

CHAPTER 23

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Khalid Koser

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To understand the main trends, patterns, and processes of contemporary international migration.
- ◆ To discover the underlying causes of international migration.
- ◆ To appreciate the relationship between international migration and development.

To set the scene, this chapter begins with a brief overview of contemporary **international migration**. It then examines the relationship between international migration and development in two main ways. First, it demonstrates how international migration is inextricably linked with the process of globalization and specifically how **disparities** in development can be an incentive to migrate. Second, we consider the relationship in reverse, demonstrating how international migrants and the migration process influence development in their countries of origin. In the final sections, the chapter turns to the interactions between displacement—or involuntary migration—and development, and between internal migration and development.

CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

The United Nations defines an **international migrant** as a person who stays outside her/his country of origin for at least one year (see Box 23.1). According to that definition, the UN estimated that in 2010 there were

about 214 million international migrants worldwide, with an additional 15 million **refugees**. The number of international migrants is closely equivalent to the population of the fourth most populous country on earth, Indonesia. About one in every 32 people in the world today is an international migrant. But migration also affects far more people than just those who migrate—it has important social, economic, and political impacts at home and abroad. This observation has led Stephen Castles and Mark Miller to suggest that we live in an ‘age of migration’.

The number of international migrants has more than doubled in just 25 years, and about 40 million have been added in the twenty-first century. Before 1990, most of the world’s international migrants lived in the developing world; today, the majority live in the developed world, and their proportion is growing. In 2010, there were about 72 million migrants in Europe (including the states of the former Soviet Union), 50 million in North America, 30 million in the Middle East, 27.5 million in Asia, 19 million in Africa, 7.5 million in Latin America, and 6 million in Oceania. Almost 20 per cent of the world’s migrants in 2010—about 43 million—lived in the US.

The Russian Federation was the second most important host country for migrants, with about 13 million, or nearly 8 per cent of the global total. Germany had 10 million migrants, followed by Saudi Arabia and Canada with between 6 and 7 million migrants each. It is much harder to say which countries most migrants come from, but it has been estimated by the Global Commission on International Migration that at least 35 million Chinese, 20 million Indians, and 7 million Filipinos currently live outside their country.

A second trend has been that the traditional distinction between countries of origin, transit, and destination for migrants has become increasingly blurred. Today, almost every country in the world fulfills all three roles—migrants leave, pass through, and head for all of them. The Mediterranean region is a good case study (see Box 23.3).

Besides the dimensions and changing geography of international migration, at least three trends signify an important departure from earlier patterns and processes. The first is feminization (see Box 23.2). Very nearly half the world's migrants were women in 2010—according to UN statistics, in 2005 there were more female than male migrants in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Oceania, and the former USSR. While women have comprised a significant proportion of international migrants for the past 50 years or so, they have traditionally migrated to join their male partners abroad, whereas an increasing proportion who migrate today do so independently; they are often the primary breadwinners for the families they leave behind.

A final trend of contemporary international migration is that, while most of the major movements that

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS BOX 23.1

WHO IS A MIGRANT?

Ostensibly, the answer to the question 'who is a migrant?' is straightforward: most countries have adopted the UN definition of someone living outside his or her native country for a year or more. In reality, however, the answer is more complicated. First, the concept 'migrant' covers a wide range of people in a variety of situations—for example, voluntary and forced migrants, low-skilled and high-skilled migrants, legal and illegal (or 'irregular') migrants. Second, it is very hard to count migrants and to determine how long they have been

abroad. This is especially the case for 'irregular' migrants. Third, just as important as defining when a person becomes a migrant is to define when that person stops being a migrant. One way for this to happen is to return home; another is to become a citizen of a new country, and the procedures governing that transformation vary significantly. Finally, it has been suggested that as a result of globalization, there are now new 'types' of migrants with new characteristics, at times described as members of transnational communities or diasporas.

CRITICAL ISSUES BOX 23.2

THE FEMINIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

For a number of reasons, women comprise an increasing proportion of the world's migrants and, in recent years, more are migrating independently than previously has been the case. The demand for foreign labour, especially in more developed countries, is becoming increasingly gender-selective in favour of jobs typically fulfilled by women—services, health care, and entertainment. Also, shifts in gender relations in some countries of origin have resulted in women's having greater freedom to migrate. In addition, and especially

in Asia, the growth in the migration of women can be attributed to overseas demand for domestic work (sometimes called the 'maid trade'), organized migration for marriage (sometimes referred to as 'mail-order brides'), and the trafficking of women, especially into the sex industry. Finally, an increasing number of countries have made family reunification a central part of their immigration policies—in other words, allowing the spouses and children of migrants to join them. Most often, these spouses are women.



PHOTO 23.1 A currency exchange house in rural central Mexico, established to facilitate the exchange of remittances from migrant family members working in the United States.

Source: Paul Alexander Haslam

took place over the past few centuries were permanent, temporary migration has become much more important today. Furthermore, the traditional pattern of migrating once and then possibly returning

home seems to be phasing out. An increasing number of people migrate several times during their lives, often to different countries or parts of the world, returning to their home countries in the intervening

CURRENT EVENTS BOX 23.3

ORIGIN, TRANSIT, AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Perhaps no part of the world better illustrates the blurring boundaries among origin, transit, and destination countries than the Mediterranean. About 50 years ago, the situation was fairly straightforward. All the countries of the Mediterranean—in both North Africa and southern Europe—were countries of origin for migrants who mainly went to northern Europe to work. About 20 years ago, southern Europe changed from a region of emigration to a region of immigration as increasing numbers of North Africans arrived to work in their growing economies and at

the same time fewer southern Europeans had an incentive to head north for work anymore. Today, even with the recent unrest in this part of the world, North Africa is changing from being merely an origin area to become a transit and destination region as well. Increasing numbers of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa are arriving in such countries as Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Some remain; others cross the Mediterranean into southern Europe, usually illegally, where, again, some stay and others try to move on into northern Europe.

periods. Even those who are away for long periods of time return home at more and more frequent intervals, since international travel has become so much cheaper and more accessible.

DEVELOPMENT AND MIGRATION

International migration is an important dimension of globalization and has become increasingly embedded in changes in global economic and social structures. Growing developmental, demographic, and democratic disparities provide powerful incentives to move, as does the global jobs crisis affecting large parts of the developing world. The segmentation of labour markets in richer countries creates increasing demand for migrant workers there. A revolution in communication has facilitated growing awareness of disparities and opportunities for would-be migrants, while transformations in transportation have made mobility cheaper and more readily accessible.

Migration networks have expanded rapidly and further facilitate migration. New individual rights and entitlements allow certain people to cross borders and stay abroad more easily (although many more face growing restrictions). And the growth of a migration industry adds further momentum to international migration, even where it is not officially permitted. In this section, we examine why there are more reasons and additional means to migrate than ever before.

Growing Disparities

Development is a difficult concept to measure (see Chapter 1). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has produced a widely cited Human Development Index (HDI) which ranks countries according to a combination of three dimensions— income, health, and education. While the HDI has ranked countries across the developed world and most of the developing world for the past 20 years, during the past decade there have been unprecedented reversals in some of the very poorest countries. In 2005, 18 countries recorded lower HDIs than they had in 1990; 12 of them were in sub-Saharan Africa. Not only is human welfare in those countries deteriorating, but at the same time the gaps between them and

the rest of the world are increasing. It is expected that the long-term effects of the recent global and financial economic crisis may heighten these disparities between rich and poor countries.

Some of the statistics provided by the UNDP are very depressing indeed. Around 550 million of the people in work around the world earn less than one US dollar per day. More than 850 million people, including one in three preschool children worldwide, suffer from malnutrition. More than 1 billion people lack access to safe water, and 2.6 billion do not have adequate sanitation. Worldwide, about 115 million children are denied even basic primary education— most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. On average, girls can expect to receive one year of education less than boys in African and Arab states and two years less in South Asia. In the developing world as a whole, only 58 per cent of women are literate, compared to 68 per cent of men.

A lack of development is compounded by growing population pressure. Almost 5 billion people, or about 80 per cent of the world's population, currently live in poor or at best middle-income countries. While many of the world's more prosperous countries have declining populations, populations are burgeoning in many poorer countries: virtually all of the world's population growth currently takes place in developing nations. The average woman in Africa today has 5.2 children, while the average European woman has just 1.4. These trends mean that the share of the world's population residing in developing countries will rise even further. And as a result of high rates of childbirth in the developing world, there is also a far higher proportion of younger people there than in the developed world, and they will need to be absorbed into the labour market or will have to migrate elsewhere to find work.

It is no coincidence that the democratic process is fragile, the rule of law is weak, and corruption is rife in a number of poor countries (although corruption is certainly not limited to poor countries). By migrating, people try to protect themselves and their families from the effects of a weak economy and volatile market and from political crises, armed conflicts, and other risks. In some cases, people are forced to flee as refugees because the state can no longer protect them from the impact of conflict or from persecution. In the very worst cases, the states themselves are responsible for these offences.

It is important to stress, however, that underdevelopment or overpopulation or poor governance per se is not necessarily the cause of migration; a more fundamental cause could be differentials between different parts of the world. Per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is 66 times higher in the developed world than in the developing world. A child born in Burkina Faso today can expect to live 35 years less than a child born in Japan, and somebody born in India can expect to live 14 years less than somebody born in the United States. Limited school enrolment and low literacy levels in poorer countries contrast with almost universal enrolment and full literacy in the richer ones.

The Global Jobs Crisis

One of the most powerful incentives to migrate is the need to find work. Although there are important variations, the overall trend has been towards declining unemployment in the developed world in recent

years. In contrast, unemployment has increased or remained at a stable but high level in large parts of the developing world. The highest incidence of unemployment in the world's major regions is in the Middle East and North Africa, at over 12 per cent, which in part may explain the popular uprisings of 2011 and the demands for regime change across this region. By comparison, unemployment averages about 6 per cent across the industrialized economies. The recent global financial and economic crisis has increased unemployment rates across the world, including in the developed world, but the broad disparity remains.

Being out of work is not the only dimension of the current global jobs crisis. Many people are underemployed. Usually, these people work in the informal sector where employment is unpredictable, opportunities come and go by the season and in some cases by the week or even day, and working conditions can be appalling. Even for those who are employed, wages



PHOTO 23.2 The wall separating Israel and Palestine.

Source: Alternatives/Michel Lambert

are often barely sufficient for survival. Another aspect of the global jobs crisis is the 12 million people who the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates are currently working in situations of forced labour.

Populations under particular stress in the developing world rely on agriculture for their income. They comprise about half of the entire labour force—some 1.3 billion people. Many have small farms that are threatened by commercial expansion and environmental degradation. They are also often taxed disproportionately because of their weak political position. The income gap between farming and non-farming activities in developing countries has increased dramatically in recent years (see Chapter 18). One result has been increasing rural–urban migration as farmers and their families head for towns and cities to try to find a better source of livelihood. For many of these people, internal migration to the city is the first step towards international migration out of their country.

The Segmentation of Labour Markets

High-income economies are increasingly becoming characterized by the segmentation of labour markets. This occurs when native workers eschew sectors of the labour market because the jobs provided are low-paying, offer little security, are of low status, and often involve dangerous work, and thus they have become dominated by migrant workers. These occupations are often described as ‘3D jobs’, entailing work that is dirty, dangerous, or difficult—and often a combination of all three. They are concentrated in sectors such as agriculture, forestry, plantations, heavy industry, construction, and domestic services. Often, today, the migrants who work in these sectors

are undocumented or have irregular status, since they are the people most willing to work for very low wages and in insecure conditions.

The Communication and Transportation Revolutions

The communication revolution is a central element of the globalization process. Much of the academic literature on globalization has focused on the recent explosion in high-tech developments such as e-mail and the Internet, electronic bulletin boards, and satellite television stations, as well as cell phones (Box 23.4) and cheap international telephone calls. It has been estimated, for example, that between 1990 and 2000, the number of telephone lines worldwide increased from 700 million to 2.5 billion, while the number of Internet users increased from scarcely one million to more than one billion (a thousand-fold increase). This revolution has facilitated global linkages and, in effect, reduced the distance between different parts of the world. It is relevant to migration for two reasons. First, it makes people aware of disparities—of what life is like in other parts of the world. Second, it makes people aware of opportunities to move and to work abroad.

At the same time, it is possible to overstate the communication revolution. There is still a significant global ‘digital divide’—the gap in access to information resources between poor and rich countries (see Chapter 25). This was most strikingly illustrated in a speech by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2000, who said that ‘Half the world’s population has never made or received a phone call’, although this statistic has been widely debated ever since. Bridging the

CURRENT EVENTS BOX 23.4

THE CELL PHONE REVOLUTION IN AFRICA

It is estimated that worldwide there are 2.4 billion cell phone users and that 1,000 new customers subscribe every minute. Fifty-nine per cent of cell phone users live in developing countries, making cell phones the first telecommunication technology in history to have more users there than in the developed world. Cell phone usage in Africa is

growing faster than in any other region and jumped from 63 million users in 2008 to 152 million in 2010. There are 3.2 million cell phone customers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, and 8,000 new cell phone customers sign up each day. This compares with just 20,000 conventional land lines there.

digital divide is nevertheless considered important for achieving global equality, increasing social mobility, encouraging democracy, and promoting economic growth.

Another 'revolution' often referred to in the globalization literature is in transportation, with an increasing range of options for international travel and decreasing costs. It has arisen particularly because of the proliferation of competition among airline companies. Once again, it would be a mistake to assume that this revolution has reached every part of the world, but it is nevertheless estimated that today it costs no more than US\$2,500 to travel legally between any two places in the world. As oil prices increase inexorably and oil supplies decline, however, this 'revolution' could be of short duration. It can be far more expensive—although still possible—to travel illegally (see Box 23.5). If the communication revolution has made many would-be migrants more aware of reasons to migrate, the transportation revolution, so far, has made migration more feasible. At the same time, travelling internationally is still prohibitively expensive for the majority of the world's population, and many face administrative obstacles such as the difficulty of obtaining passports and visas.

Migration Networks

Most migrants move to countries where they have friends or family already established, forming what is often referred to as transnational migration networks

or chain migration. It has been argued that these networks, which establish a self-perpetuating cycle, are one of the main reasons why migration is increasing today. The expansion of migration means that more people than ever before have friends or family already living abroad, and the changing geography of migration means that more often than previously, these networks link would-be migrants in poor countries with potential destinations in richer countries.

Migration networks have been shown to encourage migration in three main ways. First, they provide information, often taking advantage of the new communications technologies described above. Second, they finance trips by lending would-be migrants money. Third, they can play a crucial role in helping new migrants to settle by providing an initial place to stay, helping them find a job, and providing other economic and social assistance.

New Rights and Entitlements

A significant expansion of rights and entitlements has allowed certain people to cross borders and stay abroad far more easily than ever before. The dismantling of internal borders in the European Union (EU), for example, allows for the free movement of EU citizens within the region, while the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and regional economic agreements in other parts of the world, including Africa and South America, also contain some provisions for the free movement of workers. Furthermore,

CRITICAL ISSUES BOX 23.5

THE COSTS OF MIGRANT SMUGGLING

A 2005 review of more than 600 sources in which the costs charged to migrants by smugglers were reported yielded the following mean costs for movement between world regions:

Routes	Mean Costs (US\$)
Asia–Americas	26,041
Europe–Asia	16,462
Asia–Australasia	14,011
Asia–Asia	12,240
Asia–Europe	9,374
Europe–Australasia	7,400

Routes	Mean Costs (US\$)
Africa–Europe	6,533
Europe–Americas	6,389
Americas–Europe	4,528
Americas–Americas	2,984
Europe–Europe	2,708
Africa–Americas	2,200
Africa–Australasia	1,951
Africa–Africa	203

Source: Petros (2005: 4–5).

certain categories of people—such as business people, academics and students, sports and entertainment performers—often either do not require visas or can apply via fast-track procedures. Almost every country in the developed world allows long-term migrant workers to be joined by members of their immediate family. Furthermore, most countries in the world have signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, which guarantees protection and assistance to refugees outside their country (perhaps the most significant non-signatory is India).

Nonetheless, the extent of these new rights and entitlements can be exaggerated. The free movement of labour has not yet been realized in most regional economic agreements outside the EU. Applicants for family reunion face increasingly rigorous administrative processes. There are also increasing restrictions on the mobility of many other people—the low-skilled and asylum seekers, for example. In particular, the phenomenon of ‘irregular’ migration has risen quickly on political agendas worldwide (see Box 23.6).

The Migration Industry

Migration is facilitated by a wide range of individuals and agents, including labour recruiters, immigration

lawyers, travel agents, brokers, housing providers, **remittance** agencies, and immigration and customs officials, as well as by entire institutions such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an intergovernmental agency initially founded several years after World War II to help in the resettlement of displaced persons. Today, the IOM, with over 100 member countries, is often responsible for transporting migrants and refugees for official resettlement or return programs. In addition, numerous NGOs provide assistance and shelter to migrants and refugees. These individuals and organizations have been described by some analysts as forming a new migration ‘industry’ or migration ‘business’. There is also an illegitimate part of the migration industry, comprising human traffickers and migrant smugglers (see Box 23.7). The enormous profits that the immigration industry makes from migration, it has been argued, add considerable momentum to the process.

Explaining Migration

The factors that together provide increasing incentives and opportunities for people to migrate need to be reconciled with the fact that international migrants still make up only about 3 per cent of the world’s

CRITICAL ISSUES BOX 23.6

IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Irregular migration is a complex and diverse concept. There is not even common terminology—irregular migration is variously described as ‘illegal’, ‘unauthorized’, and ‘undocumented’ migration. It is also important to recognize that a migrant can become ‘irregular’ in many ways. Irregular migration includes people who enter a country without the proper authority—for example, by entering without passing through a border control or entering with fraudulent documents. It also includes people who may have entered a country perfectly legally but then remain there in contravention of the authorities—for example, by staying after the expiry of a visa or work permit, through sham marriages or fake adoptions, or as bogus students or fraudulently self-employed. The term also includes people moved by migrant smugglers or human traffickers and those who deliberately abuse the asylum system.

In addition, important regional differences exist in how the concept (or the ‘problem’) of irregular migration is dealt with. In Europe, for example, where the entry of people from outside the European Union is closely controlled, it is relatively easy to define and identify migrants with irregular status. That is not the case in many parts of Africa, where borders are porous, ethnic and linguistic groups straddle state borders, some people belong to nomadic communities, and many people do not have proof of their place of birth or citizenship.

A final complexity arises because migrants’ status can change, often quite literally overnight. For example, migrants might enter a country in an irregular fashion but then regularize their status, perhaps by applying for asylum or entering a regularization program. Conversely, migrants might enter regularly, then become irregular when they work without a work permit or overstay a visa.

CRITICAL ISSUES BOX 23.7

MIGRANT SMUGGLING AS A BUSINESS

The author spent some time in 2004 interviewing migrant smugglers in Afghanistan and Pakistan. They reported that over time, not only had the amount they charge changed but the way they received payments had as well. About 10 years ago, migrant smugglers apparently insisted that payments be made in full in advance. The danger for migrants was that smugglers might take their money and disappear before moving them. In response to these fears, some smugglers changed their practice, asking only for a deposit in advance of movement, with the balance to be paid after

arrival in the destination country. The problem here was that some migrants were exploited by smugglers to whom they were indebted after they had arrived. In the past two or three years, smugglers have responded to their clients' concerns and demands once again. Now payment is made in full in advance but is deposited with a third party rather than being paid to the smuggler directly. The money is released to the smuggler only after the migrant has called to confirm that he or she has arrived safely at the destination. What this amounts to is a money-back guarantee on migrant smuggling.

population. Given growing inequalities, widening awareness of opportunities for a better life elsewhere, and increasing access to transportation, a legitimate question to ask is why so few people migrate.

Some of the answers to this question have already been alluded to. The very poorest people, those most affected by global inequalities, simply cannot afford to move. Many people who do migrate in response to poverty move internally, normally from the

countryside to the city, and not internationally. There are far more unemployed or underemployed people in the poor world than there are jobs for them, and this is true as well in the segmented labour markets of the rich economies. The communication and transportation revolutions are not as far-reaching as some commentators believe, nor are migration networks. Rights and entitlements to move apply on the whole to the privileged few. And the migration industry depends



PHOTO 23.3 Surveillance on the US side of the wall that separates San Diego, California, from Tijuana, Mexico.

Source: Paul Alexander Haslam

on profit and therefore has an incentive to keep migration costs up.

At least three other reasons emerge from the literature. The most important is inertia. Most people do not want to move away from family, friends, and a familiar culture, so they tend to stay in the country where they were born. Another reason is that governments can control migration. Communist countries used to stop people from leaving—the Berlin Wall was concrete evidence of this—but since the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, this is rarely the case any more (Cuba and North Korea are notable exceptions). However, certain countries in Africa and the Middle East still require citizens to obtain permission before they can leave. Much more common today is migration control on the part of destination countries, although their efforts are not always effective. An additional reason is that as countries develop, emigration eventually declines, and despite the depressing statistics cited earlier, most countries in the world are developing, albeit sometimes at a painfully slow rate.

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Migration can have profound impacts on the development of countries of origin. On the positive side, migrants often send home vast sums of money and make other contributions from abroad too, and when they return they can bring home new skills, experiences, and contacts. On the negative side, migration can deplete countries of skills that are in short supply through the **brain drain**.

Remittances

The term ‘remittance’ usually refers to money sent home by migrants abroad, although over a century ago ‘remittance men’ in North America often were the younger sons of the European upper classes—those who did not inherit their fathers’ estates but who were sent money from home. Today, the true scale of remittances worldwide is hard to gauge. While some money is sent home through banking systems and can thus be formally tracked, it is likely that more is sent home through informal channels. One reason is the high costs that are often charged by banks and agents. Channels for informal remittances include migrants taking home cash when they return for visits or sending home money with friends or relatives. Sometimes entrepreneurs and traders who travel regularly to and from home carry money back for migrants for a small commission—in Cuba, for example, these entrepreneurs are known as *mulas*. Perhaps the most elaborate mechanism for informal transfers, however, is the Somali *hawilaad* system (see Box 23.8). The point is that the scale of these informal transfers is simply not known. Furthermore, even formal remittances cannot always be accurately quantified, because banks are often unwilling or unable to release specific details about personal transfers.

These data problems notwithstanding, the World Bank produces annual estimates of the scale of remittances worldwide. The estimates for 2010 indicate that some US\$440 billion was sent home by migrants. The scale of remittances is staggering, and another striking feature is that there has been a 50 per cent increase in the flow of remittances in just five years—the main reason being the impact of

CURRENT EVENTS BOX 23.8

THE HAWILAAD SYSTEM

The *hawilaad* (or *xawilaad*) system is based on Somali traders. They collect hard currency from Somali migrants abroad, then use the money to purchase commodities that can be sold in Somalia. They return periodically to Somalia, sell their goods, and pay the equivalent in Somali currency to the migrants’ families. Profit made on the sale of the goods effectively becomes the

traders’ commission. This system of transfer is very common among Somali communities across the world. In the aftermath of 9/11, attempts were made to monitor it or close it down because of some evidence that funding for the attacks was channelled through Somalia. However, the system has proved hard to formalize and still appears to be widespread.

globalization. Transportation—particularly, cheap air transportation—has facilitated the movement of people to overseas employment, and tourism and family ties draw them back home to visit for a holiday, and many migrants carry home money when they visit. Finally, advanced telecommunications—cheap telephone calls and widening Internet access—mean that migrants and their families can stay in contact more regularly than previously, and friends and families can more easily request assistance, and migrants abroad can more readily remit money to their relatives.

The two leading countries for remittances, India and China, between them received about US\$106 billion in 2010 (\$55 billion and \$51 billion, respectively), while the next two largest remittance-receiving countries, Mexico and the Philippines, received \$22.6 billion and \$21.3 billion, respectively (Torres, 2011). For the Philippines, this inward cash flow represents 10 per cent of the national GDP, and people are said to be the country's most important export product because Filipinos working abroad remit such large sums to families back home.

The majority of remittances are sent to developing countries—about US\$325 billion in 2010, a 6 per cent increase in remittances to developing countries from 2009. The global economic crisis of recent years severely affected some poorer countries in this regard, however: between 2008 and 2009, remittances to Nigeria dropped nearly 20 per cent and Uganda saw a 40 per cent decrease. Many migrants in developed countries either lost their jobs or suffered wage reductions, and thus had less money to remit home. Even in 2009, however, when these flows of money to home countries diminished, remittances amounted to almost three times the value of donations through development assistance and charity.

There is still significant debate about the impact of remittances at home. It is clear that they benefit those who receive them directly—who are often among the poorest in society. Remittances can lift people out of poverty: it has been estimated that in Somaliland, for example, the average household income is doubled by remittances, while in Lesotho they represent up to 80 per cent of the income of rural households. Besides increasing incomes, remittances also diversify them, meaning that households are less reliant on a single source of income. In this way, remittances provide insurance against risk. In addition, they are often spent on the education of children and health care for the elderly.

The extent to which remittances benefit those outside the immediate family, however, largely depends on how the money is spent. If used to establish small businesses, for example, or invested in community-based enterprises such as wells, schools, or health clinics, then remittances can provide employment and services for people other than the direct recipients. On the other hand, if they are spent on consumer goods such as cars and television sets or on repaying debt, as is often the case, their wider benefit is limited. Nonetheless, the money still enters the local economy. In addition, when some households receive remittances and others do not, disparities among households can be exacerbated and communities undermined. It is also worth remembering that migrants tend to originate in certain parts of source countries, which means that their remittances can increase regional disparities. There is also some evidence that receiving remittances can create a 'culture of migration' in source countries, whereby young people see the apparent rewards of migrating and have unrealistic expectations about moving abroad. Alternatively, relying on remittances can be a disincentive for some people at home to work at all.

Diasporas

The term **diaspora** is used to describe migrants (and their descendants) outside their country who maintain a relationship—from psychological to material—with their country of origin. They often come together in formal organizations, such as professional associations that bring together migrant doctors, lawyers, or teachers from the same origin, or in organizations based on common interests such as sport, religion, charitable work, and development. Another type of organization is the hometown association (HTA) that brings together people from the same town or city who direct their activities towards development in their hometown (see Box 23.9).

These diaspora organizations commonly collect donations from their membership and send them back to the country of origin for specific purposes, including ongoing development and emergency assistance (this is on top of remittances sent home on an individual or family basis by migrants). Diaspora organizations rallied quickly to send home money, medical equipment, tents, and food in response to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti and the 2010 floods in

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS BOX 23.9

HOMETOWN ASSOCIATIONS

Mexican hometown associations have a long history—the most prominent were established in the 1950s. There are currently more than 600 Mexican HTAs in 30 cities in the US. They support public works in their localities of origin, including constructing public infrastructure (for example, new roads and road repairs), donating equipment (for example, ambulances and medical equipment), and promoting education (for example, establishing scholarship programs, constructing schools, and providing school supplies).

Pakistan, for example. As well as making economic contributions by sending home money and material goods, diaspora organizations can also participate in the political, social, and cultural affairs of their home country and community. A good example can be seen in Somalia, where Somali diaspora organizations largely paid for the construction of the University of Hargeisa and Amoud University in Boorama.

While diasporas can contribute to development, they also can contribute to war. Remittances from Ethiopian and Eritrean diaspora organizations helped fund the conflict between these two countries from 1998 to 2000, for example, and the US-led ‘war on terror’ has focused on the siphoning of remittance funds from and to organizations considered to be supporting terrorist activities. In addition, diaspora organizations often are dominated by a particular religious or ethnic group, and their contributions can target those particular groups, thus exacerbating disparities. An associated point is that diaspora organizations frequently are comprised of the educated and elite, and their contributions reflect this. Building a university, for example, probably does not directly benefit poor rural peasants.

Return

Besides sending home individual remittances and making a collective contribution through diaspora organizations, a third way migrants can potentially contribute to development is by returning. Migrants can bring home savings from abroad to invest at home when they return, often establishing small

businesses, for example. They may come home with a good network of contacts abroad that can form the basis for small-scale trade and import–export activities. They also may bring back new ideas that can spur entrepreneurial attitudes and activities among the people with whom they settle on return.

Once again, it is important not to overestimate the impact of return. Some people return because they have not succeeded abroad—they may come home with no savings and no new skills and return to whatever they did before leaving. Often, migrants go home to retire, having spent their working lives abroad. While they may take home money and experience, they are not economically active themselves upon return. Also, the extent to which return has an impact really depends on conditions at home. If there is no access to land, or taxes are too high, or there is an inadequate supply of skilled labour, for example, return migrants with good intentions to set up a new business can easily become frustrated and have their plans thwarted.

The Brain Drain

When there are high levels of unemployment at home, emigration can make a contribution to economic development in that it reduces competition for limited jobs. This is one reason why the government of the Philippines, for example, positively encourages emigration; another reason, as we have seen, is the money that these migrants send home.

Migration, however, can be selective, and those who leave are at times among the most entrepreneurial, best educated, and brightest in society. The immigration policies of developed countries in the Global North encourage this type of selective migration. If their particular skills are readily available in the society, this need not be a problem. India, for example, can afford to have computer experts and technical workers emigrate in substantial numbers, since so many young people in India today have these skills. It is more usually the case, however, that these movements deplete the country of origin of skills that are scarce. This process is usually referred to as the brain drain. Besides removing skills, the brain drain also means that countries do not see any return on their investment in educating and training their own citizens.

Of special concern is the migration of health personnel—nurses and doctors—from countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Some of the figures are startling: since 2000, for example, nearly 16,000 nurses from

sub-Saharan Africa have registered to work in the UK alone. Only 50 out of 600 doctors trained since independence are still practising in Zambia. It has been estimated that there are currently more Malawian doctors practising in Manchester, England, than in the whole of Malawi. Although it has attracted less attention, the brain drain of teachers from Africa is generating growing concern.

Reactions to the brain drain are divided. It can be argued that this represents people moving in order to improve their lives and realize their potential, and that there is nothing wrong with that. In addition, if their own countries cannot provide adequate employment, career opportunities, and incentives to stay, then the problem lies with those countries. On the other hand, there has been criticism of the richer countries to which skilled migrants head, especially when these countries actively recruit those skills. Furthermore, many migrants fail to find jobs commensurate with their skills, a phenomenon often referred to as 'brain waste'.

DISPLACEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

So far, this chapter has focused mainly on voluntary migrants—people who by and large choose to move abroad. This final section briefly considers the interactions between involuntary migration—or displacement—and development. Most people who are forced to leave their own countries are described as refugees, although in fact the legal definition of a refugee is very specific (see Box 23.10). The majority of the world's 15 million or so refugees are currently located in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia.

The literature on links between refugees and development focuses on three specific interactions. The first is between development—or lack of development—and displacement. The second is the developmental impacts of refugees in host countries. And the third link involves the implications of the return of refugees for development in their home countries.

There is considerable debate about the extent to which a link exists between refugee displacement and poverty or underdevelopment in their home countries. In 1995, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) conducted a basic analysis comparing refugee numbers and development indicators. It found that countries

IMPORTANT CONCEPTS BOX 23.10

WHO IS A REFUGEE?

According to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951), a refugee is someone who is 'outside his own country, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution, for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion'. There are regional variations on this basic formula, and it has been criticized as being out-of-date; yet it remains the most commonly accepted definition. There are two defining characteristics of this definition. First, it only covers people who have been displaced outside their own country—many more people have been forcibly displaced within their countries. Second, it focuses on people who are displaced by persecution and conflict—not those who flee natural disasters, climate change, or extreme poverty.

with the highest ranking on the Human Development Index were the least likely to experience population displacements, whereas those with the lowest ranking had the highest propensity to generate large movements of refugees. The same broad correlation remains true today.

It is difficult, however, to establish a causal relationship. Many poor countries have not generated refugees—Tanzania is a good example. Conversely, some wealthier countries have, the best recent example being the former Yugoslavia. Furthermore, many recent refugee movements have been provoked by events such as conflict, which are not necessarily directly linked with economic development—the recent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq are examples.

The second main focus of literature considering interactions between refugees and development considers the developmental implications of refugees in host countries. It is often assumed that refugees have a negative impact, and there is a particular focus in the literature on the environmental impacts of refugees. Refugees often need wood for cooking and construction, and significant deforestation can occur around their settlements, resulting in the longer term in deteriorating soil quality. The water table may also be lowered and groundwater polluted. Their potentially negative

impact on the environment has been cited recently by several countries (for example, Honduras, Pakistan, and Turkey) as one reason to turn refugees away. In this light, it is important to place the environmental impact of refugees in proper context. It varies according to the number of refugees and the length of time they stay. It is likely to be more severe when they settle on marginal land, when they live in camps rather than within local settlements, and when their movement is restricted. And recent evidence suggests that even where environments are damaged, they can rebound quickly once refugees have gone home.

A more limited literature considers various other impacts that refugees can have. Because they receive aid, they can sometimes undercut the wage rates of local people, thus introducing an element of competition that benefits some and disadvantages others within the local community. Social tensions can arise between refugees and the local community. As well, sometimes refugee camps can become the focus for political activities.

Perhaps the clearest example of a positive impact of refugee settlement is the 'integrated zonal

developments' that emerged in several East African countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Rural refugee settlements were planned and deliberately integrated into the local economy, and in some cases they formed the focus for the growth of new villages and even towns. The reasons these developments succeeded were, first, that there were relatively few refugees involved and, second, that host governments had a largely positive attitude towards them.

The final interaction to consider is the implications of the return of refugees for development at home. The first thing to bear in mind, however, is that refugees often return to countries that have been affected by conflict for long periods of time (for example, Afghanistan or Mozambique), and in this context it may be premature to talk of development, at least in the short-term. It also needs to be noted that there is a significant shortage of research on what happens to refugees after they return, at least in part because they no longer fall under the institutional responsibility of any international organization.

The limited literature, nevertheless, indicates that return can pose significant obstacles for refugees.



PHOTO 23.4 Afghani internally displaced persons in a refugee camp near Kandahar.

Source: © Catherine Pappas

Recurrent physical problems include the presence of landmines and the destruction of housing. Economic activity largely depends on access to key resources such as land, labour, working capital, and skills. And social confrontation can often arise in the context of the reintegration of returnees with the internally displaced, with those who never fled, and also with demobilized soldiers.

The conditions in refugee settlements in exile and, specifically, the extent to which refugees have been allowed to gain a degree of self-reliance are among the most important variables that can influence the reintegration process. Other variables include the type and management of settlements for returnees and the extent and type of assistance made available to them.

A recent extension of the literature considering the links between refugee return and development at home focuses on situations in which refugees do not return but instead remain in host countries permanently and form a 'refugee diaspora'. This situation probably only applies to that very small percentage of refugees who move long distances and settle in richer countries. Yet, despite their small numbers, they can have a significant impact on development at home. They often send home remittances and invest in land or property. They can participate in elections from abroad. And they can contribute to intellectual debate via the Internet. Clearly, however, the desire and ability of refugees to contribute in these sorts of ways vary over time and cannot always be taken for granted.

INTERNAL MIGRATION

This chapter has focused almost exclusively on international migration—both voluntary and involuntary. This topic has been the subject of far more research and writing than internal migration and has attracted far more political and media attention and public discourse. Yet the number of internal migrants—both voluntary and involuntary—is far higher than the number of international migrants.

Worldwide, far more people choose to move within their own countries than to cross an international border. It is estimated that in China alone, there are 140 million internal migrants, compared to 200 million international migrants worldwide. What is more, internal migration appears set to grow at an even faster rate than international migration over the next few years. In the next 20 years, a further 300 million

Chinese citizens are expected to migrate within their country.

Like international migration, internal migration is both a symptom and a cause of development processes. Most people who move within their country move from the countryside to towns and cities, normally in search of work, better incomes, and greater opportunities. Internal migration also can contribute to development. It has been estimated that internal migration has contributed up to 16 per cent annually to the growth of China's GDP in recent years, primarily because this is one way of relieving unemployment in certain areas and filling labour market gaps in other areas. Limited research indicates that internal migrants also send home significant remittances. According to one estimate, the equivalent of over US\$30 billion is sent home each year by Chinese internal migrants—mainly to rural areas by workers who have moved to the city. Their remittances have helped to reduce the rural–urban income gap in China, decrease regional disparities in wealth, reduce rural poverty, pay for education and health care, and promote consumption and investment.

Similarly, far more people have been displaced inside than outside their own countries. Many of these people have been affected by 'development-induced displacement', particularly in the context of dam construction. In such development schemes, planned reservoir areas can necessitate the relocation of entire settlements. The scale of these displacements is hard to assess, but the World Bank estimates that in the past decade more than 100 million people have been affected. Particular controversy surrounds the construction of the Three Gorges dam on the Yangtze River in China, which has inundated two cities, 140 towns, and 1,350 villages and necessitated the resettlement of more than one million people.

CONCLUSION

Today, there are more international migrants than ever before recorded, and their numbers are likely to continue to increase for the foreseeable future as a result of uneven development, conflicts, and globalization and its discontents. At the same time, international migration and migrants can contribute towards development, especially in source countries, and may become one factor that eventually begins to even out global disparities. Migration and development will remain inextricably linked.

SUMMARY

Contemporary international migration is characterized by rapidly growing numbers, changing geographical patterns, and new processes, including the feminization of migration. These changes are likely to accelerate in the future. International migration is inextricably linked with globalization. Among the main underlying causes of international migration are disparities in development and democracy; a global jobs crisis compounded by the recent financial and economic crisis; the segmentation of labour markets, especially in more advanced economies; revolutions in communications and transportation; the momentum associated with migration networks; new rights and entitlements that allow certain people to cross borders more easily; and a burgeoning migration industry, including migrant smugglers and human traffickers.

Migrants and migration can have significant impacts on development in the countries where they work and settle and in source countries. Migrants send home hundreds of billions of dollars each year, and these remittances help lift people and communities out of poverty. Diaspora organizations also make significant contributions to countries of origin through economic transfers and through political, social, and cultural interventions. Returning migrants can become a catalyst for local development. On the other hand, large-scale migration of skilled people can deprive their countries of needed talent and skills. While this chapter mainly focused on the relationship between international migration and development, it also considered the relationship of internal migration and displacement to development.

QUESTIONS FOR CRITICAL THOUGHT

1. Who is an international migrant?
2. What are the main causes of migration?
3. Why are there not more international migrants?
4. How do international migrants and migration contribute to development?
5. Under what circumstances do remittances benefit poor countries?
6. What is the 'brain drain' and why does it matter?
7. What are the links between displacement and development?
8. What are the links between internal migration and development?

SUGGESTED READING

- Castles, Stephen, and Mark Miller. 2009. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 4th edn. London: Palgrave.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2010. *World Migration 2010: Building Capacity for Change*. Geneva: IOM.
- Koser, Khalid. 2007. *International Migration: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Skeldon, Ron. 1997. *Migration and Development: A Global Perspective*. London: Longman.
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). 2009. *Trends in International Migration Stock*. New York: UNDESA.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2006. *The State of the World's Refugees*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

RELATED WEBSITES

Global Commission on International Migration

www.gcim.org

International Organization for Migration

www.iom.int

Migration Policy Institute
www.migrationinformation.org

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
www.unhcr.org

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Petros, M. 2005. 'The costs of human smuggling and trafficking', *Global Migration Perspectives* 31. Geneva: Global Commission on International Migration.

Torres, Ted. 2011. 'World Bank: Philippines 4th biggest remittance recipient in 2010', *Philippine Star*, 7 Mar. At:

www.abs-cbnnews.com/business/03/06/11/world-bank-philippines-4th-biggest-remittance-recipient-2010.