

CONFERENCE SUB-THEME 7.3. FEMALE MIGRATION

Gendered migrant social and human capital: An investigation into informally employed Zimbabwean migrant women in Botswana.

BY

Canisio Mutsindikwa Cell: +267 74051896

Address: P.O. Box 502716, Gaborone, Botswana

E-mail: canisio.mutsindikwa@yahoo.com

This paper shall seek to investigate the role played by social capital in the movement of Zimbabwean migrant women to Botswana. The research shall seek to unravel the interrelationships and dynamics between human and social capital in the context of the migration of Zimbabwean women to Botswana. The research intends to put to the spotlight the dynamics of the migration of Zimbabwean women from the social capital dimension and the manner in which they acquire survival skills in the process of migration. These aspects shall be analyzed with due consideration to the backgrounds of the migrants both individually and collectively.

Background to the research

This paper shall assume that in Southern Africa, from the colonial era until recently, international migration was the province of men, and women were systematically excluded. Men moved in steps, internally to the urban areas and later across national boundaries to seek better life after blacks had been dispossessed of their land by white colonialists. While Zimbabwean men moved as far afield as the Witwatersrand gold mines in South Africa, the Copper mines of Zambia, among other places women were supposed to remain at home. Their task was to look after the children and work on the farm. Women were dependant on their men's wages. The capitalist economy, in order to ensure a stable and docile labour force forbade women from moving into purportedly male dominated domains such as migration. Women were trapped in the home. This was exacerbated by the fact that most men did not send back enough remittances to support the women and children at home, so women bore the brunt of sustaining families in a largely patriarchal, male dominated society based on patrilineal tenets. Even as things worsened for the women they could not move across borders because the movement of unaccompanied women was seen as taboo. Those who moved were castigated as immoral and deviant and men who allowed their women to migrate were seen as weak "women in trousers only". Women were considered unfit for migration at the time.

A cursory appraisal of the current migration landscape is however, telling a different story. Women have begun to migrate across borders from Zimbabwe to various regional countries such as Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and others. Some are moving as far afield as Europe and the United States and so on. These developments became noticeable in Zimbabwe in the mid to late eighties and the tide has been increasing steadily. Besides the obvious political and economic turmoil facing Zimbabwe the migration of women may be attributed to a number

of socio-economic developments in Zimbabwe. Firstly after independence the system of free and compulsory education ensured that women became literate and more independent. Secondly gender based stereotyping was officially discouraged and affirmative action laws took root to emancipate women and guarantee rights to own property and become legally recognized persons with full equal rights (arguably). Thirdly the prevalence of single parent families (female headed) due to AIDS and social disorganization further gave women no choice except to move and work for their families. Industrialization brought the usual social decay typical of (Tonnies's gessellschaft) with rising family breakdowns. Lastly Zimbabwe's unprecedented economic meltdown taught women (and some men) that they needed to seek alternative livelihoods strategies such as international migration to better destinations. Furthermore many women in today's society are divorced, separated, widowed or unmarried (Haralambos and Holborn 1991:307). Women found themselves released from the boring, uneventful domestic trap and able to enter the traditional province of men with all its excitement and adventure. Marriages with their dreary, boring routines had been traps for these women. Often the harbingers were cross- border women traders who could locate jobs and bring back information to those left behind.

Most informally employed women came as legal migrants with documents (ETDs and Passports) but later overstayed their visas and became undocumented migrants ('illegal migrants' in most host countries). Since they cannot get formal employment most have become stuck in the largely unregulated or under-regulated "black economy" of Botswana as domestic workers, or self employed as hairdressers. Some do piece jobs for locals. Some have turned to prostitution due to tough laws making formal employment impossible. Others have turned to combining all the above modes of earning a living. However the bottom line and crux of the matter is that women are now migrating across borders. Though this was normally frowned upon by society Zimbabwean are rapidly accepting it. The migration of women has become a social fact with many consequences which may merit separate researches. The key question, which is the major concern of this research, is how do the formally immobile women manage to migrate, adapt to foreign environments and achieve their goals? The other question could be, "what are the ramifications of the migration of informally employed women in social terms and on social policy on both sides of the border?"

Assumptions of the study

This study shall assume that although macro forces are the major forces influencing migration there is more to it than mere spatial differences between destinations. At the macro-level, political, social and economic forces have obviously caused Zimbabwean women to *consider* moving or migrating, but not to *actually decide* to migrate. The study therefore assumes that once macro-forces have been noted then other (meso level) forces take over (Elrick 2008). The socio-political and economic transformations which Zimbabwe has undergone since independence as already alluded to have all compounded to feminize the international migration interface considerably. Having tasted initial economic prosperity, the women who formally enjoyed better crumbs from their men could not stand the spectre of instant poverty in a rapidly decaying Zimbabwean economy. Most casualties of Zimbabwe's economic demise were hapless women. The question is why did these women choose to come to Botswana, not South Africa or Angola, for example? The assumption is that they must have used networks to move (social

capital) and that these networks obviously have social and policy repercussions. The possibility of women social networks facilitating migration between Zimbabwe and Botswana should not be underestimated and need investigation to promote knowledge and assist policy makers. These women may be transforming the migration landscape. Who knows?

The problem

The problem is to find whether Zimbabwean migrant women informally employed in Botswana depend on social capital to migrate and if so the kinds of social capital they use most of the time. The problem is also to find the implications of this on human capital, social policy and society.

Theoretical focus

This study shall be based on the new theory of social capital (from economic sociology). The theory was developed by many authors such as, Pierre Bourdieu, Alejandro Portes, James Coleman, Robert Putnam, Nan Lin, Francis Fukuyama, Ronald Burt and others. Social concept as a heuristic is not an entirely new concept. Its roots are seen in the works of Georg Simmel, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons (Woolcock 2000). The key to social capital is that for migration to actually take place people must depend on social networks. These networks should be made up of member who trust one another, have norms of reciprocity and recognize each other as members of such social networks. Network members are entitled to the network's socio-economic resources by virtue of membership in the network. Though having power of sanctions the networks are informal. Doing good to others ensures that others are indebted to others and should reciprocate at a later date in any acceptable way.

A few definitions of social capital (relevant to this thesis shall be briefly stated here, for clarity. Bourdieu defined social capital as “ the sum of resources, actual or virtual that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Burt 2000:2, Portes 1998:3, Nan Lin 2004:3). Coleman thinks that the closer the relationship between a current migrant and a prospective migrant the more likely the prospective migrant will be assisted to migrate. Others advocate for weaker distant relationships which can ensure more diverse and richer resources (Nan Lin 2004). Close groups are seen by these scholars such as Granovetter as stifling and having limited resources. So it can be said that the key to whether one migrates is not “what you know” but “whom you know.” so people with more or closer links are more likely to migrate. The issue is to prove if Zimbabwean women use social networks and if so the kinds of networks they may be using and with what effect. In Bourdieu's view network members deliberately help others so that they can call upon the beneficiaries to assist in any way needed. These interactions in social relations are seen as investments for future exploitation. Norms of reciprocity, backed by sanctions force network members to help others in their network. The issue is does this happen on the Zimbabwe-Botswana migration interface.

Sampling Techniques

The sampling techniques shall include a combination of quota sampling and snowball sampling. Quota sampling is a kind of purposive sampling. According to Mack. Woodsong. MacQueen,

Guest and Namey (2005:7) quota sampling is a sampling technique where “we decide while designing the study how many people, with which characteristics to include as participants.” in this study the participants shall be informal Zimbabwean hair dressers and Zimbabwean domestic workers. The sample size shall be determined by the researcher basing on the time and resources available to the researcher and the observed numbers of respondents. Quotas of respondents (hairdressers and domestic workers) shall be determined in advance by the researcher. After determining the quotas the researcher shall employ the snowball technique to find respondents. Snowball sampling, also called referral sampling is a kind of purposive sampling. Mack et al (ibid: 7) assert that “In this method, participants or informants with whom contacts have already been made use their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who could potentially participate in, or contribute to the study” The researcher shall find one or two respondents in each category and these shall introduce others until the required quotas are met.

The reason for using snowball sampling is that the population is not immediately apparent and is somewhat ‘hidden’. Also since some of the informally employed women are likely to have no documents this may become a sensitive issue and therefore requires more caution

Expected findings

It may be expected that women informal migrants may belong to social networks, but what needs to be unraveled is the types of networks used, how they work and their ramifications on human capital, policy and society.