Global Workshop on Governance and Internal Migration

Pacific Basin Research Center and East-West Center

Many countries have experienced substantial internal migration from one locale to another; these population movements demand effective policy responses. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimated that more than 38 million people were internally displaced in 2014; nearly 11 million of whom were displaced that year.[1] A very large portion of internal displacement results in urbanization, joining millions of people who migrate to cities seeking economic advancement and urban amenities. The 2016 UN Habitat World Cities Report estimated that 77 million people migrated *annually* to cities between 2010-2015; the world's urban population now exceeds its rural population.[2] Unfortunately, internal migration has not received much attention by bilateral or multilateral aid, security, and human-rights agencies, although the stakes are no lower for internal migration than they are for international migration. Moreover, internal migration is often linked to international migration, as many inter-state migrants begin as intra-state migrants. The demand is compelling for more effective policy responses to promote humanistic development and avoid conflict. What are some "best practices" that can help integrate internal migrants and host communities?

The high incidence of internal migration reflects the broad combination of both "pull factors", e.g., perceived economic opportunities, and "push factors", e.g., poverty, violence, weather, ecosystem degradation, or infrastructure development displacement. Some of these population movements are directly encouraged, or even coerced, by governments; sometimes they are indirectly induced by the construction of physical infrastructure such as roads going into less developed areas or urban improvements. Thus, both national governments and sub-national authorities have a responsibility for the outcomes triggered by the migration. Whatever the reasons for population movements, they raise crucial issues of governance. It is extremely rare for people to relocate in areas where literally no other people reside. Therefore, migrants almost always enter into areas where some forms of governance, property rights, and other institutions are already in place. This raises the policy issues to be considered in this project:

- What are the most appropriate roles of international organizations, national governments, local governments and civil society in ensuring the integration of migrants?
- What governance rules should exist for the participation of the newcomers? For example, what duration-of-residency requirements should apply for eligibility to vote, to serve on community councils, to run for elected office, to receive services, and so on?
- How are property rights assigned or reassigned, and how should they be addressed?

---

[1] The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2016. Global report on internal displacement. Geneva: IDMC.
[2] UN Habitat 2016. World cities report: Urbanization and development: emerging futures. Nairobi: UN Human Settlements Programme.

- How should urban authorities balance the accommodation of new arrivals, who often settle illegally in environmentally sensitive areas, against the rights of established urban residents whose quality of life is diminished by the low-quality squatter settlements.?
- How can governments diminish economic competition between host and newly-arrived communities?
- What sort of social mechanisms exist to help integrate newcomers? What sort of social mechanisms exist to help integrate migrants, including tensions among the residents and migrants? This is a key issue in the New UN Development Agenda 2035.
- In those cases where eligibility for social benefits such as health care subsidies are tied to the location of origin (e.g., China), what rules should apply to determine whether the authorities in the new area offer the migrants comparable benefits? How can systems operate fairly if there are restrictions on family mobility?
- If government agencies, in inducing the migration have made any commitments to the migrants, how should conflicts that may arise with the pre-existing population over these commitments be resolved?
- Insofar as the enlarged total population puts additional strains on the physical and social infrastructure of the locale, who should bear the responsibility for providing resources to address this challenge?

- Insofar as there are perceptions that the newcomers will remain only temporarily, and therefore the pre-existing population and its leaders may be reluctant to grant benefits to the newcomers, how should institutions cope with the possibility that newcomers will remain for extended periods (this is common for people dislocated because of violence)? What institutional arrangements for large scale migrants emanating from internal conflicts should manage their repatriation?
- What degree of autonomy should be granted to the micro settlements that may be established by the newcomers, if they do not degrade the areas inhabited and exploited by the pre-existing population?
- If destructive conflicts arise (which may even occur within the pre-existing population or within the set of newcomers), how would governance institutions address these conflicts?
- Given concern for refugee crises, what potential roles can international organizations or foreign states play in aiding integration efforts?

Key research questions are important to inform how the policy questions ought to be addressed:

- What governance rules, distribution of rights and benefits, and inter-group relations currently exist in areas of interest?
- What are the determinants of internal migration, especially rural to urban migration and migrants displaced through internal conflicts? There is a wide body of literature that should be reviewed.
- To what extent do migrants increase deficiencies of urban services (including their access to these services)?

- What institutional arrangements for large scale migrants have arisen due to internal conflicts; which have been effective?

It is important to recognize that "pressure points" can be applied not only after migrants have arrived, but often prior to their arrival, insofar as the migration is planned or predictable. In fact, governments at various levels would do well by anticipating the possibility of migrations by establishing doctrines for addressing the challenges. Even after migration has occurred, the possibility of "re-resettlement" also exists as a policy option, e.g., following the 2008 attacks on Madurese in Indonesia's Central Kalimantan.

To address these challenges, it is important to identify the conditions that both motivate and permit various institutions to intervene broadly to establish the doctrines, to plan ahead for specific migrations, or to take actions within the community to minimize the problems that encounters might create. To whom should we address advice on best practice insights to intervene in constructive ways—leaders of the national governments, leaders of subnational governments, civil society organizations, foreign assistance agencies, international organizations, and social organizations (schools, religious officials, etc.)?

Identifying pressure points, and developing sound approaches, requires a sufficiently comprehensive framework of the causes of internal migration. For example, some causes, such as droughts or natural disasters, are no one's fault in particular, and therefore may be more amenable to external intervention to relocate migrants. In other cases, population growth may cause the local economy to no longer be able to sustain the population; therefore migration occurs. Alternatively, internal migration may result from civil war, the arrival of external armies, heightened criminal activity, etc., that may be much more difficult to address, and may reduce the range of institutions that could have a positive impact.

In addition to the causes of the migrations, outcomes will depend on additional conditioning factors: the extent to which migration is voluntary, the scale and timing of migration, social and religious complementarity, whether the host area is urban or rural, the ethnic heterogeneity of the receiving region, whether the migrant community arrives as a complete society (with elites and poor) or whether their ranks are comprised of a limited range of social groups, and the role and capacity of the state.

These issues would be addressed by a working group of governance experts familiar with specific cases in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Some support for this work would be provided by the Pacific Basin Research Center of Soka University of America. This project is conducted in collaboration with the urbanization project of the East-West Center's Asia-Pacific Governance and Democracy Initiative

Contact:

Shabbir Cheema, Senior Fellow, Research Program and Director, Asia-Pacific Governance and Democracy Initiative, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii 96848 Email: cheemas@eastwestcenter.org