

Governance, migration and local development

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SUMMARY: Migration is important for poverty reduction and for economic success. All nations with successful economies have experienced rapid rural-to-urban migration in response to the concentration of new investments and opportunities. Yet city and national governments often have negative views of migrants, even blaming them for a range of city problems that are far more linked to their own inadequacies or incapacities.

International migration is more widely seen as positive; the amount of money remitted by migrants to their families at home exceeds official development assistance flows. But it can also bring costs that are often ignored – for instance, inadequate wages and poor working conditions for migrants, and challenging transformations in the dynamics of power back home.

There are predictions that by 2050, the constraints imposed by climate change in rural areas could result in up to 200 million “environmental refugees”. But when land degradation or decreases in rainfall result in migration, it is usually short term and short distance. There is no question, however, that without attention by governments and international agencies to the reduction of emissions and to effective rural and urban adaptation, climate change will cause crisis-driven population movements that make those forced to move very vulnerable.

I. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: GROWING INTEREST AND POLARIZED PERCEPTIONS

Over the last two decades, migration has been attracting growing interest from aid agencies and international development banks and from researchers. Internal population movement within countries (especially rural-to-urban migration) largely mirrors urbanization and the transformations in the national economic base that underpin urbanization. In some countries, the transformation from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban economy and settlement pattern has been remarkably rapid.

At the same time, the number of international migrants has increased (although the proportion of migrants in the world’s population has not changed). The global volume of international remittances from these migrants to their families in low- and middle-income countries is now larger than both foreign direct investment and official development aid. It is a reflection of the growing interest in these phenomena that the World Bank and the UNDP, two of the most influential international agencies, focus on the links between migration and development in the 2009 World Development Report and the Human Development Report.

The starting point of the 2009 World Development Report⁽¹⁾ is that economic development is inherently uneven spatially, and that concentration of economic activities is necessary before governments can promote some level of convergence in incomes and standards of living in different geographical locations, mainly through economic integration. It follows that, from an economic point of view, countries do not prosper without mobile people, and that governments should facilitate internal labour mobility. The report applies a similar view to international migration: “...allowing the freer flow of skilled and unskilled labour across national borders would probably do more to reduce poverty in developing countries than any other single policy or aid initiative.”⁽²⁾ The 2009 Human Development Report⁽³⁾ also argues that migration and development go hand in hand. In the countries and areas to which migrants move, their migration boosts economic output at little or no cost to locals. And while the report warns that, even if well managed, international migration is not an alternative to a national development strategy, it also states that “...mobility can facilitate access to ideas, knowledge and resources that can complement and in some cases enhance progress.”⁽⁴⁾

Thus, these two reports share a positive view of population movement as a key element of social change and economic growth, both in the areas of origin and destination, across and within national borders. But this view is not universally shared. Indeed, the UNDP report argues that the main reason

1. World Bank (2009), *World Development Report: Reshaping Economic Geography*, The World Bank, Washington DC, 383 pages.

2. See reference 1, page 161.

3. United Nations Development Programme (2009), *Human Development Report 2009: Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke and New York, 217 pages.

4. See reference 3, page 5.

5. United Nations (2008), *World Population Policies 2007*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 496 pages.

6. For a review of the literature on migration and climate change, see Tacoli, C (2009), "Crisis or adaptation? Migration and climate change in a context of high mobility", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 21, No 2, October, pages 513–525.

why in the past 50 years the proportion of international migrants in the world's population has remained surprisingly stable (at around 3 per cent) is because of an increase in government-imposed barriers around the countries to which the migrants want to move, especially for migrants with low skills.

Indeed, despite the positive views in these reports, migration within national boundaries (internal migration), especially rural–urban movement, is still viewed by many as a problem. The number of governments worldwide that are implementing policies to try to control rural-to-urban migration has risen from 47 per cent in 1976 to 65 per cent in 2007.⁵ An increasing number of mayors and senior civil servants in city governments blame "migrants" as the reason for large and often growing deficits in provision for infrastructure and services and growing numbers of people living in informal settlements. Underlying the most alarmist estimates of the numbers of environmental refugees and climate migrants is an inherently negative view of migration as a societal failure.⁶

To some extent, such policies or understandings reflect deeply held assumptions that are often unsupported by reality. For example, rural–urban migrants do not always contribute to the growth in the number of urban poor; they are often more likely to be employed and sometimes better educated than non-migrants. The growth in informal settlements has far more to do with the number of households lacking the income to afford to buy, build or rent formal housing than the number of migrants. The antipathy to rural–urban migrants is also a little odd when, in all the world's wealthiest nations, they have been such a central feature of their economic success.

On the other hand, international migrants tend to respond to a demand for labour that is not filled by local workers – although in the current recession, unemployment rates among migrants to Europe and North America tend to be higher. This is because of their concentration in sectors such as low-skilled construction and manufacturing and services, which are also the ones shedding the most jobs. At the same time, remittances sent home can contribute to higher standards of living for the families of migrants as well as, in many cases, the construction of public facilities such as schools, religious centres and water points.

But mobility and migration are not inherently positive for everyone. In destination areas, migrants' rights are all too often ignored as they are forced to accept below standard living and working conditions, making their employers the main beneficiaries of their migration. And remittances sent home by international migrants, despite their contribution to higher standards of living in the countries of origin, also widen social and economic inequalities, themselves the root causes of migration. This does not mean that the best policy response is to try and control (i.e. reduce) migration: there is enough evidence to show that this does not lower the number of migrants, while it certainly contributes to making them more vulnerable.

It is difficult to generalize on the links between migration and development because of the complexity and heterogeneity of migrants and their experiences. The diversity in the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of migrants, and in migrant destinations and in how long they stay, is reflected in the diversity of impacts. This, in turn, is best considered in the local (origin and destination) areas where the impacts are concentrated. Here, local institutions can have a critical role in ensuring that the transformations related to migration do not result in deepening social polarization. But it would be naïve to assume that local authorities, especially in low- and middle-income countries, have the necessary capacity and revenues to fulfil this role without strong support from central government. And, perhaps more importantly, it would be wishful thinking to assume that the impacts of out-migration and remittance flows are purely financial and economic and do not involve the creation of new, often powerful interest groups able to contest existing social and cultural hierarchies. In areas with high rates of out-migration, the new poor are often those groups that do not receive remittances, as described in many of the papers listed on the back page. Local governance systems that are accountable, effective and inclusive – of in-migrants, out-migrants and non-migrants – are thus more essential than ever in achieving equitable development in the context of increasing migration and mobility.

Surprisingly, the concept of governance is largely missing in current debates on migration and development. These debates tend to focus instead on the (macro) economic benefits of mobility and on the rights of migrant workers. However, new research is filling this gap by exploring the processes and institutional responses through which population movement does – or does not – contribute to social, economic and cultural change at the local level.

II. HOW NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS SHAPE MOBILITY

That a large proportion of the urban population in most nations lives outside large cities is now more widely recognized, although small and intermediate size urban centres tend to be overlooked in discussions of migration. But in many instances they are important mobility nodes, as they combine two roles: that of "home" places receiving remittances; and that of destinations for new in-migrants. But of course, not all smaller urban centres attract migrants, and differences in economic and demographic growth

7. See the paper by Arif Hasan on "Migration, small towns and social transformation in Pakistan" listed on the back page.

8. See the paper by Arif Hasan on "Migration, small towns and social transformation in Pakistan" listed on the back page.

9. See the paper by Wilma S Nchito listed on the back page.

10. See the paper by Bingqin Li and Xiangsheng An listed on the back page.

11. See the paper by Bingqin Li and Xiangsheng An listed on the back page.

12. See the paper by Mohamadou Sall listed on the back page.

13. See the paper by Mohamadou Sall listed on the back page.

14. See the paper by Christien Klaufus listed on the back page.

15. See the paper by Arif Hasan on "Migration, small towns and social transformation in Pakistan" listed on the back page.

16. Hoang, Xuan Thanh, Thi Thu Phuong Dinh and Thu Huong Nguyen with Cecilia Tacoli (2008), *Urbanization and Rural Development in Vietnam's Mekong Delta: Livelihood Transformations in Three Fruit-growing Settlements*, Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies Series, Working Paper 14, IIED, London, 64 pages; also Diyamett, Bitrina, Mathew Diyamett, Jovita James and Richard Mabala (2001), "The case of Himo and its region, northern Tanzania", Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies Series, Working Paper 1, IIED, London, 37 pages.

patterns are best understood within the broader national context. A range of factors shape migration and mobility patterns in any nation.

For instance, in Pakistan,⁽⁷⁾ several factors act together as important triggers of rural-urban migration. These include the country's geography, with large mountain and desert areas where incomes from agriculture are low and unstable. They include the concentration of industry and cities in the Indus plains, where both incomes and literacy rates are higher and constitute a powerful magnet for internal migrants. They include changes in traditional social structures, including the collapse of the feudal system in the rural areas and changes in agricultural production systems, including the mechanization brought about by the Green Revolution. Finally, they include cultural transformations, such as the wish to give children, and especially girls, a level of education that is not always available in the rural areas. Pakistan has a long tradition of migration: in the past century it has received more international migrants (mainly from within the region) than it has sent abroad, and these flows have had an important role in the country's social, economic and cultural transformations.⁽⁸⁾

Insights into migration and mobility can be drawn from case studies of particular urban centres. For example, for two smaller urban centres in Zambia's largely agricultural Southern province, different economic bases and labour markets (themselves shaped by the colonial plantation and mining systems) are key factors in determining not only the size and destinations of migrant flows but also their gender composition.⁽⁹⁾ This provides a strong contrast with China's dynamic small urban centres; the number of small towns in China has grown phenomenally since 1978 and they are now home to almost half the country's urban population.⁽¹⁰⁾ This is the consequence of successful national strategies for economic development and the subsequent relative relaxation of what had previously been a tight system of control over people's mobility that in the past made migration from rural areas to urban centres extremely difficult. Within the Chinese administrative system, however, local authorities in small towns are under the political and financial control of higher levels of the administrative hierarchy. Under this system, incentives and allocations to local government are linked to local economic growth and revenue generation. Hence, underfunded small town authorities are keen to attract migrants as an economic resource but, in most cases, are unable to guarantee basic services to their expanding populations.⁽¹¹⁾

III. THE IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: CITIZENSHIP, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL POLARIZATION

Mobility and migration influence, and in some cases radically transform, the dynamics of power at the local level. For instance, international migration is transforming governance systems in two Senegalese small towns where remittances have long been a key element of local economies and livelihoods, and have enabled communities to survive recurrent economic and ecological crises.⁽¹²⁾ But migrants (both those who have returned and those who are still away) are highly critical of local authorities, whom they accuse of incompetence and corruption. In Senegal, decentralization has opened up an opportunity for migrants to participate in local politics that had previously been dominated by the old system of traditional chieftaincy. While this certainly helps foster local democracy, migrants' ability to enter into and influence the political system depends on the clientelist electoral system based on financial rewards to activists and voters. In this way, migrants can become a powerful new interest group whose main attraction to local politics is the control of state and public land, the management and use of which has been devolved to local governments. This is especially important given that land and property back home are preferred investments for Senegalese migrants.⁽¹³⁾

International remittances have had a major impact in many urban centres in Central America. For instance, in San Miguel, El Salvador's second largest city, 34 per cent of all households receive remittances; in Quetzalquengango, Guatemala, this figure is 40 per cent. It is impossible to understand the economy of these cities without a consideration of remittances – and these remittances have triggered a construction boom of luxury gated communities and have almost doubled the extent of urban areas. The growing role of the private sector goes hand in hand with the retreat of state institutions from housing provision. The consequence is not only house price inflation but also environmental degradation, as weak municipal planning institutions are unable to implement regulations to protect hydro-geological systems. In addition, international migration becomes less and less an option, and households that do not receive remittances are the new poor.⁽¹⁴⁾ In Pakistan too, farming families that receive remittances increasingly rely on waged labourers, often on a seasonal basis, for farm work.⁽¹⁵⁾ This is not an isolated case: similar trends have been noted in Tanzania and in Vietnam.⁽¹⁶⁾

Remittances from international migrants have a positive impact on the economies of many low- and middle-income countries; in Pakistan, for example, they are the third most important source of capital for economic growth, without which the exchange rate and monetary and fiscal policies would come under great pressure. But the impact of both internal and international migration is complex and contradictory, especially at the local level. For instance, the remarkable growth of international migration from Bolivia has resulted not only in large financial benefits but also in concerns about long-term

17. See the paper by Gery Nijenhuis listed on the back page.

18. See the paper by Bingqin Li and Mark Duda listed on the back page.

19. See the paper by Bingqin Li and Mark Duda listed on the back page.

20. See the paper by Hoai Anh Tran and Ann Schlyter listed on the back page.

21. See the paper by Kees Van der Geest, Anton Vrieling and Ton Dietz listed on the back page.

22. See, for instance, Potts, Deborah (2009), "The slowing of sub-Saharan Africa's urbanization: evidence and implications for urban livelihoods", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 21, No 1, April, pages 253–259.

23. See Myers, N (1997), "Environmental refugees", *Population and Environment* Vol 19, No 2, pages 167–182; also Stern Review Team (2006), *What is the Economics of Climate Change?*, HM Treasury, London.

24. See Henry, S, B Schoumaker and C Beauchemin (2004), "The impact of rainfall on the first out-migration: a multi-level event-history analysis in Burkina Faso", *Population and Environment* Vol 25, No 5, pages 423–460; also Massey, D, W Axinn and D Ghimire (2007), *Environmental Change and Out-migration: Evidence from Nepal*, Population Studies Centre Research Report 07–615, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

25. See Beauchemin, Cris and Philippe Bocquier (2004), "Migration and urbanization in Francophone West Africa: an overview of the recent empirical evidence", *Urban Studies* Vol 41, No 11, pages 2245–2272; also see reference 24, Henry et al. (2004); see reference 24, Massey et al. (2007); and see reference 16, Hoang et al. (2008).

development, especially its potential to undermine the country's ambitious decentralization policy and participatory planning. The ability of local governments and NGOs to encourage and support the development benefits of remittances is, however, limited and fraught with difficulties, not least the lack of capacity and resources.⁽¹⁷⁾

There is also the issue of the conditions that migrants face when they move. In China, this includes the issue of employer-provided accommodation for internal migrants.⁽¹⁸⁾ Dormitories for migrant workers are being built alongside factories, but this is not out of concern for the difficulties migrants often encounter in finding accommodation in urban areas. Rather, in this way employers can increase their control over the workforce: proximity to the factories makes it easier to enforce long working hours; the provision of cheap, shared accommodation means that salaries can be kept low; and not providing accommodation to couples and families discourages those workers who may also want more stable employment. But this is nevertheless a valuable supply of housing that can have an important role in China's rapidly expanding cities, and policies should concentrate on ensuring that the accommodation they provide is of decent quality and is reasonably priced.⁽¹⁹⁾

One aspect of mobility that gets perhaps too little attention is the issue of who is served by public transport policies. One recent study examined how urban transport affects gender inequalities and emerging class issues in China and Vietnam. In both countries, the increase in the use of private motorized transport overlaps with the development of market economies and the growing differentiation of households' economic resources. However, these also relate to land use and social justice, although political concerns about these issues are usually limited to ethnic minorities and remote rural areas, with little attention to the growing polarization within urban centres along lines of wealth and gender.⁽²⁰⁾

IV. CLIMATE CHANGE AND MIGRATION

Environmental degradation, whether or not related to climate change, is considered to be an increasingly important influence on migration. There are assumptions, for instance, that environmental degradation causes out-migration and that rapid in-migration contributes to environmental degradation. In Ghana, a study used census data at the district level to map migration flows and relate these to changes in the presence of green vegetation, in order to answer two questions: how do environmental conditions affect migration; and what is the impact of migration on the environment?⁽²¹⁾

The analysis found some weak but significant correlations between net migration and trends in vegetation cover – for instance, districts with more out-migration tended to have more positive trends in vegetation cover than districts with more in-migration. But the research also showed that historical and geographical data need to be considered in understanding migration patterns. Most of those who are most affected by environmental scarcity (and likely to be affected by climate change) are least likely to migrate because they lack the funds and contacts to do so. Indeed, while movement to the capital, Accra, is the largest migration flow in the country, the high costs associated with large income differentials makes it difficult for poor rural people to move there – especially those from the poorest regions in the north. Migration to Accra is mainly driven by economic opportunity, not by environmental degradation. In other districts, access to land is more likely to attract migrants than environmental conditions. Here, as in most other locations, there is a diversity of factors affecting mobility and migration in addition to environmental conditions.

Studies of migration show that population movements are generally rational, well-informed responses by individuals and households to changing circumstances. Despite the attention given to international migration, most migration takes place within national boundaries. Rural-to-urban migration responds to the concentration of new investments and opportunities in urban centres; when urban economies are stagnant, in-migration slows, stops and may even reverse.⁽²²⁾ So what does this imply with regard to the issue of climate change-induced migration? There are predictions that by 2050, there could be 200 million "environmental refugees", forced to move as a result of environmental degradation and water shortages caused by climate change.⁽²³⁾ But land degradation or decreases in rainfall do not inevitably result in migration. Or where they do, most movement is short term, as in response to extreme weather disasters, and short distance, as in migrant responses to drought and land degradation.⁽²⁴⁾ Where there are slow-onset impacts from climate change (for instance, rising temperatures and declining rainfall), this can have a negative impact on agriculture, but income diversification and short distance circular migration are likely to be the more common responses.

As illustrated in the examples above, there are many factors influencing migration duration, direction and composition. Where climate change is causing environmental stress for rural livelihoods, it will be one among a number of factors in determining migration. In addition, support for agriculture, including agricultural adaptation initiatives, do not necessarily reduce rural-urban migration; indeed, successful rural development often supports rapid urban development locally, as it generates demand for goods and services from farmers and rural households.⁽²⁵⁾

..... But regardless of the range of responses, it is clear that a failure by governments and international agencies to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and to support rural and urban populations to adapt will bring crisis-driven population movements that make those forced to move very vulnerable. Here, migration is no longer planned movement helped by knowledge and contacts in the destination area. The pressures on crisis-driven population movements will also be much increased if high-income nations fail to agree on implementing the large reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that are needed to avoid dangerous climate change.

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