Migration, remittances and the women left behind
A study on how women in Mali are affected by migration and remittances from their migrated husbands

G3-paper in Political Science
Autumn 2010
Sofie Ahlin and Åsa Dahlberg
Supervisor: Edmé Reyes Dominguez
Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following for their very much appreciated help, advice, contribution and hospitality during our field work in Mali: Seydou Diabate from Plan International Mali, Abdoulaye Konaté, Ismael Sacko and Souleymane Konaté from CIGEM, Malin Synneborn Lundberg and Désiré Ballo from the Development Cooperation Section (Sida) of the Embassy of Sweden, Aminata Fabou Traoré from Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme de l'Enfant et de la Famille, Founèke Sissoko from the Regional Assembly of Kayes, Cheick Diallo and Siriman Dembele from AMRK, Zaynab Tera from GRDR, Mariame Sow from CAFO, Harouna Samassa from CAMIDE, Yaya Bamba and Niarra Diarra from the Regional Assembly of Sikasso, Diélïka Cissé Traoré and Adama Camara from Direction Régional de la Promotion de la Femme de l'Enfant et de la Famille de Sikasso, Yaya Elie Bamaba from Centre de Recherche pour la Promotion et la Sauvegarde de la Culture Senoufo, Lassana Diombana from OIM, Fousseni Dembele from GRADECOM and Ann from Tounga Tours.

Special thanks to our translators Bougou Coulibaly and Masega Diallo and to all the women in Kayes and Sikasso who shared their life stories with us.
Abstract
The purpose of this study is to find out in which way international migration and remittances influence the role and lives of women in Mali. We look more specifically on whether migration and remittances change existing gender roles and empower women. Our research questions focus on changes in women's decision-making power in the households as well as on their activity outside the households. To understand the importance of remittances, we compare two regions with heavy migration - the one receiving most remittances and one of the regions receiving least. The method used is semi-structured interviews with women in the two regions, both migrant’s wives and women having their husband at home. The study is also based on interviews with several organizations in Mali.

Our results show that remittances and migration have little impact on women's empowerment and ability to make choices. However remittances can influence their material well being and lessen their work burden, which can serve as a prerequisite for empowerment, but only if it is combined with other variables such as changes in traditional gender values.

Search words: Migration, Remittances, Mali, Sikasso, Kayes, Gender, Empowerment, Women.
Number of words: 11 961
# Index

Acknowledgments................................................................................................................ 1
Abstract.................................................................................................................................. 2
Index......................................................................................................................................... 3
List of charts and figures........................................................................................................... 4

1. Introduction........................................................................................................................ 5

2. Background......................................................................................................................... 6
   2.1 Migration in Mali........................................................................................................... 6
      2.1.1 Kayes..................................................................................................................... 8
      2.1.2 Sikasso................................................................................................................... 10
   2.2 Women in Mali............................................................................................................. 10

3. The purpose and research questions.................................................................................... 12

4. Method and material............................................................................................................ 12
   4.1 Choice of regions......................................................................................................... 12
   4.2 Face to face interviews with women............................................................................. 13
   4.3 Complementing information from organizations.......................................................... 15

5. Theories............................................................................................................................. 15
   5.1 Gendered Geographies of Power................................................................................... 15
   5.2 Women’s empowerment – a question of measurement and values.................................. 16

6. Previous research............................................................................................................... 19

7. Migration and remittance impact on women: the fieldwork results................................. 21
   7.1 Migration impact on gender roles in households and communities in Kayes............... 21
      7.1.1 The head of household and the enlarged family....................................................... 21
      7.1.2 New family dynamics and habits .......................................................................... 24
   7.2 Migration, remittances and women's activity outside the household............................ 26
      7.2.1 Women as providers............................................................................................... 26
      7.2.2 Passivity vs. more spare time................................................................................ 28
      7.2.3 Women in associations and society....................................................................... 30
7.3 Sikasso - migration but no remittances .................................................. 32

  7.3.1 Women as unwanted providers or negative empowerment .................. 32

  7.3.2 Migration and social exclusion ...................................................... 34

8. Conclusions ........................................................................................................ 35

9. Appendix ........................................................................................................... 36

  9.1 Questions to the women whose husbands have migrated ......................... 36

  9.2 Questions to the women whose husbands are at home ............................ 37

10. References ...................................................................................................... 38

List of charts and figures

Figure 2.1 Mali in Africa ................................................. ...................................... 7

Figure 2.2 The Regions of Kayes and Sikasso .................................................... 8

Chart 4.1 Interview groups .................................................................................. 13
1. Introduction

The notion of women and development is a broad notion that in the last 20 years has gained a lot of attention among scientists and aid organizations. The acknowledgment of the important role of women in relation to questions of development has been done in several scientific fields and many institutions also agree about that efforts to improve women's situation is beneficial for the development of whole communities. This idea often goes under denominations such as 'gender-responsive' poverty alleviation or women's empowerment.¹

The gender perspective in remittances is on the other hand something we know relatively little about. Remittance research is often analyzed from an economic and quantitative perspective but studies on how remittances influence women’s status in developing countries is relatively scarce.² As remittances represent one of the most important incomes for many developing countries³, it is crucial to explore how these amounts influence people who stay in the country of origin, the ones expected to bring the country’s development forward. These people are often women.

“(…) women become critical actors in the remittance-to-development paradigm, and understanding differential gender characteristics in remittance use, savings and investments becomes a major prerequisite for the success of local development programs”⁴

¹ S Chant, Gender, Generation and Poverty – Exploring the 'Feminisation of Poverty' in Africa, Asia and Latin America, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2007, p. 120-121.
⁴ UN-INSTRAW, Gender, Remittances and Development – Remittances 2007, Working Paper 4, UN-INSTRAW,
Mali in West Africa is a country strongly affected by migration and also a country where women have a very weak position. It is therefore an interesting choice of country for a study on the impact of migration and remittances on women's empowerment. What happens to a society where a big part of the active male population migrates and how do such changes affect the lives of the women left behind? Do women take on the responsibilities of their migrated husbands and can they benefit from the money the migrants might send to the families? Do the absence of men and the improved economic situation provoke a process of women’s empowerment?

2. Background

2.1 Migration in Mali

Mali is a big, landlocked country in western Africa, and one of the poorest countries in the world. The Human Development Index for Mali is 0.309 (maximum is 1.0, minimum is 0.0), which gives the country a rank of 160 out of 169 countries. The estimated life expectancy is about 50 years, the adult literacy rate is 23 % (2003-2008) and the fertility rate is 5.5 (births per woman in 2008). The country is a former French colony and is considered a democracy since 1992. Mali is often seen as a role model in the African context because of its successful and relatively peaceful transition to democracy.

---


7 Z Smith, 'Mali's Decade of Democracy', Journal of Democracy, Volume 12, Number 3, July 2001, p.73-79
There is a lack of information on the current migration situation in Mali and despite the attention that the government of Mali has given to migration related questions it is still not enough dealt with.\(^8\) The last household survey the government dedicated specifically to migration was made in 1992-1993 (l’Enquête malienne sur les migrations et l’urbanisation, EMMU 1992-93) and cannot reflect the current situation.\(^9\)

A large portion of the emigrants from Mali stay in the neighboring countries and only 2.5% of the Malians abroad live in Europe.\(^10\) Still, people migrating to Europe play an important role for their country in terms of the large sums of money they send home. In 2007, 161 million Euros were sent to Mali in form of remittances, which is 3.3 % of Mali’s GDP.\(^11\)

People migrating abroad from Mali are usually young men, which means that the ones left behind are to a certain extent the women. In Mali 66% of the people migrating abroad are men and 73% are from rural areas. The reason for migrating is to a large extent work related (40%). Approximately 70% migrate to the Ivory Coast.\(^12\) In Mali the number of men is larger

---


9 M Ballo, p. 19, 30


than the number of women in the ages between 0-24 and 55-74, but in the ages of 24-55 women are in majority. One of the reasons is the international migration.\textsuperscript{13}

But the amount of migration and remittances also depends on the region. The region of Kayes in the north west of Mali is very affected by migration and especially towards Europe.\textsuperscript{14} It is also very dependent on remittances from abroad. In 2005, 56.7\% of the households in Kayes received remittances. This can be compared to the Region of Sikasso where only 27.8\% of the households received such benefits. The average sum per capita sent to Kayes that year was 15 026 CFA (about 23 Euros). In Sikasso the sum was 1 295 CFA (about 2 Euros).\textsuperscript{15} In the two next sections, we will present a short, more specific migration profile of each of the two regions in Mali where we performed our study.

\textit{Figure 2.2 The Regions of Kayes and Sikasso}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{regions.png}
\caption{The Regions of Kayes and Sikasso}
\end{figure}

\textbf{2.1.1 Kayes}\textsuperscript{16}

Kayes is by far the number one migration region in Mali and is heavily dependent on remittances from abroad, especially from France. People from Kayes have migrated since long before the colonial era and the phenomenon has almost become a part of the culture. One reason is the dry

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 34, 105.
  \item \textit{Ibid.}, p. 83.
  \item \textit{Ibid.}, s. 123
  \item The information in this chapter is taken from the interview with CAMIDE, Kayes
\end{itemize}
Sahelian climate which does not permit sufficient agricultural production. That, along with the region's location on the way between Bamako and Dakar (Senegal) makes trade a more common activity for people in Kayes today.

In modern history Kayes has seen different migration waves. The first one was initiated by the French colonial administration that forced people from Kayes to go to work in the peanut plantations in Senegal, where work force was needed. At the end of World War II France itself was also in need of work force, and the French administration then sent young West Africans to work in the European factories. The majority of those either died in the war or where repatriated by the French administration.

The apparent richness of the returners, at least compared to their countrymen in Kayes, created the second migration wave to France. As Mali was still a French colony the door was open for those who could afford the ticket to France, and no papers were needed at the time. Difficult droughts during the -70s, as well as more insecure weather conditions since then, accelerated the migration from Kayes, especially from the country side, and the region's dependence on migration and remittances increased. At present most families in Kayes have one or more family members in France. There are even families where all the active men have migrated and where only women and old men are left back home.

In France the migrants from Kayes are often organized in associations, who together finance different projects in their home region, such as the creations of schools, health centers, water sanitation projects and religious celebrations. Hence migration has become the main survival solution and the dream of many young people in Kayes. Even though migration restrictions during the past decade make legal migration harder, people do not seem to be discouraged from leaving Kayes and trying to make their luck in France.

Furthermore, the global economic crisis and the fact that the new generations of migrants, and especially their children who are born in France, do not seem to feel the same obligations to support their community of origin as their fathers did, make remittances a less stable source of income for Kayes in the future. The region seems to have come to an understanding of the importance of long term and joint investments if it is to continue benefiting from migration also in the future.
2.1.2 Sikasso

Sikasso in the south of Mali is the most fertile region of the country and is characterized by its agricultural possibilities. Still an increasing poverty due to, among other things, a crisis in the important cotton industry, the demographic increase and a high pressure on existing natural resources encourage people to leave and look for work elsewhere. The population in Sikasso migrates to a large extent towards neighboring countries, especially towards the Ivory Coast.

About one million Malians moved in the sixties and seventies to live in the Ivory Coast, encouraged by a politic of free movement between the two counties. However, since the economic and sociopolitical problems in the Ivory Coast escalated in 2002, many Malians have been forced to leave and people in Sikasso are beginning to choose other destinations. Migrants to the the Ivory Coast, are mostly young men who hope to earn some money and an increased independence from their families in Mali. The goal is not always to stay and many return home to their villages to get married after a couple of years.

Most Malian migrants take on agricultural work in the Ivory Coast and they are often low paid. Compared to Kayes the migration from Sikasso is also less organized and therefore less profitable for the region.

2.2 Women in Mali

Life in Mali is far from equal between men and women. In the Gender Gap Index from 2010, presented by the World Economic Forum, Mali gets the overall rank of 131 out of a total of 134 countries. The Gender gap index attempts to measures the gap between women and men when it comes to resources and opportunities. According to the Gender Gap Index, women in Mali seem to have most trouble when it comes to areas such as economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment and political empowerment. Even when it comes to basic

17 M Ballo, p. 61-62
18 Interview with GRADECOM, Sikasso
19 M Ballo, p.62
20 Interview with GRADECOM, Sikasso
human rights, such as legislation punishing acts of violence against women, maternal versus paternal authority and gender mutilation, Mali hits the bottom with almost the worst score possible.\textsuperscript{22}

Another index trying to measure discrimination of women is the SIGI (Social Institution Gender Index), developed by the OECD. The SIGI claims to account for the underlying social institutions behind discrimination of women and draws on 12 variables grouped into five categories: Family Code, Physical Integrity, Son preference, Civil Liberties and Ownership rights.\textsuperscript{23} All categories included, Mali places itself as number 99 out of a total of 102 countries and is classified as a high discrimination country in social institutions.\textsuperscript{24} In a SIGI country profile Mali is described as a country where women’s rights are very limited and traditions such as female genital mutilation and underage marriages are widely spread. In the sub-index of Family Code and Physical Integrity, Mali hits the lowest score of all countries participating (112/112, 114/114).\textsuperscript{25} A report from OMCT (the World Organization Against Torture) to the UN Human Rights Committee points out several laws that are directly discriminating towards women. For instance, the marriage law in Mali declares that men are the head of the households and that women are obliged to obey their husbands.\textsuperscript{26} The overall message of the OMCT-report is that problems exist, both concerning legislation and the actual social status of women in Mali and that they are not dealt with in a sufficient way by the government. The report also states that the cultural attitudes and stereotypes that consider women inferior to men is the root of the problems and make changes difficult to achieve in Mali.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{22} Gender Gap Index
\textsuperscript{23} SIGI, Social Institutions and gender Index, \textit{The Social Institution Variables}, OECD, 2009 retrieved august 3 2010, <http://genderindex.org/content/social-institutions-variables>
\textsuperscript{27} World Organization Against Torture, p. 283
3. The purpose and research questions

The purpose of the study is to find out in which way international migration and remittances influence the role and lives of women in Mali. In order to obtain the purpose of the study we ask the following questions:

1. Do migration and remittances change traditional gender roles and women’s position in the household?
2. Do remittances make women more active in society, for example in projects or as income providers, because of the improved economic possibilities they create? Or do they make women more passive and eventually more dependent on men than they were before?
3. How does migration and remittances (or the lack of them) impact women whose husbands migrated in two different regions – one with and one without remittances?

4. Method and material

4.1 Choice of regions

To find out how women in Mali are influenced by migration and international remittances, we chose to study women’s situation in two regions – one which receives a lot of remittances (Kayes), and one which has the same migration rate but receives a lot less remittances (Sikasso).28

Our first idea was to compare Kayes with Sikasso because of the fact that Sikasso has a lot less migrant’s wives.29 By comparing the lives of migrant’s wives in Kayes with non-migrants wives in Sikasso we hoped to get an idea of the differences between these groups and therefore the possible empowering impact of migration and remittances. However, isolating whether specific variables such as migration and remittances influence the gender power structures in a region is difficult, as there are several other differences between the regions which might influence the results as well. Arriving in Sikasso we understood that the differences

28 M Ballo, p. 122-123
29 See chapter 2.1.2 on the migration situation in Sikasso
between the regions were too significant and therefore we chose instead, as explained above, to focus the study on how the different types of migration in the regions (one with remittances and one without) influence women’s roles in these two regions.

4.2 Face to face interviews with women
The study is based on a total of 40 interviews; 20 with women whose husbands have migrated and 20 with women whose husbands stay at home. We understood through our interviews that it would be too hard to compare women without migrant husbands in Sikasso, with the women in Kayes. Our interview questions were more focused on migration, and more importantly, the general situation of the women depended on too many different variables. Such a comparison would therefore have given a wrong picture of the causes of the differences in women’s situations in these two regions. The group of women with non-migrant husbands therefore served instead as a control group. Interviewing non-migrants wives permitted us to ensure whether differences were caused by migration and remittances and not by other variables.

As Mali is a country with many different ethnic groups we also tried to get an ethnic diversity among our interviewees. In each region we also interviewed women in both urban and rural areas (see chart 4.1), thus avoiding the risk of local geographical differences.

Chart 4.1 Interview groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>40 women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 women in Kayes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 women in Sikasso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 women in rural areas</td>
<td>10 women in urban areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 women in rural areas</td>
<td>10 women in urban areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whose husbands have</td>
<td>whose husbands have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>have migrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>whose husbands have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>have migrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>whose husbands have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>have migrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>whose husbands have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>have migrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>whose husbands have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 women whose husbands</td>
<td>have migrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have migrated</td>
<td>at home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interviews are of informant type and semi-structured in order to get the most relevant information from each interviewee. We aimed for an open discussion and flexibility when interviewing the women in order to cover all relevant aspects of remittances, migration and the women's family situation. Questions of money, gender and power can be of sensitive nature and perhaps hard to pin down in a more standardized questionnaire. Considering our lack of previous knowledge of the situation of these women we found these types of interviews a more suitable method.

As this study focuses on the aspect of women’s empowerment, which we see as a process of change in people’s capacity of making choices, we have asked questions about women's life situations and about the choices they are able to make. We also asked questions about whether migration and remittances might influence women’s status and situations in the household and in society (for example in associations and as income providers). We also asked the women with non-migrant husbands about how they look upon migration and remittances, and about what differences they see between themselves and a migrant’s wife, to get a broader view of the phenomenon.

One aspect which could have affected the quality of the interviews is the fact that we had to use an interpreter in almost all our interviews. The knowledge of the official language (French) varies widely in Mali and unless you have been to school you do not speak it at all. Obvious risks are therefore that information gets lost in translation or that nuances and expressions are hard to translate correctly. We chose female interpreters in both regions, in order to make the interviewees more comfortable.

Even though the questions might have been of a sensitive nature, we and our interpreters got the impression that the women wanted to speak about their situations and were honest in their answers. As far as possible we tried to make the interviews with the women alone, but in some cases that was hard to arrange as many interviews were made in the women's homes, thus with many family members around.

Another problem related to field work is that it is impossible to maintain a completely objective position as a researcher towards the subjects of inquiry. Even though we have tried to be objective, different cultural backgrounds, personal experiences and contexts make it harder for us to get a complete view of what the women we interviewed really think of their lives. As
Järviluoma, Koisala and Vilkko maintain:

“(…) every choice made by the scholar, his/her theoretical background, methodological tool and resources of interpretation, is loaded with ideological and other cultural assumptions”

The same goes for the interviewees who might find it more or less hard to interact with us, because of differences in for example age, sex, nationality, color etc.

4.3 Complementing information from organizations
We also interviewed local and international NGO:s working with women and/or migration, as well as a regional and a national ministry for the promotion of women. This enabled us to get a more complete idea of the situation of women in Mali, as well as a view of the general migration and remittances situation in the country. These interviews also complemented the information given to us from the interviewed women and helped confirm our conclusions and interpretations.

5. Theories
We use two main theories in our study. One is a framework theory called Gendered Geographies of Power. The other one is the concept of women’s empowerment, a branch of theories often used in the women and development research.

5.1 Gendered Geographies of Power
Gendered Geographies of Power is a framework theory developed by Pessar and Mahler in an attempt to “bring gender in” to migration studies. It is a framework for analyzing people’s gendered social agency, given their own initiative as well as their positioning within multiple hierarchies of power. The framework is intended to aid case and comparative study research and

30 Järviluoma, Koisala and Vilkko, p. 33.
the analysis of gender across transnational spaces.31

In the article “Transnational migration: Bringing gender in” the authors are deepening and broadening this model that consists of three fundamental elements: geographical scale, social locations and power geometries.

- The element geographical scale represents the understanding that gender operates simultaneously at several socio-spatial scales – the body, the family or household and the ethno-national group.
- The element social locations stands for individual’s positions within interconnected power hierarchies created through different factors such as kinship, history, economy and gender. A person’s social location can be anywhere from the most disadvantaged to the most privileged. We assume that remittances and migration affect these power hierarchies and perhaps change women’s social locations in the context they live in.
- The element power geometries means that while people are affected by the above stated social locations, they are also themselves affecting and asserting power over these forces and processes, such as migration and remittances. People can be contributors and/or prisoners in the processes and this affects the “power geometries” between the remittance senders and receivers.

These three elements will serve as a framework for our study, a sort of point of departure. However we have also chosen to look at how the lives of women in Mali are affected by migration and remittances through the concept of women’s empowerment. This will complement our first, more general theory.

5.2 Women’s empowerment – a question of measurement and values
This study aims at finding out which influences migration and international remittances have on women in Mali, both in the households and in society. This can be translated into the concept of

“empowerment”, which is discussed by among others the social economist Naila Kabeer.\(^{32}\)

Kabeer describes the difficulties in measuring and conceptualizing women’s empowerment and prefers describing it as form of social change, a process of change in one’s \textit{ability to make choices}.\(^{33}\) She suggests a set of three dimensions to describe changes in the ability of making choices:

- The first dimension is \textit{resources}, which can be material, social or human. They form the conditions under which choices are made.\(^{34}\) In our case the resources will be the remittances, but also women's actual situation, her knowledge, skills, obligations, expectations and social relationships. Access to resources depends on rules, norms and practices in the society women live in.

- The second dimension - \textit{agency} - refers to a person’s ability to define her life-choices and to act to achieve those. The agency can be positive and give power to do things, but it can also be negative in the sense of someone having power over someone else’s agency. It can also be individual or collective and include a wide range of actions such as negotiation, manipulation, resistance and protest. Here it is also important to include local and cultural norms which can deeply influence social behavior and one’s ability to make choices.\(^{35}\)

- Resources and agency together form the third dimension in Kabeer’s model; \textit{achievements}, which is people’s different ways of being and doing. Success or failure in achieving wanted beings and doings can, holds Kabeer, be taken as manifestations of empowerment or disempowerment.\(^{36}\)

To define one’s ability to make choices, a deeper reflection over those ‘choices’ needs to be

\begin{itemize}
\item \(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 18-19, 28 and p. 52
\item \(^{34}\) Ibid., p. 19, 21
\item \(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 21
\item \(^{36}\) Ibid.,p. 21-22
\end{itemize}
made. Kabeer writes that social norms can make it difficult to define gender inequalities as they sometimes can seem to have been chosen by women themselves. Women can be seen as a subordinate social group, both by men and by women themselves, and the acceptance of this lower status influences the choices they are able to make. This behavior derives from tradition and culture and is often inscribed in the taken-for-granted rules of every day social life, thus something naturalized and not questioned. There is even evidence of women making choices which are essentially disempowering and thereby reproducing gender inequalities, as conforming to certain social norms might give women greater respect in the community.

Kabeer explains that it is therefore important, though difficult, to distinguish between strategic life choices and more mundane choices, as well as to examine to which extent choices made have a potential of challenging and destabilizing existing inequalities. Instead of looking at actual choice she suggests potential choice as the important measurement of empowerment, as change in women’s access to resources does not always mean a change in the choices she is able to make. In our case, a woman might receive remittances, but if she has no say in how to use the money, her increased economic resources do not empower her. Remittances might therefore give women more material wealth, but might not necessarily transform into increased possibilities to make choices.

“(...) access to resources will only translate into empowerment if women are able to act on, or because of, these resources in some definite way.”

When studying empowerment we also need to consider the eventual problem of external values. If the achievements we define represent values of those who are measuring (the researchers) and not of the women we study, our results do not have much significance.

37 Ibid., p. 23-26
38 Ibid., p. 46
39 Ibid., p. 26
40 Ibid., p. 28-29
41 Ibid., p. 31
42 Ibid., p. 23, 49
6. Previous research

There are relatively few studies on the impact of migration and remittances on women with migrated husbands and/or women receiving remittances. Research tends to focus more on purely economic issues of migration and remittances and the potential economic development in the country of origin. Research is also more concentrated on the individuals actually migrating, rather than the ones left behind, receiving remittances.\(^{43}\) However, since a few years, there seems to be a growing interest in the broader social impacts of migration and remittances and in women's roles as migrants and remittance senders as well as remittance receivers.\(^{44}\) An example is a joint project started by UN INSTRAW and UNDP in 2007, based on case studies in six countries; Albania, Dominican Republic, Lesotho, Morocco, Philippines and Senegal. The project focuses on women-headed remittance households and aims at building what they call “gender responsive local-development” through remittances.\(^{45}\)

There are similar studies in other countries focusing on the women “left behind” when men migrate and possibly send money back to their families. In 2009, Lokshin and Glinskaya performed a study in Nepal on the effect of male migration on women’s employment patterns.\(^{46}\) Taylor, Moran-Taylor and Ruiz look at how transnational migration affects lives in Guatemala and one part of the study focuses specifically on so called gender transformation.\(^{47}\) In Burkina Faso, Hampshire examines the effect of migration on domestic organization among the Fulani

---

46 M Lokshin & E Glinskaya
ethnicity. In Albania, King, Mai and Dalipaj are looking at possible modifications of patriarchal structures due to migration. Sadiqi and Ennaj are examining the more general impact of male migration to Europe on women in Morocco and Nagla is looking at the emerge of female-headed families in India. Al-Shamarni investigates women's roles in transnational family networks in the Somali diaspora in Egypt.

All of these studies testify of very different and sometimes paradoxical effects of male migration on women's lives. As could have been expected, women claim both negative and positive aspects of migration, although none of these studies imply any radical change in gender roles due to migration and remittances.

When it comes to Malian migration in specific, there are a lot of studies on migration and remittance issues, especially in the Region of Kayes. However, these studies tend to focus on the development potential of remittances and the remittance habits of migrants in France and very little on the gender aspect of migration and remittances. One example is a study effectuated by Mirabet and Gendreau (2007), which shows that living conditions in Kayes do not differ much from other Malian regions and that positive economic effects of remittances in the country of origin cannot be taken for granted. One reason could be the so called “substitution effect” (our translation from the French “effet de substitution”), a theory developed in Kayes in 2000, which asserts that remittances certainly increase the income of the households, but when the money is taken for granted it causes lack of efforts from the individuals in other areas. Remittances act as a substitution for income generating activities among those who receive the

51 M Al-Sharmarni, 'Transnational family networks in the Somali diaspora in Egypt: women's roles and differentiated experiences', *Gender Place and Culture*, Volume 17, Issue 4, 2010
52 Interviews with OIM, Bamako and GRDR, Kayes
53 M Ballo, p. 83.
remittances. Instead of investing the money or improving for example the agriculture, the theory suggests that people tend to work less. This study does not focus specifically on women, although in Kayes, women are often the ones left behind when men migrate.

7. Migration and remittance impact on women: the fieldwork results

In this chapter we will present the results of our study. The research questions will be discussed separately and in order. To understand the importance of remittances we have chosen to look at Kayes in the two first sections and then compare with the results from Sikasso in the third section.

7.1 Migration impact on gender roles in households and communities in Kayes

In this section we will describe how migration and remittances affect gender roles in households and communities in Kayes. First we will explain two important concepts when it comes to gender roles in Mali, after that we will account for the social change migration has brought to Kayes.

7.1.1 The head of household and the enlarged family

A conclusion from the field study in the Region of Kayes in Mali is that migration and remittances have very little impact on gender roles in the households. Women's roles are not changed or reinforced and women have often very little influence on the money sent to the family. The absence of a husband does not change the status of the woman and her influence over household decisions does not increase. This is due to the persistent family structures people in Mali live in, especially in rural areas. On the other hand we did not find any evidence that women were disempowered in any way by migration or that their status or social location in the households and the community were lessened.54

A concept that is inevitable when you talk about family structure, gender roles and decisions in households in Mali, is the concept of the head of household. The head of household is the economic and moral guardian of the family and has the final word when it comes to

54 Interviews with women in Kayes
decisions making. He, because it is always a he with very few exceptions, has to be asked for permission for anything that goes beyond normal routines in the family and will stay head of household until the day he dies.\textsuperscript{55} The head of household is responsible for the financial and emotional well being of the family and the equal treatment of all family members.

“When you say chef, it is really the CHEF (‘chef de famille’ in French means head of household, \textit{author’s remark}). There is no debate. (...) and generally, the woman is a maid”\textsuperscript{56}

If the head of households migrates he will have obvious difficulties exercising his power and another family member will become head of household in his absence. This is usually a younger brother. Therefore, when the husband migrates and leaves his wife behind, she will automatically fall under the authority of another man. If the migrant is not the head of household, the place of his wife in the household is even more unchanged because she stays under the same authority as before, for example the father or the older brother of her husband.\textsuperscript{57}

Husbands rarely send money directly to their wives, at least in rural areas where the traditional family structure is most explicit. It is often the head of household who receives the money, which he distributes to family members according to their needs. It is also the migrant or the head of household who determine the needs of the family, sometimes expressed by individual family members, for example the wife (or wives).\textsuperscript{58} As Kabeer points out:

“The terms on which people gain access to resources are as important as the resources themselves when the issue of empowerment is being considered. (...) Empowerment entails a change in the terms on which the resources are acquired

\textsuperscript{55} Interview with OIM, Bamako
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Explained in interviews with for example OIM, Bamako, CAMIDE, Kayes, CAFO, Kayes and confirmed by interviews with women in Kayes and Sikasso
\textsuperscript{58} Interviews with OIM, Bamako and CAMIDE, Kayes
Remittances give women an increased access to resources, but the terms by which the resources are distributed are in line with the overall domination of men in the Malian society. Remittances do not seem to empower women, at least not in any direct way. Neither does the absences of a husband give women increased influence over family decisions or a greater freedom to make choices on their own life situations, at least not in general.

In Mali, the more traditional enlarged family is the norm. When a woman marries she moves to her husband's family and becomes a part of it. She lives together with not only her husband's parents, but also his brothers and their wives and children and perhaps also one or two other co-wives and their children. As explained before remittances are normally sent to the head of household and are intended for the family as a whole. The family receives the money as a collective and it is the head of household who distributes them according to the needs of the family. This way of organizing the households prevents women from benefiting directly from remittances. Even if many women stated that they can decide themselves for the part they receive, that money is often destined to be used for things that the women would anyway be responsible for, and does therefore not change their possibilities to make choices or decisions or challenge existing values. Here it can be difficult to clearly see if women chose this themselves or if they were limited by the existing social norms and values, as mentioned in the theory section of this paper.

It is important to point out that we saw a slight difference between women in rural areas and women in urban areas. In the city, traditional family values are less obvious and some families live in a more nuclear type of family. Here some women received remittances directly from their husbands.

---

59 N Kabeer, p. 20
60 Interviews with women in Kayes
61 Interviews with women in Kayes
62 Interview with GRDR, Kayes
“Over there (in the city, author's remark) you don't necessarily live with the
grandfather or the brother and for the women I think that there is a transfer of
decisions that gives the woman a role of head of household, when the husband is
not there.” 63

In urban areas where the traditional values are more loosened up and the concept of the collective
is weakened, women sometimes receive remittances directly. Depending on how authoritarian
her husband is she might have the possibility to decide on the money and benefit more directly.

7.1.2 New family dynamics and habits

As concluded in the previous chapter, we have a hard time seeing women being empowered by
the absence of their husbands, at least in any direct way, but migration and remittances obviously
affect women's lives in Kayes. As we have seen in previous chapters, the Region of Kayes is
characterized by migration. Men can leave Mali and stay away for their whole active working
life and not return permanently until their retirement. As soon as a migrant receives his papers
and can stay legally in the country of destination (and then also leave and return as he wants) he
tries to return to see his family, but this can take years or even decades.

Migration and remittances is seen as a way of ensuring the survival of one's family.
Marrying a migrant is seen as a strategy to ensure the survival of your children and family and
give them a more stable life. 64 Women with husbands at home envied women with migrated
husbands and their increased material wealth and security. But they also expressed negative sides
of migration such as difficulties raising children alone and the emotional stress of having your
husband away for years without seeing him. They also mentioned divorces and children born
outside of marriage as negative effects of migration. 65 This was also confirmed by women having
migrated husbands, even though people talked about a growing acceptance in the region for
children born outside marriage. Husbands now tend to accept such events when leaving their
wives for years and support the children as if they were their own.

63 GRDR, Kayes
64 Interview with GRDR, Kayes
65 Interviews with women in Kayes
"The migrant comes back after five years and finds out that there is a two year old boy, but the family covers all that and the migrant often says: yes, this is my son. There is a system that is put in place to regulate all that."  

This change in behavior shows that migration can change traditional gender values. That can be seen as a sign of empowerment as it gives women the possibility to make choices they could not have made before. Although, on the other hand this can also be seen as a sign of acceptance of events that husbands cannot control. The husbands choose to blunder and accept the fact that this is likely to happen when he is away for decades. In this case we cannot talk about empowerment.

Two organizations mentioned that some migrated men are affected by European family values and try to pass around the traditional Malian family values by sending money directly to their wife secretly, although we cannot judge how widespread this phenomenon is.  

"(...) some (men, author's remark) are conservative and do not change opinion at all, but some change opinion and say: but from now on I would like to run my family alone, a bit 'à l'européen', and the culture clash gives a sort of cross-breeding of the cultural way of thinking and that makes them want their wife to be more... to take part of the decisions."  

The power geometries, mentioned in Pessar's and Mahler's theory Gendered Geographies of Power, between husband and wife are then affected. The migration of the husband changes his values and gives him the ability to make his wife participate more in the decision-making. He is then asserting power over the social location of himself and the wife. This could entail increased possibilities for the woman to make choices and might therefore empower her, but in general traditional gender roles and women's position in the household are not changed due to migration and remittances.

66 Interview with GRDR, Kayes  
67 Interviews with GRDR and AMRK, Kayes  
68 Interview with GRDR, Kayes
7.2 Migration, remittances and women's activity outside the household
This chapter will discuss whether migration and remittances make women more active in society, for example in projects or as income providers, because of improved economic possibilities. The substitution effect and women's eventual passivity due to increased remittances will also be treated.

7.2.1 Women as providers
Most women in Mali work with agriculture, mainly cultivating millet, sorghum, rice, corn, peanuts and cotton. In rural areas men and women complement each other. Each family has its own fields where necessities for the whole family are grown. The family field is under the responsibility of the head of household, who is also in charge of the equal distribution to each part of the family. Men mainly work in the fields while women take care of the domestic work and the children. Very often women also help out in the family fields.

In the groups Soninké, Moor and Bamanan/Bambara for example, many women also disposes of own fields, which they work to support their families. There they often grow vegetables, as women's responsibility is to provide the sauces for the meals. Rice, millet and other cereals is the responsibility of the men. The time a woman has to dedicate to her own field work might be limited though, as she needs to spend a lot of time on domestic work, which is almost entirely the women's responsibility. Many women also run a small business along with their domestic and/or agricultural work. This often includes selling vegetables, other agricultural products, wood, herbs, or snacks at the local market or in town. This activity often increases in bad times or during the dry season when the agricultural production is lower. Such business activity seems to be looked upon as a sort of last possible solution, when other income generating activities are not enough for the survival of the family.

The well organized migration from Kayes and the significant amounts of remittances the
region receives, help women provide more nutritious and varied food for themselves and their families, to put their children in school and to get a materially richer life. The migrants' organizations in France even finance facilities such as shops where the migrants pay directly to the association in France, for food their families then can go and get in the shop.\textsuperscript{73} Sometimes families in Kayes can also choose to hire a domestic servant to ease the heavy workload of the women.

It is important to remember that increased material wealth does not necessarily mean increased empowerment.\textsuperscript{74} Even though we have seen that women's general well being in Kayes is increased due to migration and remittances, their possibilities to make life choices do not seem to change much.

When a man from Kayes migrates his work is generally taken over by a male relative, for example a brother or an uncle, but it happens that his wife or wives takes on part of it as well. After a couple of months the migrant going to France often manages to start sending money to his family, and generally he continues to do so proximately every 1-3 months. Once he starts being able to send home money, the pressure on the family decreases a lot and the wives can often lessen their work load. This can clearly be seen in Kayes where only three out of the ten interviewed women whose husbands had migrated said they were cultivating and only one was running a business activity. For the majority of them the biggest change in their lives since their husbands left also had to do with a better economy and/or that they did not have to sell things at the market any more.\textsuperscript{75}

“I work a lot less now. I get money so I don't have to work as much any more. I take care of my children instead.”\textsuperscript{76}

Most of the women in Kayes whose husbands are at home also found their own economic situation worse than that of women with migrated husbands.

\textsuperscript{73} Interview with CAMIDE, Kayes
\textsuperscript{74} N Kabeer, p.22-23
\textsuperscript{75} Interviews with women in Kayes
\textsuperscript{76} Soninke woman in Kayes town, wife to a migrant, 25\textsuperscript{th} of October 2010
The remittances that women receive are often used for consumption goods such as sauce ingredients, clothes, soap, medicine or things for the children. No one of the interviewed women mentioned that she uses the remittances to create an income generating activity. Why this is, might be hard to tell but one possible reason is that the amount of remittances is enough just for the basic living. People in rural Mali also live on a day to day basis where savings for the future are hard to make. Another reason might be that the women find it hard to get time for yet another activity in their already heavily loaded schedule.

7.2.2 Passivity vs. more spare time

Wives to migrants seem to be happier with life in general and more relaxed than the women whose husbands are at home – if the migrants send them remittances that is. Several of the women are also happy to work less than they did before. With the heavy workload that women in Mali carry (generally they work more than 14 hours a day), it would be wrong to criticize them for becoming lazy due to the remittances they receive from their migrated husbands. If remittances give a woman more time to dedicate to other activities than work, and if she at the same time is able to eat and dress better, it should not be seen as a negative thing.

On the other hand leaving all economic responsibility in the hands of the migrated husband makes the wife more dependent on him for her own survival. That could cause her problems if he for some reason would stop sending her money. The “substitution effect”, elaborated by Mirabet and Gendreau, can here be applied on the women. Women’s work, for example with agriculture or other income generating activities, is partly substituted by the remittances they receive. The women we met did not seem to make any investments or improvements in already existing income generating activities by the remittances they received.

But according to one organization women were more passive ten years ago and counted a lot more on the remittances from their migrated husbands.

77 Interviews with women in Kayes
78 E Evers Rosander, p. 35
79 M Ballo, p. 83
80 Interview with CAFO, Kayes
“The sugar is finished – call Paris!”

This change might be due to a general improvement of women’s situations most probably it is more a consequence of harsher and more unstable conditions for the migrants in Europe (now a days it is both harder to get papers and to find a job in Europe for a migrant). In that case women cannot stay passive and have to work harder to help support their families.

“What he (the husband, author’s remark) sends – will that be enough until next time he sends, if that takes 1 month, 2 months, 3 months... And during that time there might be 3 or 4 kids who are at school and that needs to be paid for, as well as their well being and clothes. If the woman will limit herself to what her husband sends her (...) that is a problem for her and she is therefore obliged to run a small business, or at least some kind of income generating activity”.

This leads us to the theory about empowerment as a process of change in one’s ability to make choices. If it is the woman's own choice to leave her income generating activity because of her husband’s remittances, that could be seen as a sign of empowerment. But if she on the other hand would leave the activity because of for example social pressure, or if her stronger dependence on her husband would prevent her from making future choices, that should be seen more as a manifestation of disempowerment. Whether this change is something positive or negative for the woman's empowerment is more a question of how you value the woman’s choice and the consequences such choice might entail. Even if their resources (the remittances) are increased, women's increased possibilities to make choices are very limited and therefore there are very few empowering achievements. Her life standard might increase, but for that to work as empowering for her, changes in patriarchal structures are needed as well. The resources are distributed according to these structures, which limit the way she uses the money.

81 Interviews with AMRK and CAFO, Kayes, about the attitude among some migrants' relatives
82 N Kabeer, p. 18-19, 28 and 52
83 See Kabeer's discussion about Resources, Agency, Achievements
7.2.3 Women in associations and society

In Mali there are a large number of associations and organizations with different focuses and many of those are female. They work with for example gardening, breeding, agriculture or transformation of agricultural products. There are also so called caisses d'épargne where individuals in for example a village, a municipality or a block get together to save money.

In Kayes, the women with migrant husbands seem to be active in women's associations, micro credit groups or caisses d'épargne to a larger extent than women whose husbands are at home. Among the women whose husbands are at home the reason for them not to take part was mainly that they did not have time for it or that they did not afford it. Migrants' wives who were not part of an association, micro credit groups or caisse d'épargne said it was because they did not want to take part. As a woman who receives remittances is often better off than a woman who does not, it might also be more likely that she gets involved in associations.

It is important though to remember that the increase in the number of women's associations during the last years also has other reasons than migration and remittances. The main one is probably the national efforts that have been made to start promoting women. One of our translators was surprised by the way in which women dared to speak to us about their situations and problems, and she said that was something they would not have done ten years ago. Remittances might then be a pre-condition or facilitating factor - for women to join an association, as it gives them more money and time to spend on such activities.

There are also a few success stories in Kayes where women's associations are financed by remittances from migrants in France. One example is found in the “cercle” of Yelimané, a region extremely affected by migration and where agriculture possibilities are poor. In Yelimané

84 Interview with CAFO, Kayes
85 The savings collected in caisse d'épargne are used for different purposes, for example to help individuals in the group when they are in special need. It can also be for common purposes. The difference between a caisse d'épargne and a micro credit group is that the caisse d'épargne is financed by the members themselves and there are no loans involved.
86 Interviews with women in Kayes.
87 E Evers Rosander, p. 46
88 Discussions with Bougou Coulibaly, journalist, translator and women’s activist in Sikasso.
89 “Cercle” in French is an administrative division and consists of several municipalities.
there is a development cooperation between micro credit groups, international NGO:s, the state and migrants' associations and the objective is to develop that cooperation further. The wish is to make even better organized use of the remittances and to make migrants want to invest in the region\textsuperscript{90}, which would of course be beneficial also for women. This is no general trend yet though, and it is once again important to remember that migration and remittances are only variables in the process. If a women's association of any kind is created in Kayes, it is also very likely that a big part of the participants are wives to migrants, simply because there is already a big percentage of them in the region.

Thus, the reason for the associations to start might not be migration and remittances, but remittances might be one of the causes of the increase we see in women's activity in such groups, one part in the running of the activity and an important pre-condition and motivation for women to join. The future of the remittance flow seems to be unstable, and associations and investment opportunities might therefore become more and more important, if the impact of migration and remittances is to be beneficial for the region also in the future.

Because of more spare time and funds, due to remittances, a woman can make the choice to join an organization and this is empowering in itself. Furthermore as a member she gains new resources that can work empowering for her. On the other hand her access to this organization depends on her husband's approval. Once again, basic changes in gender roles are needed for remittances and migration to have a clear impact on women's empowerment.

To conclude, women in Kayes work less because of the remittances they receive from their migrated husbands, but even if this might make them more dependent on the men than they were before, that should not be seen as negative in this context. Their lessened work load and improved economy allows them to be more active in associations which could work empowering for them.

\textsuperscript{90} Interviews with CAFO and CAMIDE, Kayes
7.3 Sikasso - migration but no remittances

This chapter discusses the different impact migration has in Sikasso, compared to Kayes, because of lack of remittances. Both migrants’ wives and wives to men living at home are included in the analysis.

7.3.1 Women as unwanted providers or negative empowerment

As we have seen the migration situation in Sikasso is very different from the one in Kayes. The destinations are different, the migration in Sikasso is not as well organized as in Kayes and the amount of remittances sent to Sikasso is far below the sums that Kayes receives. Men in Sikasso often migrate before they marry and then come back after a few years. Therefore there are also fewer women who have their husbands living abroad. Furthermore, the work the migrants take on at their migration destination (mainly the Ivory Coast) are lower payed than those in France, which makes it harder for them to send home money to support their families. The recent cotton crisis further worsened the economic situation both in Sikasso and in the Ivory Coast.

The migrants' wives seem to live a much harder life in Sikasso than in Kayes. Very few of them receive remittances, and even if they do it is only about once or twice a year. Many women never receive any news from their husbands, do not know what they do abroad or not even where they are. Some know that their husbands have taken new wives at the destination and that they now use their money to support their new families. Even though the husband abandons his wife in this way, she is obliged to stay in his family and work for them. Remarrying is rarely an option even though the husband has been away for years or even decades.

“Since he left she has not heard from him at all. He does not send anything, she does not know what he does over there. He left 13 year ago. No news, nothing, nothing...”

91 Interviews with women in Sikasso
92 M Ballo, p. 37
93 Translator Bougou Coulibaly during an interview with a Djula woman, wife to a migrant, in the village of Finkolo, Sikasso region, 19th of November 2010.
To be able to support her children the wife is also forced to work harder, for example selling vegetables, wood or snacks at the market or in the village. The husband’s family often tries to help her if they can, but because of poverty the help might be sufficient only for very basic needs such as food. Many migrants’ wives complained about not being able to send their children to school or afford health care. Even though almost all women said that their husbands’ migration gave them much more responsibilities, and often also more work, they did not get more independence from it and this should not be seen a sign of empowerment, but instead more of disempowerment, or as we chose to call it – negative empowerment.

“All too much, it (the work load, author's remark) has increased too much! The other men do not care about her and she has been really sick this year. Not even her family helps her. She is alone.”

All of the interviewed women in Sikasso whose husbands are at home also found the life of a migrant woman harder than their own lives.94 The fact that women become providers of their families must not be seen as positive empowerment, if it is not the choice of the women themselves.

The attitude towards migration is therefore very different in the two regions. While it is the dream of almost every young girl in Kayes to marry a migrant, it is a nightmare in Sikasso. The answer to the question of what the biggest change in their life is since their husbands migrated, was for the majority of the women in Sikasso that their economy is now worse than before – the opposite to the results in Kayes. Many also expressed that if their husbands would have been at home, they would have been happier. Looking at the situation from the women's perspective it is therefore motivated to say that the positive effects of migration and remittances, as well as people's attitudes towards those, largely depend on whether or not the migrant succeeds in sending enough money to his family in a regular way so as to impact in a positive sense the family living standard.

94 Translator Bougou Coulibaly during an interview with a Sénoufo woman, wife to a migrant, in the village of Sokorani, Sikasso region, 20th of November 2010.
95 Interviews with women in Sikasso
7.3.2 Migration and social exclusion

In both Sikasso and Kayes, many women are active in different sorts of associations, micro credit groups and caisses d'épargne. An interesting difference between the two regions is seen among the migrant's wives. In Sikasso those women do not seem to be part of such groups to the same extent as other women. This might have economic reasons (a migrant's wife in Sikasso is often one of the poorest individuals in society and might therefore not afford neither the demanded fees, nor the time needed for engagement in these associations\(^\text{96}\)), but it might also have to do with the social exclusion that many women feel exposed to due to their husbands' migration. Some of them do not dare to enter any female group because they fear that other women might talk bad about them. Others are afraid of going to see their friends or family in the evenings, as being seen outside the home could be looked upon in a bad way by other villagers – where is this woman actually going? Is she seeing someone else now that her husband is abroad?\(^\text{97}\) This seems to be a bigger problem in Sikasso than in Kayes, and migrants' wives in Sikasso generally seem lonelier and sometimes bitter. Through interviews with organizations we understood that this could also be related to the different cultures in Sikasso and Kayes. In Sikasso, a traditional agricultural society, a person who migrates increase the heavy work burden of the rest of the family and is therefore often looked bad upon. This could also affect the way in which people look upon that man's wife.

Furthermore, the social structure in Sikasso is not as adapted to the migration as it is in Kayes. For example, to accept children born outside marriage by a migrant's wife whose husband has been away for a long time, does not seem to happen in Sikasso to the same extent as in Kayes. It is also important to remember that all the social benefits due to remittances in Kayes, such as schools, health centers and infra structure, are not a reality in Sikasso. This affects the daily lives of both men and women, and even though increased material wealth does not necessarily have a positive impact on women's empowerment\(^\text{98}\), it can be one of the tools or variables in the process. More money and more accessible health care and education are tools

\(^{96}\) Interview with CAFO, Kayes  
\(^{97}\) Interviews with women in Sikasso and with OIM, Bamako  
\(^{98}\) N Kabeer, p. 22.
that at least could be used to create women's empowerment, but as mentioned before that is only possible if there are other variables too, such as general attitudes and equal laws. Even though it is hard to see that migration and remittances in Kayes should have created any remarkable change in women's empowerment compared to in Sikasso, we can see that the potential - the tools - for such change are there.99

8. Conclusions
In our study, migration and remittances seem to have little influence on the empowerment of women in Mali. Migration and remittances do not increase women's ability to make strategic life choices. Women's decision making in the households was not affected by the migration of their husbands, due to the strong tradition of men as decision-makers and heads of households. A woman's social location is not changed because of migration and remittances and whether the power geometries change or not depend mostly on the husband’s willingness for them to do so.

Neither did we see any clear correlation between migration and remittances and increased activity in associations and projects among women. On the other hand if the migrant succeeds in sending a sufficient amount of money on a regular basis, women could choose to ease their work burden and therefore have the time and funds to engage in such activities. In that case remittances might be one variable in women's empowerment process. But resources by themselves are not empowering, if they do not also give her the agency to achieve wanted changes. For women to truly benefit from remittances and migration in Mali changes in traditional gender values and legislation are needed.

When a woman due to migration and remittances is able to choose to work less, this can be considered an empowerment. On the other hand, if she has her own income generating activity which she chooses to leave, this can mean that she is more dependent on her husband than before and therefore disempower her. If a women due to migration is forced to work more because her husband has abandoned her and does not send any money, her increased work

99 Interviews with women in Kayes and Sikasso, with CAMIDE, Kayes and with Promotion de la Femme, Bamako.
burden must be seen as disempowering.

We can also conclude that migration and its effects on women's lives and empowerment depend on the social structure of the society they live in as well as on cultural values, tradition, and the amount and sustainability of the remittances they receive. It is also important to remember that women are affected by migration and remittances not only as wives but also as mothers, sisters and children to migrants. More research is needed to get a complete understanding of the relation between women's empowerment and migration and remittances.

9. Appendix

9.1 Questions to the women whose husbands have migrated

1. Can you describe a normal day of your life?
2. What is your occupation?
3. How many children do you have?
4. Who is the head of household here?
5. Where has your husband migrated?
6. What kind of job does he have over there?
7. What kind of job did he have before leaving?
8. When did he leave?
9. Does he come back from time to time?
10. Do you work more or less after his departure?
11. Who does now do the work your husband did before leaving?
12. What is the biggest change in your life since he left?
13. Do you miss your husband?
14. What do you find most difficult when your husband is absent?
15. Do women get more or less responsibilities for the family when the men are gone?
16. Who receives the remittances?
17. How often do you receive money from your husband?
18. How do you receive the money?
19. What do you use the money for?
20. Who decides on what to use the money?
21. When your husband is gone, who makes the decisions in your family?
22. Would your situation be different if you did not receive remittances? In what way?
23. Will your husband come back in the future?
24. What is your husband's level of education?
25. What is your level of education?
26. How many wives does your husband have?
27. Are you active in any association or women's project?

9.2 Questions to the women whose husbands are at home

1. Can you describe a normal day of your life?
2. What is your occupation?
3. How many children do you have?
4. Who is the head of household here?
5. What are your responsibilities in the family?
6. What are your husband's responsibilities?
7. Do you have friends whose husbands have migrated? Do you find your situation similar to theirs?
8. Do women get more or less responsibilities for the family when the men are gone?
9. Do women work more or less when their husbands have migrated?
10. Have you and your husband discussed the possibility of migrating? What would be positive and negative for your with migration?
11. What is your husband's level of education?
12. What is your level of education?
13. How many wives does your husband have?
14. Are you active in any association or women's project?
15. Has your husband always been here or has he migrated earlier?
10. References

Books:

Scientific articles:
- Smith, Z, 'Mali’s Decade of Democracy', *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 12, Number 3,


**Reports:**


Webpages:


Newspaper articles:


Interviews:

- Bougou Coulibaly, journalist, translator and women's activist in Sikasso, Sokourani, 2010
- Fousseni Dembele at GRADECOM, Sikasso, 9th and 22nd of November 2010
- Cheick Diallo and Siriman Dembele at AMRK, Kayes, 26th of October 2010
- Lassana Diombana at OIM, Bamako, 30th of November 2010
- Aminata Fabou Traoré at Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme de l'Enfant et de la Famille, Bamako, 3rd of December 2010
- Harouna Samassa at CAMIDE, Kayes, 30th of October 2010
- Mariam Sow at CAFO, Kayes, 26th of October 2010
- Zaynab Tera at GRDR, Kayes, 28th of October 2010

- 20 women in Kayes, from the 22nd of October to the 25th of October 2010, performed in Bangassy, Samé, Bangassy-Pobela and the City of Kayes
- 20 women in Sikasso, from the 15th of November to the 22nd of November 2010, performed in Finkolo, Missirikoro, Kadoila, Sokourani, Gongasso and the City of Sikasso