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Rural women in Latin America: some key issues

Rural urban migration is a trend in LAC region, especially among female population between 15 to 35 years. Data available since 1960 show that women internally migration is higher than men in some countries e.g. Uruguay, less than 50% of rural population are women. Rural women profile in the region is usually described as young /middle age, unemployed, illiterate or with low educational level. Rural women from LAC region usually migrate in search of a job or for better working/economic conditions; to access to higher levels of formal education and health. Also rural women migrate due to natural disasters factors as well as they might migrate due to domestic and interfamily violence. This latter issue needs to be better investigating as there is very few information on the subject.

- **On rural ageing and food insecurity:**
 - There is a trend of ageing rural population, in Uruguay as in other Latin American countries of the region. This could affect family food security especially if young population migrates to other rural areas or to urban areas leaving behind its parents and children. If this trend continues in the LAC region, in the short term there will be a significant number of rural families integrated by grand parents and grand children.
 - migration of young women and men have resulted in population ageing (“left behind”) affecting demographic composition of households, structure of labor force and its division of work by sex and age. Land modernization and technological innovation might be affected; lack of institutional support system for the elderly rural population could also be a disadvantage especially for rural women.

- As this is a rather recent phenomenon, there is a need to research more on rural population ageing and its linkages to food security and rural development. Moreover this trend seems to have policy implications specially focusing how population ageing in rural areas affects poverty and food security and which actions should be developed to retain young rural women and men in rural areas
- **Rural migration, division of labor and food security.**
 - Impact in rural women and food security can be contradictory :a) it can increase women work and weaken food security ; b) increase number women headed household and exacerbate family poverty/ food insecurity as women usually do not have access to land, credit etc.
- **On remittances and food security**
 - Migration can have positive effects **if** families left behind receive remittances which could be oriented towards poverty alleviation. In the absence of remittances this could have a greater negative impact in the families, especially in food security.
- **On Mobility:**
 - Household dependency ratio reduces the probability that young men will migrate, but they have no statistically significant impact on women's migration.
 - Rural urban migration affects women's roles in rural economy. According to E. Katz, ¹rural women are almost 30% more likely to leave rural areas to perform non-agricultural jobs. This case has been acknowledged in several countries of the region (Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, El Salvador, and Nicaragua)
- **On land ownership and migration:**
 - Larger endowment of privately owned land is more likely to restrict men migration. Access to common property resources act as migration deterrent for women. Women that own a piece of land are less likely to migrate.
- **On international migration:**
 - There is a tendency of "masculinization" of migration to USA, but in the recent decade the US census Bureau (2001) indicate that feminization of migration is increasing. . In the case of intraregional migration within Latin America women make a greater percentage
- Service sector including domestic service are more likely to include large number of rural women (Colombians to Venezuela, Paraguayan to Argentina, Nicaraguan to Costa Rica; Peruvian and Bolivian to Chile) Countries with high demand for foreign agriculture workers tend to attract predominately men

¹ E.Katz , "The changing role of women in rural economies of Latin America," in Davis B (ed) Current and Emerging Issues for Economic Analysis and Policy Research, (CUREMIS II) , FAO- Economic and Social Department , Rome 2003

- **On gender differences:**

- A recent study developed by Kanaiaupuni (2000) ² on Mexican communities explore gender differences in the role of human capital, socio-economic status, lifecycle, social networks and local economic opportunities in the decision to migrate. In determinants of migration, women's education plays a role: higher levels of education increased women chances of migration but decreased men chances. High level of women employment decrease men migration. This could imply that women's local earning can substitute remittances. Women that own more than 5 ha of land are less likely to migrate and livestock assets reduces migration trends

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2004

² Kanaiaupuni, Shawn Malia. 2000. "Reframing the Migration Question: An Analysis, of Men, Women and Gender in Mexico." *Social Forces* 78(4): 1311-1348.