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Gendered Migration in the Global South: An Intersectional Perspective on Inequality

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Introduction

From being predominantly framed as “associational migrants”, women have come to be recognised as migrants in their own right, as primary migrants who are moving to new countries in search of work and new economic opportunities. Huge advancements have been made in achieving a deeper understanding of migration as a gendered process but despite the early publication of Morokvasic’s seminal paper on “women are birds of passage too” in 1984, there are still gaps to be filled and issues to be explored (see also Donato et al., 2006). Although migration is undeniably a global phenomenon, it remains geographically concentrated, partly in response to the existence of centres of economic (re-)production and regulatory frameworks directing migration, many of which are pitched at bilateral rather than regional, let alone global, level. In some regions, we can observe greater fluidity in the South–South context where migratory flows tend to be larger than in the South–North context. Nonetheless, the latter has been the basis for most theorising of international migration in general, and gendered migration in particular.

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In this chapter we focus on intra- and trans-regional migration in a South–South context and explore what this means for women migrants.¹ In particular, while feminist scholars have highlighted care and the ways in which migration challenges social reproduction as an important issue, migration policies continue to tend to focus on just the ‘productive’ lives of migrant workers. Migration theories are still mostly built on the experience of South–North migration, and there continues to be relatively little understanding of South–South migration dynamics, despite the fact that most migration occurs intra-regionally. While the development literature has paid some attention to countries of origin, particularly through research linked to the so-called migration-development nexus, most of this research continues to mainly take into account South–North migrations. This is partly so because funders largely reside in the Global North (Europe, the US, Singapore) and are interested in understanding the development implications of the migrants that arrive—and potentially then return to ‘their’ countries of origin. There is far less funding available in migration destination countries in the Global South and the regional poles of attraction for regional migrants, such as Argentina, South Africa or Malaysia. Language is sometimes a barrier in regard to the circulation of knowledge, as in the case of South America, where a rich and diverse literature and migration research history exists on its regional migrations, but it is generally not known or disregarded in research published in English (see Asis & Piper, 2008; also Bastia and Kofman, forthcoming, for a fuller discussion).

We start this chapter by providing a brief overview of where we are at in terms of understanding gendered migration within the context of economic centres of (re-)production, polycentrism and global efforts to govern migration, and then move on to addressing some of the key challenges women migrants face in the context of current trends, including the feminisation of migration, temporary migration, transnationally split families and cross-generational issues.

Intersectional, Gendered Migrations

As feminist scholars have advanced critiques of hetero-normative social science research, this has also led to greater attention paid to gender disaggregation of migration flows. To those who have been attentive to the role paid by women in migration as well as to the changes in global and national economies, it came as no surprise that women actually played an important role in various migration streams long before it was formally acknowledged

(see Morokvasic, 1984). Globally, women have increased their share of the overall number of international migrants from 46.6% in 1960 to 48.8% in 2000 (Zlotnik, 2000). However, most of this increase is the result of women displaying greater participation in South–North migration streams towards higher-income countries. Women’s share of total migrants in more developed countries increased from 47.9% to 50.9% during this period, while it remained constant in less developed countries at 45.7% (Zlotnik, 2000). More recent figures indicate that the share of women migrants increased slightly from 51 to 52% between 1990 and 2013 in the Global North. However, it decreased quite significantly from 46 to 43% in developing regions during the same period (UN, 2013). There are also significant regional variations. In Europe and North America, women make up the majority of international migrants, while Oceania, Eastern/ South-eastern Asia and Latin America have achieved gender parity (in terms of numbers) (UN, 2013).

It is clear, therefore, that the term ‘feminisation of migration’ does not represent migration across all regions. It relates only to the experiences of higher-income countries in the Global North as well as South America and Oceania (see also Tittensor & Mansouri, 2017). Demographic trends and women’s longer life expectancy also contribute to a larger share of women among the total migrant population in terms of the stock of migrants (Donato & Gabaccia, 2015). Clearly these figures only refer to international migration. As we know, internal migration is often much more significant, at least numerically, than cross-border migration. Internal migration is generally cheaper and more accessible, so more people engage in this kind of movement. The Human Development Report on human mobility (2009) highlights the relative weight of internal migration. For some countries, internal migration is eight times larger than international migration (HDR, 2009, 22). From this point of view, internal migration is often more significant than international migration for poverty alleviation, because moving within national borders is generally more accessible to poorer people than longer and more expensive moves across international borders (Bastia, 2013). A study on migration in and from Burkina Faso, for example, shows that internal migration was more likely to reduce poverty while international migration had a positive contribution for those households that were already better off and, as such, contributed to increasing income inequalities in places of origin (Wouterse, 2008).

The term “feminisation of migration” also fails to take into account the intersectional nature of migrations. As we have argued elsewhere, migrants are by definition “intersectional subjects”, whose positionality alters as soon

as they move from one geographical area to another (Bastia et al., 2022). This change is often even more pronounced when they move across international borders, because ethnic, race, class dimensions that influence gendered identities are then compounded by those of migration status. Any discussion of migration and inequality, therefore, requires an intersectional perspective, given that gender relations are always also classed, racialised and ethnicised (Anthias, 2020).

Some early work on the gendered composition of internal migration streams showed how gendered labour markets and the gendered division of labour within rural households influenced decisions about migration. Sarah Radcliffe (1986) researched internal migration in a village in Southern Peru and concluded that men tended to migrate shorter distances and for shorter periods of time during the slack season in the agricultural cycle, while young women migrated longer distances, usually to the capital Lima, and they did so for much longer periods of time (often years as opposed to months) because their labour was considered ‘surplus’ in their native rural households.

This example might seem far removed from our discussion about the “global economy” but it is not. It illustrates how gender roles and the households’ organisation of labour along gender lines influence who migrates, where to and for how long. As we have seen, as higher-income countries in Europe, North America and Asia face rapidly ageing societies while at the same time experiencing greater labour market insertion by native women, they start to rely more heavily on other women, usually (though not exclusively) international migrants, for filling in care gaps within their households. The domestic and care sectors in these regions are now dominated by women migrants, who sometimes travel thousands of miles, to take up insufficiently or even unregulated, insecure and generally low-paid jobs, while leaving behind their own families (see section below on transnational family life). Various labour market sectors as well as migration more broadly have also been subject to “governing” attempts. Given the array of institutional actors involved at the local, regional and global level, coordinating policy responses (‘migration governance’), as well as advocacy efforts to influence those, are faced with the challenge of multi-layered and multi-sited character of migration regulation.

Gendered Migration, Temporality and Precarity

Cross-border migration has been an important dimension of economic development throughout the world, alongside increased demand for low-wage labour needed to sustain global and regional re/productive chains. As a result, many migrants remain within the region when migrating and their migration is proactively shaped by states. Most governments in Asia, for instance, have come to actively promote outflows or inflows of migrant workers as a key economic strategy, and they have primarily done so on the basis of strictly temporary visa policies. This is so because origin countries typically seek remittance inflows and skill transfers, while destination countries use temporary migrant labour as “disposable” inputs for jobs shunned by the local workforce. National, regional and global policy-makers have reached a consensus on mutually beneficial economic outcomes of temporary labour migration, thus spreading such policies around the world. This understanding has resulted in the subordination of migrants’ legal and working rights as lesser considerations to the economic ‘management’ paradigm of migration flows (Piper, 2022).

Intra-regional migration in the form of temporary visa arrangements has become a distinct pattern especially in Asia since the mid-twentieth century, a period during which temporary labour migration had also risen to its prominence in the “West”. In Asia, this type of migration was boosted by neoliberal economic globalisation (Gills & Piper, 2002) with its specifically gendered forms of labour supply and demand. The highly feminised migration of domestic workers is one distinct feature of such trend. Many temporary migrants take up domestic work in countries of destination. At least 53.6 million women and men above the age of 15 are reported to be in domestic work as their main job, with some source suggesting a figure as high as 100 million (ILO, 2010). Domestic worker employment constitutes at least 2.5% of total employment in post-industrialised countries and between 4 and 10% of total employment in developing countries. In gender terms, women are the overwhelming majority of the domestic workforce (at 83%), which represents 7.5% of women’s employment worldwide (ILO, 2010). Moreover, the women who enter this sector of work, often belong to racialized and ethnified social groups, not just migrant workers, but are often also of indigenous descent or of lower socio-economic class.

Temporary contract migration schemes mean that legal migration takes almost exclusively place on the basis of strictly fixed term contracts. Such contracts typically tie the worker to one specific employer, an example being the notorious Kafala system as practiced in the Gulf countries (Iskander,

2021). Breaking the contract to seek employment elsewhere—for instance in the case of abuse or contract violation on the part of the employer—can turn a migrant into an ‘illegal’ worker and resident. In this sense, there is no free access to the ‘labour market’. Because of the strictly temporary nature of migration, the nature of employer-tied contracts and the frequent occurrences of undocumented migration as the result of absconding or overstaying, return migration can be a natural consequence of this arrangement.

The practice of restrictive policies in the form of strictly temporary migration is particularly evident in the case of migrant domestic workers who are sometimes violently prohibited from any measure that can be seen as developing intimate ties to the destination countries. Migrant domestic workers are prohibited from marrying locals and restricted from marrying migrant workers in Singapore. In these cases, marriage has to take place after departure. Female migrant domestic workers, who make up the majority, have to undergo regular pregnancy tests by the authorities, and pregnant domestic workers face being deported (Xiang, 2013; Constable, 2014). Gendered discrimination is here compounded by nationality, as states aim to preserve the national ethnic make-up by prohibiting marriage with non-nationals. Since the employers are *de facto* penalised when their domestic worker becomes pregnant, employers take on the role of surveillance to impose curfew or interfere with the workers’ day-off, often in the name of gendered morality and ‘protection’ (Constable, 2014; Yeoh & Huang, 2010). In Hong Kong, migrant domestic workers are excluded from eligibility to apply for permanent residency, which is available for expatriates after seven years of residence (Constable, 2014).

The case of temporary employer-tied migration requires us to note that any development “agency” on the part of individual migrant women is hampered by ever more restrictive and selective migration policy frameworks. Restrictions are driven by barricaded access to labour markets, types of work, and length of stay; and the ‘selectiveness’ of workers based on their gender and/or country of origin. A migrant’s agency for development is, therefore, not only restrained by the restrictive and selective nature of prevalent migration policies, but also due to gendered norms, flexible labour markets, high competition for jobs and the fraudulent practices of intermediaries (resulting in economic precarity) as well as socio-political non-commitment to newcomers and politically disenfranchised migrant-(non)citizens. These processes are not only gendered, but also racialized and marked by considerations for preserving national ‘purity’. It has been shown that countries of destination tend to have the upper hand in determining the substance of bilateral negotiations (Wickramasekara, 2011). However, in recent years some

countries of origin such as the Philippines have also become more selective, albeit often in the form of instituting bans on female migrants only, rather than blanket bans on everyone's migration to a specific country of destination where conditions are particularly unfavourable or exploitative.

Migrants' expectations, planning and understanding of temporality attached to space, shape their behaviour and membership practices in destination countries, most notably their participation in the labour market. Piore's study (1979, as quoted in Levitt & Rajaram, 2013) found migrants more willing to accept lower wages and comparatively worse employment conditions when they expect their stay to be temporary. The temporary nature of migration shapes or rather reflects the kind of institutional understanding that destination and origin states have of migration. Migrants are not perceived as members, or potential citizens, but rather as flexible low-wage labour that supplies manpower in areas where the destination country is experiencing short- and (usually) long-term shortage, while providing much needed monetary flows to sustain their own families. Martin (2006, 4) explains this process by using an aphorism that "there is nothing more permanent than temporary migration". Despite permanent labour shortages, temporary migration provides labour at the expense of human rights such as the right to family life, mobility, social protection and other basic rights to one's life and well-being (Castles, 2004; Sharma, 2007), affecting migrants' ability to function as agents of their own, their families' or communities' and national development.

The predominance of temporary contract migration leads inevitably to return migration. The promise of the "development effect" even for individual migrants does not usually materialise after just one stint abroad. Re-migration often occurs, and the suggested positive 'development effect' of 'circular migration' is more the manifestation of many migrants being captive to, or falling back into, the situation of precarity which they were hoping to escape.

Social Reproduction and Transnational Family Life

As (married or unmarried) women migrate to seek better opportunities elsewhere, they typically leave behind their families which in turn need to adjust to the absence of the person who usually acts as the main carer. Migrants are often unable to take their families with them because of restrictive migration regimes, as discussed above. In the past, when migration was not so strictly

regulated and countries of destination actively recruited comparatively large numbers of migrants to populate their countries, it was easier to reconcile migration with family reunification or formation with spouses who hailed from the migrants' country of origin. Migration was aimed at settlement and the best way to ensure that migrants settle is for them to have their families with them. Today, however, migration regimes actively discourage settlement, except for a very small proportion of highly skilled migrants, who are deemed 'desirable' by countries of destination, in what has become the 'race for talent'. Most migrants, especially those entering informal, insecure and low-paid work, are however not welcomed, but tolerated by allowing them to stay for the duration of the performance of their key role as 'cheap and disposable labour', as discussed above. Destination countries typically want to appear able to respond quickly to economic downturns and changing political mood among their voting public. In addition, they also want to avoid bearing the costs of educating, caring for and providing a safety net for migrants' families. They therefore actively discourage or prohibit the reunification of migrant families. As we have seen, in some cases, they also control and police women migrants' bodies through pregnancy tests and deport them in the event of them falling pregnant.

Even when migration policies do not explicitly prohibit family reunification, the types of jobs available to most women migrants mean that they cannot reconcile their migration journeys with family life. Long working hours, low pay and no or limited access to benefits are contributing factors to their inability to work while also looking after their own dependents. For example, one of the sectors where women migrants predominate is care work, particularly elderly care. Migrant women working as live-in elderly carers are often on call for 24 hours a day and work six to six-and-a-half days a week. Employers will sometimes allow women to work with very small babies, but for the great majority of these women it is impossible to work and also care for dependents. Those working as cleaners for multiple households paid by the hour manage such a busy schedule in order to be able to cover their basic necessities (food, rent, transport) while at the same time trying to save as much money as possible, that they also find it impossible to reconcile work and family life (Bastia, 2015, 2019).

Some women are able to access carer programmes set up by destination countries, such as Canada, which gives them the option to apply for permanent residency and subsequently reunite with their families after they have fulfilled a two-year contract. However, as Geraldine Pratt shows, to access this programme, Filipino women have often had to work abroad in Singapore or Hong Kong, before gathering sufficient social and financial capital to apply

for the programme in Canada. By the time they are able to bring their families to Canada, years have gone by, the young children they left behind meanwhile grown into teenagers or young adults, and their husbands sometimes found other partners. So even when available in theory, reunification in practice is marred by practical and emotional difficulties (Pratt, 2012). These migrant women use their migration within their region to build finances, skills and networks to eventually reach their preferred destinations in the Global North.

One of the costs associated with women's access to the global economy is, therefore, related to the split families it engenders (see Haagsman & Mazzucato, 2020). Besides the emotional pain associated with being separated from loved ones for long periods of time (Pratt, 2009; Bastia, 2019), others have also drawn attention to the unequal distribution of care labour globally as a result of migrant women performing care duties in higher-income countries. Hochschild (2000) has termed this process the 'global care chains' to highlight how families at destination that employ women migrant carers are intrinsically linked with the migrant woman's families of origin. She argued that as women migrate, they leave a "care vacuum" in their families of origin that is usually filled in by another woman who might be another family member or somebody employed by the family to undertake care duties. She might be an internal migrant, who is unable to access the more lucrative cross-border migration so might be poorer and more disadvantaged, generally of a lower socio-economic class, sometimes of indigenous descent, than the woman who moved internationally. The destination family, on the other hand, is able to benefit from a surplus of care. This might be a dual-earner family, who is able to have more income and more quality leisure time, as a result of the care that the migrant woman is contributing to their household. Globally, therefore, the migration of women carers contributes to a "care deficit" (or "displaced care", see Withers & Piper, 2018) in countries of origin and a "care surplus" in countries of destination (see also Yeates, 2004).

The analytical framework of "care chains" has contributed to highlighting the importance of care and the costs associated with low-paid, temporary and insecure migration. It has also done much to draw attention to what happens in countries of origin as a result of global migration. Some of the critiques of this way of thinking about women's migration have centred around the fact that: (i) it puts forward a zero sum game between households of origin and destination; (ii) it conceptualises care as a physical resource; (iii) it draws on a very specific experience of migration (Philippines to Canada/ US) and (iv) it does not address how care is reconfigured for migrants working in sectors other than the care sector (see Pearson & Kusakabe, 2012). Its conclusions are therefore, by necessity, quite pessimistic. More recently, scholarship

emerging from South America has highlighted the multiple ways in which households of origin are able to accommodate the absence of the main carer (Gioconda Herrera, 2013, 2020). The “Asian” experience reinforces this and further underpins the supporting role that families have always played (Asis et al., 2019).

Cross-Generational Issues

The splitting of migrant families therefore raises concerns related to the care arrangements of those family members who stay in countries of origin. Most of the policy and research concern to date has focused on the migrants’ children (e.g. Parreñas, 2005). This has been a particular concern that has been linked to the feminisation of migration. That is, the care of children who remained in the countries of origin was not raised in relation to men’s migration because it was assumed that the main carer, i.e. the mother, remained in the country of origin and continued to care for her children. Policy-makers and researchers have started paying attention to what happens to children in contexts of migration only when they started realising that a large number of older, married women, who were also mothers, were also deciding to migrate for long distances and over long periods of time (as discussed above). The absence of fathers is not usually seen as a problem for children’s well-being in policy-makers’ views.

While policy-makers and the media usually refer to the migration of migrant mothers in terms of “moral panics”, the research in this area is a bit less conclusive. While children (and mothers) generally suffer emotionally as a result of long separations, some research suggests that as long as children are included in their mothers’ migration projects, then the consequences are they generally come to better understand their decisions and how their migration benefits the family as a whole (Parreñas, 2005). Current migration decisions also need to be placed within longer historical accounts of migration, in which the notion of the stable, nuclear family might not be as normative as in policy-makers’ (or researchers’) assumptions. In Bolivia, for example, there is a lot of talk of the current disruptions to family life resulting from high levels of women’s emigration but in the not so distant past, it was not uncommon for children to be raised by their grandparents or uncles and aunts, when the need arose (Bastia, 2019).

Moreover, migrants generally also have parents, who might also have care-needs of their own but are often left to look after grandchildren. The literature on the migrants’ parents who stay behind in the migrants’ countries of origin

is, however, only just beginning to emerge (Bastia et al., 2021; Vullnetari & King, 2008). Grandparents might also travel to countries of destination to care for their grandchildren and migrants, will, indeed, travel back to countries of origin to provide care for their ageing parents, if the means allow (King et al., 2017).

Much of this concern for what happens to the care of vulnerable family members in the absence of migrants, particularly mothers and the women in the family, is premised on the assumption that physical proximity is required for people to provide care and care for one another. The literature on transnational care has shown, however, that people provide care from afar in a myriad of ways: through regular phone calls, by sending remittances, arranging for substitute care, providing emotional support in times of need and, when required, visiting (Baldassar et al., 2007). Whether this is available to people in lower-income countries, for migrants with insecure jobs or in setting where access to modern communication technologies is still challenging, is still to be seen.

Missing from this discussion and of particular relevance for those women migrants who enter insecure, low-paid jobs, is the question of “caring for self”. While policy-makers and researchers grapple with the consequences of women’s migration for vulnerable family members in countries of origin, of paramount importance to us seems to be the well-being of the women migrants themselves. Much of the development-talk around migration raises questions about the extent to which migration can deliver development for countries, communities or families of origin. But, what about the women who undertake these journeys? In the final section we focus on migration governance and show how macro-level migration policy-making is also highly gendered and is at the root of some of the unequal processes we have discussed so far.

(Re-)production, Polycentrism and Migration Governance

Women migrants engaged in global labour markets are subjected to the dictates of ‘neoliberal governmentality’ through feminised forms of flexibilisation and informalisation of work, which underpin macro-economic development projects (Oksala, 2013; Peterson, 2012). Temporary migration has also been analysed as a specific form of disciplining practice for migrant subjectivity (Robertson, 2014). Given the highly-gendered labour markets and restrictive migration policies practiced around the world, female

migrant workers are differently situated within labour migration dynamics in comparison to men. Gender can operate as an additional governing code (Hennebry et al., 2018). However, in migration and development policies at both national and international levels, gender is not often considered a separate analytical category. Moreover, migration policies are mostly gender-blind, ignore the power dynamics and implications of gender-segregated labour markets, and the socio-economic/cultural structures in both origin and destination countries (Piper, 2006).

In the “migration-development nexus” discourse which has greatly influenced the global governance debate in both scholarly and policy terms, the prime focus is on monetary gains measured through women migrants’ contributions, i.e. the remittances they sent, in relation to national economies. This development paradigm ignores women migrants’ personal experiences and the costs involved in migration, thereby failing to pay attention to their rights, protections and unique subjectivities (Piper & Lee, 2016; Walsham, 2022). Government policy frameworks are predominantly concerned with controlling migration (i.e. the exit and entry of individuals and their access to labour markets or jobs) and extracting economic benefits from foreign workers while “paying mere lip service to the human rights of migrants” (Piper, 2015, 792).

There is much greater recognition about the need to cooperate and coordinate with other states, as reflected in global migration governance, despite its multi-actor character, having become a much more concerted effort. However, the predominant regulatory framework to date—especially in the South–South context—still takes the form of bilateral agreements (BLAs), where destination countries tend to have the upper hand. The various bilateral agreements which exist on domestic worker migration, for instance, rarely include clauses on workers’ rights or are gender-sensitive, let alone gender-responsive, but tend to be about technicalities (Hennebry et al., 2022). In most migrant-sending countries, in turn, women migrants’ remittances make significant contributions to national economies. Separation from their families ensures a steady flow of remittances, so there is little incentive to negotiation for family unification provisions. A governmental discourse that focuses on remittances alone, however, serves to instrumentalise migrants’ contributions and ignores the social costs of migration to families.

States generally refrain from formulating gender-sensitive migration policies that facilitate women’s cross-border labour mobility, including across the Global South. Rather, some countries impose legal restrictions on women’s labour migration, typically under the guise of protection (Hennebry, 2017). Moreover, labour laws in most host countries often poorly protect the rights of women migrants, who are subject to intersecting structural factors and

discriminations based on gender, class, age, ethnicity and nationality. These factors further compound the challenges they confront (Hennebry, 2016). As a result, women migrants who are concentrated in highly gendered sectors at the low-wage end (e.g. domestic work, garment manufacturing) cannot access the same labour rights and social protections as workers in other sectors. Structural inequalities, gender discrimination in labour markets in countries of origin, and restrictive immigration controls coalesce so that women generally have fewer pathways to migrate, will be more likely to turn to recruiters and to migrate via lower skilled temporary worker schemes or undocumented channels—and as such are particularly politically disenfranchised (Hennebry, 2017; Piper, 2010). Socio-economic precarity, geographic isolation and political disenfranchisement extend to recent ideas around refugee employment in the Middle East where manufacturing has emerged as the key sector where refugee women work under Export Processing Zones conditions and without trade union representation (Lenner & Turner, 2018).

Yet, there have been some promising developments in recent years as far as the global governing framework is concerned. The great success story concerns the ILO Convention No. 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. The convention was adopted in 2011 after a two-year negotiation process and several years of concerted advocacy alliances by trade union and other civil society organisations around the world. These efforts emanated particularly strongly from those civil society organisations situated in the Global South (Piper, 2015).

UN Women is also doing important work on securing better rights for migrant domestic workers, targeting in particular the migration corridor between the Middle Eastern countries and South Asia. There are now good practice examples of BLAs between some countries in the Middle East and South Asia, promising unified contracts and minimum standards. Moreover, the SDGs have specifically recognised gender as an important factor in migration, particularly stated through SDG 5.5, SDGs 5.6, 8 and 10.4. The SDGs have normative value, and it is through diverse actors and appropriate mechanisms that these goals could be achieved. The research by Hennebry et al. (2018) shows that both in terms of issues covered and the process in which they were developed, the SDGs are considerably more participatory and inclusive than their predecessor, the MDGs. Although it might be an overstatement to say that the agenda of women migrants is at the forefront of SDGs, the fact that migrant *women* are acknowledged as a specific category and target group within the SDGs constitutes a major achievement (ibid.; Datta & Piper, forthcoming).

The latest development at the global level concerns the negotiations around the Global Compact of Migration (GCM) where gender issues were also flagged up and pushed high up on the agenda by civil society organisations, supported by international organisations such as UN Women and the ILO. Implementation is a huge challenge and a space to watch. Furthermore, although decent work is mentioned in the GCM, key issues related such as decent wages and freedom of association are sidelines. Addressing migrant worker precarity in gendered and racialised labour markets, thus, remains a challenge. The existence of an ever greater number of CSOs and their expanding regional and global networks, however, are a promising factor that will continue to remind governments of their commitments.

Conclusion

We are at a critical junction in our understanding of women migrants in the global economy. Huge advancements have been made to further our understanding of migration as a gendered process, including as one that is shaped by the intersectional nature of the challenges that migrants encounter in their migration journeys. However, as we have argued, there is a continued need to keep focusing on women migrants and the way they fare in the changes that are taking place in the global, regional and national economies. This is because a focus on gender alone, especially at the individual micro level, can lead to de-politicisation, or it can re-draw attention to male migrants only, albeit one where they are understood as gendered beings.

Moreover, most of the theories that are generally drawn on for understanding gendered migration processes are based on the experience of South–North migration. As we have shown, almost half of all cross-border migration (and probably much more) is made up of South–South, intra- and trans-regional migration streams, which often have different characteristics compared to South–North migration. Temporary migration features more prominently in some regions such as Asia, for example, where it is more tightly regulated than elsewhere. Such regulation relates to migrant women's working lives but also their bodies, in cases where their reproductive lives are under surveillance by national authorities. In other regions, there is a relative ease for moving across national borders, such as among MERCOSUR member states,² but the precarity and insecurity associated with the type of jobs that women migrants have access to continue to be a cause of concern. Xenophobic and racist attitudes further impinge on migrants' daily lives, their

socio-economic and psychological well-being. These attitudes are always also gendered.

While the development literature has paid some attention to countries of origin, most of the examples it draws on continue to include South–North migrations. Destination countries in the Global South, such as Argentina, South Africa or Malaysia, need to feature much more prominently in migration research in the future, if we are to build a truly global picture of migration and its relationship with intersectional inequalities. We also need to find ways to overcome language barriers and fully recognise migration research arising in the Global South.

As we have demonstrated in this chapter, a focus on South–South migration raises different issues for migrant workers, including women migrants, to those covered in the mainstream literature on gender and migration. A re-orientation in focus can shed new light to existing research questions. Examples from South America, for example, provide a less stark and more grounded understanding of how social reproduction is re-organised as a result of the migration of women, as compared to the negative conclusions of the global care chains literature. However, we still need a better understanding of the cross-generational effects of migration, given that most of the concern, both in research and in policy, has been on children. Last but not least, going beyond domestic and care work by conducting cross-sectoral research, especially from a comparative perspective, would be important for broadening the knowledge base on gendered migrant precarity. So, there is a strong case to be made for more research on South–South and inter-regional migration.

Notes

1. This chapter is an updated version of the article that we have co-written and was published in *Gender & Development* 27(1) Migrants in a Global Economy, March 2019, pp. 15–30, with the following title ‘Women migrants in the global economy: a global overview (and regional perspectives)’, which is available here <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13552074.2019.1570734?needAccess=true>.
2. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela are State Parties. Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Surinam are Associated States (<https://www.mercosur.int/en/about-mercosur/mercosur-countries/>).

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