

Does aid for gender equality reduce female migration?

Betül SIMSEK[◇]

[◇]PhD. Cand., University of Hamburg, Institute of Law and Economics,
betuel.simsek@uni-hamburg.de

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Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment has been a focus of international attention since the United Nations launched the UN Decade for Women in 1975. Key commitments included the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, and the establishment of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 in 2015 ([Grown, Addison and Tarp, 2016](#)). In particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has boosted development finance for gender equality ([UN, 2015](#)). Countries and other stakeholders committed themselves to "work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap" ([UN, 2015](#), p.10). In this context, member countries of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have steadily increased their financial resources towards gender equality ([OECD, 2018](#)). This paper explores the potential impact of aid for gender equality on female migration. Through empirical analysis and theoretical discussion, this paper fosters the understanding of how gender-specific aid could affect female migration. The paper contributes to the aid-migration literature by using gender-specific aid data. This is an important consideration, as the extent to which women's needs are addressed may depend on the type of aid provided. Furthermore, prevailing gender norms could constrain women's access to development aid, affecting their decisions to migrate differently than their male counterparts. The paper also contributes to recent literature that considers the heterogeneity of development aid affecting migration. [Lanati and Thiele \(2020, 2018b,a\)](#) show that aid targeted towards social infrastructure and services such as

education and health reduces emigration. Likewise, [Gamso and Yuldashev \(2018\)](#) show that aid targeting the political development of the aid-recipient country has a negative effect on emigration. My paper adds to this literature by examining the impact of aid towards gender equality on the female emigration rate.

Gender-equality aid can be divided into two types. The first type is classified as aid with a principal objective of promoting gender equality. Gender equality is the main objective of the project and it would not have been undertaken without this objective ([OECD, 2016](#)). Examples include initiatives that educate men and boys to advocate against gender-based violence in their communities or development aid towards women's organizations ([OECD, 2016](#)).

The second type is classified as aid with a significant objective of promoting gender equality. Gender equality is an important but not the main objective of the activity. In this case, a gender perspective is integrated or "mainstreamed" into the aid projects that are undertaken for other purposes, such as aid for education, water sanitation, and agriculture. This approach is also known as gender mainstreaming.

On the one hand, if aid for gender equality strengthens women's economic and social standing, it can increase women's incentive to stay. A growing body of literature tests the effectiveness of gender-specific aid on women's outcomes. So does [Baliamoune-Lutz \(2016\)](#) show that development aid to women's equality organizations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) increases women's political empowerment. [Beath, Fotini and Enikolopov \(2013\)](#) show that development aid programs mandating women's community participation in Afghanistan increase women's income-generating activities and socialization. [Berlin, Bonnier and Olofsgård \(2023\)](#) show that gender-targeted aid positively impacts female empowerment in matrilineal communities in Malawi but that the positive impact of gender-targeted aid disappears in patrilineal communities. [Minasyan and Moninola \(2023\)](#), considering the years between 1990 and 2019 and over a hundred aid recipient countries, show that gender-equality aid positively impacts women's economic empowerment. Further evidence shows that perceptions of gender discrimination increase women's stated intentions to emigrate abroad ([Ruyssen and Salomone, 2018](#)). On the other hand, more gender-equality aid can increase female migration by providing women with the means to move.

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