Women on the Move: The Neglected Gender Dimension of the Brain Drain

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Outline

• The feminization of migration
• Highly skilled women on the move
• The gender bias in the brain drain
• Impact of emigration of highly skilled women
• Conclusion
The Feminization of Migration

- Nowadays, gender balance prevails:
  - Women represent 51% of the foreign-born population of OECD countries in 2000

- This is a break from the historical trends when most migrants were men

- Why? Growing family reunification, changing economic structures, rising female education ...
Highly skilled women on the move

- Almost as many immigrant women as men in OECD countries have a tertiary degree (about 9 million)
- The first and second origin countries are the Philippines and UK. Former USSR comes third.

Share of tertiary-educated immigrants by gender in selected OECD countries, circa 2000

The gender bias in the brain drain

- Emigration rates increase with educational attainment
- Emigration rates of highly skilled women are higher than for men
- The gender difference in the brain drain is highest for African countries

Average emigration rates, by region, sex and education, circa 2000
The gender bias in the brain drain (cont.)

- Analysis of the main determinants of emigration rates shows the impact of:
  - Demographic and geographic variables: population size and islands
  - Education
  - Gender for tertiary educated
  - Level of development in relation to gender and education

Estimated relationship between emigration rate and level of development, by education and gender

Impact of the brain drain on key developmental indicators

- For a given development level, no impact of total emigration rate on secondary enrollment and children health in origin countries ...
- ... But emigration of tertiary-educated women has a significant negative impact
- Negative impact of brain drain of women is not compensated for by the positive impact of remittances
Conclusions

• Gender balance nowadays in immigration
• Women over-represented among the brain drain
• Gender bias is stronger for poorer countries
• Possible negative impact of emigration of highly skilled women on development

• Policy implications:
  ➢ Need to evaluate the impact of targeting highly skilled women for migration in the domestic and caring sectors
  ➢ Strengthen opportunities for highly skilled women in developing countries
  ➢ Gender dimension of brain drain must be included in efforts toward better policy coherence for development