-12-

International Migration: Human Rights and Development Dimensions

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I. International Migration in Context

According to the United Nations and the OECD, more than 230 million people were living outside their countries of birth in 2013 with an additional 700 million migrating internally within their countries (UN DESA and OECD 2013). Current research and analysis has suggested that in the coming decades, demographic changes, increasing globalisation in a context of growing international inequality and climate change will significantly increase migration pressures within and across borders, at least in the short to medium term (see, for example UNDP 2009, IOM 2010, OECD 2007 and 2009).

In his report to the UN General Assembly in July 2013, the UN Secretary General summarised the current context succinctly:

> '*Migration continues to increase in scope, complexity and impact. Demographic transition, economic growth and the recent financial crisis are reshaping the face of migration. At the heart of this phenomenon are human beings in search of decent work and a better or safer life. Across the globe, millions are able to move, live and work in safety and dignity. Yet others are compelled to move owing to poverty, violence and conflict, or environmental changes, and many face exploitation, abuse and other human rights violations along the way'*
>
> (UN General Assembly, July 2013: 3-4)

Migration is set to remain a key challenge for human development and human rights in the coming decades.

Of today's 232 million international migrants, 59% currently live in regions of the Developed World; between 2000 and 2013, the estimated number of such migrants increased by 32 million and by 2013 made up nearly 11% of total population (up from 9% in 2000). This contrasts with some 2% in developing regions where between 2000 and 2013, the migrant population living and originating in Developing World regions increased by almost 23 million. In the same period the migrant population from developing countries now living in the Developed World increased by more than 24 million (IOM 2013).

There are a number of important patterns and trends within these broad figures which benefit from closer scrutiny and which are significant in terms of current debates and political agendas; these include:

- Of the estimated 232 million migrants worldwide, some 10-15% are '*unauthorised*' or illegal with the concept itself becoming increasingly contested.

- Overall, 22% of movement represents 'North to North' migration; 5% is North to South; 33% is South to South migration and 40% is South to North.

- South-South migration is now as common as South-North migration - in 2013, about 82.3 million international migrants who were born in the South were residing in the South, which is slightly higher than the 81.9 million international migrants originating in the South and living in the North.

- Asians living outside of their home regions form the largest global migrant group with those from Latin America and the Caribbean representing the second largest. Europe and Asia

combined host nearly two-thirds of all international migrants worldwide with Europe remaining the most popular destination with 72 million migrants in 2013, compared to 71 million in Asia.

- International migration remains highly concentrated - in 2013, half of all international migrants lived in 10 countries with the US hosting the largest number (45.8 million), followed by the Russian Federation (11 million); Germany (9.8 million); Saudi Arabia (9.1 million); United Arab Emirates (7.8 million); United Kingdom (7.8 million); France (7.4 million); Canada (7.3 million); Australia (6.5 million); and Spain (6.5 million).

- The North, or developed countries, is home to 136 million international migrants, compared to 96 million in the South, or developing countries. Most international migrants are of working age (20 to 64 years) and account for 74% of the total. Globally, women account for 48% of all international migrants.
  Source: IOM World Migration Report 2013, Geneva, 62

South – North	Origin	Destination	Number of Migrants	% of total S-N
1	Mexico	United States	12,189,158	12.8
2	Turkey	Germany	2,819,326	3.0
3	China	United States	1,956,523	2.1
4	Philippines	United States	1,850,067	1.9
5	India	United States	1,556,641	0.7
North - North				% of N-N
1	Germany	United States	1,283,108	4.0
2	United Kingdom	Australia	1,097,893	3.5
3	Canada	United States	1,037,187	3.0
4	Korea, Rep. of	United States	1,030,561	2.8
5	United kingdom	United States	901,916	2.5
South - South				% of S-S
1	Ukraine	Russian Fed.	3,662,722	4.9
2	Russian Fed.	Ukraine	3,524,669	4.7
3	Bangladesh	India	3,190,769	4.2
4	Kazakhstan	Russian Fed.	2,648,316	3.5
5	Afghanistan	Pakistan	2,413,395	3.2
North - South				% of N-S
1	United States	Mexico	563,315	7.8
2	Germany	Turkey	306,459	4.3
3	United States	South Africa	252,311	3.5
4	Portugal	Brazil	222,148	3.1
5	Italy	Argentina	198,319	2.8

Source: IOM World Migration Report 2013, Geneva, 62

II. Migration and Development – Some Key Issues and Debates

There are very few areas in international development research and policy where there is almost total agreement among informed commentators and analysts yet as regards international migration and its impact on development there is such agreement. The consensus was reflected in the UNDP Human Development Report 2009 which argued that:

> *'…research has found that while migration can, in certain circumstances, have negative effects on locally born workers with comparable skills, the body of evidence suggests that these effects are generally small and may, in some contexts, be entirely absent… this report argues that migrants boost economic output, at little or no cost to locals…'*
>
> (UNDP 2009:3)

This view is echoed by the World Bank (2014) which notes that:

> '*…International migration boosts world incomes. By allowing workers to move to where they are more productive, migration results in an increase in aggregate output and income…'.*

This assessment is shared by a diverse range of authors and institutions including Cohen (2008), Naerssen, Spaan and Zoomers (2008), Castles and Millar (2009), Rodrik (2011), Martins, Glennie & Mustapha (2013), the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (2012), Castles, De Haas and Millar (2014) and others. Such analyses have highlighted that while there may be limited and, usually short-term negative impacts from migration in both recipient and sending countries, the overall impact is positive at a variety of levels – the role of remittances in international development, circular migration and the impact of returned migrants, the brain *'drain and gain'*, the role of migrant networks in recipient countries socially and culturally and their

contribution to economic development locally etc. (see van Naerssen, Spaan and Zoomers 2008:5-8). In terms of human development over the past century, migration has transformed the opportunities of literally millions of poor people internationally (UNDP 2009:28-33).

Despite this overall positive assessment, debate on migration today is dominated by the impact of the economic failures and crises affecting western countries and is most frequently referenced in terms of the challenges faced by recipient countries primarily those in Europe rather than those faced by recipient countries in the developing world. Migration to Europe is currently the subject of increasingly restrictive legislation – a reality that stands in stark contrast to the dominant economic theories in support of the increased liberalisation of markets, trade and other economic flows (Alonso 2011). While private capital increases its global mobility and moves with increased ease across national and international borders and as barriers to trade continue to be reduced, labour mobility remains contained by restrictive policies and procedures (ILO 2014). This contrast highlights the unequal character of the globalisation process dominant today, a process with profound implications for migration.

The implications of the current dominant focus as regards migration have been highlighted by the ILO in the following (human rights) terms:

> *'…migration has moved centre stage in national, regional and global policy agendas, bringing with it not only a sense of urgency in societies and among decision-makers, but also a set of controversies which can be damaging to social coherence if left unaddressed…despite the positive experiences that can and should be cited, migration is still too frequently associated with unacceptable labour abuses in the face of which inaction is an abdication of responsibility…'*
>
> (ILO 2014:3)

The human rights dimension to the debate was also highlighted by the UN Secretary General:

> *'Too few channels exist for legal migration. The human rights of migrants, therefore, are compromised. Millions travel, live and work outside the protection of laws. As a result, those who exploit migrants - smugglers and traffickers, unscrupulous recruiters and corrupt employers - are empowered. We must begin building an adaptable system of international migration that responds to the realities of the twenty-first century.*"
>
> (UN General Assembly, July 2013:2)

The UNDP, ODI, World Bank and the ILO have variously outlined a broad framework for both national and international policies and treaties to address the issues through, for example opening up existing entry channels; ensuring basic rights for migrants; lowering migration transaction costs; researching solutions that benefit destination and migrant communities and making it easier for people to move within the own countries (UNDP 2009:95-112). One common theme characterises many such reports and proposals – addressing the migration issue solely from the perspective of the recipient countries in the developed world without considering the contexts, needs and rights of migrants especially poor migrants (and their countries and regions of origin), is neither practical or just and will certainly not achieve stated objectives. As Glennie & Turton (2014) observe:

> *'…as with the drugs debate, as with climate change and energy consumption, as with cheap clothes, so with immigration: the way rich country policies affect others far away should be taken into account more fully as those policies are devised and implemented.'*

Similarly, the World Bank observed:

> *'The negative portrayal of migration can foster policies that seek to reduce and control its incidence and do little to address the needs of those who migrate, when migration may be the only option for those affected by climate hazards. Indeed, policies designed to restrict migration rarely succeed, are often self-defeating, and increase the costs to migrants and to communities of origin and destination.'*
>
> (World Bank, 2010:25)

A number of additional themes characterise much discussion of the migration issue worldwide – those of resource flows, remittances and aid; changing international demographics and their implications for migration, the impact of the 'brain drain' on migrant donor countries (and recent proposals to compensate them), future international strategies for managing migration and the tensions between individual country perceptions and realities, 'environmental migration' and the need for internationally co-ordinated policy and action. A final theme of increasing importance is the diverse and often contradictory public perceptions and attitudes towards migrants and its influence on policy. Some of these issues are briefly reviewed below.

It is frequently observed that migrant remittances dwarf official aid flows to developing countries and, in human development terms are often far more effective and targeted (on family, community and area needs). According to the World Bank (2014) officially recorded remittances to developing countries are expected to reach $481 billion in 2014 (rising to an estimated $516 billion in 2016 with global remittances expected to reach $681 billion). In contrast, official aid flows (despite a 6.1% increase in 2013) remained at $134.8 billion and continue to suffer from routine failures to achieve stated targets and from considerable levels of fluctuation thereby undermining effectiveness and planning (OECD 2013, Reality of Aid 2012).

In this context it is also crucial to recognise that, contrary to popular opinion, the net direction of resource flows worldwide is from Developing to Developed countries. According to IMF figures as referenced by the UN Secretary General in 2013, total resource transfers from Developing Countries and Emerging Economies amounted to $827 billion in 2011 (UNGA 2012:3). Within such a context, the key importance of migrant remittances as a driver of international human development cannot be underestimated and has major implications for the post 2015 MDG related agenda (Martins, Glennie & Mustapha, 2013).

Future demographic patterns and their impact on labour shortages and opportunities are expected to influence and shape migration thereby stimulating the need for national and international policy and action (IOM 2011). According to the International Organisation for Migration (2010:4) the labour force in economically developed countries is projected to remain at approximately 600 million until 2050, while the labour force in less developed countries is expected to increase to 3.6 billion by 2040. Poor employment opportunities in developing countries are expected to remain the norm under present development models until at least 2030 thereby stimulating further the logic of migration.

A recent study by Fargues and Bartolemeo explored, inter alia, the demographic trends that are likely to challenge the EU in four key respects:

- The total population of the EU will decrease or stabilise depending upon migration scenarios, while the world's population will continue to steadily increase so that the relative demographic weight of the EU will dwindle, challenging its role in world affairs.
- The EU's workforce will decline in absolute numbers, challenging the EU's production and wealth. If no immigration occurs between 2010 and 2030, the EU-27 will lose 33 million persons at working age (-11%).

- The EU's welfare systems will become unsustainable due to the old-age dependency ratio (65+ / 20-65) jumping from 28% in 2010 to 44% in 2030 in the no-migration scenario.
- From 2010 to 2030 with no migration, the population aged 20-30 will decrease by 25% and the population aged 60-70 will increase by 29%. Moreover, the 'ageing of skills' will be amplified by any postponement of the legal age of retirement adopted in response to rising old-age dependency (Farques and Bartolemeo 2014:3).

While there is little agreement on how many migrants the EU might in future require (and under what circumstances), a study by Fotakis (2000:6) suggested as many as 170 million migrant workers will be required after 2020. These patterns and trends have profound implications for migration and for the immediate and future shaping of policy and public debate.

III. Migration – a Multi-faceted Reality

Neoclassical migration theory tended to focus primarily on the individual and viewed the decision to migrate as essentially voluntary (see Naerssen, Spaan and Zoomers 2008); research today has shifted focus from the individual to the family (families utilise migration as an economic survival strategy) and to the view that migration is predominantly involuntary (IOM 2014). Migration is most likely driven by a variety of factors and this reality needs to be addressed in developing migration policies and strategies internationally. The complexity and diversity of migration cannot be managed by a singular migration policy alone – it is a multi-faceted reality requiring responses at a variety of levels including responses focused on the development, human rights, gender and environmental agendas and not simply those of 'security' and 'regulation' (as currently pursued in the EU and across Europe).

The factors most likely to lead to migration include economic realities (the yawning and growing gap in life chances and opportunities between countries and regions is paramount especially in the context of highly unequal globalisation (Rodrik 2011, UNDP 2013 and 2014, Piketty 2014) and 'radical inequality' (Pogge 2008). The lack of effective governance in many countries at a variety of levels including in welfare, education and health along with intense conflict and violence (in which the West continues to play a key role) remains pivotal. According to UNHCR '…w*e are witnessing a quantum leap in forced displacement in the world*' with the number of people forced to flee now exceeding 50 million in 2013 (UNHCR 2014). Additionally, the absence or denial of personal freedom (of belief or religion) also forces many to flee along with discrimination of various types including race, gender and/or ethnicity. The emergence of organised migrant communities and networks in destination countries contributes significantly to migration as well to local and international development (Cohen 2008).

Of increasingly urgent importance to migration are environmental factors such as earthquakes, floods, soil/coastal erosion and droughts related directly to climate change (UNDP 2009:45, Laczko and Aghazarm 2009).

'Large numbers of people are moving as a result of environmental degradation that has increased dramatically in recent years. The number of such migrants could rise substantially as larger areas of the earth become uninhabitable as a result of climate change.'

(IOM, 1992)

The global rise of the 'environmental migrant' (a term first coined by Lester Brown) looms large, according to the International Organisation for Migration by 2008 some 20 million people had been displaced by extreme weather events, compared to 4.6 million internally displaced by conflict and violence over the same period. Research indicates that gradual changes in the

environment tend to have an even greater impact on migration than extreme events. Gradual changes, such as desertification, coastal and soil erosion, tend to be less dramatic and therefore attract less attention than natural disasters. However, such changes tend to affect a larger number of people and will continue to do so in the long term. For example, during the period 1979-2008, 718 million people were affected by storms compared to 1.6 billion people affected by droughts. Laczko and Aghazarm have estimated that by 2050, between 25 million to 1 billion people may migrate or be displaced due to environmental degradation and climate change (2009:15). Additionally, 1.3 million square kilometres are likely to become flooded; developing countries are likely to bear the brunt of such events with as much as 98% of all human casualties from extreme weather events with South and East Asia, Africa and small island states becoming the most severely affected (Myers 2002, IOM 2009:33).

IV. Inequality, Development Paradigms and Migration

Most recently Thomas Piketty has highlighted the dominant assumptions surrounding international inequality and wealth in the twentieth century and, in particular the arguments suggesting a *'moral hierarchy of wealth'* deemed to explain and justify current levels of inequality (2014:443-447). In challenging this paradigm, Piketty once again draws attention to the systemic nature of inequality under current globalisation conditions. In this, he echoes many of the arguments of Pogge concerning 'radical inequality', which root poverty and injustice in current dominant economic models (2008:204-205). The implications of their arguments for migration and in particular for the poverty and inequalities which drive it are clear. Current economic development paradigms, models and practices generate and recreate the realities that fuel migration. Separating the issue of migration from the forces that drive it is not only unjust, it is also unrealistic in that it refuses to recognise underlying dynamics and places the core focus on migrants themselves and on the need for greater *'security'* and regulation.

How such realities impinge on migration is illustrated in the case of sub-Saharan Africa in the context of agriculture and the vexed question of the ongoing impact of EU and US subsidies for their agricultural exports and their impact in Africa and elsewhere. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN has catalogued key elements of how US and EU subsidies on commodities such as cotton continue to damage African farmers, reduce much needed revenues for African Governments and artificially distort world markets (FAO 2007). Analysts and research institutes along with developing countries' governments argue that the agricultural and trade policies of the world's richest nations are a major obstacle to economic development in some of the poorest countries globally. For example US and EU food and agricultural trade policies and selected export subsidies continue to be used regionally to *'dump'* a broad range of products onto poorer country markets contributing to the creation of poverty and insecurity and thus migration (IFPRI 2003, FAO 2006 and FAO 2009). In addressing the reform of its Common Agricultural Policy in 2013, the EU continued to refuse to rule out the use of export subsidies despite extensive evidence of their negative impact on poorer countries (Matthews 2011). In the case of the US, the World Trade Organisation in 2005 upheld a ruling against the United States declaring export subsidies illegal yet the US government continues to resist reform (Kinnock 2011).

V. Migration, the European 'Public' and Cognitive Dissonance

A brief review of the research on migration and public attitudes in Europe (as distinct from that on 'traditional immigration countries' such as the US, Canada and Australia) suggests a number of anomalies. Immigration policy as practised by many governments remains relatively more 'open' and 'liberal' (despite its overall and growing restrictive character and practice) than public opinion would support. The public across Europe consistently and significantly overestimates the scale of immigration and yet there are widespread discrepancies in

attitudes across age, economic class and level of education (Penninx, Spencer and Van Hear 2008:4-5, Facchini, G and A.M.Mayda 2008:2-4).

The 2014 Report of the Director General of the ILO raises similar points and observes:

> *'…Policy initiatives addressing migration frequently run up against a marked divergence between widely demonstrated economic benefits of migration and equally widely held public opinion regarding its negative impact. Is this simply the consequence of a mismatch of objective realities and subjective opinions, or is something else in play?'*
>
> (ILO 2014:4)

Recent decades have witnessed a steady if uneven growth in anti-immigration movements among populist groups within the context of broader anti-globalisation and European integration sentiments. This movement grew in importance in the context of a low-turnout 2014 EU elections where their representation increased suggesting a *'boiling over'* of long simmering anti-immigration sentiment across the EU. How should this be understood and what are its implications for migration in the decades ahead? Is it simply the manipulation of public opinion by a series of *'political entrepreneurs'* seeking to achieve political advantage over more traditional parties or are there important issues and challenges for migration policy and for integration strategies?

At the outset it is clear that advances in understanding of the multiple contributions of migration to development amongst researchers, policy makers and analysts have not kept pace with public perceptions (and experiences). The public discussion of the issues appears to be significantly impervious to factual realities – many (but by no means all) people still believe that migrants are far more numerous than they are in fact and that they consistently benefit from social welfare provisions than local populations

(Facchini and Mayda 2008, Fargues 2014). Recent experience of economic recession, increased unemployment (especially in some hardest hit sectors) and the significant cutbacks in public services in some states have helped fuel anti-immigrant sentiment. In such circumstances the simple challenging of misperceptions and misinformation with '*hard facts'* is most unlikely to achieve the desired results. A far more nuanced and sophisticated analysis of how the public comes to judgement on this issue is required and thus how strategies for engagement are designed and delivered.

The research to date suggests a number of trends and patterns which require considerably more research and analyses in order to more effectively shape and govern public discussion, public judgement and public policy. According to Facchini and Mayda economic considerations outweigh non-economic considerations in public attitudes; only a minority favour more open policies; pro-immigration lobbies remain important in influencing the government policy (those from industry, non-governmental organisations and already established diaspora groups (2008:3-4). Penninx, Spencer and Van Hear highlight the different characters and contexts of public attitudes across different sets of countries – those older, established immigration countries (the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) which have an established immigration culture with well-established policies; northern European countries with either an established colonial history or which, for economic reasons, have well-established labour migration needs and networks and, finally, those 'new' immigration countries (such as Ireland, Poland, Spain, Italy and Malta) which have been until recently net emigration countries (2008:5). Evidence to date also suggests (but is by no means conclusive) that attitudes to immigration vary across educational levels, age (with younger groups tending, in the main to be more tolerant) and location - urban versus rural (Fetzer 2011).

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