

## WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

By Kathleen Newland

### Executive Summary

Few international transactions have had as strong an impact on the living standards of vast numbers of poor (and not-so-poor) people, and on the financial stability of developing countries, as international migration. Yet the policy framework of migration and development remains relatively weak, and few development agencies have made it a priority to consolidate and promote the positive impact of international migration. In some policy circles, emigration is still seen as a drain on a country's human resources, rather than an opportunity for those who leave to become more productive and, if the circumstances are right, to contribute more to their countries of origin than if they had remained.

The reason that this view persists to a surprising degree may be, in part, that the evidence supporting direct linkages between migration and development is not well known to policymakers. Many controversies persist because *what we know* about migration and development has not been fully incorporated into the analysis of development dynamics. This policy brief therefore reviews some of the concrete evidence that migration does indeed support development.

This paper concludes and gives an overview of a series of policy briefs by a group of international experts on migration and development, summarizing the state of knowledge in their particular areas of expertise. The series covered topics such as remittances, circular migration, skilled migration, the recruitment of migrant workers, the demography of migration, and more — and explained the relationship between these topics and development outcomes. The policy briefs in this series resulted from a project organized by the Migration Policy Institute and implemented between December 2012 and September 2013. It is intended to contribute to the discussions at the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in October 2013 — and beyond — by clarifying the evidence base for the relationship between migration and development.<sup>1</sup>

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i The experts who participated in this project were Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias on recruitment, Michael A. Clemens on high-skilled migration, Graeme Hugo on circular migration, Donald M. Kerwin on migrants' rights, Susan F. Martin on climate change and migration, Rainer Münz on demographic trends, Kathleen Newland and Sonia Plaza on diasporas, and Dilip Ratha on remittances.

## I. Introduction

Perceptions of migration's impact on development depend, of course, on how development itself is conceived. The United Nations' Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000, implicitly defined development as poverty reduction, better health outcomes, wider access to education, greater gender equality, and environmental sustainability — as well as more effective global partnerships on these topics. The “human development” standard emphasizes the freedom and capability of people to achieve the kind of life that they themselves value — and in this sense migration can be seen as having intrinsic value as a realization of one kind of freedom.

However, the migration and development debate tends to focus on the instrumental value of migration for the achievement of other goals such as those mentioned in the Millennium Development Goals. How and how much does migration contribute to these goals, what kind of migration is most effective, and through what channels? The 2009 *Human Development Report*, which focused on international migration, found that migrants who moved from countries with a low human development index (HDI) to a higher-HDI country experienced, on average, a 15-fold increase in income; a doubling in education enrollment rate; and a 16-fold reduction in child mortality.<sup>1</sup>

International migration is complex. Its impact is felt in different ways in different settings, making generalization perilous. Yet enough evidence has accumulated in important policy areas to put some controversies to rest, and to support concrete recommendations. Some of the aspects of migration that have been the subject of the most heated debate are also the focus

of multiple studies with largely consistent results. These include, first and foremost, the positive effects of migrant remittances on development; and also the development impacts of diaspora engagement, circular migration, recruitment practices, and the emigration of highly skilled people.

Other important issues, such as the relationship between climate change and migration, and the development implications of protecting migrants' rights, are also much better understood than they were a decade ago, although the relationships involved have not been as thoroughly quantified yet.

## II. Improving the Evidence Base Since the First High-Level Dialogue

The UN General Assembly's 2013 High-Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development is a rare opportunity for the participating governments to achieve a set of common understandings of the complex relationship between migration and development, and

to build the international migration agenda for the balance of the decade — and beyond — on that basis. This should be an agenda for action, framed by informed choices grounded in

the best evidence that scholarly research and policy experience can offer.

The first HLD on international migration and development, convened in 2006, led to the creation of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), which met annually from 2007 to 2012 and will resume in 2014. The six meetings of

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the GFMD have generated a vast amount of information, data, and discussion, as well as a concerted effort to improve the evidence base on international migration. Substantial independent work by scholars and practitioners has proceeded on parallel tracks. Taking account of the best available evidence should help governments to determine the policy arenas in which they should invest over the next five to ten years.

Despite the time, money, and energy that governments, civil-society organizations, and international institutions have devoted to understanding the relationship between international migration and development, especially in the last ten years, broad areas of controversy remain. Although scholars, researchers, and practitioners have developed evidence that clarifies many aspects of the relationship, the policy debate remains more clouded than it ought to be, given the improved fact base of the last decade.

This brief summarizes the accumulated evidence on eight aspects of the relationship between migration and development, capping the series of expert policy briefs that the Migration Policy Institute has recently published on this topic.

### III. What We Know About...

#### A. The Impact of Demographic Trends on Migration and Development<sup>ii</sup>

Entwined demographic and economic trends will change the geography of migration in the 21st century in ways that will have a profound influence on development. Today's middle- and low-income countries will enjoy higher economic growth in the

coming decades, while current high-income countries will grow more slowly than they have in the recent past. As more people are lifted out of poverty and join the growing middle classes of emerging economies such as Mexico, Brazil, and China, emigration to Europe, North America, and Australia from these countries will almost certainly decline. For example, Mexico and Turkey are already sending significantly fewer migrants to the United States and the European Union, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

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As these economic trends unfold, demographic change will be driven by decreasing birth rates and increasing life spans. These two trends are largely

unrelated, but they combine to produce demographic aging on a global scale, and will influence future economic output, labor markets, welfare systems, and migration patterns.<sup>3</sup>

In his policy brief exploring the impact of demographic trends on migration and development outcomes, Rainer Münz points out that in Japan and Russia the domestic labor force is contracting, that Europe will experience a similar contraction within the next ten years, and China's labor force will decline after 2020. In Latin America the labor-force potential will start declining after the year 2045. Meanwhile, working-age populations will continue to grow in South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Münz also observes that the slow-growing countries of the Northern Hemisphere, with unemployment rates currently well above historical averages, are less attractive for labor migrants and their families.<sup>4</sup> Some of the European countries most affected by the financial and economic crisis, including Ireland, Greece, and Spain, have recorded more emigration than immigration in 2011.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, several emerging economies

ii Rainer Münz, "Demography and Migration: An Outlook for the 21st Century" (Policy Brief no. 4, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Demography-Migration-Outlook.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Demography-Migration-Outlook.pdf).

— including Angola, Brazil, Chile, Malaysia, and South Africa — are attracting migrants from neighboring countries who might have otherwise gone overseas in search of job and career opportunities.<sup>6</sup> In addition, internal migration to the cities of the emerging economies has become an attractive alternative to emigration.<sup>7</sup>

As Münz writes,

*Conventional wisdom has it that people will continue moving from youthful to aging societies as well as from today's poorer to today's richer economies. As a result, most policy scenarios assume that the rich countries of the Northern Hemisphere will continue to attract labor and skills from abroad, and that a youthful global South will fill the ranks of an aging Europe, Russia, and North America.<sup>8</sup>*

Given this situation, Münz cautions that,

*Fiscal plans and social policies often are based on assumptions of stable populations or continued population growth, leaving many countries unprepared to meet the demographic realities of the future.<sup>9</sup>*

## B. Remittances<sup>iii</sup>

Despite the enormous volume of remittances to developing countries — which according to World Bank estimates topped US \$400 billion in 2012 (and amount to about three and a half times the volume of official development assistance) — some still argue that remittances are not major contributors to development because they are used primarily for consumption, are dependent on external policies such as immigrant admissions to labor-importing countries, are vulnerable to economic crises in countries of migrant destination, and

are not self-sustaining. But if reduction of poverty, increased rates of education, and better health outcomes are markers of development, strong evidence exists that remittances make a major contribution. The impact of remittances has been most often studied at the household level, but their impact on the macroeconomic stability of developing countries is also extremely important.

The World Bank has devoted considerable resources to measuring migrants' remittances and their effects on remittance-receiving households (microeconomic impacts) and countries (macroeconomic impacts) for a decade. Along with research by scholars in other institutions, this accounts for the very strong evidence base

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linking remittances and poverty reduction. Aggregation by researchers at the World Bank of cross-country evidence showed that a 10 percent increase

in international migrants as share of the population led to a 1.9 percent decline in the number of poor people in the country of origin.<sup>10</sup> Cross-country studies focusing on Africa show a similar impact at the regional level.<sup>11</sup> The pattern repeats itself in many country studies. For example, the poverty headcount in Nepal declined by 11 percent between 1995-96 and 2003-04, a period when the number of remittance-receiving households increased by 9 percent.<sup>12</sup>

One study, a rigorous analysis of remittance-receiving households in Ghana that uses statistical techniques to avoid some of the data problems common in many other studies, reveals that by consumption poverty and three different measures of income poverty, households that receive international remittances are significantly less likely to be poor than non-receiving households.<sup>13</sup> The study

iii Dilip Ratha, "The Impact of Remittances on Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction" (Policy Brief no. 8, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Remittances-PovertyReduction.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Remittances-PovertyReduction.pdf).

shows the short-term impact of remittances, and also highlights the long-term outcome that remittance-receiving households are much more likely to see their children complete primary school and enroll in secondary school. Few indicators correlate more strongly with development than human-capital accumulation in the form of education. This is just one study of one country, but its findings are consistent with almost all of the statistical analyses of the impact of remittances on poverty reduction in other national contexts.

Numerous household studies have shown that remittance-receiving households invest heavily in human capital — particularly in the health and education of their children. One such set of surveys in Africa showed that the proportion of remittances received from outside Africa that were invested in food, health, and education ranged from 30 percent in Kenya and 37 percent in Nigeria to 47 percent in Burkina Faso and 67 percent in Senegal. A 2004 study of children in migrant households in rural Mexico found they had higher birth weights and were less likely to die in infancy than children from households without migrants; the pattern of observations suggested that it was not just higher incomes but improved health knowledge that influenced the outcomes for these children.<sup>14</sup> In Nigeria and Senegal, receiving international remittances nearly doubled the number of household members with secondary education. As a counterfactual, one study of the consequences of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis showed that households whose remittance income lost value during that period pulled children out of school in response.<sup>15</sup>

These studies focus on the impacts of remittances on individuals and households, but these flows of foreign exchange have impor-

tant macroeconomic effects as well. They have resulted in improved credit ratings, and therefore lower interest rates on national debt; facilitated access to international capital markets for both governments and private businesses in remittance-receiving countries; and reduced exchange rate risks for foreign investors. World Bank studies have demonstrated that taking remittance flows into account could bring similar benefits to a wider range of countries if remittances were included in their national accounts.

The development benefits summarized here are rarely contradicted in the evidence-based literature on the effects of remittances. Different studies show greater or lesser positive effects of remittances, but very few show negative results at the household level. At the macro level, high remittance flows pose some danger of asset inflation (where remittance receivers have very limited opportunities for productive investments beyond land, buildings, livestock, or small businesses in already overcrowded sectors) and exchange rate appreciation, which may reduce the competitiveness of a country's exports. Creating opportunities for investment that increase national output reduces both kinds of risk, but has proven elusive for a number of the most heavily remittance-dependent countries.

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## C. Diasporas<sup>iv</sup>

Emigrants and their descendants — the members of modern diasporas — are the source of the remittances discussed above. But diasporas contribute far more to development than just the cash sent home to families and communities in their countries of origin. For many countries, the diaspora is a major source of foreign direct investment (FDI),

iv. Kathleen Newland and Sonia Plaza, "What We Know About Diasporas and Economic Development" (Policy Brief no. 5, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Diasporas-EconomicDevelopment.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Diasporas-EconomicDevelopment.pdf).

market development (both for exports and for outsourcing of production), technology transfer, philanthropy, tourism, political development, and more intangible flows of knowledge, new attitudes, and cultural influence.

The quality of information — much less hard data — about diaspora influences in these dimensions is generally less robust than it is for remittances, but evidence shows strong correlations between the presence of a diaspora in a country and beneficial economic ties to the country of that diaspora’s origin. One study of Canada’s trade with 136 partner countries in the 1980-92 period showed that a 10 percent increase in immigration from a particular country was associated with a 1 percent increase in exports to that country and a 3 percent increase in imports from it.<sup>16</sup> Similar studies of the United Kingdom and 48 partner countries, and of US states’ exports to 28 countries of origin, also found strong links between the presence of a diaspora and increased trade.<sup>17</sup>

Foreign direct investment, too, is correlated with immigration, not only because diaspora members themselves invest in their countries of origin, but also because they encourage others to do so — including the companies in which they are employed in countries of destination. Political scientist David Leblang used statistical methods to test whether diaspora networks influence global investment by reducing transaction and information costs, and found that “even after controlling for a multitude of factors, diaspora networks have both a substantively significant effect and a statistically significant effect on cross-border investment.”<sup>18</sup>

Diaspora-based linkages between country of origin and country of destination have been responsible for the development of

important industrial sectors in countries of origin. Although the role of engineers and entrepreneurs of the Indian diaspora in helping to develop the information technology sector in India is well known,<sup>19</sup> the story of India’s domination of the global diamond industry is less recognized but illustrates the key role that a diaspora can play.<sup>20</sup> Diaspora diamond traders penetrated the closed world of diamond trading in Antwerp, Belgium and worked with their often family-based contacts in India to develop highly competitive capacity in cutting, polishing, and jewelry-making. These industries in India now employ over a million people and generated more than US \$21 billion in export revenue by 2008 (about 13 percent of total export revenue)<sup>21</sup> — up from \$40 million in 1968.<sup>22</sup>

An example of the diaspora’s impact on the transfer of knowledge and innovation is ChileGlobal — the Talent Network for Innovation — which promotes and facilitates the development of key economic clusters in Chile by reinforcing their links with Chileans residing abroad. These diaspora Chileans contribute their time, experience, contacts, knowledge, and skills to help globalize Chilean companies. Through its network of about 400 influential Chilean

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members abroad, ChileGlobal has helped create 76 companies with more than

50 domestic and international partners (including private corporations, universities, and institutes of technology).<sup>23</sup> Among these companies were leaders in biotechnology and information technology.

#### D. Circular Migration<sup>v</sup>

Another new pattern of mobility that was little discussed a decade ago is circular migration. Circular migration describes repeat movement between a country of

v. Graeme Hugo, “What We Know About Circular Migration and Enhanced Mobility” (Policy Brief no. 7, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Circular-Migration.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Circular-Migration.pdf).

origin and a country of destination, and is an increasingly common feature of a world of shrunken distances and instant communication. More and more people live their lives in two countries, with their work, family members, residences, and recreation in either or both. Circular migration is controversial, both because many people don't believe that it is a stable pattern, and because some see it as primarily a coercive form of movement. In fact, there are several kinds of circular migration, ranging from repeat temporary labor migration with workers required to go home at the end of each contract, to dual citizens who can come and go at will between two countries.

The work of Graeme Hugo in Australia and Richard Bedford in New Zealand (two of a minority of countries that collect both entry and exit data on their own nationals and permanent residents, as well as on temporary migrants and visitors) shows that migrants who have dual citizenship or permanent residency in two or more countries — and are thus free of the constraints of restrictive immigration regulations — travel frequently and often for extended periods of time to their countries of origin; and maintain active roles there as investors, teachers, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and so forth. Policymakers in some countries, such as Sweden, have acted on this realization to remove obstacles to circulation, increasing migrants' freedom of choice and their ability to participate in development activities in their countries of origin or ancestry.

The limited evidence available suggests that circular migration is most productive when it is voluntary, rather than the product of a contract labor regime that confers time-limited permission to remain in a country, even if that permission is repeatedly granted — although even such constrained access

to repeated employment abroad is usually beneficial to the migrant and his or her household. The voluntary form of circular migration, however, has more positive development potential than permission-based and time-limited temporary migration.

Evaluating the development impact of circular migration is difficult because many of those who engage in it voluntarily have dual nationality, and therefore are not counted in the migration statistics of either country. Dual nationals normally face no legal or administrative barriers to entry to the countries whose nationality they hold. A great many countries have accepted dual nationality — de facto or de jure — in the last 20 years, and the growth in the number of dual nationals has set the stage for spontaneous circular migration. The same invisibility may affect migrants who circulate within an economic area governed

by a freedom-of-movement regime, such as among European Union (EU) countries that are members of the Schengen accord.

Research in Australia indicates that circulation is common: when

people can circulate freely, they do. A study of Chinese immigrants who have settled in Australia and those who have returned to China after long-term residence in Australia shows that long term settlers from China on average made 6.4 visits to their homeland over the 1998-2006 period. It also shows that among Chinese residents visiting Australia, a significant group are China-born people who had previously migrated to Australia and since returned to China — but once back in China, made an average of 5.9 return visits to Australia between 1998 and 2006.

In his policy brief on circular migration, Hugo points out that a similar observation that permissive migration regulations encourage circular migration emerged from an analy-

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sis of migration to Germany from a number of guestworker countries, which found that more than 60 percent of the migrants were repeat or circular migrants. The study concluded that such migrants are “attractive for employers and policymakers because they are less likely to be illegal and more willing to adjust to the temporary needs of the economy of the receiving country,” and that easier mobility in and out of the destination makes it more likely that migrants will opt for a circular strategy over permanent settlement.<sup>24</sup>

The advantages for circular migration for development of the country of origin largely flows from the observation that migrants who frequently return home are more likely to keep up remittance flows, invest in the country of origin, facilitate trade ties between the two countries, and share their knowledge and skills with people and institutions in the homeland.

#### E. Migrant recruitment<sup>vi</sup>

With an estimated 232 million international migrants in the world, of whom the majority have left their countries in order to work abroad, labor recruitment agencies are playing a large and growing role in determining the gains of migration for individual migrants, their households, and their countries of origin. The wage differentials between developing and developed countries have raised the stakes of migration, while the difficulty of migrating independently have grown — because of the need to navigate complex bureaucratic requirements for legal migration as well as the dangers and uncertainties of migrating without legal authorization. The result is greater commercialization of migration, and richer opportu-

nities for middlemen to arbitrage the wage differentials and capture more of the gains of migration for themselves. Yet recruitment agents also perform a valuable service for employers and, often, for migrants: they match workers with employers in a complex global marketplace that both parties may find difficult to negotiate. The International Confederation of Private Employment Agencies, for instance, records over 46 million workers using staffing agencies to find jobs in 2012.<sup>25</sup>

Most of the negative effects of recruitment practices stem from the excessive fees that recruitment agencies or middlemen charge. To address this problem, the Ministry of

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Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment in Bangladesh has fixed the maximum migration cost for low-skilled male migrants at 84,000 Bangladeshi takas (BDT, about US \$1,220) and BDT

20,000 (\$145) for female workers. However, migrants interviewed in a number of studies report paying brokers an average of BDT 200,000 (\$2,900). This suggests that the cost of the middlemen and profit of the licensed recruiter is as high as BDT 150,000 (\$2,165) or almost two-thirds of the total cost to the migrant — and as much as half of the wages they expected to earn under a three-year contract.<sup>26</sup> Highly-skilled workers also pay high recruitment fees in some instances. Chinese nurses seeking jobs in Australia and the United Kingdom have been known to pay recruitment fees of between \$4,000 and \$15,000.<sup>27</sup>

There is also ample evidence of workers being recruited for jobs that do not actually exist, or being placed in a job that is different than — and almost always inferior to — the one they expected to perform. For

vi Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias, “What We Know About Regulating the Recruitment of Migrant Workers” (Policy Brief no. 6, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/LaborMigration-Recruitment.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/LaborMigration-Recruitment.pdf).



example, 15,000 Bangladeshi workers were stranded in the Kuala Lumpur airport in August and September 2007 when they arrived to find that the recruiters they had paid did not turn up to meet them, and the jobs they expected did not exist.<sup>28</sup>

Many other studies reveal similar patterns, with workers paying more for jobs in high-wage destinations, for jobs that seem to have a path to long-term stays, and, ironically, for less-skilled (and therefore lower-waged) jobs for which competition is most fierce.

Regulation of recruitment is notoriously difficult, with agencies banned for bad practices re-opening under new names, collusion between agents in countries of origin and countries of destination to sell visas at high margins, conflicts of interest among regulators who are mandated to increase deployment of migrant workers and protect them at the same time, and workers desperate for jobs feeling compelled to pay fees over the official rates to land a spot. Even formal governmental agreements have a poor record: according to one study, the bilateral agreement on nurse recruitment between the governments of the United Kingdom and the Philippines resulted in only 200 nurses recruited into the UK National Health Service; while private medical facilities, which were not covered by the agreement, recruited 2,000 Filipino nurses in the same period.<sup>29</sup> Because the exploitative practices of unscrupulous recruiters are hidden from sight, it is difficult to get data on the details of the practices.

Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias suggests that bilateral agreements can be effective tools for countries of origin and destination to jointly regulate the operations of recruiters,

citing several examples of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between countries. For example, she notes that an MOU between the Philippine government and three Canadian provinces bans charging placement fees to migrants. Jordan's MOU with Indonesia concerning domestic work-

ers covers not only the costs migrants incur at the pre-departure stage, but while at the destination and even upon return, including provisions that require the Indonesian agent to pay for the deployment cost

if the domestic worker is not qualified and/or refuses to work without reason. South Korea bilaterally signed MOUs with a number of Asian countries outlining the recruitment process and the types of fees that can be legitimately charged from employers and workers alike, both before departure and when the migrant reaches South Korea.<sup>30</sup>

Bilateral agreements are sometimes effective, but are a cumbersome way to regulate recruitment, given that migrants from a single country may deploy to dozens of destinations. Codes of conduct on recruitment have proven to be a blunt instrument, often ineffective and with unintended consequences, such as limiting migrants' freedom of choice. A more promising approach is to develop frameworks of good recruitment practice with built-in incentives for compliance, and to enlist multiple stakeholders — recruiters, employers, trade unions, governments, and civil society (including migrants) — in the effort to ensure that they are accepted and implemented.

## F. High-Skilled Labor Emigration<sup>vii</sup>

Whereas many of the topics examined here are examples of available evidence that is

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vii Michael A. Clemens, "What Do We Know about Skilled Migration and Development?" (Policy Brief no. 3, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/SkilledMigration-Development.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/SkilledMigration-Development.pdf).

overlooked in policymaking, the case of high-skilled emigration is one in which the absence of data has been embraced to permit unsupported assumptions that shape policy. Because very little data on skilled emigration exists, the highly plausible assumption that it damages development prospects in countries of origin has been impossible to confirm — or deny. In consequence, both source and destination countries have adopted policies to discourage the emigration of skilled people, without evidence that such measures contribute to better outcomes in the source countries.

Concern about the outflow of skilled workers has been particularly acute in the health sector, but even here, empirical evidence supports neither the widely held belief that such emigration results in poorer health, nor the conviction that emigration is responsible for personnel shortages in the health sector. For example, a 2003 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development study reporting that 35,000 registered nurses in South Africa were either unemployed or not working as nurses indicates that labor shortages due to emigration were not responsible for the country's serious public health problems.<sup>31</sup>

More recently, Michael Clemens' important study of physician emigration in 53 African countries has provided further evidence to question the assumption that the emigration of skilled health-care personnel has a negative impact on public health, and therefore, on development.<sup>32</sup> This study showed, first, that the number of physicians per capita working in these countries tracked the number of physicians per capita from these countries working outside them. In other words, the two measures rose and fell together. If emigration does not reduce the number of doctors working in the countries of origin, it is hard to make the case that poor health outcomes

are due to emigration. But the study also found no correlation between the proportion of physicians who had left the country (whether that proportion was high, as in Ghana, or low, as in Niger), and a variety of health indicators in African countries — including infant mortality, child mortality, vaccination rates, child respiratory infection and treatment, and HIV prevalence and treatment<sup>33</sup> (all indicators of general public health conditions). Ironically, the countries in Africa with the *lowest* rates of physician and nurse emigration are those with the worst overall health conditions.

The author's explanation of this counterintuitive outcome is that health professionals in Africa rarely work in poor rural areas, where the burden of disease is highest. In addition, their skills are not the ones most needed by people whose children die

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principally from lack of oral rehydration during diarrhea, lack of malaria prophylaxis, and lack of basic primary treatment for acute respiratory

infections. None of these require highly trained personnel to deliver.<sup>34</sup> This rigorous and extensive empirical study shows that *no evidence* supports the assertion that emigration of health-care personnel from sub-Saharan Africa damages the development of Africa. Emigration is more a symptom than a cause of health failures in Africa.

The historic experience of Taiwan with the exodus of highly skilled people illustrates the way that a perceived loss of talent can prove an advantage in the long run. Taiwan suffered from a serious brain drain in the second half of the 20th century. More than 90,000 Taiwanese left to study abroad, and in some years returns were less than 10 percent of departures.<sup>35</sup> Taiwan adopted a long-term policy of making use of the skills emigrants acquired abroad, both through networking and through return migra-

tion. The government systematically invited scientists, professionals, and highly skilled technicians back to Taiwan, to teach and to network with Taiwanese counterparts, officials, and investors. Government-sponsored national development conferences continue to bring many overseas Taiwanese to participate at government expense and contribute to the formation of multinational networks oriented toward building Taiwan's business and technological advantages. Recruiting programs also targeted older scholars and professionals, offering them competitive salaries, excellent working conditions, and financial subsidies for such purposes as travel and business start-ups. When Taiwan's economy developed to the point that it needed highly skilled people for the development of knowledge-based industries, it had a repository of diaspora members with the requisite skills, who retained their ties to Taiwan and were willing to return, either temporarily or, in some cases, permanently.<sup>36</sup>

Close study of the evidence about the relationship between skilled migration and development should spur rethinking about the brain drain — which Clemens suggests should be relabeled in a less pejorative manner as “skill flow.” There are at least four reasons to believe that the emigration of skilled people does less damage than usually imagined, and may even be beneficial in some cases.

- Countries such as Egypt, Pakistan, South Africa, and Kenya turn out more university graduates than their economies can absorb, so emigration of highly educated people (which is usually equated to highly skilled in analysis, perhaps unjustifiably) may have a low opportunity cost for the source country. In that situation, as with South African nurses, the problem may be better characterized as “brain overflow” rather than brain drain.
- Like in Taiwan, China, and South Korea, the skilled diaspora may act as a “brain trust” for the country of origin in readiness for such time as it develops certain sectors to the point that it can attract back diaspora professionals and business people.
- Diaspora business people, professionals, and skilled tradesmen/women often gain exposure to new ideas, techniques, subject matter, and ways of working that they could not have been exposed to in their countries of origin. For example, an Egyptian entrepreneur brought to Egypt the model of a technology start-up business incubator (“Plug and Play”) that he helped develop in Silicon Valley; an Indian cardiologist developed a telemedicine program to take high-quality health care to Indian villages after practicing in the United States; and a Mexican farmer introduced drip irrigation to his orchard in Zacatecas after working for years in the California wine industry — demonstrating a technique for saving water while increasing production and quality.
- Even among diasporas who are firmly settled in the country of destination (in some cases for generations) and have no intention of relocating to the country of origin, many highly skilled people are willing to contribute to development in their countries of origin by advising, mentoring, teaching, donating to philanthropic causes, and filling skills gaps on temporary visits.

## G. Development and the Protection of Migrants' Rights<sup>viii</sup>

The human rights of migrants should be respected and promoted whether or not they contribute to economic development, but that does not negate the evidence that migrants who enjoy a broad spectrum of

viii Donald M. Kerwin, “Does Respect for Migrant Rights Contribute to Economic Development?” (Policy Brief no. 1, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MigrantRights-EconomicDevelopment.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MigrantRights-EconomicDevelopment.pdf).

civic, political, social, and economic rights are better equipped to contribute to development than migrants who do not. There are two aspects to the case that rights and development are linked. On the one hand, migrants who come from rights-respecting countries are more likely to be willing to remain actively involved in those countries by visiting regularly, investing, participating in social and political activities, and in some cases, even returning. On the other hand, migrants whose rights are upheld in their countries of destination are less subject to exploitation and are better able to use their skills, earning more as a result.

The contrast in access to rights is most stark between migrants with legal status and those who lack authorization to live and work in the country of destination. The results of legalization programs in the United States, Spain, and Italy demonstrate that legal status and its accompanying rights can lead to increased wages, improved working conditions, and the activation of human capital in the form of access to education and job training.

Donald Kerwin points out that “the link between migrant rights and development is often assumed but rarely examined with rigor.”<sup>37</sup> But he notes that growing evidence supports the assertion that migrants’ enjoyment of human and labor rights has instrumental as well as intrinsic value.

***The contrast in access to rights is most stark between migrants with legal status and those who lack authorization to live and work in the country of destination.***

## H. The Impact of Climate-Induced Migration on Development<sup>ix</sup>

The relationship between climate-induced migration and development runs in both directions. The level of development in an area negatively affected by climate change is a major determinant of whether the inhabitants of that region will need to migrate in order to preserve or regain

livelihoods damaged by changed ecological circumstances. At the same time, migration affects the development prospects of regions experi-

encing change — in some cases positively and in others negatively. As Susan Martin points out, “the availability of alternative livelihoods or other coping capacities in the affected area generally determines the scale and form of migration that may take place. ... If affected populations are not able to access alternative livelihoods within a reasonable timeframe, migration may become the best or only option available....”<sup>38</sup>

The discussion of migration and climate change has often become entangled in debates about the numbers of people likely to be displaced by climate change rather than the development impact of movements of people. The policy debate has been hindered by the lack of credible data, and by the paucity of analysis of actual and likely migration patterns. Data collection is complicated by the fact that the effects of climate change interact with many other factors that inform a decision to move.

ix Susan F. Martin, “Environmental Change and Migration: What We Know” (Policy Brief no. 2, Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, September 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Migration-EnvironmentalChange.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/Migration-EnvironmentalChange.pdf).

## IV. Conclusions

Communities of emigrants and their descendants connect their countries of origin to transnational processes that can unlock the beneficial aspects of globalization. Yet many policymakers continue to see migration as more of a problem than an asset. They often perceive migration as a response to development failures rather than a contributor to development successes. In this framing, lack of development is seen as cause of migration and, conversely, sustainable development is seen as a cure. The accumulated knowledge and experience of the past 20 years paints a more nuanced and positive picture of the relationship, and one that makes a compelling case for incorporating migration in the post-2015 development agenda.

National and multilateral development agencies are capable of leveraging the upside of international migration by helping countries of origin and destination work together to:

- create opportunities for savings, insurance, and productive investment based on remittances;
- encourage diasporas to connect with their countries of origin and help connect these countries to the world, especially through entrepreneurship

and business development;

- remove obstacles to circular migration;
- monitor recruitment closely and work with the private sector to establish fair cost structures and good recruitment practices;
- address the need for human-capital development in undersupplied sectors in countries of migrant origin;
- develop cooperative strategies for the protection of migrants' human rights and labor rights; and
- prepare appropriate policies and governance structures to include planned or facilitated migration as part of a broader adaptation to climate change.

The UN High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in October 2013, and the reinvigorated Global Forum on Migration and Development process starting in 2014, offer opportunities to launch a new round of practical policymaking on the basis of the evidence that has accumulated over the past ten years. The resources generated by migrants are underperforming their potential. Their impact could be amplified, by the applied expertise of policymakers and practitioners as they refocus their efforts on migration and development from debate to action.

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