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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



- 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