

Internal and International Migration and Development: Research and Policy Perspectives

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Over the last half century, migration research and policy have focused on internal and international migration separately. Attention to internal migration has focused largely on rural–urban movements and processes of urbanization within developing countries and on movement between regional labor markets within industrialized countries. Such concerns have for the most part been pursued with little or no connection to debates related to international migration, the study of which began to consolidate during the 1980s largely in response to policy debates over the increasing flow of international migrants from countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Although internal and international migrants are often motivated by similar forces and may be linked with one another, whether or not their movement takes them across national borders has placed them under different spheres of national sovereignty and administrative governance, reinforcing their separation in scholarship as well as policymaking.

Recognition of the contributions that migrants can make to economic development provides good reason to reconsider the separation between internal and international migration research and policymaking. Part of this interest in migration and development has been stimulated by the substantial increase over the past decade in the amount of funds that international migrants remit to their home countries. The potential importance of remittances has led researchers to reconsider more broadly how the types of resources that migrants transfer home might be significantly related to various aspects of development in sending countries. While most attention is being given to the use and impact of the remittances of migrant workers, other research is also examining such issues as the balance between “brain drain” and “brain gain” resulting from the movement of skilled and professional migrants; the investments made by diaspora-based entrepreneurs in home country businesses; the economic implications of refugee flight and settlement; the stimulation of production and trade by

overseas ethnic markets; and the ways in which new ideas, values, and other “social remittances” redefine development goals. As a result, both national governments and international organizations have begun to view international migration as a tool for development and to design policies to maximize its benefits.

Some governments have established programmes to retain connections with their emigrant populations by extending continuing national membership, dual citizenship, voting rights, and the like. Economically, they offer special tax and other benefits to attract investments in the home country and the return home of nationals with useful skills. Through the United Nations, a large number of states have recently begun to participate in a Global Forum on Migration and Development to explore together the development benefits that they might foster through state sponsored policies and programmes.

Significant as international migration may be to development, internal migration may be more important, particularly in countries undergoing urbanization. While statistics about international flows of migrants and remittances around the world are being refined and analyzed, less international attention has been given to assessing the substantially larger internal movements of migrants. The most recent estimate by the Population Division of the United Nations is that close to 200 million people, or 2 to 3 percent of the world’s population, live outside the countries of their birth. In contrast, over the next two to three decades, in China and India alone, governments are planning for the urban resettlement of some 340 million and 100 million rural residents respectively. Smaller but still significant numbers of people are also moving between rural areas, between cities, or from cities back to the countryside. Other countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America expect to go through similar demographic transitions, if they have not already done so. That those countries with the highest levels of urbanization also enjoy the highest rates of economic productivity suggests some of the developmental implications of internal migration.

Consideration of the significance of internal and international migration for development raises two basic questions: how are the two migratory processes related to one another and in what ways are they similar or different with regard to their effects on development? This volume helps to answer these questions by focusing specifically on the internal and international movements of migrant workers and the implications of their employment, earnings, and spending in both sending and receiving areas. This approach becomes relevant to a broader rethinking of the relation between migration and development by exploring three interrelated perspectives. First, it examines relations between internal and international

migration processes. Internal and international migrants, families, and their networks are often linked with one another and they share resources both within and across national borders. Second, it examines comparatively the implications of internal and international migration on different levels of social organization ranging from individual migrants and their families to communities, districts, nations, and world regions. Third, because both forms of migration are often motivated by similar economic, social, and political factors, understanding their interrelations and their similarities and differences can contribute to the design of policies intended to enhance their contributions to development.

The events that led to our combining considerations of internal and international migration began with a regional conference on “Migration, Development, and Poverty Reduction in Asia,” which was organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and hosted by the government of China in Lanzhou, Gansu, in March of 2005. The Lanzhou conference emphasized the importance of internal migrants for local and national development and how their contributions can be enhanced by strategies to reduce the risks of migration for poor people.¹ But several papers also considered to some extent the contributions to development of international migration. The Lanzhou conference prompted the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and the International Organization for Migration to propose a workshop that would explore new directions for migration and development research and policy by highlighting important linkages between internal and international migration. With funds provided by the Economic and Social Research Council (of the United Kingdom) and the Center on Migration Policy and Society (based at Oxford University), as well as by the IOM, the SSRC organized a workshop titled “Migration and Development Within and Across Borders: Concepts, Methods, and Policy Considerations in Internal and International Migration,” which took place during November 2005 in New York City.

The papers and discussions at the workshop covered various types of internal and international migration, including the local effects of skilled and professional migration and conditions that attract return, investments made by entrepreneurs in their home countries, the implications of forced migration for development, and the contribution of “socio-cultural remittances.”² The articles we have selected for this volume are revised versions of some of the workshop papers that focused on issues related to

¹ For a report on the conference, see International Organization for Migration, *Migration, Development and Poverty Reduction in Asia* (2005).

² For the workshop’s full agenda, including all the participants and papers presented, go to http://programs.ssrc.org/intmigration/working_groups/migration_and_development/workshop/nov_2005_agenda/.

labor migration. This narrower topical focus not only facilitates our framing of internal and international migration within sending and receiving areas and on different levels of social organization but also makes possible an examination of related methods of research and links to policy. In doing so, our goal is to elaborate a strategy that can more broadly integrate migration and development research, inform future research agendas and methods, and help to link research to policy considerations.

To frame and clarify our approach, the articles in this volume are grouped into two sections followed by an afterword. Section I includes papers that examine linkages between internal and international migration processes in relation to economic development. The articles summarize what is known about how internal and international migration affect one another and suggest issues for researchers and policymakers to take into account in the future. Two of these articles give particular attention to methodological issues. The second section includes articles that bring different perspectives of internal and international migration to the impacts of remittances and labor migration on development in sending and receiving areas.

Finally, we have written an afterword that explores the collective insights that can be drawn from each of chapters by framing their findings with regard to levels of social analysis within sending and receiving regions. This framework is employed to link research findings to consider the design of future research and policy agendas.

Connecting Internal and International Migration and Development

Ronald Skeldon's article provides a broad overview of the different ways in which internal migration leads to international migration and, similarly, how international migration gives stimulus to internal migration. Drawing largely on examples from Asia, he proposes that because internal and international migrations are different geographical responses to the same processes of modernization and development, they should be analyzed and understood within a common research framework. In the afterword, we build on Skeldon's approach and draw upon other articles within this collection, to outline how such a framework might be developed and applied both to research and to migration and development policies.

Based on research about Peruvian and Ghanaian migrants respectively, the articles by Norman Long and Valentina Mazzucato approach migration and development from the perspective of migrants themselves. In doing so, they recognize that for migrant families and networks to secure their livelihoods, they must sustain linkages and exchange resources between

sending and receiving locations. Whether those networks are local or international depends upon the opportunities that a migrant family encounters and their ability to take advantage of them. Starting from the point of view of migrant actors and recognizing the central importance for them of sustaining translocal ties leads both Long and Mazzucato to introduce innovative concepts and research methods.

In analyzing translocal family relationships Norman Long expresses misgivings about the categorical distinctions between different types of migratory movements. Instead he assumes an “actor-oriented perspective” that conceives of the members of translocal migrant networks as they are related to family enterprise, reproduction, and change. In a “globalizing world” where geographical mobility, rapid transportation, and instantaneous communication of information are the norm, he contends, “there is no ‘great ontological difference divide those living ‘at home,’ in some ‘distant city,’ or in a ‘transnational world.’” He illustrates this methodological point with his ethnographic research on the multi-sited and cross generational ties that link the livelihoods of Peruvian migrant family and community members dispersed within and outside the country.

Valentina Mazzucato and her research team discovered similar ties between internal and international Ghanaian family and community networks. By adopting a “simultaneous matched sample” research method, in which researchers were posted at multiple nodes of migrant networks, she and her research team were able to investigate the communications and exchanges of resources between network members in the Ghanaian countryside, the capital city of Accra, and the Netherlands. The research revealed that the “mutual insurance contracts” that bind the livelihoods of network members resulted in bi-directional exchanges of informal moral and material support between sending and receiving areas, wherever the need. This simultaneous, multi-sited approach enabled the researchers to follow the give and take of mutual relations not otherwise recordable.

In their chapter, J. Edward Taylor, Jorge Mora, Richard Adams, and Alejandro López-Feldman take advantage of a national Mexican survey of rural households to test the idea that migration begins with relatively wealthy community members whose networks then facilitate and reduce the cost of travel for poorer community members, whose migration soon follows. The authors seek to determine what impact the remittances of both internal and international migrants have on poverty and income inequality between households. They conclude that the more closely rural communities have become integrated into local and international labor markets, the greater the impact remittances have in reducing poverty and

narrowing income inequalities within sending communities and, over time, between regions of rural Mexico. They show that international migration provides migrants with higher incomes and contributes a larger portion of household income than does internal migration, although they do not attempt to determine how differences in levels of earnings affect choices to engage in one form of migration or the other.

Shifting focus from sending to receiving areas, Susan Carter and Richard Sutch analyze the effect that international migrants might have on the employment and wages of native-born workers, some of whom are internal migrants. To inform contemporary debates about U.S. immigration restrictions, they examine a historical case of immigrant labor market impacts based on U.S. county level census data from 1910. They expect that if international migrants have an adverse impact on native-born workers, it will be more obvious in the past than today because of the relatively higher ratio of international to native-born workers and because immigrant and native workers were more similar in educational and other characteristics than they are today. Through their analysis of migration to different counties and regions of the United States, the authors find that both immigrant and native workers migrated to the same urban labor markets. Not only did immigrant and native born workers not “crowd out” one another, they conclude, but the arrival of both contributed to moderated and long-term economic growth. The authors argue that if research is to be relevant to policy, current “textbook” models of labor markets must be refined to reflect the markets’ open and dynamic nature.

Comparing the Impacts of Internal and International Migration on Development

In this section we have grouped together articles that address either internal or international migration separately but within the same countries or regions. The purpose is to facilitate comparison of similarities and differences between the two forms of migration as within the same geographic contexts. In the volume’s afterword, we pursue more systematically what can be learned from comparisons at the different levels of analysis of the family, community, nation, and region.

In India, Priya Deshingkar’s chapter presents an overview of short-term internal or circular migration. In the absence of accurate survey data, she compiles village and regional case studies into a national portrait of how rural villagers take up temporary employment in other agricultural areas and cities in order to supplement and sustain their rural livelihoods. In most instances, short-term migration seems to minimize poverty more than

provide the basis for prosperity or growth. She uses her analysis, however, to convince policymakers, who have largely sought to discourage rural migrants from settling in cities, to take into account the benefits of circular migration in planning broader strategies that might link rural agricultural and urban development.

Prema Kurien analyses the uses of overseas earnings in three ethnically distinct villages in the Kerala state of South India. Although she mentions that some villagers had earlier been involved in internal migration, she focuses her analysis on why migrant families tend to regard funds earned abroad as “easy money” and, thus, to spend them for consumption more than productive investment. She examines how differences of ethnicity and social organization in Muslim, Hindu, and Christian villages affects consumption patterns that result, respectively, in the redistribution of goods throughout a whole village, in more limited support of extended family networks, and in concentrated savings for the advancement only of nuclear family members. One of the implications of her findings is that policymakers would benefit from considering the influence of socio-cultural as well as economic factors when relying on remittances to promote local development.

The volume’s three chapters about Chinese migration focus on different aspects of migration and development but within the same context of China’s shift from a planned to a market economy. Huang Ping and Zhan Shaohua are particularly concerned with the contributions that rural–urban migration can make to alleviate the poverty of rural families and help to close the income gap between rural and urban areas. To save wages and send remittances to families in rural areas, migrant workers in cities endure miserable deprivation in their work, diet, housing, and health. The authors find that remittances sent back to rural areas are used primarily to pay the costs of education, health, and local government administration. While such consumption does alleviate poverty, it diminishes the possibility of remittances being invested in productive enterprises. To promote rural development, the authors advise the central government to increase state subsidies for rural public services, particularly education and health, so as to free up remittances for investment. To help migrant workers, they advocate for access to better employment and services in cities.

Cai Fang and Wang Dewen examine rural migrants’ integration into urban labor markets and their contribution to China’s industrialization and economic growth. They argue that urbanization is necessary for China’s growing private enterprises to take advantage of economies of scale that can increase productivity. Although rural–urban migration between 1978

and 2004 has increased the urban portion of China's population from 17.9 to 41.8 percent, Cai and Wang contend that an even higher level of urbanization will be necessary for China to match the world's most productive economies. Blocking such progress are policies that originated within a planned economy but now discourage economic growth: the old *hukou* system, which restricts migrants' freedom to resettle with access to public services, and state enterprises, which protect urban workers' jobs from competition and exclude migrant workers from employment. To assure that cities will have the workers needed for future economic expansion, the authors urge a deepening of reforms that would result in more open and competitive urban labor markets and increased internal migration.

The research of Zai Liang and Hedeki Morooka has examined the economic contributions to southern China's Fujian Province made by remittances sent home by international migrants working in the United States. The authors found that although migrant families spent remitted funds primarily on consumption, they also devoted a small but significant portion to public welfare projects, such as schools, roads, and public buildings in their villages, and, after pooling funds, to investments in industry and real estate elsewhere in the region. Contesting the notion that remittances must be invested in productive enterprises in order to contribute to economic development, they point out that consumption – particularly housing construction – has multiplier effects that ripple throughout the regional economy and stimulate investment and growth in related businesses. Thus they see international remittances as contributing positively to regional economic growth within the longer history and broader context of national policies that have been implemented since the late 1970s to promote coastal industrialization and international trade.

Shifting regional focus, Manuel Orozco's chapter takes up the development contributions that remittances and other migration-related economic activities make to development in Latin America and the Caribbean. Like Liang and Morooka, Orozco points out that remittances have multiplier effects in the communities and regions where they are spent, but the extent to which remittance spending can promote economic growth, he concludes, depends upon the structure and organization of the local economy and the opportunities it provides for both consumption and investment. Crucial factors include levels of productivity and efficiency in different economic sectors and markets; access to savings, loans, and other financial services through banks and other institutions; and the economic policy environment established by local and national governments. Whether remittances can become integrated into local markets and leverage economic transformation

and growth ultimately depends on the responsiveness and flexibility of local markets and creating such conditions is the central challenge facing policymakers. Orozco also points out that other migration-related economic activities can contribute to the development of migrants' home countries. Referring to tourism, telecommunications, transportation, trade, and remittance transfer businesses as "the 5-Ts," he argues that these links can contribute to economic growth in both sending and receiving countries.

In the final chapter, the editors assess the collective contributions of the volume chapters toward linking the study of internal and international migration and their impacts on development. To do so, we examine the different perspectives that the chapters bring, first, to understanding the relations between internal and international migration, and second, to comparisons between internal and international migration at different levels of analysis. These two approaches then lead us to assess conceptual and methodological innovations that have been introduced in linking research and analysis of internal and international migration and their developmental impacts. Finally, we consider the range of implications for policy that the authors draw from their different research foci and perspectives. This discussion is framed in terms of the geographies of sending and receiving areas and levels of social organization that, we propose, can inform future research and policy development not only related to labor migration and remittances, but also other types of migration and resource transfers that link the processes of migration and economic developments between different socio-cultural contexts.