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Putting Migration in Development Studies

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Introduction

It is now generally accepted that along with transfer of human capital and resources migration leads to transmission of skills, ideas, knowledge and creates link and inter-personal networks, contributing to economic and social developments of both countries of origin and destination. However, such outcomes are not automatic. In order to link migration with development some countries are in the process of integrating migration into development strategies. This paper attempts to locate some of the potential interfaces between the two that can be pursued at state, regional and global levels. It concentrates on four issue areas. These are: poverty reduction, economic growth, return and circulation of highly skilled migrants and climate change.

Poverty Reduction Policies and Migration

Poverty can be either the cause or effect of migration. Likewise, poverty might be reduced or enhanced due to migration (Skeldon, 2002). Therefore, any intervention to reduce poverty should try to decrease the negative results of migration and increase the positive outcomes. The Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations target to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty into half between 1990 and 2015. Migration does not feature in the original framework of MDGs. However, the roadmap designed to achieve the MDGs gradually incorporated migration.

Adams and Page (2003) empirically demonstrated that international migration can be positively linked to a decline in the number of people living in poverty. A World Bank report (2007) recently linked 6 percent poverty cut in Bangladesh in 2006 to migration. During the year 2004, 11 percent poverty reduction in Nepal was attributed to migration (Gurung and Adhikari, 2005). All these lead us to argue that in order to reduce poverty migration should be linked to global strategic development planning such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers of various countries, development agenda of donor organisations and more importantly national development planning of different countries. Following are some of the areas where poverty reduction strategy can take the help of migration.

Increase access of the poor to migrate: Studies have shown that international migration requires relatively large investments. So the poorest of the poor cannot use this as a livelihood option to overcome poverty. Policy directions are needed in all the above poverty reduction strategies to encourage public and private financial institutions to lend the poor at a lower interest rate for soft collateral to finance migration. Migrants can pay back through instalments once they start to earn in the country of destination. Repayment of loan will also expose migrants to formal channels of remittance transfer. While increasing access of the poor it is important to bear in mind that some countries have restrictive policies towards migration of their female workers. Civil society should advocate for the abolishment of such policies and ensure the equal rights of men and women to migrate. As women migrants are particularly vulnerable to harassment, the state must ensure their due protection while facilitating their migration.

Reducing Poverty Pockets in the Receiving Countries: In some of the receiving countries of short term contract workers, pockets of relative poverty have been created where migrants live. Low wage, inhumane living conditions, lack of access to social protection, health care and sanitation, are the inevitable causes of such poverty pockets in the receiving countries (Tamango,2008). In line with *UN Convention on Protection of Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families* (1990) advocacy must be launched at regional and global levels demanding better work condition. These receiving countries bilaterally negotiate terms with the sending countries. Multilateralism needs to be encouraged on different global fora including this GFMD. In 2008 in Abu Dhabi, as natural progression of the Colombo process, both groups of origin and destination

countries got together where the issue of state of migrants in receiving countries was discussed. Continuation of such multilateral processes can lead to a reduction of relative poverty in receiving countries.

Reducing Poverty of Slum Dwelling Migrants: Fast economic growth in the urban areas has resulted in the migration of a significant number of people from rural areas. Such internal migration may have balanced the demand and supply of labour between rural and urban areas. Nonetheless, huge growth of cities has created new challenges for policy makers. In urban areas internal migrants, both men and women, employed in low skilled jobs are staying in slums in sub-human conditions. They enjoy very little civic amenities such as decent housing, safe drinking water, hygienic sanitation and quality education (UN,2003). Women's reproductive and physical security are compromised in many of the urban slums.

Traditionally urban planners have treated internal migration as a problem. According to them such migration leads to 'slumisation' of urban cities. The easy solution they prescribed was to create more employment in rural areas. An important reason for 'slumisation' in different urban areas is the absence of understanding of the policy makers about the need for allocation of space in the urban planning for the service providers. Any urban planning should demarcate spaces for low income workers with basic minimum civic amenities catering the need of both men and women. In order to ensure better living condition of internal migrants who are providing labour to different factories, industrial plants or in the services sector, specifically allocated spaces should be made at an affordable cost. Without being accompanied by their families, a large groups of single women (married or unmarried) move to cities. Urban planners also need to design accommodation for these women. Migration will be a major source of urban growth especially in the developing countries. Ministries of housing, health, education and institutions in charge of urban planning should be targeted by civil society bodies for bringing in changes in the mind set of policy planners.

Policy towards out migration of essential professionals and poverty: Some countries of Africa are deeply concerned with the outflow of their professional workers, particularly doctors, nurses and teachers, at a faster rate than they can replace. Depletion of skilled human resource may result in the unavailability of essential health and educational services in these countries resulting in impoverishment. Ghana tried to resolve this issue by imposing restriction of movements of professionals as well as providing incentives. Past experiences demonstrate that restriction only increases undocumented flow. Besides, these countries also need remittances for their economic growth. Some of the receiving countries, on the other hand, have come up with policies of restricting movements of professionals from countries of origin by introducing the concept of ethical recruitment. However, experts particularly representing countries of origin perceive this as a way of market protection in favour of the professionals of countries of destination. Besides, traditionally the majority of the health workers who migrated are women nurses. Restricting their movements reduces opportunities of women who are not organised enough to articulate their voice against such policies.

Creating a larger pool of highly skilled workers: The Philippines on the other hand, addressed the emigration issue of health professionals differently. It has provided all kinds of incentives to public and private sector institutions to offer training and created a big pool of nurses for taking up overseas employment. Therefore, in order to reduce the harmful effects of emigration of skilled workers at the national level, health and education ministries of the countries of origin need to draw a long term planning. It needs to create enabling environment for growth of education institutions both at public and private sectors which will produce quality human capital for local and international markets.

Support from receiving countries: Sending countries can seek support from the receiving countries. They can bilaterally and multilaterally approach the receiving states to direct a

section of their development assistance towards establishment of such training centres. If a person receives education through government subsidised educational institution then the government may think of claiming compensation from the migrants concerned or the institutions of receiving states that are employing those essential professionals. In producing higher number of health professionals, countries of origin can develop higher education link programme with similar institutions of receiving countries.

Under the head of poverty reduction this section concentrated on four broad issues, increasing access of poor to choose to migrate to earn a livelihood; reducing the situations of relative poverty in the receiving countries by ensuring better wage, shelter and access to health care facilities to the migrants; reducing the harmful affect of migration of professionals by producing greater number of highly skilled persons for both local and international employment, and finally enhancing the health and sanitation for the rural urban internal migrants through ensuring meaningful urban planning.

Integrating migration in national policies of economic growth

At a national level both labour receiving and origin countries have particular industrial, agricultural, trade, service sector or infrastructure development policies to achieve certain growth rate. Migration needs to be interfaced with those national policies. In the following three broad issues have been discussed. These are: turning small economic ventures of a section of the migrants into small and medium enterprises (SMEs); floating of bonds for encouraging use of remittance in large scale development projects, inspiring use of philanthropic remittances in local development and regulatory reforms for increasing access of migrants to formal channel of remittance transfer.

Expand access of migrants to formal transfer channels: Access to foreign exchange is crucial in pursuing many of the developmental goals. Since 2000 remittances sent by the migrants through formal channel has increased in a major way. It has become the largest source of foreign exchange earning for many countries. High level of foreign exchange reserve and positive balance of payment ratio are direct outcomes of steady growth in foreign exchange flow to the countries of origin (Ratha, 2008). Although since September 11, 2000 global surveillance of international financial flow and introduction of new actors in remittance transfer have successfully brought a huge sum of migrants' remittances into the formal network of transfer, yet a large amount is still transferred through informal channels. In the Gulf and Southeast Asian region, remote provinces and states where migrants are working lack access to formal channels. At the remote areas of country of origin as well access to formal channels for remittance transfer is secured.

High cost of transfer is another area of concern. Some countries have reduced the cost by introduction of internet and mobile banking, and some others have addressed the problem through introduction of grassroots level non-governmental organisations as the last leg of remittance transfer (Siddiqui 2009). The central banks of remittance receiving and sending countries need to sit together to harmonise their policies for increasing formal flow. Access to increased amount of remittance to the sending countries has deep significance in terms of dependency on foreign aid. A significant part of development budget for some of the developing countries come from foreign aid which have all kinds of strings attached. Although remittances are in no way substitute of foreign aid, targeted policies of encouraging use of remittance in certain sectors by the migrants and their families can produce higher economic growth and reduce external aid dependence.

Advocacy for Budgetary Allocation: Policy advocacy on better management of remittances has to be conducted by national and international civil society organisations to the governments of countries of origin. Reduction of costs of transfer and increased access at both ends are important areas for advocacy. Advocacy also needs to be targeted to ensure budgetary allocation and good governance in all areas of migration, starting from recruitment of workers, their protection at destination and management of

remittances. If remittance receiving countries allocate equivalent amount of 5 percent of remittance that they receive in their budget to remittance and migration governance that will yield substantive results. Therefore, civil society bodies should raise demands for substantive budgetary allocation in this regard.

Studies (Ratha 2008) have shown that after meeting some basic consumption needs a section of remittances still remain as savings. Migrants families use this amount in purchasing of land and constructing houses. A typical avenue for migrant's investment for income generation is in construction of market place or buying general and grocery stores. A section of remittances is also used in agricultural production such as buying seeds, irrigation, employing labour during harvesting. Remittances are also used in off farm activities such as poultry farm, cooperative for fish farming and transport business.

Business advisory services: The governments of countries of origin need to develop specific programmes that will target the returnee migrants and current migrants' family members and help them to transform their small investment ventures into SMEs. For doing so the government should provide incentives to public and private sector business advisory institutions to develop projects that will impart training to migrant families in financial management, project planning and link them with formal financial institutions to access investment loans. Non-governmental organisations can be taken as partners at the grassroots to reach the left behind families of migrants. A large number of left behind families are women headed. Women specific investment avenues have to be consciously integrated. They can connect migrants with available business services by forming groups. Through research, conferences and other forms of engagement civil society organisations and research bodies can advocate to their governments as well as to donor organisations for such SME development programmes. Challenge funds can be made available by the development partners to these organisations to bring innovations in this respect DFID-Bangladesh Bank Challenge Fund project under Remittances and Payments Partnership is a good example(Siddiqui 2009).

Large scale development projects: Migrants' remittances can also be used for large scale infrastructural and other development projects. Instead of depending on foreign aid or loans at concessional rates the governments can float special bonds targeting the migrants and their families. Diaspora investment can be specifically targeted for this. Government and semi-government bodies may float bonds for funding construction of bridges, modernization of airports and communication development projects. Some of these projects can come up with profit sharing arrangements with the migrant investors. India and China have been greatly successful in this area. The Philippines and India have recently amended their citizenship laws to accommodate diaspora. Other countries can design programmes for diaspora investment in their development strategies by incorporating similar changes. Nonetheless, incorporation of these policies may not produce similar results like China and India, if the investment climate is not congenial.

Local development and philanthropic remittances: Migrants are particularly interested to help develop their own locality. Local governments of migrant intensity areas can interface with local development and migrants' remittances. This they can do by targeting the philanthropic portion of migrants' remittances. In the national budget there needs to be allocation for local governments to encourage such innovative projects. The civil society bodies can help local government articulate their demand for allocation of resources from the national government.

Attracting permanent or temporary return and circulation of the highly skilled

In the 21st century, knowledge workers are seen as the driving force behind economic growth and development. The migration policies of industrialised and newly industrialised countries are competing to attract the highly skilled migrant workers from all over the world. Migrants desire to explore the best possible options for their lives and

livelihood. Some highly skilled professionals in developing countries may not have sufficient opportunities for utilising their skills in their countries of origin and it is therefore natural that a significant portion of highly skilled professionals from developing countries will continue to migrate.

Using diaspora for home country development: From the perspective of developing world in the 1960s migration of highly skilled persons was theorised as 'Brain drain'. This brain drain seriously affected many countries, particularly those in Africa. However, recent studies have shown that a section of these migrants at certain stages in their lifetimes, return to their countries of origin and contribute to the development of the country by using the knowledge and technology they acquired in the countries of migration. Some of them circulate between home and host countries and bring back valuable knowledge and experiences. A recent survey of the Silicon Valley immigrant professionals found that 80-90 percent of Chinese and Indian migrants, who have business relations in their home countries, travel home more than five times a year. Countries have undertaken various measures to encourage return of workers; these are, tax exemption, access to land, housing, voting rights, dual multiple citizenship, scope of lateral entry into public service etc (RMMRU and DRC 2006). Those countries who lag behind can replicate some of these to attract temporary or permanent return of their diaspora.

Incorporation of migration in climate change debate

Inter-governmental panel on climate change (IPCC) projects that by 2090 sea level will rise in the range of 0.11-0.77 metres. It also projected that one metre sea level rise will result in the displacement of 6m people of Egypt, 13m of Bangladesh and 72m people of China (Gomes and et al, 1998). Thousands of hectares of agricultural land will be inundated. Due to global warming local climates of various regions will undergo major transformation; some are likely to be hotter and some colder, and some others drier or wetter. This will have adverse impacts on livelihood patterns that will have major implication for population movements.

Research and Demographic Modelling: Only recently is research being conducted to analyse the impact of climate change on population movements. Such research findings on inter-relationships between migration with climate change have a major bearing on development process of various countries and regions have to be widely discussed. Besides, more research and greater cooperation between those working on environmental issues and those working on demographic modelling needs to be conducted (Skeldon, forthcoming).

Coordination of campaign between migration and environmental groups: Certain countries are contributing disproportionately more in inducing climate change. Unfortunately, the adverse impact of climate change will be faced more rigorously by those which contributed the least. It is important that global civil society organisations campaigning for responsible actions slowing the pace of global warming should work together with those global and regional organisations which are working for protection of rights of migrant workers. Combined effort of these two forces will be able to put the voices of millions of men and women who will have no other choice but to migrate. Developed countries that are contributing more to global warming should support programmes in vulnerable countries for diversifying their agricultural production methods and creating alternative livelihood options. Climate change and restrictive migration policies of developed countries may give rise to more irregular migration. Civil society bodies should campaign for opening up of avenues for regular migration in the developed countries.

Migration and Regional Bodies

For a long time regional bodies have emerged to enhance economic growth in different regions through trade and investments. Regional bodies have also emerged at a civil society level to enhance the human rights in the concerned regions. Incorporation of migration into state initiated regional bodies as well as in civil society bodies is important for enhancing positive development of migration. Member countries of regional organisations such as African Union (AU), Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), Puebla Process, Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), Andean Community, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) experience labour migration in a major way.

Migration in to the agenda of regional bodies to foster growth: The African Union has drafted a strategic framework for a migration policy for Africa. It covers a wide number of things, including labour migration, border management, irregular migration, human rights of migrants, internal migration, migration data collection and exchange, migration and development etc.ⁱ In 1989, twenty states and territories of Caribbean community under the CARICOM declared free movement of nationals among them.ⁱⁱ Through Puebla Process ten Central American and North American countries including the USA and Canada adopted a multilateral approach on migration. Protection of the workers is the major issue here.ⁱⁱⁱ Mobility of labour to border areas, free movements of goods, services and factors of production between four Latin American countries constitute major issues in a multilateral framework initiated by MERCOSUR.^{iv} The ASEAN community also adopted a Charter on rights of the migrants who move within member countries. These fora should concentrate their efforts to multiply migration-development interfaces in their actions.

Regional civil society bodies and advocacy on migration and development: At the civil society level different organisations have emerged. Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), South Asia Migration Resource Network (SAMReN), CARAM Asia, Casa Asia, Digital Diaspora Network (DDNA), South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA), African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) are some examples. These organisations conduct networking activities to promote migrant rights, generate knowledge on developmental outcome of migration, train academics and professionals, establish links with transnational communities of skilled professionals etc.

These civil society initiated regional forums already contribute in enhancing economic and social development outcomes of migration. Nonetheless to develop common stands on labour issues these forums should be used by the sending states more rigorously. In order to learn from experiences of all these forums researches need to be conducted. Such research will provide evidence on what produces better results and can be replicated by other.

Conclusion

The discussion above highlights some of the ways in which migration policies can be integrated into development strategies for the benefits of all – origin countries, destination countries, men and women who migrate and also who do not migrate can participate in such planned development. UN institutions, development partners, regional bodies, national governments and civil society bodies all can incorporate migration in their development agenda.

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Example of Good Practice



Remittance Festival organised by the MRPC at the grassroots



MRPC Campaign on Safe Migration



Best remittance user family



Finance Minister honouring a migrant with 'Person of Gold' Award

Migration is an integral part of the economy of Bangladesh. Remittances received from the migrants are five times higher than the foreign aid and nine times more than the foreign direct investment to the country. For the last five consecutive years, despite widening trade deficit and relatively low flow of FDI the country's balance of payments remained in the surplus. This has happened because of increased inflow of remittances to the country. The central bank undertook several reform measures that attracted the flow of remittances through formal channels. It collaborated with a civil society organisation, the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), in disseminating new methods of transfer and the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry of the Government of Bangladesh collaborated in disseminating procedures of safe migration at the grassroots. RMMRU, in partnership with seven grassroots NGOs, formed Migrants' Rights Protection Committees (MRPC) at local level of migrant intensity districts.

These MRPCs have gradually given voice to the voiceless migrants and their families by providing all kinds of services, ranging from counselling on migration procedure, opening of bank accounts to facilitate redress of cases of fraudulence. Along with nation-wide media campaign MRPCs are now conducting remittance festivals at local levels where all public and private commercial banks and government agencies involved in migration process display their products in stalls. Through festivity of the fairs MRPCs have been successful in connecting aspirant and returnee migrant workers, their families, bank officials and government functionaries with each other. Such connectivity among users and service providers have resulted in securing better services and increased flow of remittances through formal channels and their productive utilisation.

These MRPCs annually honour a select group of migrants and their family members for their contribution to national economy as the 'people of gold'. Grassroots level bank officials and recruiting agencies are also honoured for providing quality services to the migrant clients. Honouring of these groups of people has generated a momentum for productive utilisation of remittances. This is an excellent example of government-civil society collaboration in ensuring good governance in migration.

Three recommendations for reducing the cost of migration:

Abolition of levy system: In order to discourage recruitment of unskilled overseas workers governments of some Southeast Asian countries impose yearly levy on the employers. In reality, the cost of such levy is passed on to the migrant workers. For example, in 2008, the Malaysian government earned as much as 1500 X 300000 from poor Bangladeshi migrant workers. The GFMD 2009 can urge the receiving countries to withdraw imposition of levy on unskilled workers. This will reduce cost of migration significantly.

Elimination of visa trading: In some of the Gulf countries work visa trading has become a major problem. Allegedly agents of visa issuing authorities, employers, and the recruiting agents in the receiving countries are involved in selling visas to recruiting agents of sending countries or their intermediaries. Visas are sold within the range of US\$1000 to \$1500. This amount is added to regular costs of migration. The GFMD can request the concerned authorities of the Gulf countries to launch a drive against visa trading. It can mobilise the civil society bodies attending the Forum to launch a media campaign using television channels like Aljazeera to disseminate the message that ‘visa trading is haram in Islam’. This will help forming of opinion of nationals of Gulf States against the practise of visa trading.

Online recruitment system

In order to reduce fraudulence in the recruitment process at the grassroots level the governments of sending countries may develop an online recruitment system. The aspirant migrant workers can register themselves from any place of the country online. The private recruitment agencies can then recruit directly from the online database. This system has the potential of curbing the role of the intermediaries operating at different levels and thus has the potential to reduce cost of migration at the sending end. Bangladesh has started online registration of workers though it is yet to be fully functional.

ⁱ <http://www.africa-union.org/Summit/July%202005/PRC%20Draft%20Rapporteur%20Report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ www.ilo.org/public/English/protection/migrant/download/imp/imp6ie.pdf; <http://www.caricom.org/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.gcim.org>; <http://www.rcmvs.org>

^{iv} <http://www.epcmercotur.gov.ar/leyes/ley25903.htm>; www.iadb.org/intal/tratados/mercotur.htm