

Development with Care:

Migrant Families and Australia's Pacific Labour Scheme



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Overview

Temporary Labour Migration

- Guestworker Schemes
- Costs and Benefits

Transnational Care Practices

PLS Research

- Aims and Methods
- Preliminary Findings

Tentative Conclusions



Temporary Labour Migration

Two major waves of 'guestworker' or temporary labour migration schemes (Sarkar 2017):

- Post-WWII migration regimes in Western Europe and North America (e.g. *Gastarbeiters*)
- Labour migration to the Gulf from the 1970s and East/Southeast Asia from the 1980s

Common features of contemporary TLM schemes:

- Demand driven, typically in lower-wage industries
- Employer-tied visas
- 2-3 year contracts, distinct from seasonal employment
- Individual entry permits (no familial accompaniment)
- 'Circular' – i.e. no pathways to permanent emigration and likelihood of repetition

Temporary Labour Migration

The Pacific Labour Scheme is, in many ways, Australia's first true guestworker program:

- 1-3 year, employer-sponsored visas for market-tested employment in rural and regional Australia
- Initially limited to hospitality and tourism, aged care and non-seasonal agriculture > now open
- 'Low and semi-skilled' workers (ANZSCO level 3/4/5) aged 21-45
- Initially capped at 2000 placements > now uncapped
- No familial accompaniment
- No extended stay or permanent residency
- One year 'cooldown' period before repeat participation

North Australian Worker Pilot Program (NAWPP) 2016-2018: Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru

Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS): Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru 07/18 > Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu 09/18
> Tonga and Timor-Leste 11/18 > PNG 03/19 > Fiji 04/19

Temporary Labour Migration

Policy rationale of 'triple win' migration

- ❖ Receiving countries: benefit from access to 'flexible' labour markets
- ❖ Sending countries: benefit from reduced unemployment, 'brain circulation', financial and social remittances
- ❖ Migrants: benefit from improved wages, new skills and opportunities to invest remittances

Promotes temporary labour migration: permanent emigration deemed erode the 'wins' for sending/receiving countries – i.e. less 'flexibility' and fewer remittances

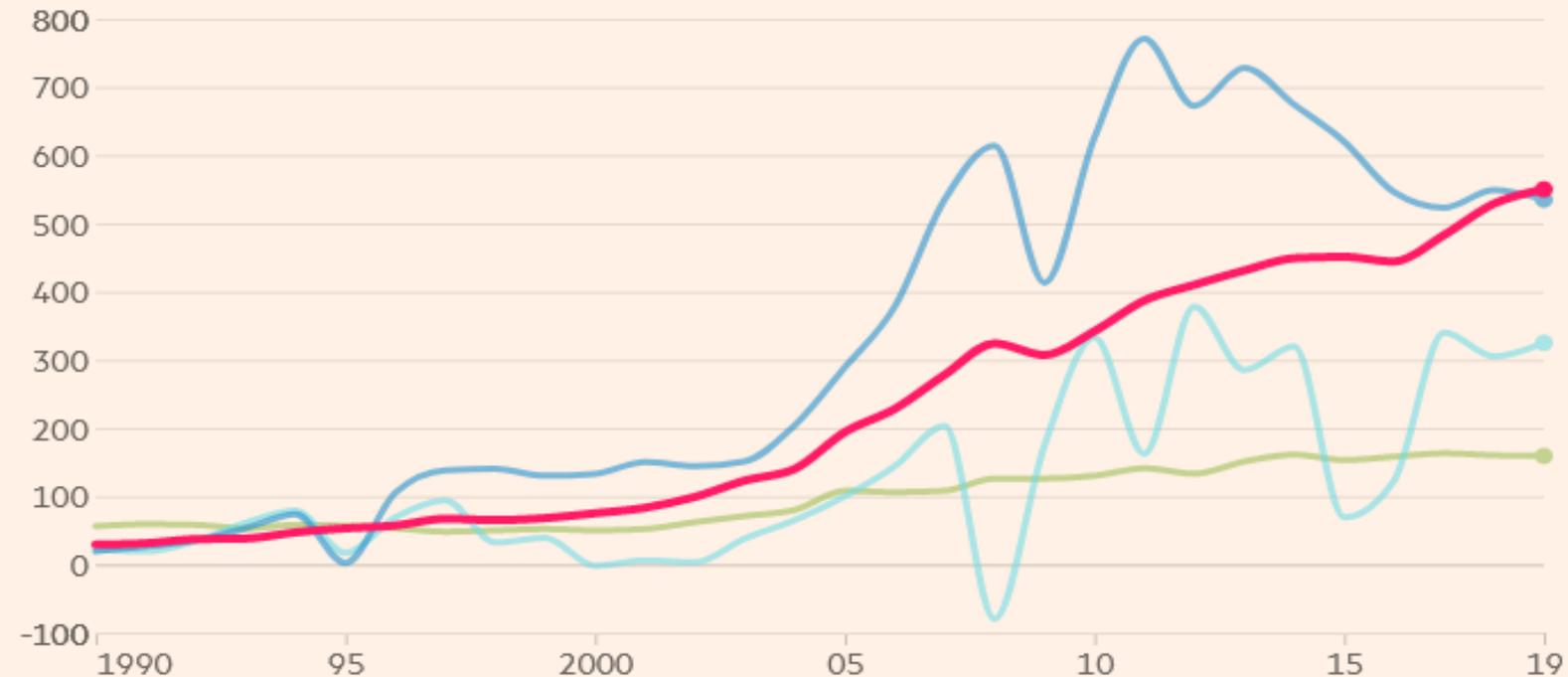
Remittances seen as a stable (countercyclical) source of developmental capital that 'flows directly to those most in need' (Ratha 2007)

Temporary Labour Migration

Enthusiasm for 'Triple Win' bolstered by global growth of remittance flows...

Remittances have overtaken **FDI**, **private capital flows** and **aid** as the largest inflow of capital to emerging economies

Capital inflows (\$bn)



Temporary Labour Migration

Outcomes typically evaluated via a narrow measure of 'the economy'

CBA typically weighs the benefits of remittances against mobility costs (e.g. recruitment fees) and the counterfactual of forgone local employment

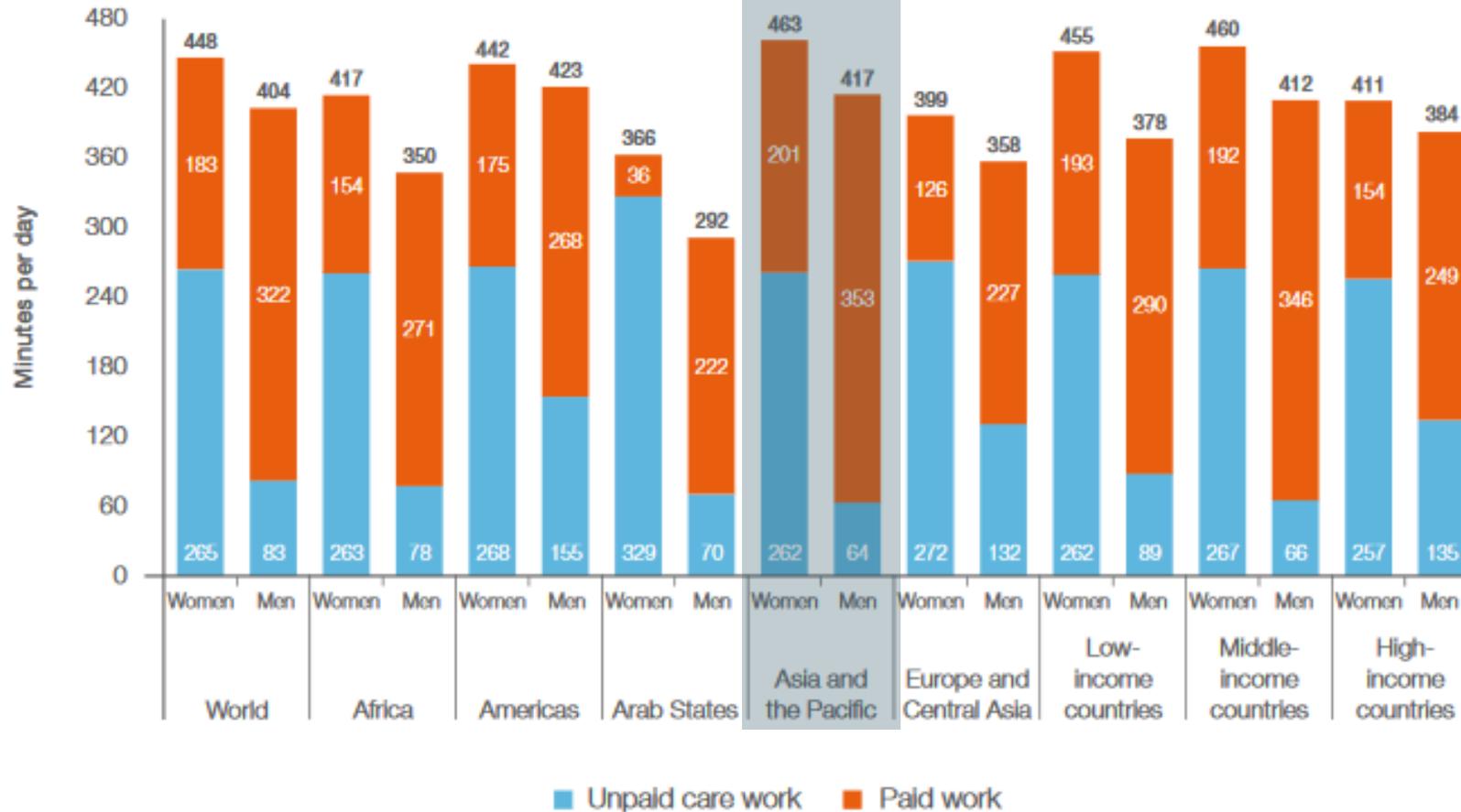
Little consideration is given to the disruption of various forms of unpaid care that sustain everyday life: care is gendered, 'invisible' and treated as an implicitly infinite resource

In Sri Lanka, prolonged transnational separation has created problems concerning the gendered division of care, as well as maintenance of relationships and social connections

Migration is not an individual pursuit, but a household strategy. It displaces productive *and* reproductive labour, while only compensating for the former

Temporary Labour Migration

And, in the case of feminised migration, it can be a lot of reproductive labour to compensate for (ILO 2018)...



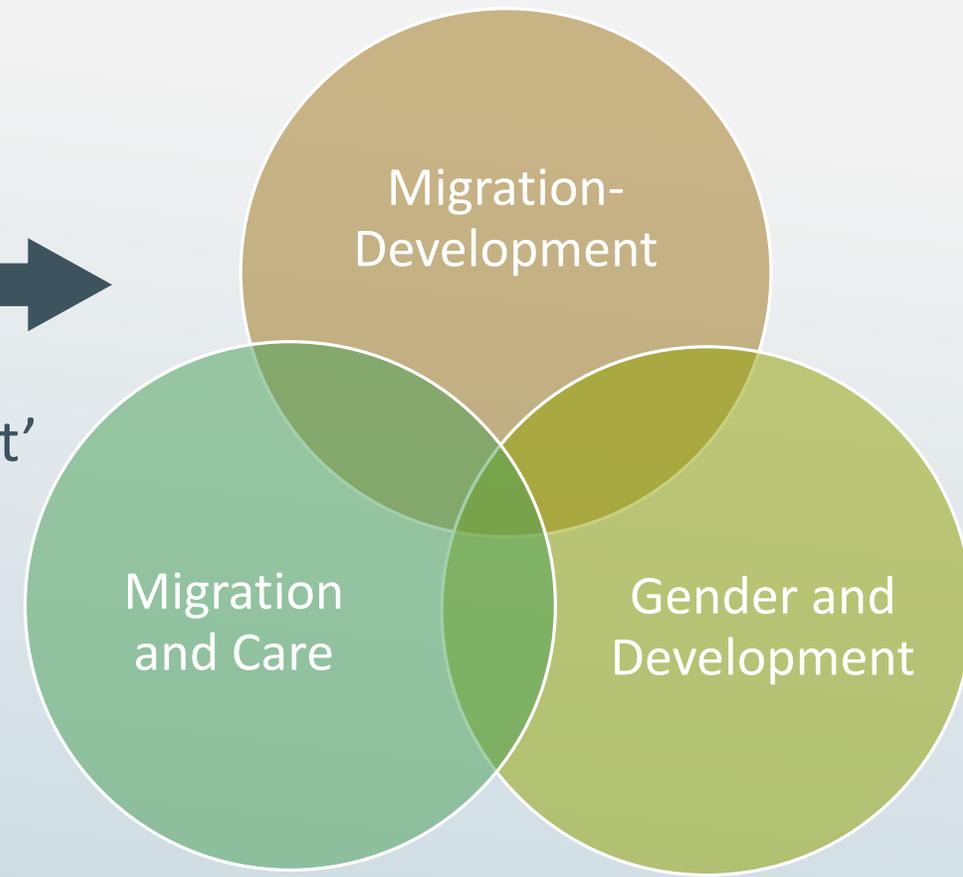
Transnational Care Practices

Three partially overlapping literatures



None sufficiently theorise a 'migration-care-development' nexus that links:

- gendered asymmetries in unpaid care work;
- with changes to work/care patterns during migration;
- and how this might affect development outcomes



Contribution: to situate care work as integral to the 'migration-development' debate, but also to locate continuity/change in care practices maintained during migration

Mapping the transnational disassembly/reassembly of care practices: neither as unidirectional as a 'global care chain' (Parreñas 1999; Hochschild 2000) nor as reciprocal as 'care circulation' (Baldassar and Merla 2014)

Transnational Care Practices

- **Taxonomy of Care**

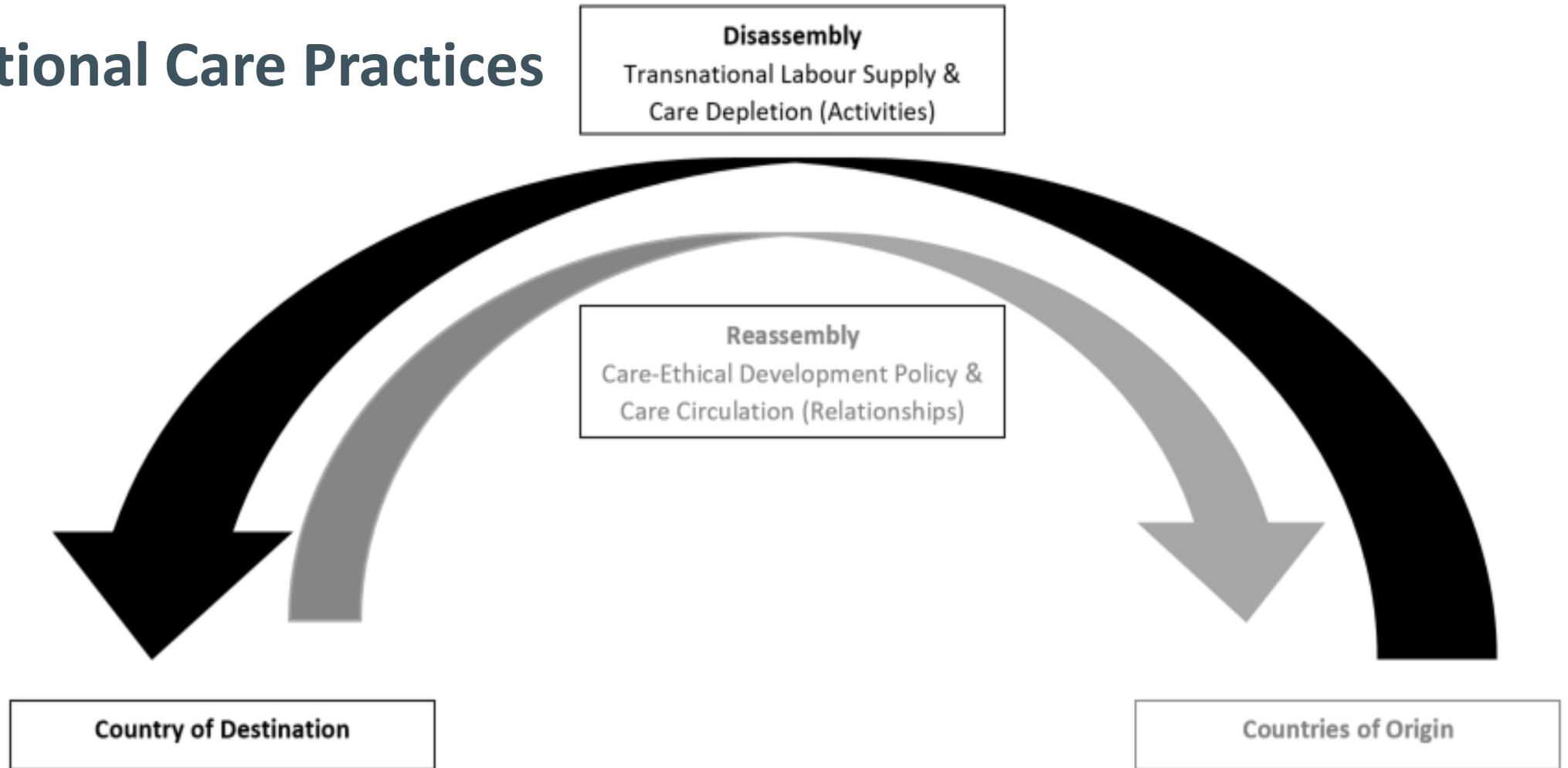
- o Care Work: Proximate Activities (Esquivel 2014)

- Direct Care (e.g. interpersonal caregiving)
 - Indirect Care (e.g. cooking and cleaning)
 - Community Care (e.g. social, cultural and environmental reproduction)

- o Care Relationships: Aspatial Roles (Tronto 1993, Doucet 2015)

- Emotional Responsibilities (awareness of, and responsiveness to, others' needs)
 - Moral Responsibilities (e.g. managing social expectations and gender ideologies)

Transnational Care Practices



Care Regime	Familial / Formal	Familial / Informal
Work Regime	More Regulated / Structural Demand for Migrant Labour	Less Regulated / Subsistence Agriculture / Few Growth Industries

Pacific Labour Scheme

Research Aims and Methods

How do migrant households participating in the Pacific Labour Scheme manage their care responsibilities and familial/social relationships during periods of separation?

1. In-depth interviews with I-Kiribati workers + families that participated in the NAWPP scheme: Hamilton and Hayman Islands (QLD); South Tarawa
2. Conducting longitudinal family studies with I-Kiribati, ni-Vanuatu and Tongan families with one or both partners participating in the PLS: Bundanoon (NSW), Mildura (VIC), Narrogin, Katanning, Kojoonup (WA); Port Vila, Nuku'alofa



Pacific Labour Scheme

Preliminary Findings - NAWPP Evaluation

- Very high income differentials (~20x) – “We earn more than our President”
- Family separation common in Kiribati, but usually without social integration of PLS
- High rates of relationship breakdown among Hamilton Island workers (~8/36)
- Reliance on video calls to maintain relationships... but also to play out care roles and witness milestones in family life, e.g. the birth of a child or newly learned words
- Active roles in organising care for children, e.g. monitoring and instruction
- ‘Remitting care’ – also a common practice, e.g. material gifts a substitute for care
- Little desire to return to Kiribati, emphasis on repeat migration or using PLS savings to finance migration to a third country (Fiji; Marshall Islands > US)

Pacific Labour Scheme

Preliminary Findings - Longitudinal Family Studies

- Family studies revealed a plurality of household care arrangements and gender norms
- Two ni-Vanuatu couples recruited simultaneously to work at the same site: both had multiple dependent children, one couple was comfortable to leave their children in the care of their aunt, the other regarded separation to be a dealbreaker
- Another woman, a single mother, concerned to leave her children with parents residing on an outer island because she felt they would inherit outdated values
- Workers anticipated relationship problems and suggested family participation in PDBs
- Tongan workers recently mobilised in WA were having difficulties with: time difference, cost of flights home, explaining initial deductions to family and cooking

(Tentative) Conclusions

The economic benefits of the PLS are hard to overlook...

...even if they can vary considerably by location, industry and the involvement of labour hire

**Is the PLS for labour supply or development?
One does not necessarily follow the other..**

Sustainable development outcomes will require additional support for transnational family life



(Tentative) Conclusions

Guestworker schemes have a poor record of supporting workers and their families – Australia has an opportunity to meaningfully establish ‘best practice’ with the PLS

Family accompaniment, pathways to settlement and couples placements are all policy parameters that could be reconsidered in alignment with the preferences of households

Minimally, other adjustments could be made to support transnational family life:

- Greater involvement of families in Pre Departure Briefings
- Subsidisation of uneven travel and communication costs
- ‘Decent Care’ policies to direct aid spending toward community care services
- Closer attention to skill transfers, ‘reintegration’ and the prospect of repeat migration

Questions or Comments?

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