

Editorial: *Realising the potential of migration and development*

International migration holds the potential to improve the lives of migrants and advance welfare in countries of origin and destination alike provided the right public policies are put in place. Yet, in a context of rising anti-immigration sentiment, migration has become a sensitive issue on most policy agendas. While immediate humanitarian concerns linked to the current refugee crisis need to be addressed and resolved, more coherent policies and strengthened international co-operation are required to enhance the contribution of migration to development.

Against this backdrop, the 2017 edition of *Perspectives on Global Development*, prepared by the OECD's Development Centre, focuses on international migration from the perspective of developing countries. It firstly examines to what extent and how the shifting of economic activity to developing countries has affected migration patterns, and secondly the many ways that international migration contributes to development. Ultimately, it aims to help policy makers take stock of what we know, what we can expect and what we can do.

What we know

The proportion of people who live outside their countries of birth has increased in the last 20 years, from 2.7% of the world population in 1995 to 3.3% in 2015. People move in search of better jobs, better incomes and, more broadly, a better quality of life. Yet, migration is costly and the decision to migrate is rarely taken lightly. Costs are not only financial – the cost of travel and settling in – but also social and psychological – moving away from home, leaving friends and family behind.

While the overall percentage of migrants from developing countries in the world's total has only increased from 79% to 80% in the last two decades, the share of migrants heading to high-income countries has increased from 36% to 51%. Despite rapid economic growth in many developing economies, the absolute difference between what an individual can earn in a low or middle-income country and in a high-income country has increased, making the latter even more attractive. In addition, although developing countries have made significant progress on various dimensions of well-being, such as access to education, health and social protection as well as the quality of institutions, the gaps with high-income countries remain large.

Migration can have both positive and negative effects on countries of origin as well as those of destination. For countries of origin, benefits are linked to its effect on taking pressure off the labour market and on contributing finance and knowledge through remittances, diasporas and return migration. But emigration can come with economic, human and social costs, such as labour shortages, loss of educated and skilled workers and social repercussions, especially for family members left behind. These costs need to be addressed by policy makers.

Countries of destination can also benefit from migration to make up for shortages of workers in key sectors. Skilled workers, in particular, can help low and middle-income countries move up the value chain. Countries with ageing populations such as Brazil, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, which will face declining labour forces in the future, can rely on immigration to help offset the reduction in their labour forces and help finance their pension systems. However immigrants may also compete with locals for jobs (particularly low skilled workers); stretch the capacity of public services such as education, social protection and infrastructure, particularly for subnational regions where they concentrate; and put pressure on social cohesion. Policies in countries of destination therefore need to address these concerns as well as recognise that there are geographic asymmetries within countries in the effects of immigration, and strengthen subnational governments' capacities to help deal with them.

What we can expect

Looking from now to 2030, migration from developing countries is likely to continue to increase because of persisting economic and well-being gaps with developed countries. Population pressures and climate change are likely to further fuel emigration from developing countries. On the other hand, the tightening of migration policies in high-income countries may encourage people to migrate to those developing countries which possess higher incomes and better living conditions.

Aside from labour migration, continuing instability in the Middle East and increasing conflicts around the world may create new refugee spikes. 87% of refugees are currently hosted in low and middle-income countries, stretching their already-limited resources. Greater international assistance for these countries is essential.

What we can do

Better policies can help improve the benefits of migration to origin and destination countries, as well as for migrants. In countries of origin, policy objectives should include providing support to families who stay behind, lowering the costs of remittances and channelling them towards productive investment, attracting back and reintegrating return migrants, and bringing diasporas into development initiatives. If countries are concerned about high rates of emigration, efforts need to be redoubled to improve conditions at home, in particular creating decent jobs and improving well-being. The donor community can play a role in supporting countries improve development outcomes.

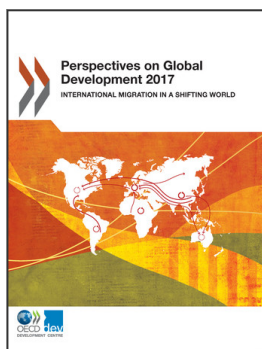
In countries of destination, migrant integration is vital for ensuring social cohesion and empowering migrants. Besides protecting immigrants' rights, regardless of their migratory status, destination countries can better benefit from the contribution immigrants can make to development by improving the functioning of labour markets, the quality of education and the access to social protection and health. Effective integration policies in countries of destination also have potential beneficial effects on the countries of origin as they may foster productive linkages between the diaspora and the country of origin. Better data and further research on the impacts of migration will enable a thorough understanding of the costs and benefits of migration, and help design better policies. Public information campaigns based on this evidence can then contribute to dispelling the myths surrounding migration and changing existing attitudes.

It is also essential to improve international co-operation on regular migration and on handling refugee crises, thereby working towards an effective international migration architecture. Enhanced co-operation between origin and destination countries would lead to better managed and mutually beneficial migration. Mechanisms to govern migration at the global level are also limited, not least because of questions of sovereignty over national borders. Greater co-ordination of mobility is needed to meet the policy challenges that the international community faces. This is particularly important in a context where immigration is increasingly seen as a threat by public opinion and by many policy makers. The successful inclusion of migration-related targets in the Sustainable Development Goals should help establish commitments that can be monitored multilaterally, regionally and nationally. Improved co-operation can span areas such as visa agreements, mutual skills recognition and qualification framework agreements, skills partnerships, and the protection of migrants' rights, among others. The proposed Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is a positive step towards more effective international co-operation. More timely, bold and innovative efforts to address the refugee crisis are also needed: in this respect, the Global Compact on Refugees will be an important element towards creating a robust framework to deal with future refugee crises.

The OECD and its Development Centre stand ready to help move this agenda forward with analysis, policy dialogue and advice and to support governments in maximising the potential contribution of migration to sustainable development.

Angel Gurría
Secretary-General, OECD





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