



Middlemen and Mobility: Some Reflections

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Migration's Middlemen is an important contribution

- Helps fill gap in research and knowledge – middlemen often discussed (and maligned), but systematic data lacking
- > case study method focussed on a major corridor
- > documents rules and structures, as well as trends
- > Valuable empirical work, particularly the extensive field interviews

Key findings and recommendations

- Useful to distinguish three migration modes: official agency, other regular, and irregular
- Costs can be high
- Enforcement often weak

Recommends

1. Changing rules
2. Better enforcement by strengthened institutions
3. Empowering migrants



Broader perspective on barriers and costs

- Restrictions on mobility create costs – especially high for temporary workers
- Asian migrants moving to the Gulf states often pay at least 25 - 35% of expected earnings in recruitment and other fees -- passport, visa, health checkups: Martin (2009) and Agunias (2009)

High Moving Costs

Figure 3.5

Costs of moving are often high

Costs of intermediaries in selected corridors against income per capita, 2006–2008

Viet Nam to Japan (6 years, 5 months and 4 days)



Bangladesh to Saudi Arabia (5 years, 2 months and 3 days)



China to Australia (3 years, 10 months and 16 days)



Colombia to Spain (1 year, 8 months and 3 days)



India to United Kingdom (1 year, 3 months)



Philippines to Singapore (8 months and 26 days)



● = Origin country annual GNI per capita

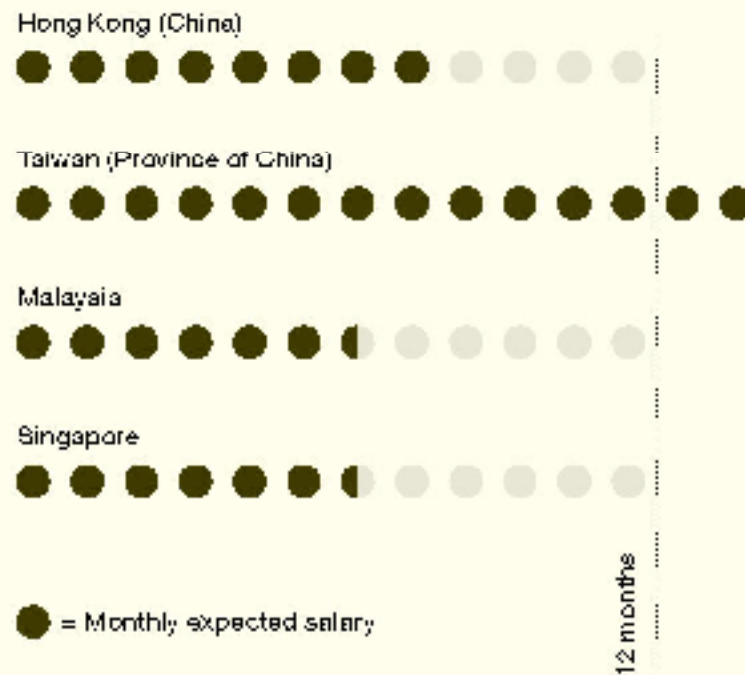
Source: Bangladesh to Saudi Arabia: Malek (2008); China to Australia: Zhiwu (2009); Colombia to Spain: Grupo de Investigación en Movilidad Humana (2009); Philippines to Singapore: TWC (2006); Viet Nam to Japan: van Thanh (2008).

Moving costs mean many months

Figure 3.6

Moving costs can be many times expected monthly earnings

Costs of movement against expected salary of low-skilled Indonesian workers in selected destinations, 2008



Source: International Labour Office (2008)



Some deeper issues to be addressed

- UAE economy relies on migrants (56% of population and higher share of workforce)
- Excluding migrants from labor laws is unacceptable – 60% of UAE migrants are women – many excluded from basic protection
 - Abusive and exploitative conditions sometimes associated with domestic work in Arab states, and can trap migrant women in circle of poverty and HIV vulnerability (UNDP 2008)
- Governments need to undertake fundamental reforms, as well as step up enforcement and information – the latter without the former will not make much of a dent
- Simplifying rules, reducing costs, and protecting migrants is part of a broader agenda to maximise the potential human development gains from mobility



Overcoming barriers: An HD lens

- Being able to choose where to live as a key element of human freedom
- Effects of movement not just on incomes, but on broader measures of human development, such as education, health, and empowerment
- Politically feasible reforms that are oriented towards helping those who are most disadvantaged and have the most to gain

2009 Human Development Report – chapter structure

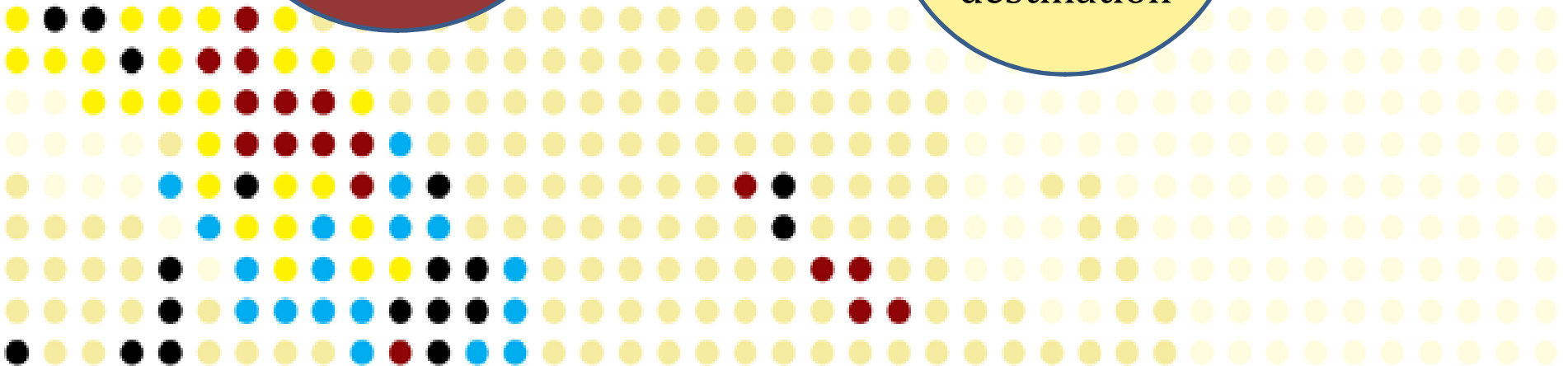
**1: Freedom
and
movement**

**2: People in
motion: who
moves where,
when and
why**

**3: How
movers fare**

**4: Impacts
at origin
and
destination**

**5: Policies to
enhance
human
development
outcomes**





Core package from Human Development Report 2009

1. Liberalize and simplify regular channels that allow people with low skills to seek work abroad
2. Ensure basic rights for migrants
3. Reduce transactions costs associated with migration
4. Improve outcomes for migrants and destination communities
5. Enable benefits from internal mobility
6. Make mobility an integral part of human development strategies