

## **Migration Graduate Student Project I**

### **Project Summary**

The aim of the project “Gender and South-South Migration” is to contribute to filling the current gap in the literature on Gender and Migration Studies where there is inadequate coverage of intersectional approaches or comparative analysis across countries of destinations. To this end, **three** qualified students will be selected to enroll in the MA program of Migration and Refugee Studies at the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CRMS) at The American University in Cairo (AUC). Each student will work on a comparative analysis of the situation of female migrants and women left behind by male migrant workers in two different countries of the MENA region.

### **Introduction**

Earlier Migration Studies were gender blind treating men and women identically as one category of ‘migrants’ or ‘refugees’, overlooking important gender considerations. To overcome this, since the 1980s, a new trend has emerged that treats women in the migration context as a ‘special group’. While increasingly recognizing the different migratory pathways of women, these accounts often reduce such experiences to women’s vulnerability. While increasingly recognizing that women’s experiences of displacement differ from men’s, such accounts often reduce women’s experiences to vulnerability or sexual violence, rather than exploring how and why women are victimized and persecuted, or recognizing that displaced women could simultaneously be victimized and yet remain active agents deserving of respect. In order to draw a more accurate picture of their experiences, one has to include also other parameters, such as class, age, legal status, as well as the context of the receiving countries in which they find themselves. As such, it is legitimate and important to study the situation of migrant women comparatively across countries.

Within the broader migration context, it is also important to investigate the experience of women left behind as a result of male migration and how such experience differs according to variables like age and social class.

### **Problem Statement**

Whilst there is now extensive literature on Gender and Migration, limited attention has been paid to generational and intersectional approaches or comparative analysis across South-South Migration (SSM) corridors. For example, little is known about the different situations of female domestic workers from Asia and Africa in the countries of destination. For example, how is their situation in Saudi Arabia different from Lebanon or Egypt? There is equally a significant knowledge gap about the effects of the absence of male migrant workers on women and the roles they play. Little is also known about how the experience of refugee women differs across countries and according to class and age.

### **Background**

The focus of CMRS’ s research agenda, since its inception in 2000, has been on the rights and conditions of the different refugee communities in Egypt. The situation of refugee women and the impact on gender relations have always been an important component of these studies. This project on Gender and South-South Migration will build upon the existing knowledge base of the center but will further expand that knowledge through comparative analysis with different countries in the MENA region. The project will also benefit from the Center’s recent involvement in a global research hub. The Hub is funded through UKRI’s Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and will see CMRS join forces with universities and organizations from

across the world to explore how the movement of people in the Global South is affecting inequality and development in less developed regions.

### **Significance**

This project will study and analyze the situation of female migrants from southern countries who are living and working in another southern country. The project will adopt a comparative approach where the situation will be assessed in a number of southern receiving countries. In this way, the project will contribute to the current gap in the literature that is very country specific.

### **Project Description**

This project aims to examine how gender inequalities affect access to rights and resources in origin and destination countries and how the experiences of women differ across countries and according to class, age, and legal status. The project will cover female migrants and refugees as well as women left behind by male migrant workers.

One of the three students selected would work on a comparative analysis of Syrian refugee women in two countries of the MENA region (Lebanon and Jordan or Egypt and Jordan); the second student will compare the situation of Asian female domestic workers in two countries of the MENA region; and the third student will focus on women left behind due to male migration in two selected MENA countries.

The project will adopt an intersectional analysis, which, ‘begins with the experience of groups that occupy multiple social locations and find approaches and ideas that focus on the complexity rather than the singularity of human experience’ (Dill and Zambrana, 2009, 2). The analysis is considered a new approach to studying the experiences and struggles of marginalized people.

One of the assumptions of this approach is that inequality is not derived from one element such as race, ethnicity, class or gender, but rather from the intersection of these elements.

The methodology of the project will be qualitative based on in-depth interviews and/or focus group discussions with female migrants and women left behind in the selected countries of study as well as with institutions concerned with female migrants and with scholars and experts in the field of Gender and Migration.

The three selected students will be advised to enroll in particular elective courses that relate to the subject of the project. Following the completion of the five core courses and the three elective courses that are needed for the MA in Migration Studies, the students will be mentored throughout the data collection process for the project and the writing of the final thesis. The duration of the research project will be 12 months, with 9 months for conducting the research and 3 months for the completion of a thesis document for each student.

### **The Advancement of Scientific Knowledge and Broader Impact**

The project will contribute to filling the existing gap in the literature that is currently country-specific and would offer an innovative approach to Gender and Migration Studies providing recommendations based on the actual experiences of women in different migration contexts. The project will also contribute to building the capacity of young researchers and train them to contribute to the field of Migration Studies, in particular, and Social Studies, in general.

### **Biographical Sketches**

Maysa Ayoub is the Research Manager of CMRS and an Adjunct faculty member of AUC Sociology Department. She has over 15 years of experience in conducting research in Migration Studies. She has researched the different refugee communities in Cairo including Sudanese refugees in collaboration with Tufts University in Boston and Syrian refugees in collaboration

with the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees in Egypt. Her most recent publication is on Syrian women in Cairo.

Gerda Heck is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Migration. Her academic work and research focuses on migration and border regimes, urban studies, transnational migration, migrant networks and self-organizing, religion and new concepts of citizenship. She has conducted research in Germany, Brazil, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Morocco, Turkey and the USA.

### **Leveraging Resources**

CMRS engagement in the UKRI GCRF South-South Migration, Inequality and Development Hub will provide an invaluable resource opportunity to students of the TLG program. In terms of academic resources, the Hub researchers and scholars can be regularly consulted. In terms of financial resources, the Hub's travel fund can contribute to students' participation in events organized in the framework of the Hub. In addition to the Hub, students will also benefit from CMRS resources in terms of its strong connection with the migrant and refugee communities, as well as the organizations working in the field both in Egypt and beyond.

### **Deliverables**

Deliverables include three master theses deposited at the Digital Archive and Research (DAR) Repository of the American University in Cairo, publically accessible. In addition, the results of the research project will be disseminated through recognized venues in the field, such as international conferences, journals, and/ or the CMRS series 'Cairo Studies on Migration and Refugees'.

### **Professional Development and Mentoring Plan**

The Co-PIs will be committed to the close mentoring of the three graduate students through theses research supervision, in order to have them develop the required skills for successfully carrying out the research, in addition to mentoring, support and guidance for results dissemination at local and international venues of relevance. In addition, a workshop will be organized during the thesis writing process in which the students will participate to review issues related to the literature review, data collection, and application of the theories studied.

### **References**

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