

Moving Forward:  
International Migration and  
Development Prospects in Asia

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# Asia: A Region in Motion

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- A region of intense and diverse migration flows since the 1970s
  - A primary source region of permanent migrants in traditional countries of settlement
    - Presently, India, China, and the Philippines are major source countries
  - Various waves of refugee migration
  - Prominence of labor migration
    - Unauthorized migration is substantial

# Asia: A Region in Motion

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- Labor migration is firmly in place
  - 1970: labor migration to the Middle East, mostly male
  - 1980s: intraregional migration stepped up, esp. in Southeast Asia; start of female migration
  - 1990s: start/resumption of highly skilled migration
- Labor migration: strictly temporary and limited integration for the less skilled; permanent residence and family reunification for the highly skilled

# 1. Development Implications of International Migration

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- Different migration flows imply different nature and levels of migrants' inclusion in the origin and destination countries
- Varying development implications: remittances, brain drain/brain gain issues, role of transnational communities in the development of their home countries

# 1. Development Implications of International Migration

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- Examples of “success stories”
  - Taiwan, from brain drain to brain gain
  - S. Korea, from country of origin to country of destination
  - China and the overseas Chinese
  - *Role of the government in all three cases*
  - *Return of scientific talent & entrepreneurs in Taiwan and S. Korea; investments & entrepreneurs in the case of China (also India)*

# 1. Development Implications of International Migration

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- Labor migration (less skilled): brain gain?
  - Vulnerability of migrants, esp. women migrants
  - Unauthorized migration, inc. trafficking in human beings
  - Return migration is a given
- Migration of the highly skilled: brain drain?
  - Migration of nurses (Philippines); migration of ICT (India)
  - More research needed on other highly skilled
  - Student migration, a precursor to future brain drain
- Migrants & transnational communities as development partners

## 2. Recent Initiatives: International Migration and Development

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- Extending the “nation” to the diaspora via absentee voting, dual citizenship – ex. Philippines (2003)
- The overseas population as partners in development– ex. Commission on Filipinos Overseas’ Link for Philippine Development Program (since 1989); Singapore International Foundation’s Overseas Singapore Program
- Celebrating the diaspora – ex. India’s Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (Non-Resident Indians Day) held every 9 January; various commemorations in the Philippines, also migrant workers as the new heroes

## 2. Recent Initiatives: International Migration and Development

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- Examples from NGOs/Migrants' Associations/Others
  - Encouraging migrant group savings and investing these for small businesses or projects in communities back home
  - Targeted donations, disaster relief, medical missions
  - Private organizations tapping overseas-based population (focus: permanent migrants)
  - *More documentation is needed; need to quantify "collective remittances"*
  - *Migrants' decisions vs. "real" needs; sustainability; challenge of jobs generation; local development*



### 3. Prospects of Co-Development in Asia

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- Limited and of recent vintage: government-to-government discussion on labor migration
- Discussion and cooperation has focused on regulating the movement of people (legal migration); common ground in curbing unauthorized migration, esp. trafficking
- In general, a “benign neglect” of migrants’ rights
- From regional integration to co-development: a long shot?