




# Human resource flows from and between developing countries: implications for social and public policies.

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Introduction:

Today, a small majority of the world migrant population goes to Northern OECD countries. Roughly half of the flows therefore occur between developing countries. This is confirmed by recent estimates of both the United Nations Organization and the World Bank, though data limitations may minimize migrant movements, especially South-South. When qualifications are taken into account, the flows of skilled human resources appear to be significantly higher towards rich countries than towards the others. This is the result of a traditional concentration of educational, technological and scientific capacities in the North and of an unequal worldwide distribution of labour, income and living conditions. However, there is some evidence that the pattern of flows is becoming more complex. The traditional North-South bi-polarity creates a situation in which new countries from the South send and/or receive highly skilled people. Despite information limitations and the need for a historical perspective to assess specific trends, these changes tend to indicate an increasing multilateralisation of human resource flows in the global society. At the same time, the feminization of these flows – now well assessed for overall migrations- exhibits particularly strong features within the highly skilled sub-population. The rate of tertiary educated female emigrants from the South is higher than for males. And the impact on social/human development indicators is noticeable.

The mobility of health professionals and its impact on shortages of medical staff in a number of developing countries has been a major concern for the last decades. Here too, the flows between countries have mainly been from the South to the North and especially to a couple of main receivers in North America and Western Europe. However, recent trends show a diversification of destination and of providers of health personnels and some data show that South-South flows have increased. However, using OECD data and comparing the magnitude of outflows with local shortages, the findings reveal that outward mobility of medical staff is but a small part of the deficit of the countries. Nonetheless, the impact of such outflows on training, education and the sustainability and reproduction of local capacities in health should be discussed beyond quantitative evaluation only. Here too, the lack of accurate data is a problem. Relying exclusively on OECD statistics hides in fact a significant part of emigration from small Southern countries to other non-OECD countries, which may represent a very high proportion of local health workforce, when added to recorded OECD exits.

With regards to education, the debate does not revolve around losses of teaching staff but rather on the impact of migration on educational standards in origin countries. Over the last five years, a revisionist approach has argued that the prospect of emigration has increased

individual motivation to acquire human capital and has thus been a factor in promoting higher education in developing countries. However, in spite of the theoretical refinements in this approach, the evidence supporting this argument is not conclusive.

Due to significant changes in mobility and communication patterns – world commuting, short term migrations, increasing return, transmigration, connection through NTICs, permanent information through media satellite, contribution to home country initiatives – the conventional vision of brain drain as a definite long term loss of human resources needs to be revised. A circulation paradigm has emerged and the notion of brain gain has come to the forefront in the 1990s with basically two options: return or diaspora. Return has been particularly successful in Asian NICs since the late 1980s but with difficult conditions for replication elsewhere (strong economic growth prerequisite). During the mid-1990s, the diaspora option – i.e. the connection of the highly skilled expatriates with their country of origin in order to contribute to its development- emerged as a possible mitigation of the brain drain and of the shortage of adequate S&T human resources in the South. As a theoretical paradigmatic shift and revolutionary policy option it has come under scrutiny and has naturally faced a number of critiques questioning the magnitude of the phenomenon, the sustainability of diasporic initiatives and their impact on origin country development.

Exploring public and social policy frameworks to deal with migration and development produces a complex picture. There are no management general recipes since networks, countries, conditions and development processes are multiple and diverse. But there are lessons about effective ways of getting home and host countries as well as diaspora actors associated in productive manners. This requires a clear understanding of the network dynamics and of the mediation instruments or institutions that connect heterogeneous entities together.

Sociological concepts may be used in order to understand these dynamics and mediation processes. The specialised literature on social capital, socio-economics of innovation and networking provides adequate keys for the interpretation of what happens in the diaspora networks. States should reconsider their support of transnational actors like diasporas, who can actively contribute to achieving home country development goals and who could, over time, become instruments of social or even broader public policies for development.

This chapter is organized in three parts, each of which is divided into three sections.

The first part, ‘Migration flows and global social conditions’ deals with general migration trends and the interpretation of (limited) macroscopic data at an aggregate level. It then turns to focus on the flows among countries of the South, drawing on new data and particular

studies. Skills and gender bias in the current migration flows and policies are examined in the third section of this part.

The second part 'Impacts on education and health and the brain drain versus brain gain debate' analyzes successively the education issue in relation to skilled migration and the mobility of health professionals from the South. The problems raised are then put into perspective with the brain drain / brain gain debate.

The third part consists in 'exploring the diaspora brain gain option', i.e. the remote though effective contribution of expatriates to their countries of origin developments. The first section presents evidence showing the increase over time in diaspora activity, the second theorizes social linkages between home and diaspora actors in order to rethink the strategic design of public policy and prepare the way for a series of proposals in the third and last section.

I- Migration flows and global social conditions

This first part aims at providing a picture of the patterns of contemporary migration flows worldwide and to link these with differential conditions fueling the moves within the global society. It intends to look at the phenomenon beyond conventional international or bi-hemispheric divisions in order to grasp global dimensions and policy trends. However, it does not pretend to give a full picture, as these changing moves are not easy to follow or describe systematically and completely. Instead, it points to what we know, and to what we could do in order to know more, if we want to design adequate policies. This issue is dealt with in three sections: the first refers to general migration trends, the second focuses on the South and the third deals with the bias toward skilled migrants as well as gender issues in the actual global management of human resources.

I-1) General migration trends: interpreting the macroscopic data

According to the United Nations in 2005, 60 per cent of the world's migrants lived in rich countries where they represented one-tenth of the population. This is seven times the proportion in developing countries (one-seventieth) (Castles 2007). The distribution is as follows (Table 1):

Table 1: Migratory moves by hemisphere of origin to the one of destination
(millions of persons)

| | |
|---|---|
| South to North | 62 |
| South to South | 61 |
| North-North | 53 |
| North-South | 14 |

source: Castles 2007 from the UN

According to these figures, the South-South flows represent a little less than one-third of the total and the North remains the world magnet with a much smaller native population and a clear majority of the migrants (61 per cent).
However, this rough global picture shows the importance of the flows among developing countries, almost as much as to the richest. A recent study by the World Bank shows a similar distribution of the flows to and from developing countries, though with slightly different figures, the flows among developing countries rising up to 74 million migrants but representing "only" 47 per cent versus 53 per cent of those toward high income countries (Ratha and Shaw 2007).

Table 2: Number of migrants (millions)

| From To | Developing countries | High-income countries | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Developing countries | 73.9<br>*47%* | 81.9<br>*53%* | 155.8<br>*100%* |
| High-income countries | 4.2<br>*12%* | 30.6<br>*88%* | 34.8<br>*100%* |
| Total | 78<br>*41%* | 112.5<br>*59%* | 190.5<br>*100%* |

source: Ratha and Shaw 2007, based on University of Sussex and World Bank data

This balance of global flows has an immediate impact upon interpretive assumptions made about the world situation and the consequent derivation of policies. If one looks at the situation from the North, the attraction seems essentially unilateral –the majority of migrants originating in the South versus a very small proportion of Northern emigrants toward this part --and the legitimacy to protect from massive entries appears obvious. This leads to the interpretation that the North-South divide is the main structural axis, along social and political lines (Castles 2007). But if one looks at the situation from the South, then migration to the North reflects only half of the destinations elected by migrants. And from this perspective, another analytical framework needs to be considered: South-South migration is harder to explain in terms of a "pull" (the "attractive" North) than in terms of a "push" (individual motivation for self-realization abroad).

This basic interpretation does not contradict the existing consensus about the importance of development for migratory flows. But it does question a classical and current policy option toward the problem: individual countries' restrictive measures, as they have appeared in Europe and North America. If the North managed to close borders (which is unrealistic), the continuing pressure to exit would have to find another direction and Southern immigration would expand. When Northern countries try and discourage migration by implementing and signalling strong entry restrictions, human resource flows are diverted to alternative receivers. The result might be temporary relief for the North, but additional pressure is put on Southern countries who are not often well equipped to manage an influx of migrants. Unless decisions to take restrictive measures are coordinated globally, this pressure is likely to put a severe strain on the social and political infrastructures of these Southern countries.

Take, for example, the direct consequences that restrictive measures taken in the North are having on social development issues in the South. If we look at the situation in Africa today, intra-continental migrations have increased at the same time that socio-economic conditions are worsening for a majority of the population. The pressure exerted on African countries by the European Union's decision to restrict migratory mouvements through Mediterranean border control with sophisticated technology (SIVE, Système Intégré de Vigilance Extérieure Electronique) and without any assistance devices, is a crucial problem (Sall 2007). Costly illegal channels and migratory agents have developed, as have labour exploitation and abuse, while stigmatization has generated ethnic tensions, human rights problems and violence, in transit/settlement countries on the southern seashore. The construction of similar control systems along other separation lines --Straits of Torres, between Australia and Indonesia (Le monde diplomatique 2006); the wall on the US-Mexican border (Lesne 2007)-– will probably have similar effects. Countries which can afford such expensive control and security devices will transfer the burden of migration social management to those whose institutions are usually less equipped to deal with the problem.

This analysis leads to two orientations for both research and policy:

- Updated information and research is required on the border control devices put in place, and on their effects on the countries from where flows are being limited. This includes efforts from journalists, NGO professionnals as well as academic researchers (especially statisticians, jurists, sociologists and anthropologists). The topic is relatively well covered but needs compilation, systematization and synthesis in order to get a clear and complete picture.
- The increasing security and social costs implied by this evolution does question the relevance of such a unilateral strategy limiting the free movement of people (Pécoud and Guchteneire 2005). The other strategy –multilateral- experienced with the UN Global Commission for International Migration (2005), High Level Dialogue on

International Migration and Development (United Nations 2006) and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (2007) is more promising. This is so, not only for ethical reasons in favour of cooperation instead of imposition, but also because it is the way to deal with the mechanisms of migratory dynamics rather than focusing exclusively on their manifestations.