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The American University in Cairo  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**A Comparative Study on the Effect of Male Migration on Female Spouses in Middle and Lower Income Families in Egypt**

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Master of Arts

by

Marwa Helmy

Under the supervision of Dr. Ibrahim El Nur

## Acknowledgements

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## **Abstract**

Migration is not a novel occurrence; it has always been a driving force along with civilization. The main catalyst behind the new era of migration is globalization. Migration is a gendered topic, and in previous academic discourse from which women have often been excluded from it. However, the effect of male migration on female spouses in the home country is an area where research has been scarce. It was not until the last decade that attention was shed on female migrants; and the important role they play in international migration. Therefore this study seeks to explore the effect of male migration on female empowerment in Egypt. This is achieved by investigating two aspects; first, whether the control over remittances increases women's autonomy, and decision-making thus resulting in empowerment. Secondly, the study also focuses on whether male migration results in a change in traditional gender roles. In order to overcome previous shortcomings, this study compares two groups: women from low-income families and women from middle income families. The main methodology used in this study was qualitative, and that was achieved through interviews. This study uses Naila Al Kabeer's definition of empowerment as a focal point of analysis. According to Al Kabeer, the ability to make choices is made up of three interconnected areas: resources that are defined as not only access, but also future claims to material and human social resources; agency, which is decision-making or the process of defining goals and acting upon them. Resources and agency together make up what Amartya Sen calls capabilities. Capabilities are the possible abilities or potential that individuals have for living the lives the way they actually want. Lastly, achievements, which are the outcomes, reached. The researcher focused on formulating questions for the women that address these three aspects.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Migration is not a new phenomenon in the history of mankind; indeed it has always been a byproduct of civilization. Historically, people have either migrated forcefully, due to enslavement, or voluntarily as a result of colonialism. Furthermore in the twentieth century, people have migrated as a result of industrialization and urbanization.<sup>1</sup> However, one might say that the current era of migration is not restricted to one area or one direction, from the South countries to North. Furthermore, the current era of migration is being prompted by globalization. Since Migration is a gendered topic; it was not until recently that research has been conducted on female migration and its effects on women both the home and host countries. However, despite the rise in the literature looking into female migration, working conditions, and female networks that help women adapt and cope with migration; there still remains a gap in the literature. This gap is in research on female spouses that remain in their home countries, while their husbands migrate. There has been a lack of emphasis on the challenges and opportunities that female spouse of migrant husbands face. Thus, the aim of this research is to assess whether male migration from Cairo, Egypt to other countries results in empowering women in low income and middle-income families. This chapter offers an introduction to the study. It starts by tracing the history of international migration in Egypt, and the rationale for this study, the hypothesis, and the methodology. The last section of this chapter provides a brief outline of the organizations of the upcoming chapters.

Migration is an important international phenomenon that has spread specifically due to globalization. One of the main prompters of migration in Egypt is poverty, and economic problems. Historically, it was more common for foreigners to come to Egypt than Egyptians migrating and living abroad.<sup>2</sup> However, Egyptian migration first started in the early nineteenth century and it was to Europe. It was subsequent to Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, which took place between 1798 and 1801.<sup>3</sup> During that time Mohammed Ali was ruling, and he sent the first

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<sup>1</sup>Sadhna Arya and Anupama Roy, *Poverty, Gender and Migration* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2006), 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ayman Zohry and Migration And Development In, *Migration and Development in Egypt*, Institute for Migration and Cultural Studies (IMIS) Osnabruck University, 2007, 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 24.

mission to Italy in 1813 to study printing arts. The second mission was in 1818 to France and the mission was aimed at gaining new knowledge about maritime and military techniques.<sup>4</sup> This was because Mohammad Ali wanted to establish an army in Egypt that was based on European standards. Migration started to increase in Egypt in the 1960s due to Nasser coming to power and transitioning the economy towards socialism thus, resulting in discontent and economic downturn. The second wave of migration came after the 1967 defeat of Egypt in war, and the country's economic problems, from the shift of Nasser's more protectionist and socialist policies to Sadat's Infitah. Iniftah was more in line with laissez faire policies and free markets. The second wave of migration was also a result of Arab Gulf countries oil boom; and their expanding demand for labor. Even in the 1980s and 1990s when Asian labor was replacing Arab workers, Egyptian worker outflow still continued. In the mid 1990s Egyptians shifted their destination to Saudi Arabia. The number of Egyptian workers was the second greatest after Indian migrants in Saudi Arabia.<sup>5</sup> In the mid 2000s remittances constituted 6% of Egypt's GDP.<sup>6</sup> This made Egypt one of the top ten countries that receive remittances in the world.<sup>7</sup> This study is critical because male migration has continued to increase since the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution in Egypt. Thus, it is critical to study the effect of this phenomenon.

### **Research Problem, Context, and Justification**

There is urgency to discuss this topic because migration studies over the past decades were male centered. Females were widely neglected from migration studies until recently. In many cases their mobility was unmentioned and rendered invisible. Additionally, women's migration has been belittled and their role in their husband's migration has been reduced to passivity. Women's roles have been seen as being associational meaning they occur solely as a passive reaction to the decision of the males to migrate. Thus, in migration literature and studies women are always referred to as being "left behind". Women are perceived as having a passive role of either trailing their husbands on their travels or as being 'left behind'. It was not until recently that research has been conducted on female migration and its effects on women in the home and host countries. However, despite the rise in literature looking into female migration,

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<sup>4</sup>Ayman Zohry and Migration And Development In, *Migration and Development in Egypt*, Institute for Migration and Cultural Studies (IMIS) Osnabruck University, 2007, 24.

<sup>5</sup>Jackline Wahba, "Five Decades of International Migration in Egypt," 2007, 3.

<sup>6</sup>Ragui Assad, *Migration and the Mashreq*, publication (Washington DC: Middle East Institute Washington DC, 2010), 36.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

working conditions, female networks that help women adapt and cope with migration. There is still exists a gap in literature. This gap is in research on female spouses that remain in their home counties, while their husbands migrate. There has been a lack of emphasis on the challenges and opportunities that female spouse with migrant husbands face. Information is especially scarce on this topic in Egypt. Furthermore, the research that exists on male migration and females spouses in home country focuses on rural to urban migration, and not international migration. Additionally, there has been limited empirical evidence on the topic to test the hypothesis. Most studies focus on the effect of remittances on the elderly family members as well as parents, and children. This study seeks to focus on this topic and specifically on international migration due to the situation in Egypt after the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution of 2011. Unemployment and poverty are the main economic problems that face the majority of developing countries, especially Egypt. Unemployment and inflation have been exacerbated and on the rise due to the political turmoil and instability in the last four years.

One of the main contributing factors to migration is poverty. This study is significant because it seeks to assess the effect of migration on poverty reduction, women's empowerment and the change in gender roles. These two points are two of the corner stones of the Millennium Development Goals. The MDGs represent a blue print for development, which focuses on eradicating poverty, improving health and the wellbeing of evolving economies, in order for them to become developed economies. Furthermore, MDGs use a human centered approach to development, thus they focus on the improvement in the quality of life of individuals and not just economic factors. This study intends to overcome limitations of previous work, such as the mixed results on the effect of migration on empowerment; by assessing two different economic segments of families and women, and these are low income and middle income.

### **Research questions:**

- 1) How does control over remittances increase women's autonomy, decision making and lead to empowerment?
- 2) How does male migration and the new increased role of women change the traditional gender roles?

### **Hypothesis**

Using development theories and building on existing evidence, my tentative hypothesis was that women from middle-income families would experience more positive effects by their spouses' migration, than women from low-income families. Furthermore, women from middle-

income families would not experience any empowerment or change. Additionally, middle-income women are more educated they tend to seek autonomy, and power. Whilst, women from low-income families have a more basic education and are more conservative thus, they fear increased autonomy. It is predicted that women's control over remittances in middle-income households will increase women's autonomy and decision-making. Furthermore, there can be seeds for empowerment as they are more likely to invest in their children's education and schooling. I hypothesized that in low-income families women would not have control over remittances, as the husband will dictate how the money should be spent, or they will assign someone from his family to help make these decisions. It was predicted that in middle income families there would be a shift in traditional gender roles since the women will have more say in decision making, while in low income families there will be no change in traditional gender roles.

### **Methodology**

My research began with a curiosity about women's empowerment and the affect of male migration on their female spouses that stay in the home country. I was introduced to this topic through a research paper conducted on migration. There was a clear gap in research on the effect of male migration on females in Egypt. When there is not detailed information of a phenomenon that is missing or incomplete, qualitative research is a useful starting point. My research materials included in-depth interviews of 19 people in various low income and middle-income families and neighborhoods. The questions enabled each respondent to talk about the following aspects: decision-making, the effect of remittances on women, workload, access to resources, and the biggest change in women's lives. The selection of the interviewees was relatively random; the candidates were heterogeneous with different backgrounds. This was beneficial for the purposes of this study as it provided different perspectives. The researcher used some personal connections like local informants. Local informants are individuals that can directly provide information about the community they help the researcher understand the population and cultural environment. Furthermore, they also help the researcher to establish connections easier and help establish trust. Trust is an essential factor in qualitative research based on interviews.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that while the informant might not be directly involved in the study they could be a great asset. The informants' connections could be very beneficial to the study. The

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<sup>8</sup>Natasha Mack et al., *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide* (North Carolina: FLI, 2005), 20.

two informants for the low income were a friend's domestic worker and a driver that used to work with the researcher in the past. The researcher then relied mostly on snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is research that is based on referrals. This entails that people or women that were already part of the study recommend and recruited future individuals that would partake in the study. There was also an informant that worked at a nursery in Nasr city that helped identify mothers with migrant husbands. Then these mothers referred other mothers with similar situations.

There were 19 interviews conducted from April 2015 to July 2015. Each interview lasted about an hour and they were all conducted in Arabic. Thus, any conclusions, and findings found in this study pertain to the limited sample, which was interviewed. The questions were designed to enable the women to talk about four aspects mainly (decision-making, control over remittances, change in gender roles, and the biggest difficulties they face. This thesis is based on qualitative research methods. The study focused on in depth interviews conducted with female spouses of migrant husbands. A qualitative approach was suitable for this study because it was used to understand a certain complex occurrence from the point of view of the participants. The main aim of qualitative research is to provide a better understanding of complex situations. Furthermore qualitative research is based on elements of induction and interpretation.<sup>9</sup> In depth interviews are one form of qualitative research. In depth interviews are based on specific focused individual interviews to explore the individuals' perception and opinion on a particular idea, phenomenon or program.<sup>10</sup> Questions for in depth interviews need to be formulated carefully, as they need to extract as much information from the participants as possible. They cannot be worded in ways that will result in overly simplified answers or one-word answers. Open-ended questions allow participants to use their own language and words. Furthermore, in depth interviews are not only associated with asking questions and recording responses. They are associated with inquisition and searching for deeper meanings. There were advantages and disadvantages to using this method of qualitative research. The main advantage of in-depth interviews is that they offer extensive information that cannot be gathered using other methods of research.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, they provide a more informal relaxed environment that is more

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<sup>9</sup>Titus Pacho, "Exploring Participants' Experiences Using Case Study," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 4 (April 2015): 44.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, 48.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 49.

conducive to gathering information. This is due to it being a more personal method of gathering information than just filling out a survey. Some of the disadvantages are the participants' bias, for example if they have a stake in the program. However, this is not the case in this study as the participants were informed that the research was for university related research purposes only. Additionally, there were not any stakes for the interviewees. Secondly, interviews especially in-depth tend to be time consuming, due to the duration of the interview, transcribing it and analyzing the results.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, these in depth interviews were conducted with women from both segments of low income and middle income in Cairo. These interviews were conducted in Arabic. The in-depth interviews provided an insight and a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities' that female spouses face as being the heads of the household. Furthermore, the interviews provided the women's unobstructed view of how they perceive the change in their new roles.

The fieldwork's targets were low-income families and middle-income families. It was difficult to directly, ask the participants about their level of income since this was an independent study, and the researcher was alone in recruiting participants, asking individuals about their income proved to be implausible. Many individuals do not feel comfortable disclosing their financial information and specifically their income to researchers especially; that the researcher is not associated with a renowned institution, and is conducting the research alone. Thus, the researcher had to ask other questions that would help determine the participants' level of income. Thus, the researcher focused on two main aspects to determine the families' level of income and these were: the parents' level of education as well as the children's type of schoolings. This is due to the level of education being directly related to the type of job a person can secure and thus the level of income. Due to Egypt's high population rate, the job market tends to be saturated, thus in order for someone to obtain a job as a skilled professional a minimum of a university degree is needed. Individuals with low levels of education, which have not completed their education, work as unskilled labor and have low levels of income. Consequently, they are unable to admit their children into private schools, as they require fees that they cannot pay. Thus, they tend to enroll their children into public government schools, which have the lowest admission fees. Thus, lower income groups in this study are defined as individuals, who have a maximum

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<sup>12</sup>Titus Pacho, "Exploring Participants' Experiences Using Case Study," International Journal of Humanities and Social Science 5, no. 4 (April 2015): 49.

of vocational training, and have their children enrolled in public government schools. Furthermore, in order to separate between middle income and higher income groups; the area of residence was taken into consideration, as well as the type of school. The neighborhoods were middle-income neighborhoods as such as Nasr City and Mokattam area. Furthermore, all participants lived in apartments, in buildings and none of them lived in gated communities. Lastly, all schools that the children were in were private language schools; none of them were in International schools, which are known to be very expensive.

In order to understand the categorization of different income groups by education level a brief description of the Egyptian educational system is discussed in this section. There are two types of education in Egypt the state education and religious education however; this study is focused on state education. There are also private schools however; they are not treated as a separate system. There are five phases of education in Egypt: Preschool, primary education, preparatory, secondary education and post secondary education (which includes higher education).<sup>13</sup> Preschool education still remains scarce in Egypt and it is not mandatory and not offered for free. Basic education, which is the second level of education, is compulsory; it includes two phases that are primary and preparatory levels. Primary education is comprised of six years, while the preparatory level is three years. This is followed by secondary education, which consists of three types, general, technical and vocational.<sup>14</sup> General secondary education is three years, where the first year is a preparatory year for the following. During the first year students are introduced to both humanities and scientific subjects. At the end of the year based on grades the student will either enter humanistic, scientific or mathematical concentration. The second type, which is technical secondary education, includes three fields, which are: industrial, commercial and agriculture. Lastly, the vocational secondary education has two fields, paramedical and tourism and hotel service schools.<sup>15</sup> There are two types of schools, government schools that are free of charge and the Arabic schools mainly, Private schools that have four types ordinary schools, language schools, religious schools and international schools. Private schools are very similar to government schools, with regards to the curriculum however, the teachers might be more attentive to the kids and their needs. Furthermore, it is important to

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<sup>13</sup>*Egypt: Education System and Policy Handbook* (Washington DC, USA: International Business Publications, 2009), 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 11.

highlight that there is a growing problem in the quality of education in public schools. There have been various studies that show that students in the end of primary school do not have basic numeracy and literacy levels. They also have a lower ratio of students to teachers in comparison to government schools, but it is still quite high and problematic. The language schools teach the same curriculum as government schools however, most of it is taught in English, and there are other languages taught such as German or French. Religious schools, tend to be religiously oriented either Islamic or Catholic schools, Islamic schools tend to teach classes related to Sharia law and Quran. Lastly, international schools are private schools that are aligned to another country's curriculum, they tend to be more expensive and offer more faculties, and activities, furthermore, they have a much lower ratio of student to teacher, which offers a better teaching and learning environment.

This study focused on Middle Egypt, which entails basically two areas Cairo and Giza. Thus, a brief description of the city is given in the following section. Cairo is the capital city of Egypt and it has 7.8 million people.<sup>16</sup> There is a great population density, which is market at 2,560 people per square kilometer. Furthermore, Cairo and Giza have the highest concentration of government institutions, commerce, factories and industrial production of iron textiles etc. The majority of the labor force, which is 78%, tends to be focused in the service sector, second is the manufacturing sector with 21%.<sup>17</sup> Cairo has the greatest concentration of professionals as part of the labor force, larger than any other governorate. Additionally, Cairo has one of the largest unemployment rates; there are around 43 per cent of individuals with a university education that are unemployed.<sup>18</sup> The reason Middle Egypt was the area selected is due to it Cairo being a primate city, and the capital of Egypt. Furthermore, Middle Cairo as mentioned earlier has most of the factories and industrial production as well as government institutions and professional working in the labor force. Thus, it has the majority of the low income or the blue collar working in factories and manual labor jobs as well as the professionals that work in the government as well as professional jobs in companies. Thus, it has the exact target group that this study is using. The specific neighborhoods used for low income are Imbaba and Ein Shams, Boulaaq Al Dakroor and for the middle income they were mostly in Nasr City and Moqattam

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<sup>16</sup>Ray Jureidini et al., "A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants," *A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants*, 2010, 14.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.



area. Furthermore, another reason Middle Cairo was chosen is due to safety reasons, there has been great instability, and a lack of security since the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution. Since the researcher is not associated with any specific organization and was conducting this research alone; areas on the outskirts of Cairo, shantytowns or slums, and other governorates were not feasible. Additionally, previous studies have been conducted on rural to urban migration, thus the study did not focus on rural areas.

### **Ethical considerations and the researcher's role**

There are not rigid defined guidelines in research about ethical standards and protocol. However, there are three main aspects that are frequently discussed in social science that researchers must adhere to in their work. These three aspects are informed consent, confidentiality and trust.<sup>19</sup> All of my interviewees were informed of my research and its purposes, by the referrals and by the researcher orally. Additionally, verbal consent was given before the interviews took place. Furthermore, the researcher guaranteed confidentiality of the women interviewed. Lastly, the women were not recorded, and the data collected was through detailed written notes. Furthermore, the women had the right to withdraw at any point and refrain from answering any questions they were uncomfortable with. Likewise, the identities of all of the participants were protected; they were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. The research itself followed the principle of not inflicting any type of harm on the participants. Thus, the implications of the consequences of the research were studied to ensure that no harm was inflicted. Furthermore, the research aimed at studying female empowerment. Thus, it contributes to the overall knowledge that could improve the lives of women, therefore helping the participations and not the opposite.

### **Thesis organization**

After this introductory chapter, this study is divided into six chapters. This section provides a brief outline of each chapter. Chapter two is comprised of a literature review on preexisting works on the effect of male migration on female spouses in the home country. Furthermore, it outlines some of the major views on the effects of remittances on female spouses. Lastly, it provides two case studies, which are male migration in Mali and Morocco (specifically the Todgha valley). The literature review is concluded with the conceptual framework. Chapter three provides a brief description of Egypt and its society, population, migration flows, economic

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<sup>19</sup>Natasha Mack et al., *Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide* (North Carolina: FLI, 2005), 9.

problems and a sociocultural background. Chapter four is comprised of the findings and analysis for the low income, followed by a conclusion for the findings. Chapter five is comprised of the findings and analysis for the middle income followed by a conclusion. Chapter six is comprised of a comparison between the findings of both middle income and low income. Finally, chapter seven provides a final conclusion to the study, as well as policy recommendations, limitations to the study and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Migration differs from other demographic phenomena such as birth and death in the sense that it is a process and not an event.<sup>20</sup> A common pattern in migration in developing countries is leaving wives and children behind in the sending country. This is due to various immigration policies encouraging solo male migration. This is an efficient way to meet short-term labor demand, when single males receive work permits and not the entire family.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, when the economic conditions are altered and the immigrant's services are not needed, the work visa is not renewed. This results in the return of the immigrant to the sending or home country. The following section, discusses the existing literature on the definitions of migration, as well as the effect of remittances on poverty reduction, and links between migration and development. It also provides two case studies about Morocco and Mali that depict the effect of male migration on female empowerment. Furthermore, this chapter concludes by providing a conceptual framework, which outlines the paradigms and theories that were used to answer the research questions.

#### **Definition of migrants and migration**

The International Organization for Migration defines migration as a process where individuals and groups of people leave their homes for a variety of reasons. The International federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent defines migrants as people that leave or flee their "habitual residence" in order to go to new places, in order to attain new opportunities and better resources. UNESCO defines migrants as people that live temporarily or permanently in a country in which they were not born, and where they have attained noteworthy social ties.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants defines a migrant worker as someone that is involved in or will be involved in or has been involved in a salaried activity in a state, which he or she is not a national.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore migration can be voluntary or involuntary. There are various types of migration, internal migration, external migration, emigration, immigration, population transfer, impelled migration, chain migration, return migration and seasonal

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<sup>20</sup>Sonalde Desai and Manjistha Banerji, "Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-behind Wives in India," *Journal of Population Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid 2.

<sup>22</sup>International Migration and Multicultural Policies," UNESCO, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

migration.<sup>24</sup> Internal migration is moving to a new residence within a state, country or continent. External migration is moving to a new home in a different state, country or continent. Emigration is leaving one's country to move to another like the pilgrims. Immigration is relocating to a new country. Population transfer is when people are forced out of a certain region by the government due to their ethnicity or religion.<sup>25</sup> It is also usually referred to as forced migration. While impelled migration is when individuals are not directly and formally forced out of their country; however they leave due to hostile situations like war or religious prosecution. Chain migration is a series of migration in a family or a certain group.<sup>26</sup> It tends to start with one family member that sends remittances to other family members to bring them over. Return migration is when people move willingly back to their country of origin. Seasonal migration is the process of moving for a short period of time due to labor conditions or climate change.<sup>27</sup> There are various types of migrants, labor migrants, stateless migrants (migrants displaced within their own country), refugees and asylum seekers. This study is focused on labor migration. Labor migration is the movement of people from one country to another within or inside their own country due to employment. The current mobility of people and groups is higher than ever in modern history, and is on the rise and it is one of the main global issues in the twenty first century. The number of international migrants has increased in the last couple of years it was estimated that they were 154 million in 1990 then that rose to 175 million in 2000 and last to 232 million now.<sup>28</sup> In order to put it into perspective if the international migrants all lived in one state they would make up the fifth most populated country in the world, ranking after China, India, USA and Indonesia.<sup>29</sup>

The geographer E.G Ravenstein developed a series of migration theories or laws in the 1880s.<sup>30</sup> These laws form the modern foundation for migration theory. In summary the principles of his laws are that most migrants travel for only a short distance. Secondly, migrants that travel for long distances tend to settle in urban areas. Third, most migration takes place in increments or steps. Fourth, most migration is from rural areas to urban areas. Fifth, any migration flow

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<sup>24</sup>Human Migration Guide," 2005, 2,

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/migrationguidestudent.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>"Migration for the Benefit of All," The International Organization for Migration, 2014, 1.

<sup>30</sup>Human Migration Guide," 2005, 3,

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/migrationguidestudent.pdf>

tends to create a movement in the opposite direction. Sixth, most migrants tend to be adults. The seventh principle is that most of the international migrants tend to be young males while, most of the internal migrants tend to be females.

### **Remittances and poverty reduction**

One of the main positive effects of migration and remittances is the positive impact on reducing poverty. A study conducted using data from 71 developing countries depicted that official international remittances (remittances accounted for by banks) reduces poverty in developing countries.<sup>31</sup> Migrants tend to send remittances because they feel a responsibility and are motivated by the family they left behind.<sup>32</sup> The remittances that the households receive serve as additional funds for ongoing expenses. Furthermore, another study conducted which uses sampling from 101 countries from 1970 to 2003 found that there is a link between remittances and poverty reduction. Additionally, this study acknowledges that the findings do not account for how poverty is defined and measured. However, it is important to note that despite poverty reducing the depth of poverty and raising living standards and household income; it does not ensure the even distribution of the effects on the countries of origin. This is due to migration trends not being the same among all regions. Furthermore, the economic behavior and allocation of remittances is not uniform among a country and its population.<sup>33</sup> Remittances have reduced the proportion of poor people in Uganda by 11% and in Bangladesh by 6% and in Ghana by 5%.<sup>34</sup>

### **Migration development nexus**

There is a binary between migration and development. However, scholars disagree on what the direct link is between them. The following section discusses some of the theories and their view of the migration development nexus throughout the years. Furthermore, the disagreement is especially linked to whether migration has a positive or negative effect on development. It could be argued that, the main challenge that migration theorists face in explaining the migration development nexus is because there is a theoretical predicament.<sup>35</sup> Migration studies tend to focus on inaccurate binaries. There is a problem in finding the

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<sup>31</sup>Rodolfo Garza, *Migration, Development and Children Left Behind: A Multidimensional Perspective*, working paper, May 2010, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibrahim Elnur, *Chasing Modernities: On the Mobility-Development Nexus – the Challenges of Harnessing Transformative Potential*, report no. 52, 2010, 6.

relationship between development and migration due to a research bias. There is a problem with where the research is focused. It focuses on the results rather than the root causes, and it also focuses on the effect on host countries and not the effect on home countries. However, there is some consensus on the effects of migration, all migration processes create permanent changes in the socioeconomic structure of societies.<sup>36</sup> These changes are not just limited to the population; essentially they affect institutions, skills and modes of production.<sup>37</sup>

The following section outlines the history and main arguments on this ongoing debate, in order to conceptualize the current debates. Links between migration and development began to be drawn in the 1950s and 60s, when development economists emphasized the importance of labor migration in the modernization process.<sup>38</sup> Economists were assessing the effects of development on migration, and the reciprocal effects of migration on development. The most important result would be a reduction in the labor surplus and unemployment in developing or sending countries. Additionally, there is an increase in the inflow of capital as a result of remittances sent by migrants back home.<sup>39</sup> Countries such as Morocco and the Philippines supported this view, that exploring labor would prompt economic development. Unfortunately, in the long run this did not take place, there were little economic benefits felt by the sending country. Thus, the pessimistic view of migration arose that it hinders the sending countries development and results in an endless chain of dependency for developing countries.<sup>40</sup> However, in the twenty first century there has been a shift in the view of migration, as a positive vehicle of development. This comes after years of pessimism and viewing migrants that came from the South to the North as problematic to national identity and as breaking social cohesion and threatening national security. There is a current trend by politicians and governments of viewing migration as having the seeds for economic and social development in the sending countries.<sup>41</sup>

This change in rhetoric has resulted from two contradicting academic discourses, and debates. The debates between neoclassical economic theory and historical institutional theory t

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<sup>36</sup> Ibrahim Elnur, *Chasing Modernities: On the Mobility-Development Nexus – the Challenges of Harnessing Transformative Potential*, report no. 52, 2010, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Sonalde Desai and Manjitha Banerji, "Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-behind Wives in India," *Journal of Population Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 12.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 13.

raged on from 1950s and 1990s. Neoclassical theory focused on the individual and his decision to migrate and that the decision was based on a comparison between home and host countries' costs and benefits of moving and not staying at home country.<sup>42</sup> Neoclassical theory assumed that the migrant had full access and knowledge of wages and employment opportunities in the host countries. Furthermore, they assumed that the decision was based solely on these economic factors. Neoclassicists believed that migration and development had a virtuous cycle. Since developing countries were trying to modernize and catch up to develop countries, they would have migration, which would facilitate development, this would cause income equilibrium. Thus, resulting in the decrease of the root causes, which prompted migration and the result, would be a decrease in migration levels.<sup>43</sup> The historical institutional approach viewed migration as exploitation and as a way of guaranteeing cheap labor. Furthermore, it was a way of ensuring the developing countries will remain underdeveloped, and dependent. This view of migration argued that the links between migration and development were a vicious cycle. There was a core periphery divide and dependency which forced migration, increased the dependency of developing countries, and increased poverty and the gap between rich and poor countries.<sup>44</sup> Alternative theoretical differentiated approaches emerged from the 1970s, which began to view migration in a more positive light.

In summary there are two views of the effect of migration on development. The optimistic approach views that migration fuels development. This view argues that the loss in manpower is not a problem, because most of these people were not employed at their home country. Furthermore, remittances are seen as catalysts for development as they result in investment in education. Furthermore, remittances are seen as resulting in multiplier effects, and increase in consumption, which results in an increase in GDP. The pessimistic view is that migration stalls development. Theorists from this school argue that migration results in a loss in manpower that is also known as brain drain, which hinders the development of the emigration countries. Brain drain is when the group of highly educated and trained people leave their home country to seek employment abroad. Furthermore, they add that remittances do not develop the

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<sup>42</sup>Sonalde Desai and Manjistha Banerji, "Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-behind Wives in India," *Journal of Population Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 12.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 14.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid, 15.

country as they are not channeled and used productively; they believe that they are spent on consumption goods and luxury items.

### **Opportunities and constraints of male migration on women spouses**

There are two views of male migration and the effect on female-headed houses. The first is that male migration helps empower women, and the other is that migration places a double burden on women. This is due to financial problems; and increased responsibilities outside the household in addition to informal labor. Workingwomen with migrant husbands, feel burdened because of what is known as the “second shift” that they face at home. The second shift is double burden of paid and unpaid work experienced by workingwomen. Hochschild coined the term in her book *The Second Shift* in 1989.<sup>45</sup> Another important observation is that the second shift has an even greater effect on working mothers specifically, those with children of preschool age. Despite the amount of housework decreasing over the years, women tend to still be responsible for core housework duties (cooking, cleaning child rearing etc.).

Male migration affects women’s autonomy. Since the husband is absent, females have to take on new activities that they would not normally perform if their husbands were present.<sup>46</sup> The positive view of male migration argues that men’s absence promotes women’s independence, self-esteem and results in an expansion in their roles. The pessimistic view of male migration depicts that male migration affects women’s lives is the financial pressures and increasing obligations for women. In many cases pursuing more responsibilities outside the household increases women’s work burden.

Studies from India and Egypt show that male migration results in a limited increase in autonomy and an increase in decision-making abilities for women.<sup>47</sup> In India in the husband’s absence women were able to have greater access to public space, and disregard norms of seclusion. This was partially out of necessity because their husbands’ absence dictated that they participate in family daily affairs. Furthermore, in India migration in various cases changed the male migrants’ mindsets.<sup>48</sup> Interviews with women in Kerala depict the advantages of male migrations. Some women discussed how upon their return their husbands did not insist they

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<sup>45</sup>Kayla V. Gorp, "The Second Shift: Why Is It Diminishing but Still an Issue," *A Journal of Undergraduate Student Research* 14 (2013): 32.

<sup>46</sup>Sonalde Desai and Manjistha Banerji, "Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-behind Wives in India," *Journal of Population Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 2.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.



cover their heads, which was frowned upon before. Furthermore, the husbands took their wives out more often.<sup>49</sup> In Egypt, women expressed that their ability to make decisions increased however, it was temporary and seized upon their husband's return.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, In India some women said their power was reduced even more in comparison to other households that did not have migrant husbands. Additionally in Egypt, ideas and attitudes on gender roles became more traditional in houses that experienced migration.<sup>51</sup> This could be attributed to the patterns of migration of Egyptian males to Arab countries that are more socially conservative than Egypt such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

It is important to note that there are two contradictory experiences presented by women throughout various studies. Despite the women having the same socioeconomic backgrounds, and migrant husbands some women managed to experience a rise in their autonomy and their responsibilities. Whilst, others did not experience the same change. This was attributed to living conditions; women that live alone had a higher chance of a positive experience with heightened autonomy and a rise in their responsibilities. Whilst, women that lived with extended families were always under the scrutiny and regulation of their husbands' families. Furthermore, they had to abide to the families rules.

Control over remittances is a key factor in whether women with migrant husbands experience empowerment. Women play a great role as recipient and allocators of remittances.<sup>52</sup> Research suggests that in Guatemala 63 per cent of remittances receivers are women while in Colombia, 70 per cent are women.<sup>53</sup> The level of control over remittances varies according to age, level of education duration of marriage and household structure.<sup>54</sup> As women's level of education increases their decision making power increases. Control over remittances varies from one woman to another due to the hierarchical structure of certain households especially in the case of women living with their extended families. Studies in Egypt suggest that in two thirds of

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<sup>49</sup>Sonalde Desai and Manjistha Banerji, "Negotiated Identities: Male Migration and Left-behind Wives in India," *Journal of Population Research* 25, no. 3 (2008): 5.

<sup>50</sup>Ragui Assad, *Migration and the Mashreq*, publication (Washington DC: Middle East Institute Washington DC, 2010), 36.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>"International Organization for Migration," Gender, Migration and Remittances, 2010, accessed October 14, 2014, 3.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 4.

households with migrant males the women become heads of the household.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, half of these women said that they were the sole decision maker when it came to spending remittances while 36 percent said they had to make decisions with their husbands.<sup>56</sup> However, a study in Angola shows that it is usually male heads of the extended family such as the brother, father, or uncle of the migrant that make decisions about how remittances is used.<sup>57</sup> This is despite 84 per cent of the males asserting that women should always be consulted.<sup>58</sup> In most cases when the husband migrates he sends the money to his parents or other male relatives instead of his wife. This causes women to become more dependent; instead of just being dependent on their husbands they now become dependent on other male in laws for financial resources. This causes women to become more vulnerable to poverty, and they become more susceptible to abuse from the family and the community.

In contrast, when women are the direct recipients of remittances there is a greater possibility of economic empowerment and increased autonomy. It is also significant to note that there are different spending patterns exhibited by males and females when they are in control of remittances. When women have control over remittances they are spent to meet nutritional, educational and health care needs of the members of the household and especially children. Research conducted in Guatemala shows that men use 50 per cent of remittances on consumption goods, unlike women who tend to spend more on health and education.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, many males view women's use of remittances as unproductive. However, in the long run investment in food education and healthcare are major elements and preconditions to poverty alleviation. Thus, it could be argued that women that receive remittances could be more empowered, as they decide how to allocate the money. Furthermore, with women in control of remittances an intermediary relative from the husbands' side does not exploit them. However, it should be noted that in the Guatemalan case any source of empowerment was temporary, because once the husband returned he reassumed the decision-making power, and women had no control over finances.

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<sup>55</sup>Ragui Assad, *Migration and the Mashreq*, publication (Washington DC: Middle East Institute Washington DC, 2010), 36.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>"International Organization for Migration," Gender, Migration and Remittances, 2010, accessed October 14, 2014, 4.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

### **Morocco as a case study**

The study was conducted in Todgha a small river oasis located in the South of High Atlas Mountains in Morocco.<sup>60</sup> In 2004 the valley had around 70, 0000 people living in 64 villages. The population of this valley started to migrate to French Algeria since the 19th century. Migration became a natural phenomenon among the people in Todgha valley. It is estimated that around half of the males surveyed ages 16-65 years have or still are involved in either internal migration or international migration.<sup>61</sup> The study found a positive correlation between international migration and household income, and this is due to remittances. Society and gender in Morocco are very patriarchal and males monopolize the decision making process. This is paralleled with the gendering of spaces where women's lives are highly restricted to the domestic sphere, and males dominate the public sphere. Women play a great role in the rural households from child rearing to cleaning the house, preparing the food making bread, washing clothes, fetching clean water, which is a strenuous task. Additionally, women also have agricultural tasks such as harvesting crops, weed and wood collection.<sup>62</sup> Women usually work from dawn to dusk. However, as a result of women's tasks being less visible than the male tasks their work is less accounted for, and less appreciated by males.

In rural Morocco male migration negatively affected females remaining in the home country especially, if they followed tradition and lived with the extended family.<sup>63</sup> In addition to their responsibilities of child rearing, housekeeping and their agricultural duties women were expected to obey their in-laws; mother in laws specifically.<sup>64</sup> Extended family households entail that remittances are not sent directly to the wife. Moreover, they are sent to the male figure in the house be it the father in law or brother in law. This tends to create conflict between the wives and the in laws especially in allocating expenditure. This causes a lot of families to live in nuclear households; only 18 per cent of all households were living in an extended household arrangement.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Hein De Haas and Aleida Van Rooij, "Migration as Emancipation? The Impact of Internal and International Migration on the Position of Women Left Behind in Rural Morocco," *Oxford Development Studies* 38, no. 1 (2010): 5.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, 12.

All women living in migrant houses had an increase in responsibilities as a result of male migration. All women experienced a double burden of taking over almost all of their absent husband's responsibilities as well as household duties.<sup>66</sup> Women reported this expansion in roles as burdensome and as psychologically stressful. Since most migrant wives lived in nuclear households they all experienced more independence over the allocation of remittances. Migrant wives in comparison to non-migrant wives have more independence in deciding which crops to be grown and which purchases to make. Furthermore, they had more power in children's education especially the daughters' education. Women residing in migrant households all experienced an increase in decision-making. However, it is vital to note that this change is temporary as migrants take control and reposition themselves as heads of the household upon return.<sup>67</sup>

Additionally, it is very peculiar that the majority of women saw the increase in their responsibilities as a burden. They viewed this position as unnatural for women and that is attributed to their occupation with the community's view of their behavior. There have been drastic changes in women and men's lives in the Todgha regarding access to education, marriage and fertility rates. Nonetheless, these changes mainly result from the process of social, cultural and economic change. Despite men's absences causing an increase in the responsibilities and decision-making power among women it is temporary as men revert back to the patriarchal norms once they return. An important question that arises is why do women left behind by their husbands view the temporary increase in responsibility as a burden. This opposes the view that women would enjoy such responsibilities. One of the reasons Moroccan women can view the increase in responsibility as burdensome because of the fear of social criticism and scandals. These criticisms could put their reputations at risk and thus, their security. In Moroccan society openly breaking the rules could result in social exclusion. There is a widespread fear of gossip in all villages. Kandiyoti argued that for women to avoid breaking the norms and in the mean time improve their living conditions women will engage in strategies to maximize their security within a certain set of social economic and cultural constraints.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently, women in various cases hold on to patriarchal norms, because they have no alternative way of securing

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<sup>66</sup> Hein De Haas and Aleida Van Rooij, "Migration as Emancipation? The Impact of Internal and International Migration on the Position of Women Left Behind in Rural Morocco," *Oxford Development Studies* 38, no. 1 (2010): 5.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

their lives.<sup>69</sup> Migration creates an abrupt change in responsibilities that women view as unorthodox. This leads to women purposefully defying emancipation process out of fear of new statuses that they have not chosen. Thus, it could be concluded that migration has a limited influence on Morocco's patriarchal norms, and improvements in women's position.

A study conducted on international migration of men and its effect on the women staying in the home country in the rural area in South Morocco; found that migration does not change gender roles. International migration and remittances allow provide women and their families with more comfortable and secure lives. However, this is countered with an increasing amount of workloads and uncertainty. Despite the husbands' migration resulting in an increase in the females; tasks and responsibilities most women perceive this as a burden. Thus, this cannot be viewed as leading to the empowerment of women.

### **Mali as a case study**

The study conducted in Mali was to assess whether migration and remittances affect preexisting gender roles and empower women. The outcome of the study depicts that remittances and migration have an inconsiderable effect on women's empowerment and ability to make choices. However, male migration positively affects women through the remittances that they receive, which improve their material well being which can be considered a perquisite for empowerment. This is only if this material well being is accompanied with other changes such as a change in traditional gender values.<sup>70</sup> Mali has great gender inequalities; the Gender Gap Index from 2010 gave Mali a rank of 131 out of 134 countries.<sup>71</sup> The GGI shows that women struggle the most in areas of economic participation and opportunity, education and political power.<sup>72</sup> Mali is a country where women's rights are very limited and outdated.

This study has 40 interviews, 20 of which are women with migrant husbands and 20 women with non-migrant husbands. This study defines empowerment as a change in women's ability of making choices. The study also assesses whether migration and remittances influence women's status at home and in society. The study found that migration and remittances in Kayes in Mali had a limited impact on gender roles. Women's roles did not expand and their position

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<sup>69</sup>Hein De Haas and Aleida Van Rooij, "Migration as Emancipation? The Impact of Internal and International Migration on the Position of Women Left Behind in Rural Morocco," *Oxford Development Studies* 38, no. 1 (2010): 17.

<sup>70</sup>Sofie Ahlin and Asa Dahlberg, "Migration, Remittances and the Women Left behind a Study on How Women in Mali Are Affected by Migration and Remittances from Their Migrated Husbands," 2010, 2.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

was not improved, and they had very limited influence on how the money given to the family was spent.<sup>73</sup> Women's influence does not increase because of the living arrangements, of living with the extended family. A very important concept in Mali is the head of the household; this person has the final say in all decisions. It is always a male and his consent is required on all matters regarding the household and its members. Thus, the head of the household is responsible for financial and emotional wellbeing of the family. Hence, when the head of the household migrates he will not be able to exercise his power and another family member will become head of the household. Furthermore, husbands seldom send money directly to their wife, which increases women's dependency not only on their husbands, but also on the middleman that delivers the money from the husband to the wife. This makes women more vulnerable and more susceptible to abuse. The head of the household receives the money and he distributes it to each family member according to their needs. However, he determines the family needs.<sup>74</sup>

Most women in Mali work in agriculture in cultivating crops such as rice corn peanuts and cotton.<sup>75</sup> In the rural areas men and women's tasks complement one another, each family has its own fields and the head of the household is responsible for the entire field. Furthermore, wives that are married to migrants tend to be happier than those married to non-migrants. That however, depends on if the husband sends remittances or not. One of the reasons the women are happy is that they work less than before. However, women have a really heavy workload of 14 hours a day, so they cannot be criticized or seen as lazy. Women still perform their household chores, which are informal however, constitute a lot of effort and time. If remittances allow women to allocate more time to other activities than work then it should not be perceived negatively. However, leaving all the economic aspects to the husband renders the women more dependent on him for survival. Thus, if the husband stops sending her money, she will not have any livelihood. Both case studies provided discussed the experience of women residing in rural areas. Furthermore, there are various commonalities in both experiences. Women do not experience changes regarding empowerment. Most women experience an increase in their workload as they perform their husband's tasks before migration, which includes grueling agricultural activities. Furthermore, in both case studies the only advantage experienced by

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<sup>73</sup>Sofie Ahlin and Asa Dahlberg, "Migration, Remittances and the Women Left behind a Study on How Women in Mali Are Affected by Migration and Remittances from Their Migrated Husbands," 2010, 22.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, 27.

women in both countries is receiving remittances, which increase the household income. However, in both cases women follow tradition in rural areas and live with their extended family or their husband's extended family. Thus, they do not receive remittances directly; males receive the money and decide how they are allocated. This results in increasing women's dependency.

### **Conceptual framework**

In order to understand the effects of migration on the household, a basic unit of definition of household should be discussed. There has been census in developing countries that households are spatial units that have members living in the same area, sharing certain reproductive activities such as cleaning cooking and eating.<sup>76</sup> However, this definition has its shortcomings. The term household has different connotation to various people living in different areas. Furthermore, there has been an ongoing debate about creating definitions that could be universally applied. Criticisms of the first definition raise the point that household reproduction is not always dependent on the efforts of people living inside the house.<sup>77</sup> In fact, in many cases especially with migrant households there is involvement and a large network of kin, friends and neighbors involved. Another problem raised is the idea that "co-resident households" are based on equal participation in survival related activities.<sup>78</sup> This view is in line with the neoclassical school assumption that households are joined bodies and income is pooled and labor is allocated according to comparative advantage. However, new literature has been drawing to the idea that inputs might be based on existing inequalities based on factors such as gender and age. Another term that is a focal point for this study is female-headed households. Previous international studies have reported that 'female' or 'women headed households' are households that have an adult woman in most cases with children living alone without any male partner.<sup>79</sup> The UN defines it to be a female-headed household when there is an absence of a co resident that is a legal or common law spouse. In contrast, a male-headed household is a unit where there is a couple or a minimum of one female adult present.<sup>80</sup>

It is important to differentiate between the reasons that a woman becomes the head of the household. There are two types of female-headed households and these are the de facto or de jure

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<sup>76</sup>Sylvia H. Chant, *Women-headed Households: Diversity and Dynamics in the Developing World*, ed. Jo Campling (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid,.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

status.<sup>81</sup> De jure households refer to households in which women live without a male partner on a more permanent basis. Furthermore, they do not receive economic support, except for child support.<sup>82</sup> However, child support tends to be neglected in developing countries; this category includes single mothers, widows, separated women, and divorcées. On the other hand, de facto female-headed households are, made up of women that have absent partners as a result of labor migration.<sup>83</sup> However, these women still have continuing contact with their partners through remittances for example. Additionally, these women are thought to be the heads of the household for a temporary time until their husbands are back. Furthermore, the contact between de facto heads and their spouses might be intermittent and there might be long periods of time without remittances. It is important to make a distinction between both groups because there are different psychological repercussions on each group regarding decision-making and financial resources. There are a number of problems that arise with this simplified definition and differentiation between de jure and de facto female headship. Despite de facto heads being temporary, they might in fact spend longer periods of time on their own than certain de jure women heads (specifically wives with overseas migrant husbands). A migrant household is characterized as a household that has one or more members of it working abroad for at least a number of six months.<sup>84</sup>

This study focused on the gender approach to development. Feminism and feminist theorists played a great role in problematizing the early concept of development, and its approach to women. Feminist theorists played a great role in the evolution and integration of women in development, and the conceptualization of the concept of gender. Thus, before outlining the gender approach to development, it is important to give a background to feminist theory. Feminism is a movement, which promotes the equality of men and women in the political, economic and social domains.<sup>85</sup> Feminists tend to believe that women are oppressed because of patriarchy. Patriarchy is a mechanism that oppresses women through different social economic and political institutions. Throughout history men had more power than women in the

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<sup>81</sup>Sylvia H. Chant, *Women-headed Households: Diversity and Dynamics in the Developing World*, ed. Jo Campling (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 5.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Christine Binzel and Ragui Assaad, "Egyptian Men Working Abroad: Labour Supply Responses by the Women Left behind," *Labour Economics* 18 (2011): 7.

<sup>85</sup> Imelda Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to 'post-feminism'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 10.



public and private arenas. All feminists aim to achieve gender equality however; there are many ways this theory has been approached. There is liberal, socialist and radical feminism. Liberal feminism is derived from classical liberal thought, which considers that individuals should be free to establish their own talents and pursue their own interests.<sup>86</sup> This approach views that gender inequality is due to the attitudes and culture of society. However, liberal feminists do not think that in order to increase equality there should be an altering of society, they argue that the opportunities and rights of women need to be extended. Furthermore they focus on protecting equal rights through legislation. Secondly, socialist feminism which is based on the ideas on the ideas of Karl Marx, who argued that capitalism promotes patriarchy by leading to the centralization of power in the hands of very few men.<sup>87</sup> Socialist feminist believe that the traditional family is based upon the capitalist system where men are the breadwinners and women stay at home. They believe that in order for women the system to change there has to be a socialist revolution. Lastly, radical feminists believe that the methods of liberal and socialist feminists to solve the problem of inequality are inadequate. Furthermore, they view that in order to eliminate inequality; there should be a radical reorganization of society, where male supremacy is abolished from all social and economic contexts.<sup>88</sup> They also aim at abolishing patriarchy by challenging all existing social norms and institutions, they do not believe in taking a political route.

One of the main contributors to the early discourse on women in development was Ester Boserup a Danish economist in 1970s. She wrote a book called *Woman's Role in Economic Development* where she critiqued development as excluding women.<sup>89</sup> This was during the Second Wave of feminism. Furthermore, she proposed a departure from previous established development discourse. She used empirical data from Africa to question the results of the 1945 development programs, depicting that they had serious affects on women's participation and well-being. Boserup's attempt was successful; it led to the first World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975.<sup>90</sup> It was later followed by the proclamation of women's rights in the

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<sup>86</sup> Imelda Whelehan, *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to 'post-feminism'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 12

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>89</sup> Jane L. Parpart, Patricia Connelly, and Eudine Barriteau, *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2000).

<sup>90</sup> Stephani Hjorth, *Male Migration and Female Empowerment: The Impact of Male Migration on the Women Left behind in Urban Lebanon*, PhD diss., Lund University, 2011 (Lund University), 14.

Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. After that the International Conference on Population and Development was held in Cairo in 1994.<sup>91</sup> The conference in Egypt emphasized the importance that women are included in development, and specifically in the economic, social and political arenas. In the 1980s there was the Third Wave of feminist movement.<sup>92</sup> During that time the category of “gender” was used in various debates about globalization. In the 1990s in Latin American countries that had social benefits, gave them through subsidies to men as the ‘breadwinners’ and women were not granted direct social security. They were not viewed as economic subjects, or full citizens. Males were viewed, as the breadwinners while women were responsible for reproducing the family life. Thus, men were in the public salaried domain and women were in the domain of reproduction. This gap began to close in the 1980s with GAD. This movement was rooted in socialist feminism, which critiqued and opposed capitalism and patriarchy; GAD opposes the logic that economic change will solely empower women. It is through this point of view that GAD criticized micro credit policies, which are given only to poor women, which do not take into consideration, the women being dominated usually by their husbands. GAD focuses on gender roles and the relations, which are called gender system, and supports structural change. It promotes gender-differentiated policies in order to alleviate poverty. One of its main purposes is equality; it makes women’s invisible work visible.

GAD is an improvement over WID in the sense that it is not narrowly focused on women, it approaches and aims at improving the position of women by taking into consideration the social relations and interactions between both men and women.<sup>93</sup> This approach recognizes that any change and improvement in women’s status cannot occur solely through women, it needs the active participation of both parties’ men and women.<sup>94</sup> The significance of GAD is that it views women as proactive and agents of change.<sup>95</sup> The WID approach to development is focused on raising more attention on women in development policy and practice, and it also stresses the importance of incorporating women in the development process. In contrast, GAD focused on

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<sup>91</sup> Stephani Hjorth, *Male Migration and Female Empowerment: The Impact of Male Migration on the Women Left behind in Urban Lebanon*, PhD diss., Lund University, 2011 (Lund University), 14.

<sup>92</sup> Jane L. Parpart, Patricia Connelly, and Eudine Barriteau, *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2000).

<sup>93</sup> Kaan Taşli, *A Conceptual Framework for Gender and Development Studies: From Welfare to Empowerment* (Wien: Südwind-Verl., 2007), 33.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 34.

the socially constructed mechanism of differentiating between men and women. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to question and change the existing predominant gender roles and relations enforced by society. The GAD approach is very important to this study as it considers men, women, and the relationship between them. The significance of this approach is that it recognizes the importance of men being incorporated. Furthermore, it recognizes that despite women being given resources and opportunities, if the relationship with men is not considered, these women will not experience any change at all. This is important for the purpose of this study, as despite the men being absent they still influence women's decisions; or they can be solely responsible for the decision making from overseas. Furthermore, upon their return if their attitude does not change, there will not be any change experienced by the women; or a change in the traditional gender roles.

This study focuses on two interrelated theories empowerment and social mobility. This study focuses on Al Kabeer's conceptualization of empowerment however, a brief history and the definitions of the term are first provided as a framework. There is a high and increasing poverty rate in Egypt; statistics show that at least 25.2% of the population lives under the poverty line. The poverty line is defined as people who live on one dollar a day. Furthermore, many studies and findings show that women in developing countries bare more of the poverty burden due to inequality. This inequality is manifested in unequal access to education, healthcare and employment. One of the first researchers to comment on the inequality phenomenon is Amartya Sen in 1990. He coined the phenomenon of missing women; he stated that there is a misconception that women form the majority of the population.<sup>96</sup> He said that this is a hasty generalization based on European countries and North America. Contrary, in South Asia, West Asia China and the Middle East (specifically Sub Saharan Africa) the ratio of women to men can be as low as 0.94 or even lower.<sup>97</sup> Sen explained this phenomenon by saying that this is due to inequality and inadequacy of access to nutritional and health care needs by female children. This inadequacy is prompted by son preference in countries such China, which causes neglect of females, selective abortion and infanticide of female. Sen estimated that four million girls were missing in India in 1990. Furthermore, he estimated that globally there were more than 100 million women missing. In an interview with Sen in 2014 he said that in the last couple of

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<sup>96</sup>Amartya Sen, "The Lost Girls: Girls Are Still Aborted in States with More Educated Women," *The Independent*, January 14, 2014.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

decades discrimination has decreased in many countries.<sup>98</sup> However, due to technological advancements in sonar and the ability to determine the sex of the baby, there has been a high increase in selective abortion of female fetuses. This counters the advancements in the difference in mortality rates. Thus, the proportion of missing women has not declined in many countries. This is one of the studies that promoted the rise of empowerment discourse, and has attracted attention to the importance of empowerment in development.

The term empowerment has been used in different disciplines such as education, social work, psychology and feminism, as well as by different development organizations. Power is at the root of the term empowerment.<sup>99</sup> Power can be understood and operated in various ways, such as power over which entails a relationship of domination and subordination.<sup>100</sup> Secondly, power could be understood as power to, which entails to having the power to make decisions and solve problems. Thirdly, power could be understood as power with, which entails people having power to organize for a common purpose or cause. Lastly, power within which is related to self-confidence and awareness. The Human Development Report in 1995 emphasis that empowerment necessitates participation.<sup>101</sup> The report stresses that people must be agents in development they must participate in the decision-making process that affect their lives. The report also stresses an instrumentalist view of empowerment; it argues that by investing in women's capabilities and encouraging them to have choice they contribute to economic growth and development. Oxfam, emphasizes that empowerment is involved with combating oppression and inequality. Furthermore, feminists argue that women's empowerment is not about exchanging or replacing one form of empowerment or another. This means that empowering women does not entail disempowering men. Empowerment is a bottom up process it is not something that can be implemented from top to bottom. This means that development agencies cannot say that they 'empower women', because women must empower themselves.<sup>102</sup>

A frame of reference needs to be used in order to assess whether women experience empowerment by their spouses' migration. This research will use Kabeer's conceptualization of empowerment through her three dimensions of empowerment, which are, resources, agency and

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<sup>98</sup>Amartya Sen, "The Lost Girls: Girls Are Still Aborted in States with More Educated Women," *The Independent*, January 14, 2014.

<sup>99</sup>Zoe Oxaal and Sally Baden, *Gender and Empowerment: Definitions, Approaches and Implications for Policy*, report no. 40, October 1997, 1.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, 2.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid, 1.

achievements. Empowerment is defined as the process where people denied the ability to make specific choices attain the ability to do so.<sup>103</sup> Thus, to become disempowered implies that one is denied the ability to make choices.<sup>104</sup> Empowerment necessitates a process of change. Empowerment has also been defined in the Beijing Platform of Action as “removing obstacles of women’s active participation in all spheres in public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision making”.<sup>105</sup> A distinction should be established between gender equality and empowerment. Women in a particular community or social level could experience gender equality however; it is viewed as empowerment when the women themselves are active agents of change. The ability to make choices is made up of three interconnected areas, resources that are defined as not only access, but also future claims to material and human social resources. The second component of empowerment is agency, which is decision-making or the process of defining goals and acting upon them.<sup>106</sup> Resources and agency together make up what Amartya Sen calls capabilities. Capabilities are the possible abilities or potential that people have for living the lives the way they actually want. Lastly, achievements, which are the outcomes, reached.<sup>107</sup> It could be argued that another vital dimension of empowerment closely related to agency is autonomy. Autonomy is defined as freedom from control or influence, and having the ability to make one’s own decisions.<sup>108</sup> Autonomy can include, access to resources, ownership of assets, participation in household decision-making, and control over income.<sup>109</sup> There have been for strategies used to measure autonomy, the first is decision making in the household. This indicator is widely accepted because of associating decision making with power and control. Moreover, it could be argued that decision-making as means of empowerment has universal and cross-cultural legitimacy. The second measure of autonomy was mobility or the ability to leave the home freely and visit friends and family as they please. The third measure of autonomy was financial control and

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<sup>103</sup>Naila Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment," *Development and Change* 30 (May 1999): 435.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid, 436.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid, 438.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid, 435.

<sup>108</sup>Goleen Samari and Anne R. Pebley, "Individual and Household Determinants of Women’s Autonomy: Recent Evidence from Egypt," CCPR Working Papers, April 2015, 3.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

personal assets. Lastly, is using women's socioeconomic status as a gauge for autonomy. This entails using the level of education, employment and formal labor as measure for autonomy.

One of the methods or theories that can help assess whether empowerment takes places or not is social mobility. It is a common focal point between both theories that a process of change must take place, in order for a positive transformation to result. Social mobility is the movement and advancement of individuals and groups in a social strata or social order.<sup>110</sup> Mobility entails the rise and decline of complete classes or the relative flexibility of classes to movement across boundaries. Thus, this study assesses whether male husbands' migration results in the advancement of the conditions of the female spouses, in comparison to their position before their husbands' migration. The main difference between social mobility and empowerment is that, social mobility does not account for the difference between improvements in social status and empowerment. Thus, by using Al Kabeer's conceptualization of empowerment a wider frame of reference or more variables are considered. Therefore any shortcomings in social mobility are accounted for. Al Kabeer recognizes the importance of change but through women experiencing an increased access to resources, and by being active agents. However, Social mobility views any improvement in social status as a positive change. In other words women can experience an improvement in social mobility however; this is not always accompanied by empowerment. In more advanced-developed countries, social mobility entails the structure of occupations.<sup>111</sup> In other words, occupational mobility seeks to assess the ranking or generational mobility; it compares the children's occupational achievements to their parents. The greater the mobility between the generations the more open the economy is and the less inequality there is in society. Occupational mobility also is the ease and flexibility by which people can change careers. However, since Egypt is a developing economy and for the purpose of this study only social mobility is discussed.

Another important theory that this study focuses on is human capital. Human capital refers to certain factor such as education, health, training, nutrition and formal education that are important for a person's future advancement.<sup>112</sup> Many economists have expressed links between

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<sup>110</sup> Frederick C. Turner, *Social Mobility and Political Attitudes: Comparative Perspectives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 1.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> P. Acosta, P. Fajznylber, and H. Lopez, *The Impact Of Remittances On Poverty And Human Capital : Evidence From Latin American Household Surveys*, working paper no. 4247 (World Bank), 23.

educational attainment, health and nutrition in increasing labor productivity and power.<sup>113</sup> The theory of Human Capital Development indicates that improvements in economic growth and production can only be reached by investing in human capital.<sup>114</sup> In conclusion, this section gave a brief outline of existing literature on the topic as well, a theoretical framework, which is the foundation of this study, and the mode of analysis. The following section provides an overview of Egypt, which includes its population, migration trends and some of the main economic problems that the country faces.

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<sup>113</sup> P. Acosta, P. Fajnzylber, and H. Lopez, *The Impact Of Remittances On Poverty And Human Capital : Evidence From Latin American Household Surveys*, working paper no. 4247 (World Bank), 23.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Egyptian Setting**

The following section provides a brief overview of Egypt, the population, Egyptian migration trends, characteristics of Egyptian migration flows, economic problems, and the socio cultural background. Egypt is one of the greatest heavily populated countries in comparison to Arab countries. Egypt had one of the greatest increases in educational attainment from 1980 to 2010 in comparison to the Middle East and North African countries.<sup>115</sup> The average years of schooling doubled during that period of time. However, Egypt also has one of the highest unemployment rates. Egypt's population doubled from 9.7 million in 1897 to 19 million in 1947.<sup>116</sup> The next doubling of population to 38 million people occurred in less than 30 years from 1947 to 1976. Since then, Egypt's population has been on the rise and almost doubling again to a total of 76 million people in 2006.<sup>117</sup> This change could be attributed to advancement in medicine, which resulted in longer life expectancy from 54 to 71, and a decrease in infant mortality from 1975 to 2005.<sup>118</sup> Egypt's population growth is accompanied by a scarcity in Egypt's cultivatable land.

#### **Egyptian migration trends**

In 2009 the Egyptian consular statistics, showed that there were 6.5 million Egyptian migrants.<sup>119</sup> The following table depicts the emigration stock by country of residence. However, it should be noted that the Egyptian statistics refer to emigration to Arab countries as temporary, while they refer to emigration to the rest of the world as permanent. The majority of migrants are in Libya 30.9%, Saudi Arabia 20.1%, US 9.8%, Jordan 8.1%, and Kuwait 7.4%.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Goleen Samari and Anne R. Pebley, "Individual and Household Determinants of Women's Autonomy: Recent Evidence from Egypt," CCPR Working Papers, April 2015, 9.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Migration Policy Centre, "The Demographic-Economic Framework of Migration The Legal Framework of Migration The Socio-Political Framework of Migration," 1

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1. The Egyptian Emigration Stock by Country of Residence According to the Egyptian Consular statistics in 2009 <sup>121</sup>

Egyptian emigration stock by country of residence according to Egyptian consular statistics (year 2009) and destination countries' statistics (years around 2012)				
Egyptian consular statistics				Destination countries' statistics (a)
Country of residence	Temporary migrants	Country of residence	Permanent migrants	
<b>Arab countries</b>	<b>4,783,800</b>	<b>North America</b>	<b>776,000</b>	<b>203,932</b>
of which Libya	2,000,000	of which US	635,000	162,232
Saudi Arabia	1,300,000	Canada	141,000	41,700
Jordan	525,000	<b>Europe</b>	<b>790,645</b>	<b>224,122</b>
Kuwait	480,000	of which UK	250,000	31,000
UAE	260,000	Italy	190,000	92,001
Qatar	88,500	France	160,000	26,825
Oman	45,000	Greece	80,000	9,461
Lebanon	38,000	Germany	30,000	13,316
Iraq	15,000	Netherlands	30,000	12,038
Bahrain	12,000	Others	48,645	39,481
Yemen	10,300	<b>Oceania</b>	<b>106,000</b>	<b>34,838</b>
Syria	10,000	<b>Others</b>	<b>8,518</b>	<b>166,175</b>
<b>Total temporary migrants</b>	<b>4,783,800</b>	<b>Total permanent migrants</b>	<b>1,681,163</b>	<b>629,067</b>
<b>Total temporary and permanent migrants</b>			<b>6,464,963</b>	-

Notes: (a) Destination countries' statistics are taken from national sources (population censuses, population registers, registers for foreigners, etc.). Such statistics are not available for Arab countries (left-hand side of the table)

Source: Egyptian consular records and destination countries' statistics

### Characteristics of Egyptian Migration flows

One of the main characteristics of Egyptian migration flows is that they constitute both educated and less educated migrants.<sup>122</sup> In the 1980s Egypt exported skilled professionals such as doctors, health workers, and teachers to the Gulf States. Furthermore, many of the workers that were employed in construction were less educated migrants. In the years to follow the number of educated migrants has been increasing while the percentage of less educated Egyptians has decreased, due to being replaced by skilled Asian migrants.<sup>123</sup> Despite Egyptian migration being concentrated in the Arab countries and specifically the Gulf States according to CAPMAS 30%

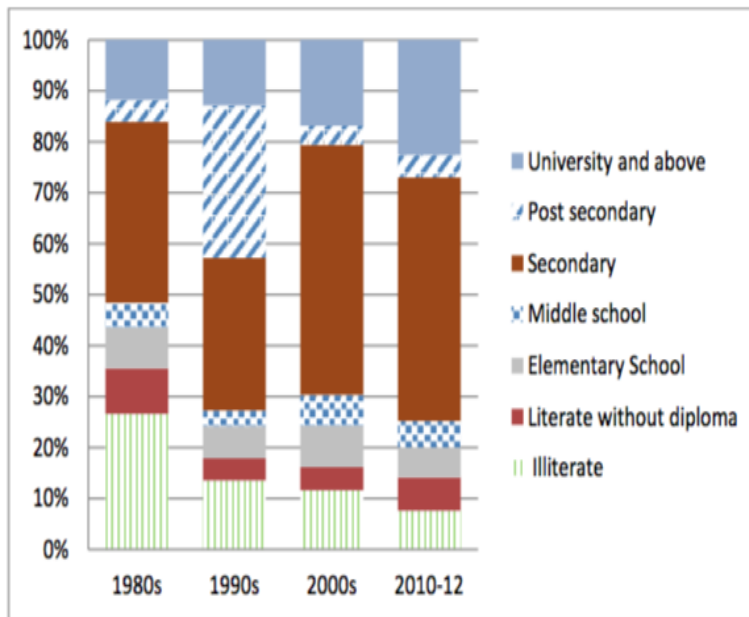
<sup>121</sup>Migration Policy Centre, "The Demographic-Economic Framework of Migration The Legal Framework of Migration The Socio-Political Framework of Migration," 1.

<sup>122</sup>Jackline Wahba, "Five Decades of International Migration in Egypt," 2007, 4.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid.

of Egyptian migrants were in OECD countries in 2000.<sup>124</sup> Egyptian migrant distribution according to education and country is that the Gulf States tend to absorb to a great extent highly educated Egyptian workers. Though, countries such as Iraq Jordan and Libya employ less educated Egyptian workers a quarter of which are illiterate.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, migrants to Europe and North America tend to be mostly highly educated.<sup>126</sup> The following graph depicts the educational level of Egyptian migrants ages 15 to 59 from the 1980s to 2012. It depicts that the majority of migrants have a secondary school degree, which means that they finished the primary education and the received some secondary education, but not necessarily finished it.

**Figure 2. The Educational Level of Egyptian Migrants<sup>127</sup>**



### **Economic problems**

Poor education and health care systems, social problems and violence are among the main problems outlined as the prompters of migration in Egypt.<sup>128</sup> The January Revolution voiced the main challenges facing Egyptians and specifically the youth. However, it also added new hardships such as insecurity and instability. The challenges that the youth were facing before the revolution, and the problems that prompted the revolution were push factors that led to

<sup>124</sup>Jackline Wahba, "Five Decades of International Migration in Egypt," 2007, 3.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid, 4.

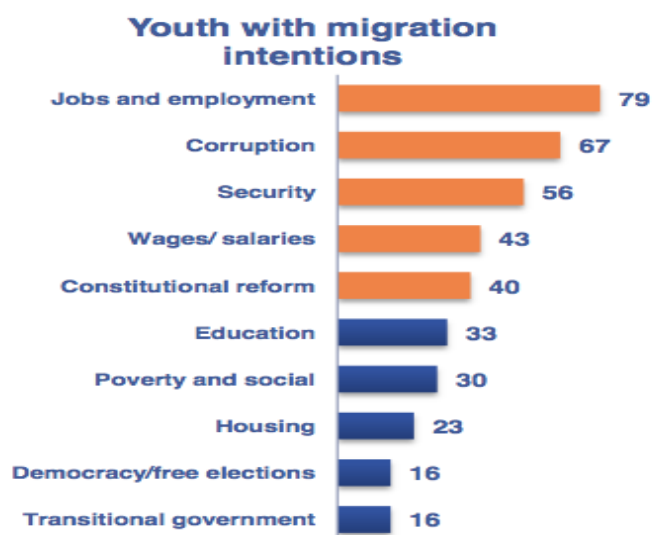
<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid, 5.

<sup>128</sup>Abdelfatah, *Impact of Arab Revolts on Migration*, publication, series 68 (European University Institute), 8.

waves of immigration. The International Organization for Migration initiated a survey that examined a total of 750 Egyptians to understand how political instability and uncertainty about the future affected youth's decision to stay or leave the country<sup>129</sup>. The two main significant results of the survey are outlined. Firstly, 79% of the people that took part in the survey said that their biggest problem was unemployment.<sup>130</sup> Secondly, 43% said that they faced problems with wages and salaries.<sup>131</sup> Lastly, 60% of the potential migrants stated that the lack of security, lack of job opportunities, and bad living conditions were the main push factor for migration.<sup>132</sup> Poverty has also been on the rise in Egypt, the poverty rate has reached 26.3% between 2012/2013 compared to 25.25 in 2010-2011.<sup>133</sup> Figure three depicts the top five important issues for youth with migration intentions after the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution. 79% reported that the most important thing is jobs and employment, followed by corruption 67%, security 56%, wages/salaries 43% and constitutional reform 40% followed by education, poverty, housing, democracy/free elections and transitional government.<sup>134</sup>

**Figure 3. The Biggest Concerns for Youth with Migration Intentions in Egypt<sup>135</sup>**



<sup>129</sup> Abdelfatah, *Impact of Arab Revolts on Migration*, publication, series 68 (European University Institute), 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> "Egypt's Poverty Rate Rises to 26% in 2012/13: CAPMAS," *Ahram Online*, November 28, 2013, 1.

<sup>134</sup> Robert Pitea and Reham Hussain, eds, "Egypt after January 25 Survey of Youth Migration Intentions," 2011, 9.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

## **Sociocultural background**

Egypt is known historically as a patriarchal society, where men are the heads of the household and they make all decisions regarding the household and its members. The basis of formation of households in Egypt is marriage and family. It is very rare for people to have households outside of family, or marriage or kin relations.<sup>136</sup> Islamic law or sharia shapes the roles and obligations of husband and wife. The husband is supposed to give unconditional economic support for the family, and he has ascribed rights within the marriage. They include being able to restrict their wives movement or physical mobility. Husbands frequently carry this out through restricting wives from working outside the house.<sup>137</sup> In November 2013 Egypt was ranked as the worst country in the Arab world to be a woman, its ranking was even lower than Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>138</sup> Egypt ranks as 129 out of 142 countries in the Gender Gap Index according to the Gender Gap Report of 2014.<sup>139</sup> The Gender Gap Index aims to measure the divide between women and men in resources and opportunities. Furthermore, GGI also measures certain indicators such as education and economic empowerment as well as other indicators, to show where the total score is made of, and which indicators countries lag in. Egypt ranks 129 out of 142 countries. There are some categories in which there is more equality. Egypt ranks 57 in female health and survival. However, Egypt ranks 109 in educational attainment, and political empowerment where Egypt ranks 134. Lastly, the economic participation and opportunity Egypt ranks at 131. The ranking is especially worse, when sub divisions of economic empowerment are considered. Labor force participation tends to be an area of increased disparity, where the ranking is 136. Furthermore, the number of legislators, senior officials and managers that are women, the ranking is 116. Lastly, professional and technical workers the ranking is 103.<sup>140</sup> This shows that women in Egypt struggle the most in areas of economic participation and opportunity, education and political power. Furthermore, in order for women to experience empowerment there has to be change in these dimensions of the GGI. However, over the last couple of years and with changes in education there has been a greater inclination by various young men and

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<sup>136</sup>Diane Singerman and Homa Hoodfar, *Development, Change, and Gender in Cairo: A View from the Household* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>138</sup>Goleen Samari and Anne R. Pebley, "Individual and Household Determinants of Women's Autonomy: Recent Evidence from Egypt," CCPR Working Papers, April 2015, 9.

<sup>139</sup>"Global Gender Gap Report 2014," World Economic Forum, 2014, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=EGY>.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

women in some parts of Egypt, that decision making should be shared. Women are responsible for traditional roles in the household and take part in the labor force. However, the latter tends to be more irregular. It is the norm for children to live with their parents until the men have attained enough resources to marry. After marriage a woman's responsibility is transferred from her natal family to her husband's.<sup>141</sup> Egypt is divided into 26 governorates grouped together as the Governorates of Upper middle Egypt and Lower Egypt.<sup>142</sup> The majority of the Egyptian population is more rural than Urban. Furthermore, Upper Egypt tends to be lagging than Lower Egypt in most social indicators. These include school enrollment, higher poverty rates, unemployment and mortality.

The effect of male migration and remittances has been a highly discussed topic in international migration discourse. International remittances can be broadly interpreted as the monetary transfers made by migrants to their home country. In a boarder sense remittances could be understood as the transfers of value by emigrants to their home country or country of origin.<sup>143</sup> These transfers are not just limited to materials or goods covered by the balance of payments; in fact they include social remittances. Social remittances are different and new ideas, identities behavior or social capital that emigrants transfer to their home country.<sup>144</sup> Remittances tend to be mostly direct cash transfers from migrants to individual family member's banking accounts. It is of great importance especially to developing countries. In 2008 remittances in low-income countries were 5.8 per cent of GDP, and they constituted 1.9 per cent of GDP in middle-income countries.<sup>145</sup> Egypt tends to rank more towards the lower spectrum of the middle-income countries. Remittances tend to be a great contributor to Egypt's economy. The following figure depicts remittance flows to developing countries. Africa is the fourth greatest continent receiving remittances it receives 38.6 billion USD.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, it is important to note that the bulk of these remittances or inflows go to Northern Africa, which receives around 17.6 billion USD.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>Goleen Samari and Anne R. Pebley, "Individual and Household Determinants of Women's Autonomy: Recent Evidence from Egypt," CCPR Working Papers, April 2015, 10.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid,13.

<sup>143</sup>Ray Jureidini et al., "A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants," *A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants*, 2010, 18.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid, 9.

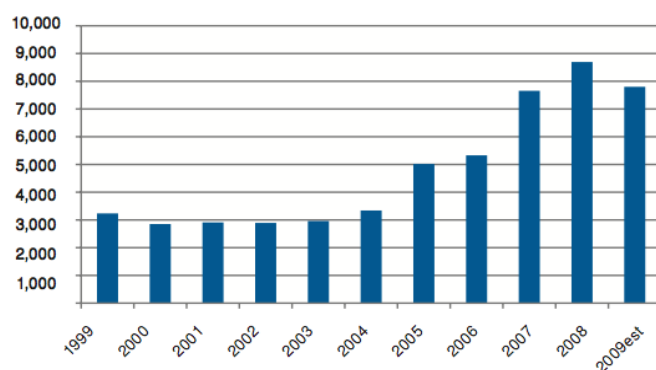
<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

There are different views on why migrants remit money to their families. One of the main arguments prompted by Cox et al is that altruism is the main prompter of remittances.<sup>148</sup> Johnson and Whitelaw in 1974 argue the role of mutual caring. Lucas and Stark prompted another reason to why migrants remit money in 1985. They introduced the idea of “enlightened self interest.” This is a view that mixes the idea that migrants remit due to a mixture of altruism and self-interest.<sup>149</sup> Others such as Haddinott in 1994 argue that, remittances are a business transaction in which, the relationship between the remitter and the receiver establishes a contract. However, literature recently has focused on the main motive behind sending remittances as being insurance. Choi and Yang in 2007 explain that when the migrant sends remittance he or she is securing himself or herself against future economic uncertainty.<sup>150</sup>

In 2009 Egypt ranked as the seventh greatest remittance receiving country in the world.<sup>151</sup> It was estimated that remittances inflow was 7.8 billion USD.<sup>152</sup> The following figure depicts remittances flows to Egypt from 1999 to 2009 in millions of USD. There was a steady increase up until 2005 where there was a greater incremental increase in inflows. This took place until 2008-2009 where the global financial crisis took place; marking the end of a decade of rapid increase in remittances.

**Figure 4. Remittance Inflows to Egypt from 1999 to 2009 in (USD millions)**<sup>153</sup>



Source: Ratha et al., 2009.

<sup>148</sup>Wael Mansour and Jad Chaaban, "The Impact of Migrant Remittances on School Attendance and Education Attainment: Evidence from Jordan," *International Migration Review* 45, no. 4 (2012): 3.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>Ray Jureidini et al., "A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants," *A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants*, 2010, 10.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Dilip Ratha, Sanket Mohapatra, and Zheim iXu, "Migration and Development," 2015, 11.

### **Effect of Remittances on Spouses in Home Country**

Literature on the effect of migration on spouses in home country has largely focused on the effect on labor market participation of female non-migrants. Many studies have found that by receiving remittances, acts as another source of income which could have a negative effect on labor supply of female spouses. Theoretically migration could have contradictory effects on the supply of labor of family in home country. It could help the household meet their basic needs. However, receiving remittances could be a disincentive for them to work. This effect tends to hold true across various countries. A study conducted in 2011 by Griogrian and Melkonoyan found that there is a decrease in wage hour work in Armenia in households that received remittances.<sup>154</sup> Another study conducted in 2007 found that remittances in the form of income tend to negatively affect labor market participation of non-migrants in Jamaica.<sup>155</sup> Another study conducted in Philippines in 2001 by Rodriguez and Tiongson; found that migrants reduce the hours of labor participation of non-migrants in the home country.<sup>156</sup> Other studies that are more directly focused on the labor supply effects on women staying in home countries were also conducted. Amudeo Dorantes and Pozo had a study in 2006 in rural areas in Mexico; they found that receiving remittances resulted in a decrease in women's labor supply in informal labor and non-paid work in rural areas.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, in 2009 Loshkin and Glinskaya found that male migration has a negative effect on female labor market participation in Nepal.<sup>158</sup> It is important to distinguish that women perform two types of work formal, which is paid, and informal which is unpaid. In Albania, Mendola and Carletto found that having a member of the household being a migrant resulted in a decrease in the paid labor supply of women. However, it resulted in an increase in their unpaid work.<sup>159</sup> In 2011, Binzel and Assad conducted a study in Egypt on the effects of international male migration on female labor supply on women in Egypt. They found that receiving remittances resulted in a decrease in formal waged work. Yet, they found that women are more likely to be working in informal unpaid family work like agricultural activities.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>Francisca M. Antman, "The Impact of Migration on Family Left behind," *International Handbook on the Economics of Migration*, 2013, 10.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

Preexisting migration research depicts that the heads of households that receive remittances are more likely to be female, and are less likely to be part of the waged labor force.<sup>161</sup> This entails that they are more likely to be unemployed. Studies have also shown that in households where the migrant is the breadwinner the remittances are used on daily needs such as living expenses, food, health care and education of children.<sup>162</sup> This previous section outlined some of the main characteristics of Egypt, including the population, migration trends, the main economic problems and the prompters for migration; as well as the effect of remittances on spouses in Egypt. The following section outlines and analyzes the findings for the low income.

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<sup>161</sup>Ray Jureidini et al., "A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants," *A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants*, 2010, 13.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

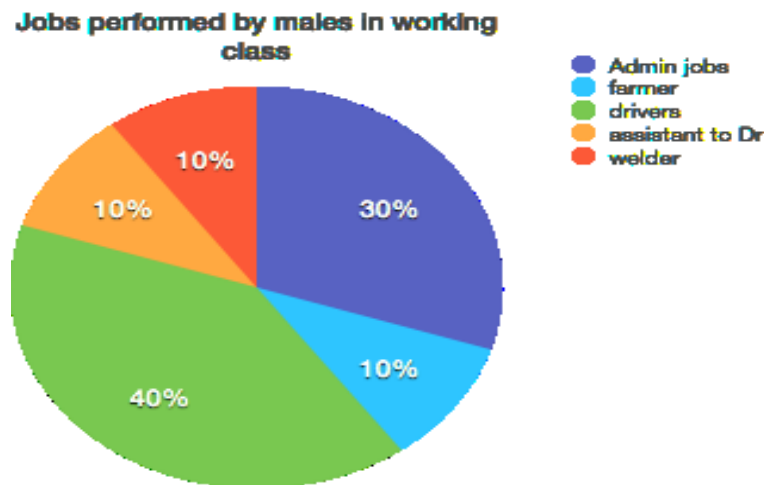


## Chapter 4

### The Case of Low Income Families: Findings and Analysis

The following section discusses and analyzes the findings of the effect of male migration on women in lower income families. It starts by giving an overview of the indicators, which are related to the researcher's definition of income discussed previously. Then, the findings are divided into subsections, which are directly related to the research questions. There were ten women interviewed the women's ages ranged from 24 to 55 year old women. All the women interviewed had children except for one she was only married for a year. The following tables depict the educational levels of women and their husbands, which range from primary school, preparatory to secondary education levels. All families except for one couple who have been married for a year have kids. Four families send their children to public government schools, whilst five families sent their children to private Arabic schools. Figure five depicts the jobs that male migrants are involved in, 10% work as welders, 10% are farmers, 10% are assistant to doctors, 30% work clerical and admin jobs and lastly 40% are drivers. As the graph depicts most of these jobs are manual labor jobs, or jobs which do not pay as much as professional jobs. Furthermore Tables one and two show the male and female's level of education.

**Figure 5 The Percentage of Jobs Performed by Males in Low Income Families**



**Table 1. Female Heads of the Household's Level of Education in Low Income Families**

Number of women	Educational level
2	Middle school (preparatory level)
5	High school diploma
3	Secondary education (technical diploma)

**Table 2. Male Heads of the Household's Level of Education in Low Income Families**

Number of men	Educational level
1	Primary education
2	High school diploma
7	Secondary education (technical diploma)

### **Decision Making**

The core of Al Kabeer's definition of female empowerment is agency, and women being active participators in their lives and not being passive by standers. All 10 women witnessed a degree of change and increase in decision-making. However, the degree of increase was directly correlated to whether they live alone or with extended family, and whether their extended family interferes in their affairs. One woman made it clear that no one affects or influences her daily decisions. One woman made it clear that she had more power now that she did before. She said, 'I make the daily decisions regarding the house, and the kids. My husband is now only responsible for fate related decisions'.

Six women made all the decisions concerning their kids and the family alone, including financial decisions, and deciding how remittances were allocated (as discussed further in the following section). Moreover, they stated that when their husbands were living with them, they were the ones that made all the decisions without ever consulting them. Another woman said that she makes all decisions; however, she consults her eldest son, but she has the final say. In contrast, three women expressed that they were not in charge of the decision making process. One woman said that her father in law is the one that makes all the decisions regarding her and the kids. While one woman, was a newlywed without any kids and said that her mother makes all her decisions for her. However, she said that she is satisfied with the current situation and that

she respects her mother and values her opinion. One woman said that her husband still made all the major decisions regarding the family. However, she expressed that she was satisfied with that. The woman that had her father in law interfering lived in the same building as he did and expressed her dissatisfaction with his interference, and how unhappy she was. All seven women gained financial control that they did not have before; they became in direct control over remittances. However, all women interviewed did not express any increase in personal assets. One woman mentioned that they now own their house, and that it is the biggest change in their lives. However, she was referring to the family; it was not hers alone it was the husband's.

Thus, it could be argued that in line with previous studies, in patriarchal societies such as Egypt women living with extended family; whether in laws or their own families experience less autonomy. This increase is extended to decision-making they experience no increase in decision making, the decision-making shifts from one person to another. In the case of one woman the decision-making power changes from her husband to her father in law. In another woman's case the decision-making shifts from her husband to her mother. However, it could be argued that women do not contest their family's involvement but they tend to contest their in-laws involvement. It could be concluded that seven out of ten women experienced an increase in their autonomy and agency. They experienced an increase in decision making in the household, they made all decision regarding the kids, cooking and cleaning and their lives. It should also be mentioned that these seven women became the primary heads of the household in their husband's absence. However, it is important to take notice that despite women gaining more access over resources, they do not have absolute financial control. The financial control was relative as they were dependent upon their husbands sending remittances, if their husbands stop sending remittances, women will have no source of income. Furthermore, they will be living in poverty. Thus despite an increase in decision-making and power women are still financially dependent, and vulnerable to any disruption in receiving remittances. This stems from the fact that most of the women are unemployed. Out of the ten women interviewed, two women were employed as domestic workers. Furthermore, six were unemployed as they did not feel the need to do so and did not want to. However, two were employed before marriage; one was working at a clinic and left her job because her husband wanted her to. While the other did not specify a reason other than that the money was insufficient and it was not worth the effort.

Furthermore out of the two employed women one mentioned that without receiving remittances they would be homeless. This entails that her income is very insufficient it would not sustain her and the children. Only one employed woman said that her life would not be affected without receiving remittances as long as she continues to work. It could be argued that she is the only woman that experiences absolute autonomy, and financial control. She also has more control over her life, unlike other women. Another important finding that should not be overlooked is that seven out of the ten women made an active choice not to work. The seven women do not want to work, and that they ‘choose’ to stay at home. One woman was even working before and quit her job because she said the pay was insufficient. Despite the decision not being productive, the fact that the women were agents and made the choice shows a degree of self-autonomy and power. This finding is further verified by the study conducted by Louhichi in 1997, “The Impact of the Emigration of the Husband on the Status of the Wife: The Case of Egypt” which finds that; 80% of women in Urban areas stopped working upon their husbands migration due to not wanting to work because, the remittances act as a disincentive to work.<sup>163</sup> The second reason given was that there was a refusal by the husband or the social circle. Another important reason cited for women’s decision to stop working is the traditional belief, that a woman working is a sign of poverty.<sup>164</sup> The remaining three women, two were employed by choice, and the last was employed at some point however, quit her job because her husband wanted her to. Furthermore, it is important to mention that this is the norm in Egypt due to it being a patriarchal society. The male is the head of the household and that he makes all decisions. Thus, as depicted by the findings all women experienced more decision-making power and financial autonomy by having control over remittances as well as, owning some assets after their husband left. Furthermore, it could be argued that in comparison to women with migrant husbands experience more autonomy and power than women with non migrant husbands. In order to assess, whether the increase in decision-making will affect female empowerment, Al Kabeer’s definition was applied. Al Kabeer discusses three dimensions of empowerment, which are: resources, agency and achievements. It could be deduced from the findings that women’s increase in decision-making and financial autonomy entail that women have more access to resources, and are active players and agents of change. However, women only achieve one

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<sup>163</sup>Khaled Louhichi, "The Impact of the Emigration of the Husband on the Status of the Wife: Case of Egypt," 1997, 331.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

dimension of resources that is gaining access to them. This is due to women not having future claims to material and human resources. All women are dependent on their husbands, and they do not work thus future access to resources is not guaranteed.

Eight women viewed the increase in decision making as a burden, while two women viewed the increase in decision making as an opportunity to gain more control over their lives and make more decisions. One woman mentioned that it was very difficult raising the kids alone, and said that having her husband around lightened the load. One woman said that it is a burden because her father in law makes all her family decisions. Another woman said that she prefers consulting someone before making decisions, and it is difficult without her husband. Another woman mentioned emotional distress 'I feel alone and have to make all the decisions.'

Furthermore, two women said that the increase in decision-making was an opportunity. One woman stated that she has more room to make decisions regarding her life and children. She also added that she feels more in control of her life. Another woman mentioned that it allows her to have more power. It is important to note that the majority of these women expressed that they had a great increase in responsibility without their husband. Thus, this might explain the reason these women view the increase in decision making as a burden, as it is manifested as an increase in responsibility. Furthermore, it could be argued that the low levels of education play a role in this perception.

### **Remittances**

Remittances are money and goods that are transmitted by migrant workers to their home country.<sup>165</sup> In 2006 it was estimated that the official international remittance to developing countries amounted to around \$221 billion per year.<sup>166</sup> There are three views on how remittances are spent. The first view, which is the most common, is that remittances are fungible and treated like any other source of income. The second view is that receiving remittances can cause changes in behavior at the household level, and that remittances tend to be spent mostly on consumption goods and not investment goods.<sup>167</sup> The final view is that since remittances are transitory types of income (anticipated income, not permanent) and individuals tend to spend them more on

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<sup>165</sup>Richard H. Adams and Alfredo Cuecuecha, "Remittances, Household Expenditure and Investment in Guatemala," *World Development* 38, no. 11 (2010): 1626.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

investment goods, such as human and physical capital rather than consumption goods.<sup>168</sup> Human capital is used to refer to health, on job training, nutrition and formal education.<sup>169</sup> The theory of Human Capital Development states that the increase in economic production and growth can only be achieved through investing in human capital. In order for any economy to develop it needs to invest in the education and health of the people. By educating more people this is not only beneficial to them, it results in positive externalities, because it spills over to benefiting people around them. Furthermore, a country that has more educated and healthier population is able to produce more output. This increase in output is translated and seen in higher GDP for the economy.

Eight women reported that they receive remittances directly, while the two others did not receive remittances directly. One woman had her mother receive the remittances, while the other had her father in law receive them. Eight women said that they decided how the money is allocated alone. Moreover, two women had no say over how remittances were spent. One woman had her mother make all decisions and she was satisfied with that. Moreover, the other did not like her father in law interfering in her life. Eight women depended on remittances, primarily as the main source of income and did not have any other channels of income. These women expressed that without remittances they will have no source of income and their lives and their children will be greatly affected without receiving remittances. One interviewee expressed that without remittances 'we will be homeless definitely.' While another woman said that 'I will have to work to provide for my kids and myself.' Another said that she would have to work to make ends meet. The other two women were employed and said that they will not be greatly affected without receiving remittances. One woman expressed that her life would not be affected as long as she continues to work. Moreover, the other said that her life and the children would not be affected because she works and contributes to the household income.

All women mentioned how they spent remittances on necessities and daily needs such as food and rent or shelter, and education. Ten women mentioned spending money food, followed by seven directly stating that they spend their money on the kid's education. Two women also discussed that they spend money on health issues, as they are ill. The woman without kids said

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<sup>168</sup> Richard H. Adams and Alfredo Cuencuecha, "Remittances, Household Expenditure and Investment in Guatemala," *World Development* 38, no. 11 (2010): 1626.

<sup>169</sup> P. Acosta, P. Fajznylber, and H. Lopez, *The Impact Of Remittances On Poverty And Human Capital : Evidence From Latin American Household Surveys*, working paper no. 4247 (World Bank), 24.

she spends the money on daily needs. The woman that had her father in law in control of the remittances said the money is spending on the kids and their needs, which includes education. Lastly, one woman said on her son and his needs. None of the women expressed spending more on food, and none expressed spending on unnecessary items. The general attitude was the importance of remittances for the children's education and guaranteeing them a better future. The following findings support the third theory of remittances spending, which suggests that remittances are spent and invested in human capital.

Women play an integral role as recipients and managers of remittances. The previous research conducted in Guatemala shows that 63% of remittance recipients are women while in Colombia it is 70%.<sup>170</sup> In contrast to expectation, less educated women do have an integral role in the management of remittances. Previous research in Egypt shows that in two thirds of households with male migrants the women became the heads of the household.<sup>171</sup> It could be argued that women become empowered through receiving remittances, they have more decision making power, more access to resources and they decide how the money is spent. However, this is only the case when women receive money directly. When there are intermediaries women, tend to have no power and be controlled by extended family. They do not experience any benefits. This might result in the wife and her children becoming more vulnerable to poverty and abuse. Another important point to mention is that studies show that men and women have different spending habits regarding remittances. Previous research in Guatemala shows that 50% of remittances are used for consumption, but men spend more on consumption than women. Women tend to spend more on education and health, which is the trend that was viewed in the field research. While, women's use of remittances tends to be viewed as unproductive; because the results are not immediate, one can argue that in the long run it plants the seeds of empowerment for the next generation especially young girls.

The findings of this study concur with "A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants", which was comparing data from Menofeya, Fayoum, Cairo and Sharkia. The study confirms the researcher's findings as it finds that the number one use of remittances is on general household expenses followed by education and health care. It is also important to mention that 51% of the overall respondents used remittances for education

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<sup>170</sup> "Gender, Migration and Remittances," International Organization for Migration, 2004, 3.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

expenses for education.<sup>172</sup> Moreover Cairo was the first governorate spending on education by 60% followed by Fayoum 51%, Menofeya 44% and 40% from Fayyoun.<sup>173</sup> Another important advantage to the pattern of spending is that it leads to social mobility. As mentioned earlier social mobility is Social mobility is the movement and advancement of individuals and groups in a social strata or social order.<sup>174</sup> Mobility entails the rise and decline of complete classes or the relative flexibility of classes to movement across boundaries.<sup>175</sup> Despite women being independent they do enjoy a better standard of living, and have better access to resources. Furthermore, the investment in human capital guarantees or gives the upcoming generation an opportunity to have a better life and a better standard of living. It does not guarantee that they will experience empowerment however; it gives them a chance to. It gives young boys and especially girl's equality of opportunity.

### **Gender Roles**

In order to discuss gender roles, and whether there is a change caused by male migration in gender relations, a clear definition of gender needs to be established. Sex refers to the biological differences between men and women. However, gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed roles and differences between men and women. Gender roles are the roles or tasks that are carried out by men and women, and are not determined by biological factors. Moreover, the socio economic and cultural environment determines them.<sup>176</sup> For example in Egypt and many other parts of Africa unskilled construction work is seen as a man's domain or work, whilst in India it is seen as "women's work".<sup>177</sup> Men and women both have productive roles, which are income-generating activities such as producing goods and services. The reproductive roles are activities needed to creating the society's labor force. They include child rearing, housework such as cooking cleaning, childbearing and looking after family members. It should be noted that in most societies women predominantly carry out reproductive roles. Furthermore, both men and women are paid for productive work. However, the reproductive work is unpaid work.

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<sup>172</sup>Ray Jureidini et al., "A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants," *A Study on Remittances and Investment Opportunities for Egyptian Migrants*, 2010, 143.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid.

<sup>174</sup>Frederick C. Turner, *Social Mobility and Political Attitudes: Comparative Perspectives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 1.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup>*2 Hours on Gender Issues in Cooperatives: An Introductory Session on Gender Issues for Cooperative Leaders* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1995), 1.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid.



Eight out of ten women were unemployed, while only two were employed. Four women reported that they work more inside the house in their husband's absence, while four women said they work less and; two women said they work the same amount. The women that reported working more said that they had to do their house work and chores, in addition to their husband's chores. When asked what their chores entailed all women said that they cook, clean and carry out household chores. The women that expressed that they work less, attributed that to having less people to cook and clean for. Furthermore, many expressed that the husbands tend to have specific needs, or preferences so now, that they are not around they have less to do. The women that reported working more said that, as the kid's grow older their needs increase. Additionally, they expressed how they face difficulty in getting them to study. Lastly, the women that reported working the same said they performed all household duties alone to start with their husbands never helped them. Thus, not having them around did not make a difference in the amount of chores they had to perform.

Four women said that their work increased outside the house. While three women said their work outside the house decreased. Lastly, three women said their work outside the house remained the same. The women that said their work increased attributed that to their husband running most of the errands. Therefore, in their husband's absence they had to run all errands, such as grocery shopping, buying the children's clothes and school supplies, dropping young children off to school and picking them up. . This is very significant especially that Egypt is a male dominated patriarchal society. These findings are concurrent with Louchi's findings where he argues that 73% of women experienced an increase in leaving the home in the husband's absence.<sup>178</sup> He also found that the inverse also took place in urban areas 17% of the time. Furthermore, Louchi mentions an important point, which is related to this study. Women do not enjoy the freedom of going out freely anywhere as they please. Women tend to be free to go to areas of shopping, settling affairs concerning the household such as paying bills and aspects' concerning the children and their needs. However, women do not enjoy absolute freedom when it comes to going out for personal reasons, such as visiting parents or neighbors and leisurely outings. The women that said they work less attributed that to having limited movement due to their husband's absence. One-woman specified that she works less now especially that her

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<sup>178</sup>Khaled Louhichi, "The Impact of the Emigration of the Husband on the Status of the Wife: Case of Egypt," 1997, 33.

husband made her quit her job before marriage. One woman said that, ‘my husband worries about me working and interacting with men and about my reputation, especially that he is not here. ‘The three women, that said they work the same amount, said that they still run errands related to the house like buying groceries, and things for the kids. Furthermore, three women specified that they did not have jobs. Therefore, they did not work a lot outside the house. They were also a bit confused by the question even after clarification.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, based on the limited sample interviewed, it is evident that women experience empowerment to some extent in certain aspects of their lives. This increase in resources by receiving remittances also leads to social mobility. The remittances guarantee an improvement in social status and a movement in the same social class. Furthermore, using Al Kabeer’s conceptualization of empowerment these aspects are, gaining more access to resources through receiving and having control over remittances, more agency and capability. These women do have the ability to make strategic life choices. However, despite having access over resources women are still dependent on their husbands for remittances and they do not have a guarantee over future access to resources. If their husbands leave them or stop sending them remittances they will fall into poverty. Additionally, women experienced increased agency through an increase in decision-making, which is manifested in deciding how remittances will be spent. Women experience limited autonomy. Despite having more decision making power inside the household and a say over how money is spent. Women are not free from influence or control, as they are still dependent on their husband’s financially. Furthermore, it is important to note that through the increased capabilities women experience more agency in comparison to, their lives before their husbands migrated, and were living with them. All women reported that they were never incorporated in the decision making process before their husbands left; and their husbands were the sole decision makers. Their spouse’s migration has granted them a chance to assume new roles inside and outside the household. Lastly, there is a very limited change in gender roles experienced by these women. Women gained more decision making power and had more access to the public sphere. They were stepping out of the house and into the domain of men, and in spaces that are usually gendered male. Yet, they still have limited freedom of mobility for personal reasons, and leisure. Furthermore, despite the feminization of the household, there is a reaffirmation of existing gender roles. Women are still the nurturers and are still carrying out the

traditional gender roles around the house. It is also important to note that even the women that are working are working in the informal market. Furthermore, they are still performing sex specific jobs or roles. Women become entrapped in reproductive roles, such as nurturing and caring which in this case is working as domestic workers. These roles are further emphasized upon their return home more gender equality and change in women's status. Women, especially housewives are taking over various roles that were performed by men. These findings confirm the Gender Gap Report findings, which depict that women are suffering the most in economic participation. There is a rising rate of unemployment however; women are still not fully participating in the job market. A study conducted by Binzel and Assad concludes that women with migrant husband's formal wage work decreases.<sup>179</sup> Moreover, they explain this decrease in labor participation as being a result of receiving remittances to be a disincentive to work. Additionally, the authors find that women's status remains unaffected by their paid economic activities. In his study on the effect of male migration on wives left in Egypt Louhichi reached similar findings. He argued that women the more women receive remittances the less likely they are to work.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, he argued that there are increasing societal pressures on women that do work. The traditional gender roles dictate that women belong at home in the reproductive role. Furthermore, there is this common idea that women's work outside of the house for wages is due to poverty. However, after the in-depth interviews and talking to these women, it can be concluded that it is societal pressures, poor economic situations and low levels of human capital. After men leave and especially in urban areas women do not reside with the extended family thus, they are always under the microscope and scrutinized for moving around without a man. Women are not working because they are still marginalized and are not equipped with the adequate tools to be contributing productive members in the job market. This section discussed the main findings for the low income by dividing the findings into various sections that are decision-making, remittances and gender roles. The following section discusses and analyzes the findings for the middle income.

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<sup>179</sup>Christine Binzel and RaguiAssaad, "Egyptian Men Working Abroad: Labour Supply Responses by the Women Left behind," *Labour Economics* 18 (2011): 11.

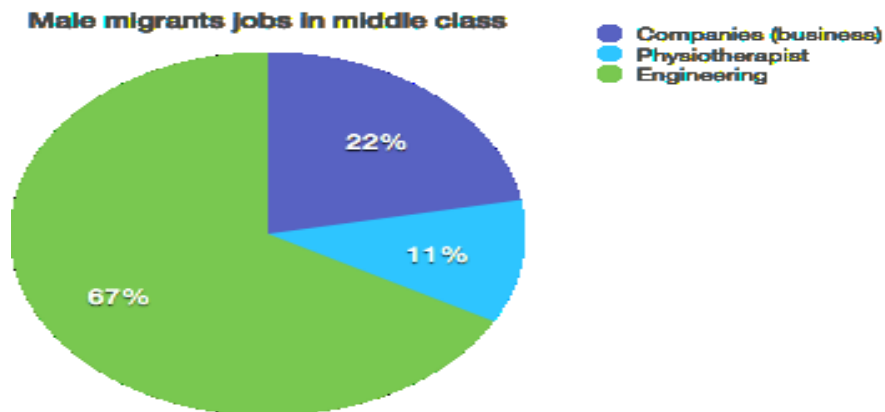
<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter 5

### The Case of Middle Income Families: Findings and Analysis

The following section discusses the findings relating to women in the middle income. It starts by giving an overview of the indicators, which are related to the researcher's definition of income discussed previously. Then, the findings are divided into subsections, which are directly related to the research questions. There were nine women interviewed the women's ages ranged from 24 to 57 year old women. Nine women were interviewed all nine attended university and graduated, and all have bachelor degrees. One woman had a bachelor in psychology, another a bachelor in fine arts, one in commerce, another in engineering, one in commerce English section, one in medicine and lastly one in pharmacy. Out of the nine women three were unemployed, one was on maternity leave and five were employed. One woman was working in an engineering firm, another in a company, one in a multinational, another in a company, and one was working at a design firm. Furthermore, out of the nine males six had a Bachelors degree in Engineering with different specializations. Additionally, one migrant had a degree in physiotherapy, and lastly two had a bachelor in business. The following graph depicts the different jobs that male migrants perform overseas, all these jobs are white-collar jobs, all of these people are highly educated, trained and is working professionals. 67% of male migrants worked as engineers, while 22% were involved in the business field and worked in companies; while lastly, 11% were employed as physiotherapists. All the women interviewed had children, and all nine families sent their children to private language schools, one family had children in private language schools and kids in private universities.

**Figure 6: Male Migrants' Jobs in Middle Income Families**



It is important to note that the main reason cited by all women for not working is to take care of the kids. One woman stated, 'It is very hard to work and be devoted to the kids I do not work so I can be devoted to the kids full time.' Another woman said that she has three girls and that she is a stay at home mother in order to take care of them and raise them well. Furthermore, she added that her greatest fear is failing and being judged for any bad decisions her kids' make.

### **Decision-making**

All nine women expressed that they have decision making abilities, and that they were active in the decision making process. Out of the nine women four women expressed that they made decision with their husbands collectively as a unit. Furthermore, they were satisfied with the current decision making process. Three women also expressed that this is the same way they made decisions when their husbands were living with them. Only one woman said that before her husband left he made all the decisions, now they make decisions together. It is also important to note that they were satisfied with this method of making decisions and did not have any grievances, and none wanted to change it.

Four women expressed that they made decisions with their husbands. Five women reported making decisions independently. One of those women said that sometimes she goes to her father for advice, but she still has the final say. Furthermore, of those six women two conveyed that they tend to report their decisions back to their husbands. Out of the nine women only one expressed that her husband made all the decisions concerning her and the family before leaving. One might argue that the main cause of this trend is the women's level of education. Education has been acknowledged by various studies as one of the major tools for female empowerment. There are various ways in which education empowers women, and influences decision-making. First, studies show that education empowers women through employment and earnings.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, education enhances women's understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, it makes women more aware and confident about their options, including the possibility of divorce.<sup>182</sup> Studies also show that women's choices should increase with different levels of education. Thus, women that have a university education or a bachelor's degree are more likely to have more power over family decisions; than women that have a high

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<sup>181</sup>Yubraj Acharya, "Women's Education and Intra-Household Autonomy: Evidence from Nepal," *Journal of Development and Social Transformation* 5 (2008): 5.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

school education.<sup>183</sup> A study conducted in Nepal found that the relationship between primary and secondary education with decision-making is insignificant.<sup>184</sup> This entails that decision-making is not affected with primary or secondary levels of education. This might be attributed to primary and secondary level curriculums not raising awareness about gender equality and gender issues. Furthermore, female education has been said to change household power relations. It increases female autonomy, by giving them more control over different aspects of their lives. Education has also been argued to increase the female's bargaining power in the household. This can account for how many women had decision-making abilities even when their husbands were here. However, it could still be argued that male migration gave more space for women to make more independent decisions, and become heads of the household.

### **Remittances**

All nine women received remittances directly, and there were no intermediaries. Four women made their decisions about allocating remittances with their husbands, and they were satisfied with that. While five women solely decided how remittances are allocated. One woman said that she makes decisions with her husband however, he gives her freedom to spend the money as she sees fit. Five women do not depend on remittances as the only source of income, while four women are solely dependent on remittances as the only source of income. It is important to note that all women expressed that, remittances play an important role in them having better access to economic resources. Furthermore, all women including the employed mentioned that remittances were a necessity for sustaining themselves and their families. One unemployed woman expressed the urgency of receiving remittances, 'without remittances we would have no source of income and we would struggle.' While another said, 'it will be a complete and utter tragedy; I do not want to even think about it at all.'

Another unemployed woman said that the kids would suffer greatly without her receiving remittances. She said she would not be able to afford the same standard of living, and specifically pay for the same schools that they are in. Another employed woman said that without receiving remittance their living standard would change and she would not be able to sustain the family alone. She also added that she feels the kid's morale and psyche would be affected negatively. Another employed woman mentioned that without remittances there will be

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<sup>183</sup>Yubraj Acharya, "Women's Education and Intra-Household Autonomy: Evidence from Nepal," *Journal of Development and Social Transformation* 5 (2008): 5.

<sup>184</sup>Ibid, 8.

great financial problems. Eight women expressed a great change in their lives and their kids' lives through receiving remittances. Only one woman said that there is a change to the better. However, she said that her husband does not make enough money to sustain them alone. She said that she still has to contribute with her income. This raises an important point, which are in addition to salaries being generally low in Egypt, women are still not being hired to high level position jobs, which are highly dominated by men. In a study conducted by *The Guardian* in 2013 accounting for the number of managers in the south, one paper found that Egypt ranked at the end of the spectrum with only 10% of its managers being women.<sup>185</sup>

The findings show that the number one item remittances were allocated to was the household expenses (food, rent, and household bills), second children's needs and their education. Lastly, it is important to note that two women mentioned that they save money. One woman said that she, 'spends the money on clear cut things, that I agreed on with my husband like household expenses, rent, kid's school and school materials, and their outings and activities.' Another woman mentioned that she 'spends the money moderately with the most important first to the least important. Another woman said that she spends the money on the children's education mainly. Additionally, one woman said she spends money very carefully on the kids, the house expenses and she said that she 'frequently saves money for the future.' Moreover, another woman mentioned that she tries to save whenever she can after spending on the kids. It could be argued that saving is a productive way of allocating resources. This guarantees that in the future if the families face any adversities, or emergencies they will have savings that they can use. Moreover they will not have to resort to borrowing, and fall in debt. In contrast to previous studies about remittances allocation, those with the surplus money or remittances spend their money unproductively on luxury goods, or consumption goods proved to be inaccurate for this study. It is also important to note that the children receiving a quality education are one of the main concerns of the women. Since, one woman directly mentioned that without receiving remittances she would not be able to afford the school for her child.

Four women perceived the increase in decision making as a burden, while five women found it to be an opportunity. First, the women that found the rise in responsibility to be a burden said, 'I feel anxious and stressed that I would not do what I am supposed to do and meet

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<sup>185</sup>Nikki Gaag, "Women Are Better off Today, but Still Far from Being Equal with Men," *The Guardian*, September 29, 2014, 1.

my commitments. I feel very alone.’ While another woman said, ‘I do not like to make all decisions alone, and be solely responsible for everything and everyone.’ It should be noted that, three out of the women that found the increase in decision making to be a burden were unemployed, and one was employed. Furthermore, out of the five women that viewed decision making to be an opportunity four women were employed while one was unemployed. One woman said it is an opportunity for her to make more decisions and take control and more initiative over economic resources. Another woman said ‘the increase in decision-making and responsibility has resulted in a strong personality. I can deal and face anything including obstacles in my life.’ This difference in perspective could be viewed as; women that are working tend to have more confidence and are more independent. They might also be more oriented to dealing with challenges and wanting to have more power and more decision making, just as they are seeking better positions and advancing in their jobs. Furthermore, they are more accustomed to pressure, since they tend to their homes as well as work outside the house and demanding jobs. Thus, they could be more accustomed to pressure and dealing with problems as they arise. While women that are unemployed, might lack the necessary skills of multi tasking, or dealing with different pressures, and thus see the rise in responsibility as a burden. As mentioned earlier, education along with employment increases women’s bargaining power and self-confidence.

### **Gender Roles**

As mentioned earlier three women were unemployed while one was on maternity leave while, five women were employed. When women were asked if they work more or less inside the house, seven women reported working less around the house. However, two women reported that they work the same inside the house. One woman said, ‘there is no change in his absence or on presence I do everything around the house.’ One woman said she worked less because she did not have to cook every day and tend to her husband. However, she said she works the same in cleaning the house and looking after the children. One woman said she works less because as the kids get older they help around the house. Other women also listed the first reason as the main one for them working less inside the house. Five women conveyed that they work the same outside the house, and all five women are employed. However, four women expressed that they work more outside the house since their husband’s departure. One woman that expressed that she works more outside the house said, she said she has to drop the kids off and pick them up all the time. She also said that she has trouble in dealing with workers and maintenance people when



she needs something fixed. She feels like she is not taken seriously because she is a woman, and sometimes things are not fixed. She says workers treat her differently when her husband is here. However, now she is taken less seriously and feels less respected without her husband. Another woman expressed that she works more because she has to do things her husband used to do. However, she said she works more outside the house, she said she runs errands for the kids, drops them off and buys everything for the house. Furthermore, she said she works more outside the house to avoid any criticisms. Thus, it could be argued that there is not a great change in the traditional gender roles, and that women still remain the nurturers and care givers. The main change is that women are assuming different roles, and have new interactions with various institutions and they enter domains that they were not interacting with before such as, dealing with workers. Additionally, many of these women reaffirmed the biases and prejudice women face in Egypt's society without a man, they feel like they are not taken seriously, and that they are still scrutinized and made to feel vulnerable. Furthermore, even when these women are allowed freedom by their husband they still feel pressured by society. One woman discussed how stressful it is for her to have to face society's pressure alone. While another woman said that she feels like now she has to be more aware of how she handles herself in public, since her husband is not here people are very judgmental. Another woman said that she has three girls and that she is a stay at home mother in order to take care of them and raise them well. Furthermore, she added that her greatest fear is failing and being judged for any bad decisions her girl's make.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it could be argued based on the limited sample that male migration in middle-income families affects women's empowerment to a limited extent. However, male migration does lead to social mobility, it results in an improvement in the families' position and advancement in their social order. Women are already autonomous, as they have decision-making power in the household, and control over resources. Nevertheless, other than the financial change, there were no major changes to the wives' life prompted by their husband's migration. Women benefited from receiving remittances, and the majority of women made decisions alone. Furthermore, there were only slight changes in the traditional gender roles but no major changes. It is important to refer to Al Kabear's conceptualization of empowerment with its three parts. Firstly, it should be noted that the majority of women had decision-making power before their husbands left. Thus, they were active agents. The majority of the women made

decisions with their husbands as a collective unit. This shows that women had a strong position from the onset within the household. The women expressed how they negotiated, and discussed decisions pertaining to the kids and the household with their husbands. Furthermore, women were satisfied with this decision making process, they did not want to change it. All women already had high levels of education and five of them were employed, and were independent to a great extent, thus they already had access to resources. Additionally, they already had freedom of mobility before their husband's departure and had power. It could be argued that there are two areas in which these women experienced significant change and these are remittances and gender roles. Most women reported that they now made financial decisions alone, and decided solely how to spend remittances. Many women discussed how important it was to receive remittances to maintain the current standard of living. This was especially important to maintain and keep the children in their current schools, which are expensive schools. Despite the women having more access to remittances, all women were still dependent on remittances, as they all expressed that their salaries were not sufficient and that they need remittances to support themselves and their kids. However, the degree of dependency varies between employed women and unemployed women; with the unemployed women being more dependent on their husbands. The employed women still being dependent on remittances might be attributed to the gender gap that exists in the Egyptian job market. There is a huge lag still in the ratio of the number of managers and technical workers of men and women. Women are still being paid less than men. Women experienced change in gender roles, by many of them expressing that interact with new domains and spaces that their husbands were responsible for before. More women reported dealing with workers and maintenance people. Women did experience a change in their life over certain areas of their lives however; there was not a great change in their lives prompted by their husband's absence except perhaps an emotional and mental change. The main change that these women experienced along with their entire families is social mobility. It could be argued that their husbands' new jobs allowed them to move or advance among their social class. The previous section discussed the findings, for the middle-income group, through dividing them into sections, which are: decision making, remittances and gender roles. Subsequently, the next section is a comparison of the findings of the two groups, low income and the middle income.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Comparison between the Case of Low Income and Middle Income Families**

The following section analyzes where the findings between both groups overlap and also highlights the differences. There are various overlapping effects of male migration on wives in both low income and middle-income families. Both groups have the same spending patterns. Both income groups prioritize their spending by daily basic needs; household expenditure and the bulk of the remittances are spent on the children. The main difference between both groups spending patterns is that two women in the middle income reported that they save some of the remittances. However, this was not representative and present among the entire group of middle-income families. Additionally, this is in great contrast to the low-income group as most of them mentioned that they still struggle with finances, and that they are still struggling. Both groups of women have certain traditional gender roles in common such as being responsible for most of the reproductive task. Both groups of women are still responsible for the kids and for the house's upkeep. However, more women in the middle income are assuming more productive roles as a larger percentage of them are working outside the home. Furthermore, unlike women from the low income, the women from the middle-income group are working nontraditional jobs. This is in contrast of low income groups where the two women that do work, are working in jobs that are reaffirming society's ascribed traditional roles, and are still working as nurtures, cooking and cleaning. All eight women except for one in the middle-income group expressed that they had decision-making abilities even before their husbands left. They had decision making power and made decisions with their husbands as a unit. This is in contrast to women from low income families where the majority did not have any decision-making abilities before their husbands' left. Furthermore, both groups of women had certain women express the increase in decision making to be a burden and other segments that expressed that it was an opportunity. In low income 8 expressed that it is a burden, while four women in middle income expressed that it was a burden. However, the reasons behind viewing the increase in decision making as a burden are different. Women from low-income groups might perceive it as a burden out of fear, of never being in control and making decisions alone. It could be due to the level of education, women from lower income groups most of them have lower level of education, and thus do not know

their rights and feel like they do not have the necessary tools to make decisions. However, women from middle-income groups do not fear making decisions alone. This could be attributed to them having higher levels of education, and having the necessary tools and confidence to make decisions alone. In contrast, they choose to make their decisions with their husbands and consult them. The education levels also explain the reason more women from middle income viewed the increase in decision making as an opportunity. This could be attributed to the education levels, as the women that have a university education or a bachelor's degree are more likely to seek more power and influence over the family. It could be argued that many educated women, seek more independence. Furthermore, as Gulati observed that women in migrant household might enjoy more freedoms; but if they were properly empowered in the areas that men deal with on a regular basis they would be better equipped to deal with their husband's absence. By having more access to information, knowledge, and more responsibilities one has higher self-esteem to execute tasks. Women tend to have higher self-esteem as they improve their skills.

The differences in both group's experiences might be attributed the fact they do not start from equal grounds, women in middle income had a better standing, and a better standard in the household than women from lower income families. After interviewing both groups of women, it was apparent that both groups have different access to space and mobility. Male migration results in a change in women's mobility. This has been concurrent with studies that examined rural areas. In rural Bihar female mobility increase where 48% of women went to the doctor alone, 45% reported going to the market, 9% reported going to their children's school and 4% went to see their relatives.<sup>186</sup> This holds true for this study as well, women experienced more mobility in their husband's absence. However, it could be argued that women in low income experienced less freedom in comparison to women in the middle income. The study was in concurrence to Louichi's findings in 1997. Similar to Louhichi's study women reported that they had more freedom to go to the market for shopping, paying bills, and going to the market. However, women had less freedom to go out when the reasons were personal such as going out for leisure visiting friends and family. This holds true for low income group as many of them experienced that their husband's worry about their image in the community. Furthermore, one

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<sup>186</sup>Sayyokhat Dushanbieva, "The Impacts of Migration: The Tajik Women's Experiences of Their Husband's Migration" (PhD diss., Central European University, 2014), 8.

woman expressed that this was the reason she quit her job because it was at a clinic, and her husband did not want her going out at night, and coming late. Women in middle income had more freedom of movement as a starting point, especially the employed ones. Additionally, many of them expressed that they now go out and do chores that they did not perform before. They were introduced to new spaces, and went to maintenance people and dealt with them in their homes.

There is a great percentage in both groups that solely make all the decisions regarding their kids. This finding is in agreement with Louhichi's study where he finds that women's authority regarding their children specifically, raising them increased in their husband's migration.<sup>187</sup> Louhichi found that 61% of women in urban areas and 51% of women in rural areas reported that they have more authority over their kids in their husband's absence.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, many women in the study expressed how their husbands were not really involved in their kids' lives except financially. One woman in the middle income group said that, 'to my kids the father is just a monthly check nothing more.' Despite this being problematic it further consolidates the idea that the mothers are solely responsible for their children and they make almost all the decisions concerning them. In both income groups women were very concerned and focused on spending and investing in their children's education. This finding is concurrent with Shults (1960), Becker (1974) and Mincer's findings that depict that education is an investment good. Furthermore, in the long run spending on it might not yield many benefits. However, in the long run there are various returns.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, women in both income groups expressed the importance of spending on their children's education. Woodruff and Hanson in 2003 found that remittances had great positive results on girls aged 10-15 in Mexico.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, in 2006 Calero et al. saw that the enrollment rate for girls in rural areas increased, and child labor as a whole decreased when receiving remittances.<sup>191</sup> Thus it could be argued, that by focusing on and investing in young girl's education, mothers are investing in human capital, and there are roots for women's empowerment in the future.

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<sup>187</sup>Khaled Louhichi, "The Impact of the Emigration of the Husband on the Status of the Wife: Case of Egypt," 1997, 7.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup>Wael Mansour and Jad Chaaban, "The Impact of Migrant Remittances on School Attendance and Education Attainment: Evidence from Jordan," *International Migration Review* 45, no. 4 (2012): 3.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

Education is one of the primary sources of female empowerment and social mobility for men women and families as a whole. Education is one of the main five important dimensions to empowerment. Additionally, it helps women achieve other key dimensions of empowerment. Education gives women the necessary knowledge tools to seek adequate health care and treatment.<sup>192</sup> Various studies have concluded that there are positive correlations between female education and women's life expectancy and family health.<sup>193</sup> It is important to note that the level of education is of the utmost importance in order for women to gain any benefits. In order for women to benefit the education must be a secondary or higher level of schooling. Additionally education improves women's wellbeing, by giving women more autonomy it reduces violence against them. Furthermore, it improves their status in the family and gives them a voice in the household, they are more involved in decision-making, and this also includes financial decisions.<sup>194</sup> More importantly, education is fundamental to sustain and maintain gains for women's empowerment throughout future generations, there is an intergenerational effect. Mothers' education has been shown to universally have positive effects on the children's schooling. Correspondingly, the effect tends to be stronger on girls than boys, especially in areas like Egypt in which girl's enrollment tends to be lagging in comparison to boys. Furthermore, daughters with educated mothers tend to be more likely to have higher levels of educational attainment, which results in the multiplier effect.<sup>195</sup> It is also important to note that the higher education levels the more likely the increase in women's chances of working and escaping vulnerable employment and having wage work. The higher levels of education are also related to the type of work. Thus, the higher level of education the more likely those women are free to work in decent jobs and escape vulnerable employment. Women are able to attain jobs that are not related to their traditional roles and sex, such as nurturing. Additionally, there are many positive externalities associated with increased levels of education. The following graph depicts the returns and benefits of education on females and their empowerment. It depicts how female education results to female market participation and competitiveness, along with acquiring skills, which results in increasing economic opportunity and leading to empowerment. The following diagram shows how education leads to improvements in women's lives such as more labor force

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<sup>192</sup>Somaya Ahmed Abdel Mowla, *Education and Economic Empowerment of Women in Egypt*, The American University in Cairo, 2009, 10.

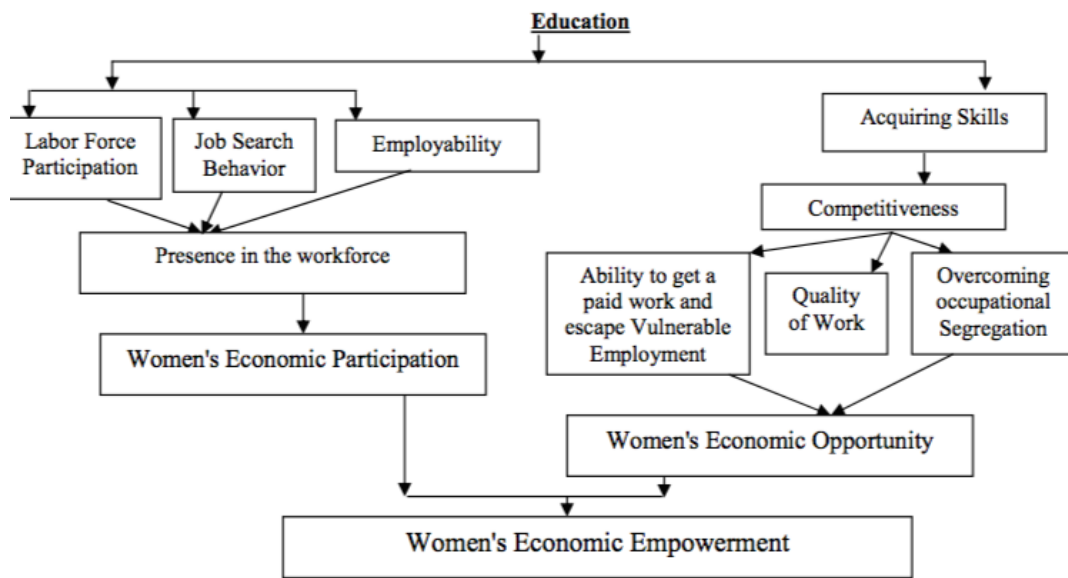
<sup>193</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup>Ibid, 11.

participation, more employability, acquiring skills, thus increasing women's economic participation and leading to women's economic empowerment. To conclude this section outlined the main similarities and differences between the effects of male migration on females in both low income and middle income. The subsequent section summarizes the major findings of the study, the limitations of the study along with suggestions for future research and lastly policy implications.

**Figure 7 Education and Empowerment** <sup>196</sup>



<sup>196</sup>Somaya Ahmed Abdel Mowla, *Education and Economic Empowerment of Women in Egypt*, The American University in Cairo, 2009, 27.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion, Policy Recommendations, Further Research

The main focus of thesis was to explore whether, male migration resulted in female spouses' empowerment in women from the low income; and women in the middle income. In order to understand this complex relationship a review of the existing relationship was given. Furthermore, in order to assess and measure empowerment, which is a complex term that has been defined by various theorists, Al Kabeer's conceptualization of empowerment. Al Kabeer's three-dimensional conceptualization of empowerment was used, since it is a diversified definition that does not just focus on one aspect of empowerment, it takes a more inclusive approach. There have been previous studies that focused on male migration. However, this study focuses on a less examined phenomenon, which is the effect of male migration on female spouse's empowerment in Egypt. There have not been various studies in Egypt that focus on the effect of male migration on females. In fact, the most prominent study was by Khalid Louhichi conducted in 1997. There have been other studies however; they focus on the effects of male migration and its effects on the family as a whole or on the children. The study found that male migration empowers women in low income to some extent, while it empowers women in middle income to a limited extent. The researcher's hypothesis was not supported by the findings. I hypothesized that women from middle-income families will experience more positive effects by their spouses' migration, than women from low-income families. However, it was the opposite that took place.

Migration has economic and social effects on women, which were described by the women in this study. Al Kabeer's model first dimension, access to resources is met through remittances, which positively affected women's in both income groups and their families. The majority of women from lower income experience empowerment to some extent. The data showed that the women's access to resources and control over resources was a route or source of empowerment, for women in the low income. This is due to the access to remittances being accompanied with an increase in decision-making. Thus, offering a potential for empowerment. However, as a result of these women being unemployed this increase of resources is temporary. Thus, they do not guarantee future access to resources. Thus, this access to resources could be temporary and women are dependent. Despite having more say in the household, women are not



free agents to make strategic life choices for themselves and their families. Furthermore, women equate the increase in decision making with an increase in responsibility, and that is the reason many of them perceived the increase in decision making to be burdensome. There were some changes in the traditional gender roles. However, women are still solely carrying out the reproductive roles, were the majority of the women are not working and are still the nurturers and caretakers. Some of the changes include, that women now had decision-making power, and in many cases were the sole decision makers. They also experienced an increase in mobility, and new roles outside the household. Yet, this increase in mobility is related to running errands, related to the household and the children and not for leisurely reasons. Despite the feminization of the household there is still a reaffirmation of existing gender roles where women are financially dependent on their husbands, and still restricted to the private domain.

The family experienced social mobility; there is an improvement in their living standards in comparison to before the husband's departure. However, they do not experience occupational mobility as the men are still employed in similar jobs they had before migration. Moreover, there are roots for future empowerment of young girls, where they are all getting educated. As well as the patterns of female spending were being focused on education and children's wellbeing. Through investing in their kids' future and the father's migration there is a guarantee the children will not fall in the poverty trap. Poverty traps are situations where a set of factors exist and cause poverty to start.<sup>197</sup> This poverty is most likely to continue unless there is outside intervention. It is a situation where poor families become trapped in poverty for a minimum of three generations. The families have very limited or almost no resources available.

Women in the middle income experienced empowerment to a limited extent. The women and their families experienced social mobility. The remittances that they received allowed them to have a better standard of living. The majority of women from the onset had decision-making power before their husband's migrated. Thus, their status was not diminished like women in low income group. Moreover, the majority of these women expressed that they enjoy making decisions with their husbands, as a cohesive unit. Additionally, the majority of women were employed, but due to the low income they needed the remittances that they received. The majority of the women viewed the increase in decision making as an opportunity and not a

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<sup>197</sup>Sabina Alkire, *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

burden, which could be related to their higher levels of education, giving them more confidence in themselves. There were no changes in the gender roles. It is worth noting that women's status in the household was not the same as women's status in the household in low-income families. However, there were changes in women being introduced to new domains, such as running errands and dealing with workers and maintenance people.

### **Policy Recommendations**

The following section outlines some policy recommendations on migration as a whole. Furthermore, certain sections outline specific policy recommendations to women and wives that remain in the home country. The Egyptian government needs to have specific programs that cater to different governorates that advise and help migrant families to invest remittances. The concept and term of women being referred to, as "left behind" needs to be considered to be problematic. The idea of women in home countries as "left behind" raises a very negative connotation of women as passive bystanders, and it reaffirms existing inequalities. Thus, a new term with more positive connotations that places women as active players and not passive needs to be created and mainstreamed in all public policy and migration policies.

Migration policies need to discuss the societal pressures and constraints placed on women and girls by the traditional gender roles. The Egyptian government should create a wide initiative that focuses on Egyptian female migrants. There are a number of women working overseas in the Middle East for example there is a huge a cluster of Egyptian female doctors in Saudi Arabia. There should be more gender specific migration policies that cater to women and their needs, especially women that have children and are leaving them in Egypt. The government should have awareness campaigns that encourage women in low-income families with migrant husbands to join the work force. Long-term support programs must be created in the home country to help provide support for wives and children. These programs can include counseling, coaching, and mentoring.

There should be more open dialogue about migration. Migration centers can host forums that are attended by families, representatives from the government and other civil society organizations, to address the challenges that women and their families face in the men's absence. There should be more investment in Internet infrastructure. It is important to make Internet more accessible and cheaper. In Egypt cell phones are very prominent among the poor. However, Internet is not, by providing Internet access to families with migrants this allows them to become

more present. This ends up reducing the burden that most women expressed of separation. There needs to be more gender specific research and global data on the effects of male migration on women in the home countries. The government needs to encourage migrants from low income to deal with banks and save their money there, and invest it.

Additionally, there are currently no financial policies or products that specifically cater to Egyptian migrants, the banking sectors should be given an incentive and be encouraged to initiate certain packages for Egyptian emigrants. Egyptian banks could use programs and examples from the Philippines experience. Furthermore, due to the unstable economy many people are very doubtful in saving their money in Egypt. Thus, incentives and reassurance need to be given for people to save their money in banks. This money will make a great difference in Egypt's GDP. There should be awareness campaigns that encourage women with migrant husbands, and kids in school to work, and not just be dependent on remittances. There should be more coordination with destination countries, to help integrate migrants successfully into the host economy. As this study depicted wives staying in home country play a pivotal role in receiving remittances and allocating them and deciding how they will be spent. Therefore, there should be gender specific programs that are designed to help educate women; and assist them by providing better information to help improve their financial literacy. They should aim at improving their investment decisions. Furthermore, policy should be strengthened in order to secure women and children's basic social and economic rights. Remittances should not be treated and seen as an alternative for government policies that address social exclusion, inequalities and providing social services. Remittances should supplement government policies and initiatives. Policies should support government policies aimed at poverty reduction. Furthermore, poverty reduction strategies need to address migration and development.

Additionally more attention must be given to the effect of economic crisis on women and families in the home country. This is important to alleviate the negative effects and design specific policy interventions that will improve development prospects for the families and children in the long run. The home countries or sending states should develop policies to support the women and caregivers of children of migrant workers in raising their children. There should be awareness campaigns and workshops on the impact of migration on children; caregivers would be given the necessary tools to deal with their kids. Furthermore, since Egypt is a developing country and there has been a cycle of economic downturn since the 25<sup>th</sup> of January

revolution, the major push factors of migration need to be addressed. There should be legal frameworks that help migrants acquire decent work.

### **Limitations of the study and future research**

One of the limitations of this study is the number of interviewees that was conducted. The researcher initially was intending on having a wider sample. However it was very difficult for the researcher to acquire more interviews. In fact, the thesis writing was delayed due to not securing enough subjects for the study. The difficulties faced were that many individuals were untrusting and this was especially the case since the researcher was not formally affiliated with a certain institution. Furthermore, due to the certain political situation, many individuals are fearful of institutions that are associated with America. They view American institutions with suspicion, and are worried about them negatively portraying them. Furthermore, some of them fear stigma of being associated with an American institution. Other challenges included securing enough time with the interviewees to go in depth with the questions. Furthermore, despite agreeing to the interviewees many of the women were not very elaborative and open. Thus, perhaps future research could include focus groups as well in order for women to feel more comfortable and at ease. Perhaps future research could include two segments of low-income groups, families with migrant husbands and families without migrant husbands. This could help emphasize the change in women's lives. This could highlight the opportunity that these women receive and their families in contrast to their husbands staying here and having limited income. Furthermore, one of the questions these women were asked was whether their husbands were legal or illegal migrants. All women, specifically women from the low income claimed that their husbands are legal migrants. However, considering the available resources in certain incidences, for example one woman said that her husband works in Libya. Additionally, she mentioned that he returns every couple of months and that it is very stressful because of ISIS and she worries tremendously about him, it could be deduced that some women's husbands were not legal migrants. Perhaps the women felt some sort of stigma associated with illegal migration thus, they were not forthcoming about it. This research did not test, whether the change in women's lives is sustained when their husbands return or not. Perhaps future research could include this factor, in order to see if the changes and benefits gained and the feminization of the household is maintained upon the husband's return or not. Furthermore, in order to offer a varied comparison, and after the findings of this study that middle income women are not highly affected by their husband's

migration; perhaps a future study should compare the low income in Cairo and the low income in rural areas of Egypt. This would be interesting research because women, in rural areas tend to live with extended family. Furthermore, it would be interesting to see whether migrants in rural areas change their mindset and become more open after travelling or if they remain traditional and enforce traditional gender roles.

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