Reviewer's report

Title: Sending Money Home. A Mixed Methods Study of Remittances sent by Migrant Nurses in Ireland

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Reviewer: john J connell

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Sending Money Home

This is a rather thin piece that could use elaboration and strengthening. It has two strong points. Firstly, it is one of a tiny handful of papers that actually address the remittances of heath workers and is therefore useful because of that (although it is not clear that the authors recognise this strength!). Secondly, the data ring true – despite it being largely a small-scale qualitative survey. On these two grounds it is publishable.

It does need more work. Firstly the authors should have a new look at the few papers etc that deal with the remittances of health workers. Connell and Brown are given somewhat short shrift, and their sequel Brown and Connell (Asia-Pacific Viewpoint, 2006) is absent. The key paper however is D. Brown, Workplace Losses and Return Migration in the Caribbean, in P. Pessar, ed, Caribbean Circuits,1997. This is perhaps the most detailed and comparable analysis. Another less useful source, but relevant to the Philippines, is Buchan’s chapter in J. Connell, ed, The International Migration of Health Workers (2008). As far as I know there is simply no other formal data on the remittances of nurses which is why this paper is potentially valuable. The authors should be cautious about using other studies which do not differentiate migrants by occupation and tend to refer primarily to unskilled workers.

Intermittently the authors refer to the larger survey of 297 nurses (which I assume is where some of the quotes that have numbers rather than names come from- but this is a bit confusing and more editing of this and many typos would have helped). Was there no more data from the larger survey that would have given the small-scale qualitative study a little mote validity? All we seem to get from this is the 87% figure. Could we at least know why 13% didn’t and/or who these 13% were – longer established nurses (see below), folks without relatives in I or P, or what. It would all strengthen the story.

The sample is very small but it would have been useful to know of there wee any obvious difference between Indians and Filipinos. Likewise they refer to changes over time (p.10). As every study of remittances has indicated this is highly important – what happens over time for remittances is crucial for source countries and households. Again the sample is far too small to say anything on this but it is rather left hanging here. Did they ask questions about return
migration? Remittances are also often linked to the probability of return - the remitters’ own social insurance.

Where is the source for the statement on verifications at the bottom of page 17? Is this a real measure of mobility or a statement about precaution? On p. 19 the nurses’ expenditure is stated to be unchanged and yet on p.11 the recession was said to have had dramatic impacts on remittance flows. Both cannot be right and we are given no overall data on remittance flows. The OECD statement on p.20 needs to be thought through further for both countries. There is little doubt that remittances are higher than training costs, but remittances go to the private sector (households) not the public sector (the training institutions – though - a cautionary note, that I now less so for both I and P) so caution is needed in simply assuming the OECD is right. The last three sentences are far too vague. Needs a clear statement at the end about proper conclusions not vacuous statements that are uncertain. 

The Bibliography is sloppy, incomplete and not in a recognisable academic form. The Irish Times references have no date and it would be hard to believe that this is an adequate source for statements about nursing being an occupation that generates remittances. Rochelle Ball has written on this topic for Filipinos and the articles should not be too hard to find (sorry – references not to hand).

In short a greater familiarity with the remittance literature (and especially D. Brown) would enable the authors to give the data more punch and conviction. So, yes, it is publishable but needs a fair bit more toughening

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests: I declare that I have no competing interests