level of education than rural ones. As to their professional activities, migrants are from the agricultural sector, commerce, servicing, building, industry, and traditional skills. The level of instruction, as well as the degree of qualification, have improved in the last decades.

The duration of migration depends on whether migrants originate from rural or urban areas, whether the migrant is a head of a household, is literate or illiterate, etc. Migrants originating from rural areas stay twice as long in Europe than those originating from urban areas because they can do hard jobs (Ait Hamza 1993). The level of education is pertinent there as illiterate migrants stay longer than literate ones. Further, agricultural workers do not stay long in comparison with migrants who have other qualifications because they are strongly attracted to their homeland.

The composition of the household is subject to change in comparison to non-migrant households in the sense that there are less nuclear families. In migrant households, mothers seem to have children at a later age because of late marriages. A study of the activity of the populations of migrant households shows the following: 3% of women in both migrant and non-migrant households work.

4. The Overall situation of Moroccan women

Moroccan women may be classified into two big categories: rural and urban. According to the most recent official statistics⁴, women constitute 51% of the Moroccan population, 65% of whom are illiterate and 74% are young. Women constitute 35% of the active population, but 35% of the unemployed. 11% of women are widows and 4% are divorced. Women-headed households are on the increase. Two out of six families are headed by women breadwinners (see the Moroccan daily *Al-Ittihad Al-Ishtiraki* of 29 May 2001).

Rural and urban women share a common denominator: poverty, which explains the migration. The dichotomy rural/urban women is useful as it reflects two categories of women which are affected differently given that they do not stand the same chances of having proper education, claiming their rights, benefiting from modernity, etc. Additionally, the rural environment does not allow the adoption of the same types of strategies in the face of migration.

Although rural women participate in agricultural production, they are still considered “housewives” or “family helpers”. It is only very recently that these women are listed in statistical accounts as “workers” or “producers”. This shows the extent to which rural women’s work is underestimated. This attitude still holds nowadays, as several types of goods and services produced or offered by women are badly paid activities.

⁴See Publications of the Department of Statistics Rabat, 1999.

5. The impact of male migration on women

Migration has a great impact on the women left behind. This impact may be positive, negative or both depending on variables such as geographical origin and the size of the household. This impact will be measured at the following levels:

- Resources
- Enterprise
- Housing
- Household equipment
- Investments

5.1. Positive impact

A positive impact of migration is its contribution to the development of Morocco as a whole. Migrants' remittances constitute the first income for the national budget.

The most positive impact of migration is the increase in the income of the household. Remittances of Moroccans working abroad constitute the second financial resource after the tourist industry for the whole country (see the Moroccan daily *Le Matin* of November 21, 2000). In fact, the structure of the resources of the migrant households differs from that of non-migrant ones (Courbage 1994, Ait Hamza 1993, Chattou 1996). This is primarily due to the amounts of money that the migrants send to their families, whereas salaried work constitutes the major source of income for non-migrant households. These incomes are often regular because of the regularity of jobs in the host countries. For two households out of three, the amount of remittances is superior to the minimal wage. This is due to a change in the nature of migration: **from a migration of complementarity, enrichment to a migration of necessity.** The amount was

multiplied by 5.3 in the 1960's, by 13.1 in the 1970's. The migrants' investment in Morocco represented 2% of the country's revenues in 1960, 10% in 1971 and almost 25% at the end of the 1970's (Department of Statistics, Rabat, 1994). The importance of remittances is linked with (i) the temporary nature of migration, (ii) the fact that the migrant is not accompanied by his family, and (iii) the solid family attachment, especially for the migrants who originate from rural areas or from the poorest sections of the Moroccan population.

Rural migrants are more attached to rural areas than non-migrant rural males. Agricultural resources are more important for the former, and enterprise resources are more important for the latter (see Hamdouch et al, 1981, Chattou 1998). Accordingly, rural migrants invest more in land, while urban migrants tend to invest in housing and commerce. For both types of migrants, investment provides security.

Migration has also a direct positive impact on education. As Moroccan education is in a transitional period (for a reform has just been approved by the government), the migrant's choice of the type of education for his children reflects his vision of the world. It is precisely at this level that modernity and tradition may come into conflict. It is also at this level that the evolution in attitudes between these two poles can be measured. Parents may choose between the following types of education for their children: religious, modern, or short-term professional training. It seems that migrant households would opt more for modernist types of education than non-migrant households. Differences between rural and urban areas, the size of the family, as well as the period of migration are important factors here.

5.2. Negative impact

Migration has a negative impact on the Moroccan social fabric. It often results in the disintegration of the family nucleus and traditions. While spatial mobility engenders more equity in household relations and promotes children's

education, it increases the divorce rate and lessens the authority of parents over children. The new cultural models that are learnt from industrialized societies deeply affect the traditional roles of men and women in the Moroccan society.

Another negative effect is related to the overall condition of the women left behind. The Department of Statistics (Rabat, Morocco) has published a most recent study on the state of poverty in Morocco (see the daily newspaper *L'Opinion* of April 11th, 2001). Part of this study focuses on the female population and households run by women, as an example of the poorest sectors in Moroccan society. According to this study, more than 2.7 million of women were officially declared poor in Morocco in the year 1998-1999, with an annual increase of 6%. Age is important there: 48.2% (59.1% in rural areas) are under 25, 33.8% (24.1% in rural areas) between ages 25 and 44, and 13.0% (16.8% in rural areas) over 45. **This shows** that rural women suffer more from poverty than urban ones.

Of great significance is the fact that the marital status of these women is not really significant: there are 10.1% of married women in urban areas (23.5% in rural areas) who are poor in comparison with 11.4% of single women (24.2% in rural areas). Households headed by single women represent 30.3% in rural areas and 14.4% in urban areas. Households headed by mothers represent 8.6% in urban areas and 22.3% in rural areas. Illiteracy is a factor: 89.9% of women in rural areas and 58.2% in urban areas are illiterate.

Serious negative effects of male migration may be attested when the migrant does not find a job or finds a low-paid job in the host country, which is becoming more common in these days. This state of affairs may engender more poverty for the women left behind, less education for the children, and changes in the structure of the family which may harm children. For example, today two out of ten marriages end in divorce in Morocco.

In rural areas, women work in the fields, generally in small farms owned by their family. Boys generally stay in school longer than girls, which reinforces the need for female labor. Rural women work an average of 10 hours a day. In spite of this, it is men who are the heads of farms and who are viewed as full-time laborers no matter how long they stay in the farm. This explains the fact that the rate of women whose work is recognized as such is abnormally low. In 1989, 82.9% of women working in agriculture counted only as family helpers.

Another problem that rural women face is their lack of funds and savings. This is mainly due to their inferior status relative to discriminatory inheritance laws. Women's share in land ownership is usually taken by male heirs. As a result, these women face difficulty in obtaining bank loans because of lack of guarantees. The devaluation of women is, thus, perpetuated because of the discrimination that laws sanction.

Poverty is aggravated by weak infrastructure facilities, unemployment, under-employment, and droughts. In Moroccan cities, the social sectors of health and education are the most hit by budget cuts. Education expenditure per capita decreased at a rate of 11% from 1983 to 1989, resulting in a general decline of 8.7% in school enrolment rates between 1985 and 1990. In a society where female education is considered less important than male education, it is girls who are most directly affected by this decline: the school enrolment rate declined at 7.8% for boys and at 10% for girls. Peasant girls are the worst hit with a decline rate of 13.6%.

Likewise, a great percentage of women is found in the lowest levels of vocational schools: 72% of them have primary school level and 50% have completed three years in the secondary school. However, females constitute one third at the highest levels of skilled technician training. Despite the recent upsurge of computer training and jobs related to computer science, electronics, hotel business, women still opt for typically female activities such as dress-making, embroidering, and secretarial work.

Nowadays, the importance of women's work for the economy of Morocco has become a reality. Households need women's financial contribution in order to survive. Women's work is, however, tolerated only if it does not clash with society's gender role assignment.

The study of the relation of migration, development and gender is still in its infancy in Morocco. There is a clear historical link between general sociology, Moroccan sociology, migration, development and gender. It is important to integrate gender in the areas of development and migration. This is timely as the current authorities give much attention to women and poverty.

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