

Why women choose to migrate

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The Monash Africa Centre at MSA

Women from China and India are migrating to change their lives, although they face greater risk than men of human trafficking, assault and rape.

The importance of understanding these women will be discussed at the international ‘Chinese in Africa and Africans in [China](#)’ conference and public seminar at Monash South Africa’s Africa Centre.

Research on the subject has been conducted Dr Tu Huynh from Rhodes University and Pragna Rugunanan from the University of Johannesburg (UJ), led by Dr Yoon Jung Park from Rhodes and Howard Universities. They examined the lives of Chinese and Indian women who have migrated to South Africa (SA).

Dr Huynh, a Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow in Rhodes University's Sociology Department, said the Chinese women she interviewed were willing to take risks to achieve their goals.

“The motivations for migration were diverse. Some left China to put bad marriages behind them, and others, though not poor, left China to improve the quality of their lives,” Dr Huynh said.

“The urge to create a new life was strong, despite the dangers they knew they would encounter during the migration process”.

Ms Rugunanan, a lecturer at UJ, said most of the Indian respondents were married to South Africans, or had accompanied Indian spouses to SA for educational reasons.

“Although some came as brides, most chose to come to SA because it offered hope or respite from conditions back home,” Ms Rugunanan said.

“For others it was an opportunity to further their education and improve their qualifications. For those who were married, life in SA allowed them to develop their own agency by working and providing for their families.”

Ms Rugunanan said this largely under-researched group could provide a wealth of knowledge about female migrants.

“Our study, while small, shows how women are taking control of their lives and how education is empowering them,” Ms Rugunanan said.

“Furthering this area of research should reveal more definitively that geopolitics equally influence the lives of women migrants, restricting opportunities as well as opening new ones. Either way, [women](#) migrants

from developing countries are taking an active role in reshaping their lives.”

Dr Park, a non-resident Senior Research Associate of the Sociology Department at Rhodes University and Visiting Professor in the African Students Department at Howard University, said this research can help us understand migration to Africa more generally.

More information: The ‘[Chinese in Africa and Africans in China](#)’ conference and public seminar will be held from 21-23 August 2012 at Monash South Africa, and feature experts in Chinese and African relations from around the world. Dr Park, Dr Huynh and Ms Rugunanan will speak from 10.45am-12.30pm on 22 August.

Provided by Monash University

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