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Ninth Coordination Meeting on International Migration

Measuring migration's economic and social
impacts: Core indicators and methodological
considerations

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My objective

- Draw out some lessons about trying to measure the impact of international migration on development
- Take most of my thoughts from our recent project with the Global Development Network – *Development on the Move*
- Large global research project measuring migration's development impacts and developing policy responses.
- Ambitious – multi-million dollar, multi year, multi partner (all continents), multi-disciplinary (including new data gathering and analysis – data to match the statue of liberty!)
- Note: Thank you to large number of people who collaborated on this work, including Frank Laczko



Outline

1. Thinking about development – what do we mean?
2. Thinking about migration – how does it affect development?
3. Measuring migration's development impacts – our considerations
4. Measuring migration's development impacts – our approach
5. Some reflections



What do we mean by development?

- To assess migration's development impacts we need to start with an idea of what development is.
- This ensures a focus on outcomes rather than phenomena – what do diasporas, remittances, return migration mean for the outcomes policymakers care about?
- Many governments / organisations may already have a definition of development, in their national development plan or mission statement
- Need to focus on how migration affects that development mission



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- Example 1: For DFID development = achieving the MDGs
- So for DFID aligning migration and development goals should be about understanding how migration affects the MDGS.
- Example 2: *Development on the Move* takes capabilities as its development framework – an individual’s capability to live the life they have reason to value. So we need to understand how migration will affect capabilities.
- Capabilities approach is interested in all kinds of outcomes – not just economic but all of life – education, health, political freedoms etc.
- Is interested both in outcomes at the individual level – such as incomes, educational achievement – but also the systems that shape those outcomes – such as economic growth rates and investment in education.



How does migration affect development?

Our research shows six 'channels' of impact:

3 direct channels:

- (1) emigration
- (2) immigration
- (3) return

3 indirect channels:

- (4) remittances
- (5) other diaspora activities and transfers
- (6) changing incentives



Measuring migration's development impacts: our considerations

- The analysis already set out can be applied to all projects. But what did we do?
- Development on the Move's approach was shaped by three main considerations, which then shaped our indicators and methodology. These were:

1. *Viewing development as expansion of capabilities.* This meant looking across a broad range of impacts.



2. *Wanting to be policy relevant.* This reinforced the need to look at a range of aspects of development. It also led us towards nationally representative work.

3. *Wanting to isolate impacts.* Going beyond correlation to causation meant doing a range of things, principally gathering the right kind of data and analysing it in the right kind of ways

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Measuring migration's development impacts – our approach

The impacts we are interested in include impacts across a range of aspects of development, and at different 'levels'



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AREA OF IMPACT	EXAMPLES
ECONOMIC	Poverty, risk, growth, inequality, labour force participation, trade
EDUCATION	Educational spending, attendance, provision, quality
HEALTH	Health spending, attendance, provision, quality
GENDER	Female migrants' own opportunities, gender roles, attitudes towards gender
WIDER SOCIAL	Traditional culture, family structures, confidence in home society



Our methodological tools included:

- Nationally representative household survey
 - Thousands of households screened
 - Targeted immigrants, recent emigrants + returnees
 - Households without migrants also included
 - 1100 – 1500 households given full interview
 - 178 questions
 - Included opinion questions
- Stakeholder interviews
- Literature and data review
- Policy audit
- Workshops



To start to understand causality we have data on households with migrants and those without. However, comparing these two groups to understand migration's impacts is complicated by two issues:

1. The possibility of reverse causality (e.g. migration not causing increased income, but increased income increasing the possibility of migrating)
2. Self-selection (comparisons between migrants and non-migrants not being valid, because migrants might be different to non migrants).



We used four methods to try to get around these problems:

- Drawing on our other methodologies to try to contextualise and explain findings.
- The use of retrospective questions to plot how things have changed within households over time
- Asking migrants themselves about what they believe was cause and what was effect
- Advanced econometric tools (such as propensity score matching and instrumental variable analysis)



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Area of impact	Impact's nature + 'level'	Data gathered
Economic	Poverty of the migrant	Questions to returned migrants and absent migrant proxy about change in living standards
	Poverty of the household	Questions about household expenditure today; about assets now and five years ago
Education	Education level of the migrant	Questions to absent migrant proxy and returned migrant about qualifications gained abroad , and to returned migrant about purpose of qualifications and other useful skills gained .
	Education level of household	Questions about expenditure on education , highest levels of qualifications gained and whether children are currently attending school



Some reflections

- Definitely worth doing nationally representative work with quantitative data – valued by policymakers and allows you to open up new terrain
- Bespoke surveys also have their advantages – sampling strategies and questions to suit your purpose
- Isolating impacts – and understanding causality – isn't easy. It's about minimising problems, not solving them
- We should have done more with our other methods – chance to do this more effectively in follow on work