

**FROM A ZERO-SUM TO  
A WIN-WIN SCENARIO?**

**Literature Review  
on Circular Migration**



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MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE



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## INTRODUCTION

For an increasing number of scholars, international migration has undergone a transformation particularly in the last decade or so. The recently released UN Secretary-General's Report on International Migration and Development suggests a "new era of mobility" characterized in part by a greater degree of nonpermanent, or circular, migration.<sup>1</sup> Hugo, among others, has noted circular migration's "unprecedentedly large scale, involving a greater cross-section of groups and taking a wider variety of forms than ever before."<sup>2</sup> Although circular migration's impact on development is far from settled, a review of the current literature suggests increasing optimism about its developmental potential.

This optimism stems mainly from the erosion of the traditionally polarized migration framework, where migrants who depart (emigrants) are seen as "lost" to the sending country and arriving immigrants are therefore "gained" by the receiving country. Instead, a transnational framework is gaining ground where migrants continually forge and sustain multiple attachments across nation-states and/or communities. As these transnational migrants return home, it is argued that they can facilitate the transfer of the critical financial and human capital the developing world needs.

However, the optimism pervading the current literature is not without a healthy dose of caution. Although the pendulum has started to move away from the dominant zero-sum scenario of previous decades toward a more positive "win-win" scenario, there are calls to keep the pendulum from moving too far. Indeed, amidst the optimism, also evident in the current literature, is a simmering concern that the impact of policies encouraging more circular migration is still very much conditioned by the political, economic, and social conditions in the countries of origin and destination, as well as by the characteristics of the migrants, their respective diasporic communities, and the dynamics of return.

Notwithstanding this concern, however, it is very clear that the previous decades' abrupt dismissal of the developmental impact of circularity as negligible or even negative is no longer warranted especially in an increasingly transnational world. The challenge still is to understand this new reality and to comprehend precisely the circumstances in which the win-win potential of a policy encouraging more circular migration has been and could be realized. Unfortunately, with this goal as standard, the literature, as it stands right now, has barely scratched the surface.

This review will be divided in four sections. The first section will discuss the literature's treatment of the impacts of circular migration on development. Specifically, it will focus on how much the return of migrants, including members of the Diaspora, has contributed to the transfer of direct investments and human capital to sending countries. For the purposes of this literature review, migrants and members of the Diaspora are differentiated as either permanent, referring to those who have permanent residency or citizenship in their host countries; or temporary, referring to workers under a temporary labor scheme or who by their own volition, stay

temporarily. This distinction is important given that the circumstances surrounding these two sets of migrants are quite different, and thus have correspondingly different policy implications. Return is similarly differentiated as either permanent or temporary so to capture the increasingly transnational tone in the literature. After the discussion of impacts, the second and third sections will then focus on the policies that supposedly do and will encourage circular migration. In particular, the second section will discuss what exactly these policies are while the third section will discuss the highly debatable issues surrounding them. The paper then concludes with a discussion of what is missing in the current literature and a set of recommendations for future research.

## **I. DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT OF CIRCULAR MIGRATION**

Migrants and their descendants are key actors in the development agenda of a number of developing countries today. Their value stems not only from what they can contribute from afar, mainly in terms of remittances, but also from what they can bring upon their return to their countries of origin. Increasingly, it is argued that a positive channel opens up when they return with the two ingredients deemed critical in an information-based global economy: financial and human capital.

### **A. Permanent Returns of Permanent Migrants and Members of the Diaspora**

#### **1. Direct Investments**

Far from being novel, the idea that returnees can become direct source of investments has been advanced many times before. Indeed, some evidence has accumulated through the years indicating the greater than average tendency of return migrants to choose self-employment or entrepreneurial activity. For example, in a study in the Italian Mezzogiorno, King et al. described south Italian peasant farmers who left for northern Europe during the 1950s and 1960s and eventually returned during the 1970s and 1980s to open small businesses such as shops or bars in their home villages.<sup>3</sup> Murillo, looking at Colombia, found that the participation of returning migrant workers in small businesses was a key aspect in that country's ability to survive economic recession.<sup>4</sup> Black and Tiemoko noted that similar findings have been reported for Mexico and for countries as diverse as Portugal, Somaliland, and China.<sup>5</sup> In Jamaica, Chevannes and Ricketts found similar investment dynamism in the incubation of tourism-related ventures.<sup>6</sup>

More recently, Dustmann and Kirchkamp noted that more than half of Turkish returnees remain active in the economy with most of them engaging in entrepreneurial activities.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in a case study of Egypt, Wahba and McCormick argued that "overseas migration for even comparatively short spells facilitates not only the accumulation of financial capital on a scale not otherwise possible but also the accumulation of new useful skills that increase enterprise investment on return."<sup>8</sup> They found a higher rate of "entrepreneurship" amongst return migrants than in the same sample prior to international migration. For Wahba and

McCormick, the “economic contribution of return migrants in this sample supports the view that overseas work experience in a high wage country can play a useful role in the development process.”<sup>9</sup>

Goulbourne, focusing on returnees from the UK to the Caribbean came to the same conclusion. He noted that the one noticeable and significant opportunity arising from the return phenomenon is the considerable financial contribution made to the economies of Barbados and Jamaica, one type of which is in the form of investments.<sup>10</sup>

Interviews in West Africa also reveal that unlike older cohorts of emigrants that were more instrumental in nation-building, more recent cohorts contribute through entrepreneurship. As Kapur and McHale noted, returnees have stimulated investments in a number of instances.<sup>11</sup> A more specific example from this region is Black et al.’s study of Ghana, which found that migration and return is a “mechanism for providing capital for the development of small enterprises, particularly amongst poorer and less-skilled migrants.”<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, Black et al., among others, have noted the centrality of savings in creating opportunities for investment upon return. Rather than simply investing from afar, they argue that individual migrants who have generated surplus capital while abroad will have an opportunity to dedicate themselves to the creation of a new business upon their return.<sup>13</sup>

Ilahi studied occupational choices on return and found that the level of savings is positively correlated with the choice of self-employment on return,<sup>14</sup> while Mesnard found that the majority of entrepreneurial projects started by Tunisian returnees were totally financed through overseas savings.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, McCormick and Wahba studied the linkages between savings, overseas work experience, and choice of activity after return. In an econometric model of entrepreneurial activity, they found evidence supporting the hypotheses that overseas savings have positive effects on becoming an entrepreneur.<sup>16</sup>

The bulk of the current literature on this issue, however, centers on key countries, mostly in East and South Asia. Indeed, China’s spectacular economic growth has long been regarded as heavily influenced by investment from the Diaspora of about 30 million overseas Chinese. Since the late 1990s, China has received \$40 billion to \$50 billion a year in direct investment, the bulk of which comes from overseas Chinese. One estimate indicates that Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and Macao alone accounted for almost 80 percent of Chinese direct investments in 1992.<sup>17</sup> According to the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology, returnees from the United States started most Internet-based ventures.<sup>18</sup>

More recently, Zweig et al. noted a significant rise in the number of returnees with advanced technical knowledge engaging in private entrepreneurship. They cited data from officials in the Shanghai Personnel Bureau indicating that in 2002, over 2,000 foreign-trained entrepreneurs in Shanghai run private businesses. Zweig et al.’s preliminary survey in 2001 revealed similar



trends. About two-thirds (44/66) of the returnees working in development zones in China reported running their own businesses.<sup>19</sup>

In the case of India, Lowell and Findlay noted what appears to be an increasing investment in rural areas by returnees.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the rise of India's software industry is argued to be the product of intensive networking between returning expatriates and Indian entrepreneurs abroad. As Hugo noted, non-resident Indians (NRIs) have been involved in "establishing significant economic activity in India." In 2002, they are responsible for about 9 percent of total foreign investments.<sup>21</sup>

Explanations of what facilitated the successful return of these transnational investors usually boil down to synergy. According to this view, there is a distinctive and crucial synergy between expatriate returnee investors and local governments that cannot be found to the same extent or in the same form with other foreign investors lacking national ties.

In the case of the Chinese, this synergy typically resides in the specific skill sets of Chinese investors, such as experience with labor-intensive exports to the West, as well as management skills that achieve high quality and productivity from unskilled labor. More commonly cited, however, are the cultural similarities and propensities the expatriates possess such as shared culture and language, the ability to form trustworthy relationships, and values of authority and hard work.<sup>22</sup>

Smart and Hsu contend that until China's accession to the WTO, FDI has primarily come from risk-tolerant investors who face uncertain property rights and a level of political risk that was hard to gauge. "For various social, economic and political reasons, the investors tended to be ethnic Chinese."<sup>23</sup>

In the same line, Huang argues that without China's ties to ethnic Chinese capital, "nonstate firms would have atrophied under the weight of the lending bias" against China on the part of the foreign investors. According to Huang, the underdeveloped rule of law "would have deterred foreign investment if not for ethnic Chinese firms that possess relationship capital and cultural know-how that help foreign firms navigate China's murky business environment."<sup>24</sup>

In a similar vein, Freinkman notes that in a situation of "great uncertainty and excessive economic risks," expatriates act as "first movers" and are therefore "critical to get the economy moving" in an otherwise "unattractive situation."<sup>25</sup>

## **2. Human Capital Transfer**

Apart from direct investments, returnees also bring with them critical human capital. Many writers note that the exodus of human capital has always been viewed by the traditional brain-drain literature as a curse for developing countries.<sup>26</sup> More recently, it has been increasingly

common to argue that out-migration, even of the highly skilled, may positively affect the sending economy.

As Kapur noted, by the mid-1990s, “despite continued concerns about human capital flight (especially from Africa, Russia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans), the expression ‘brain drain’ was less in vogue, and while not replaced was certainly challenged by concepts that implied a reversal of ‘reverse technology transfer’ — ‘brain gain’, ‘brain bank’, ‘brain trust’.”<sup>27</sup> Lowell and Findlay cited the increasing perception that “high rates of return migration after temporary stays abroad may be the best of all in an ‘optimal brain drain’ world.”<sup>28</sup>

In this view, the international mobility of highly trained workers is argued to generate “feedback effects,” one of which is return migration. Domestic workers may pursue higher education in the hope of going abroad, and if they return they can increase the source country’s average productivity, especially if they return after gaining experience and skills in a more advanced economy. It is widely recognized that a migration regime optimized for development enables migrants — both the educated and those with few formal skills — to gain skills relevant upon return. A typical example is found in accounts of Albanian returnees who increased their own vegetable production and trained other farmers using new agricultural skills acquired in Greece.<sup>29</sup>

The literature on the impact of the return of the highly skilled on development is starting to accumulate. Studies to date range from econometric analysis of labor force samples to detailed interview-based research. Like the previous discussion of Diaspora investments, the bulk of the literature centers on a few countries in East and South Asia.

Saxenian noted that in the 1990s, more than 1,000 engineers and scientists returned annually, compared to only about 200 a decade earlier. The National Youth Commission found that more than 30 percent of the engineers who studied in the United States returned to Taiwan by 1998, a marked increase from the 10 percent rate of return in the 1970s.<sup>30</sup>

In the case of India, Solimano noted OECD estimates that some 1,500 highly qualified Indians have returned from the United States in 2000 alone.<sup>31</sup> A recent and comprehensive survey of India’s software industry by Commander et al. was indeed optimistic. It confirmed the evidence of return among the highly skilled. Moreover, it found that 30-40 percent of the higher-level employees had relevant work experience in a developed country.<sup>32</sup>

The same can be said in the case of mainland China. Zweig et al. noted that after years of low return rates for those who received degrees overseas, the number has risen significantly since 1999. In fact, the number of returnees has increased at a yearly rate of about 13 percent since 1995. Many of the returnees have graduate degrees, including a high percentage of PhDs and MBAs.<sup>33</sup> For Zweig, China seems to be following the path of South Korea and Taiwan, where brain drain turned into brain gain, albeit with one difference: China’s return flow has picked up despite its authoritarian regime and low per-capita income.<sup>34</sup>

### Technology Transfer

Even more interesting is the finding that returnees in the private sector earn large profits in the domestic economy often by bringing back high-level technology unavailable in China, thus promoting China's technological development. Zweig et al.'s 2002 survey of 154 returnees and locals in high tech zones in six Chinese cities revealed that 48 percent of returnees brought back foreign technology as compared to only 21 percent of locals.<sup>35</sup>

Another survey conducted two years later revealed similar findings. After comparing 100 returnee entrepreneurs and 100 local entrepreneurs from Shanghai, Beijing, and Guangzhou, Vanhonacker et al. found that returnees were "four times as likely as locals to possess the latest international technology (34 percent vs. 9 percent), and almost 50 percent as likely (46 percent vs. 30 percent) to have technology that while not the newest internationally, is new for China."<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, what actually brought many of these people back is the opportunity to benefit from the use of the new technology within China. Indeed, Zweig et al. noted that bringing a new technology into China is an important path to enrichment and remains a major incentive for returning.<sup>37</sup> They write,

One hypothesis confirmed by the data is that technology brings people back to China, precisely because they believe that it gives them an edge in the domestic market. When asked why they returned to China, 27 percent of returnees selected "I have a technology that I believe will have a good prospect in China" as their primary reason for returning, while another 28 percent chose it as their second reason. For these entrepreneurs, technology drives much of their activities.<sup>38</sup>

The developmental implication of this finding is striking. As Saxenian pointed out, multinational corporations (MNCs) are no longer the "privileged vehicle" for flows of knowledge or skill.<sup>39</sup> Lowell agreed, further noting that although MNCs, in principle, could be a significant means of technology transfer, in reality, they are generally not. MNCs either keep information proprietary or transfer gains first to the MNC's host country. Thus, they generally do not create value added or interject gains in technology to the local economy.<sup>40</sup>

In contrary, Diasporas, as Rauch contends, "should be especially adept at transferring technology" because they "avoid language and cultural barriers to diffusion of knowledge."<sup>41</sup> As Keller noted, in technology transfers "only the broad outlines of technological knowledge are codified — the remainder remains 'tacit' ... [a] non-codified knowledge is usually transferred through demonstrations, through personal instructions as well as through the provision of expert services."<sup>42</sup>

The successful stories of India and China have, in fact, fuelled an emerging concern in the developed world, especially in the United States, about whether these countries are on their way to taking away from the United States its greatest international advantage: innovation. This

idea is disquieting enough that even mainstream media cannot ignore it. Last year, an *Economist* article argued that industry lobbyists are creating “a veil of discretion” and “playing down” India’s success in innovation:

Conscious of Western fears of the migration of ever more technically demanding and high-paid jobs, many Indians have recently concluded that the best strategy is not to draw attention to themselves. ...Yet by the crude measure of patents earned by the Indian subsidiaries of multinational firms, a significant amount of innovation now stems from India.<sup>43</sup>

A *Newsweek* article in 2004 pointed out the multiplication of native software patents in India as some 35,000 expatriate Indian information-technology workers reportedly have returned home from the United States since September 11, 2001.<sup>44</sup>

The discourse on “brain circulation” has also extended beyond the Asian continent to other parts of the developing world. One example is the returnees’ role in Ireland’s economic miracle. From 1993 to 2001, the Irish economy grew at a staggering annual pace of 8.4 percent, three times that of the rest of the European Union, thus, transforming the country from a “perennial loser to a Celtic Tiger.”<sup>45</sup> It is estimated that from 1995-2000, a quarter of a million people immigrated to Ireland, half of whom were returning Irish.<sup>46</sup> The return wave peaked in 1999 at over 26,000 returnees before declining to just over 18,000 two years later.<sup>47</sup>

Barrett and O’Connell’s study based on Ireland’s labor force survey data from the mid-1990s confirmed that the returning Irish were relatively highly educated. About 58 percent of the returnees had a third-level degree compared with only 29 percent for non-returnees in the labor force. Barrett and O’Connell’s study concluded that “the returned migrants accumulate skills and competencies while away that are rewarded on return to the home country.”<sup>48</sup>

Kapur and McHale reached similar conclusions. For them, the software sector in particular and the Irish economy in general were fueled by returning Irish with augmented skills.<sup>49</sup> They write:

The Irish experience shows how one decade’s lost human capital can become a skill reservoir that can be tapped to ease resource constraints and sustain economic expansion as domestic labor markets tighten. The Irish experience also suggests a positive productivity effect of time spent abroad that is especially pronounced for the computer sector.<sup>50</sup>

Sjenitzer and Tiemoko’s 2001 returnee data set on Ghana revealed roughly similar findings. The authors found a generally positive return experience among interviewed migrants, particularly those within the elite. About 80 percent of the elite and almost 40 percent of the less-skilled conveyed hope in applying skills learned abroad, while nearly two-thirds of both groups look forward to the business or job opportunities awaiting them.<sup>51</sup>

Another study looking specifically at the 152 less-skilled Ghanaian returnees revealed an improvement in employment status upon return as well as acquisition of organizational, interpersonal, and other work-related skills. The authors concluded that “migration, followed by a return to self-employment and the creation of a small business can represent a potential strategy for poverty alleviation.”<sup>52</sup>

Anarfi and Kwankye, in a review of several other studies on Ghanaian emigration and return, also highlighted Ghanaian returnees’ contribution to human capital formation in the country.<sup>53</sup>

Using statistics from the South African Network Skills Abroad (SANSA) and the US National Science Foundation, an ILO-sponsored study of South Africa study also suggests that a large share, perhaps half, of its educated emigrant outflow will ultimately return.<sup>54</sup> As Bhorat et al. contend, preliminary evidence show that emigrants do come back to Southern Africa years later.<sup>55</sup>

In a National Science Foundation workshop on the International Mobility of Scientists and Engineers, it was noted that Latin America has also seen an increase in the rates of return ever since the decline of authoritarian governments in the region. However, no quantitative data were presented at the workshop to document this claim.<sup>56</sup>

## **B. Permanent Returns of Temporary Migrants**

The current literature also looks into how returning temporary migrants facilitate the inflow of direct investments and human capital, although to a much a lesser degree and in a less positive light.

Basok’s case study of Mexican seasonal migration to Canada found that Mexican migrant workers have actually invested in agricultural land and small businesses at home. She also noted that even investments in some “non-productive” activities are also likely to stimulate development since there are spin-off effects such as increased demand for materials and labor and/or improvement in people’s career chances.<sup>57</sup>

Ellerman, looking into the Moldova-Slovenia temporary labor scheme, noted that some workers use their savings for investments back in Moldova. Also, some subcontracting and investment of Slovene companies back to Moldova was observed.<sup>58</sup>

Another case in point is the Korean turn-key projects in the Middle East during the 1970s. Kapur and McHale describe how Korean firms bid on construction projects in the Middle East, took Korean workers with them and in the process earned project management skills. They contend that these new skills were later applied to the large construction projects in the Korean industrialization drive, focused on heavy industry and chemicals, of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>59</sup>

The findings of a study looking into the developmental impacts of the return of temporary contract workers from the Middle East back to Kerala, India, are more negative. Nair found in the late 1990s that returned migrants are, in general, “middle-aged persons with low-levels of education, skills, and experience.” About half of the migrants were unemployed upon return while the other half either retired from active work, entered into self-employment, got into salaried jobs or became wage laborers in agriculture and fishing.<sup>60</sup>

Nair blames the unimpressive results on Kerala’s poor investment climate as well as the local government’s lack of a return migration policy. Although several schemes for concessional loans and other incentives for small-scale investors exist in Kerala as well as in India as a whole, Nair pointed out that these are just “paper schemes” that are “hardly accessible to migrants.”<sup>61</sup>

In terms of human capital transfer, the evidence is also not encouraging. The UK House of Commons International Development Committee report entitled *Migration and Development: How to Make Migration Work for Poverty Reduction* pointed to early studies of Turkish guest workers returning from Germany that suggested that fewer than 10 percent had received any useful training while in Germany. Recent research from Thailand also confirmed that very few returnees held occupations that might have imparted new skills.<sup>62</sup> The report continues:

These examples do not bode well for the ability of temporary migration to improve the skills of migrants. But they begin to explain why it is that temporary migration tends not to lead to human capital development; it is in part because of the sorts of jobs which migrants find themselves doing.<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, the problem becomes more acute among the unskilled and semi-skilled workers who constitute a significant fraction of overseas migration. Kapur noted the “little learning” taking place in the many domestic care jobs performed by South Asian immigrants in the Gulf or Central Americans in the United States.<sup>64</sup> Kapur and McHale also noted how the Bangladeshi workers currently employed in construction in Singapore are “showing little sign of stimulating technological change in that sector back home despite their exposure to superior technologies.”<sup>65</sup>

Kapur further emphasized the paltry systematic evidence that temporary worker schemes could lead to diffusion of agricultural technologies from the host to the source country. He contended that “in so far as the movement of such agricultural labor is across ecological zones (South-North migration), the technologies may simply be inappropriate to the home county’s soils and climates.”<sup>66</sup> Kapur noted that the question over the extent of technological transfer in agriculture is interesting given that many immigrants work in this sector but also because much of the labor is seasonal. Examples include Romanian farm labor in France, North Africans in Spain, or Mexicans in California.<sup>67</sup>

## C. Temporary Returns of Permanent Migrants

The phenomenon of migrant return in the current literature has been resurrected not only with a more positive slant but with a transnational tone. Return, in the current discourse, is not readily assumed as permanent but could actually be temporary and even cyclical. Far from being a “closure” of the migration cycle, return, as Ammassari and Black put it, could actually be just a “stage along a process of increasingly fluid movements between countries.”<sup>68</sup>

### 1. Direct Investments

Saxenian, in a study of Silicon Valley, found that many Chinese and Indian immigrants return to their native countries regularly for business purposes.<sup>69</sup> About half of Silicon Valley’s foreign-born professionals report traveling to their native country for business at least yearly, and 5 percent of those surveyed make the trip five times or more per year.<sup>70</sup> The Taiwanese in this study stand out, with about 20 percent reporting that they return home for business two to four times a year, as opposed to 9 percent of Indians and 8 percent of Mainland Chinese.<sup>71</sup>

For Saxenian, “these cross-regional technical communities have the potential to jumpstart local entrepreneurship, and they succeed over the long term to the extent that they build alliances with technical professionals, businesses, and policymakers in their home countries.”<sup>72</sup>

Indeed, half of these foreign-born entrepreneurs in her survey have set up subsidiaries, joint ventures, subcontracting, or other business operations in their countries of origin while most of the other half would contemplate starting such operations in the future. According to Saxenian, these operations are found mostly in few fast-growing urban areas, and their specialties reflect those of the economies of these locations. Firms based in China and Taiwan are primarily involved in marketing, sales, and hardware design and manufacturing while firms in India focus primarily on software or content development and software services.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, Saxenian found that the infrastructure for entrepreneurship is actually best developed in Taiwan. She noted how the return of Taiwanese technologists since the 1980s successfully transferred US-style venture capital. Moreover, Taiwan has completed several entrepreneurial cycles in which successful entrepreneurs have reinvested their capital and contributed accumulated know-how and contacts to a subsequent generation of technology ventures.<sup>74</sup> These “transnational entrepreneurs” are known among the local Chinese as “astronauts” because, as Saxenian noted, they appear to “spend their lives in airplanes.”<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, there is now an extensive literature highlighting what Waters described as the “various transnational configurations of contemporary Chinese populations.”<sup>76</sup> Apart from Saxenian’s study in the United States, Wong cited numerous studies focusing on the transnational practice of Taiwanese entrepreneurs in Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand, Germany, and Canada.<sup>77</sup>

Instances of transnational entrepreneurship have also been documented among a number of Latin American immigrant groups in the United States. In a study of the large Salvadoran immigrant populations of Los Angeles and Washington, DC, Landolt et al. discovered “a vibrant entrepreneurial community embedded in a web of social relations.” They identified four types of transnational enterprises, one of which, particularly relevant for this review, is what they call “return migrant microenterprises.” These are firms that are established by returnees to El Salvador that rely on their contacts in the United States.<sup>78</sup> A similar pattern is also detected by Itzigshon et al. in their study of the Dominican immigrant communities in the Washington Heights area of New York City. Return-migrant firms in the capital city of Santo Domingo also include an array of businesses based on examples found in the United States.<sup>79</sup>

Another study by Portes et al. surveyed US immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and El Salvador. They documented the existence of a diversified set of transnational enterprises and that a class of immigrants operating them exists. These transnational entrepreneurs buy and sell abroad, travel internationally on business, invest in enterprises at home and even hire personnel in their home countries. However, unlike the examples from Asia, Portes et al. found that they represent a small proportion of immigrant populations. Nevertheless, they contend that key findings point to the theoretical and practical significance of the phenomenon in Latin America. These transnational entrepreneurs not only represent a large proportion of the self-employed in immigrant communities, they are also part of the elite in their respective communities in terms of education and standing. For them, “this opens the possibility that under certain favorable circumstances, transnational activities can become far more prevalent than observed so far.”<sup>80</sup>

## **2. Human Capital**

Temporary returns not only generate the inflow of direct investment but of also of human capital. As Lowell and Findlay noticed, a number of scholars prefer to use the term “brain circulation.”<sup>81</sup> For example, Saxenian noted that there is “substantial evidence that the ‘brain drain’ from developing countries such as India and China has been transformed into a more complex, two-way process of ‘brain circulation’ linking California’s Silicon Valley to select urban centers in India and China.” She writes:

Although there is little evidence of a reversal of the brain drain such as that seen in Taiwan in the early 1990s, the professional and business links between California and these distant regional economies are developing quickly. The scale and decentralized nature of these transnational activities have important consequences for economic development elsewhere in the world ...<sup>82</sup>

Philip Martin agreed, pointing that there maybe a new era of “brain circulation” between Asian countries and the United States.<sup>83</sup>



## D. Temporary Migrants' Temporary Return: Negative Circularity?

The literature also emphasizes the tendency of temporary migrants to return home only temporarily. As Ellerman noted, "migrants from Asia to the Gulf States are called 'temporary' because each episode is limited in time and they may not immigrate. But this 'temporary migration' is nevertheless a permanent way of life."<sup>84</sup> In this scenario, temporary migrants return only to migrate again. From a development perspective temporary return, in this case, has limited, if not negative, impact.

For example, the former Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Gabriela Rodríguez Pizarro, visited the Philippines in 2002 and described vividly the difficult circumstances leading to re-migration. She noted that temporary migrants, locally called Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW), often have no savings and few chances to find employment upon their return. Indeed, statistics from the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency revealed that 70-80 percent of OFWs are unable to save enough money for their eventual return.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, many are "forced to return to the Philippines prematurely, owing to contractual violations or abuse, deportation as a result of war or changes in immigration laws, illegal termination of contracts or illness, and many still have debts in connection with their deployment." She writes:

Not infrequently spouses/partners have begun new relationships and children have suffered psychological problems because of absence of the parent. Dependency on migrant workers' incomes has grown and families often do not engage in alternative income-generating activities. If the returnee finds a job, the wages are usually not enough to provide for the needs of his/her family. The few OFWs who manage to save money and attempt to set up a business upon return often fail because of lack of planning, training, and information on business conditions in the Philippines. All these circumstances frequently leave returning OFWs with no choice other than to migrate again.<sup>86</sup>

The increasing feminization of OFWs since the 1980s certainly played a part in the rather difficult circumstances facing returnees. As Asis highlights, "men and women ... face different challenges." She notes that women migrants "are not likely to find other options in the country of origin" especially those with experience in domestic work.

Even those who acquired other skills may not necessarily be more marketable because they will still be disadvantaged by their background as domestic workers. The situation is worse for those who had been in entertainment work because of the stigma attached to this kind of work. Those who had ever been entertainers will also have to deal with failed relationships and children whom they will likely raise on their own.<sup>87</sup>

It is important to note, however, that re-migration by temporary migrants, is not perceived in an entirely negative light, at least by the migrants themselves. As Ellerman noted, the decision to work abroad is sometimes a “career choice” and not just a “temporary measure to acquire capital or knowledge.” Seen from this perspective, permanent return before retirement could be interpreted by the migrants themselves as “a failure in their chosen career.” Ellerman writes:

It would mean "not being good enough to keep their job or find another job in Germany." It is hard to build a development strategy on people doing what they, their families, and their peers perceive as being a failure! Many of the speculations about the potential developmental role in the South of remittances and returnees fail to take into account the social and self-perceptions of the *gastarbeiters* and other "temporary" labor migrants about their careers.<sup>88</sup>

Interestingly, this portrayal of re-migration as a livelihood strategy to increase and diversify the income of the whole family is quite evident in the literature’s discussions concerning the Caribbean. There seems to be a general agreement among scholars that a complex, reciprocal flow rather than permanent one-way movements characterize Caribbean international migration. According to Segal, for example, Caribbean migration “should be understood as a form of extended kinship over space and time with frequent rather than one-time movements.”<sup>89</sup> Byron reflects the same insight, arguing that Caribbeans “appear to embody the notion of the transnational community.”<sup>90</sup>

## E. Some Caveats

The preceding largely rosy account of the potential benefits that could accrue from the return of migrants, including the Diaspora, should not obscure the fact that there is still a fair amount of skepticism in the current literature. Some scholars are either skeptical about the true extent of the returnees’ impact in the development of countries such as China and India, while others question the true quantity as well the quality of returnees.

### 1. Same Ending, Different Plot

Kapur argues that India’s success in software is principally the result of domestic entrepreneurs and domestic capabilities. For him, “the role of the Indian Diaspora and international human capital flows from India simply highlights additional mechanisms that are important in understanding sectoral growth processes.”<sup>91</sup> In the same vein, Lucas contends that NRIs’ key part in the expansions in Bangalore and Hyderabad does not rest in transferring knowledge because, unlike higher income countries, India does not possess the capacity to process and take advantage of these technologies.<sup>92</sup>

There are also questions regarding the extent to which the investments in mainland China that are attributed to Hong Kong can actually be considered Hong Kong capital. Smart and Hsu

noted that a considerable proportion of Hong Kong investments in the first 15 years of the Open Policy were actually disguised subcontracting from Western manufacturers.<sup>93</sup>

Corollary to that are allegations of round-tripping, in which the domestic capital from mainland China is actually relocated to Hong Kong not only to take advantage of various tax and regulatory advantages but also to launder the proceeds of corruption. The World Bank estimated that almost 50 percent of Hong Kong capital is actually “recycled” mainland money while others put the figure at around 20 percent.<sup>94</sup>

### *Quantity of Returnees*

There are also questions on the true extent of return. For example, Docquier and Hillel noted that there is “limited evidence that return migration is significant among the highly skilled.”<sup>95</sup> As Cervantes and Guellec put it, “the harsh reality is that only a handful of countries have been successful in luring their talented émigrés back home.”<sup>96</sup>

Research on US foreign doctoral students in science and technology fields indicates that about half intend to stay in the United States, while about half intend to leave. For Lowell, the wide variation among countries makes the “blanket claim a bit suspect.”<sup>97</sup>

Some estimates note that 35 percent of African professionals sent abroad for training between 1982 and 1997 did not return to Africa.<sup>98</sup> A study by Ahlburg and Brown, focusing on the Tongans and Samoans in Australia, found that very few migrants plan to return home.<sup>99</sup> Findlay, focusing on the UK, observed that only a “moderately small proportion” of skilled migrants appears to return home, with the percentage falling in recent years. He particularly highlighted that the “low proportion of foreign doctors returning home after training in the UK should be a cause for concern, given the serious health problems still faced by many developing countries.”<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, it is important to recognize that the clamor on brain drain continues to be heard most loudly in particular sectors, such as health and education, and in, certain regions, particularly Africa and Latin America. For example, the Joint Learning Initiative (JLI), a consortium of more than 100 health leaders, published a report in 2004 citing “brain drain,” along with HIV/AIDS and underinvestment in human resources, as one of the three “major forces” accelerating what they perceived as an on-going global health crises.<sup>101</sup>

In fact, the 2005 World Health Assembly, the supreme decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), included the international migration of health personnel as one of the critical issues that needs to be addressed by the international health community. A resolution was adopted in the assembly requesting that the WHO Director-General strengthen WHO's program on human resources for health. This was the theme of the 2006 World Health Report and World Health Day 2006, as well as a key area of emphasis in WHO's General Programme of Work 2006-2015.<sup>102</sup>

The following quote from a recent article published in the *Lancet*, the prestigious medical journal based in the UK, is indicative of the medical field's current take on the brain drain. Eastwood et al. write:

The already inadequate health systems of sub-Saharan Africa have been badly damaged by the emigration of their health professionals, a process in which the UK has played a prominent part. In 2005, there are special opportunities for the UK to take the lead in addressing that damage, and in focusing the attention of the G8 on the wider problems of health-professional migration from poor to rich countries.<sup>103</sup>

The same sentiments echo in some parts of Latin America and even the Caribbean. Pellegrino noted that, at least as far as the migration trends to the United States are concerned, circular migration "is not the predominant model for Latin America."<sup>104</sup> For Hansen et al., one of the challenges currently faced by Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries is how to neutralize the migration of highly skilled workers. They write:

Survey data clearly illustrates that migration of "well educated people" is a serious problem for the LAC region. This obviously creates a challenge for LAC countries since its human capital stock is continuously eroded. It is a highly complex problem, which is due to a multitude of factors. ... This applies to most of the countries in the region, especially Mexico and Colombia, where the net immigration of skilled people translates into export of high-tech knowledge rather than import. Elsewhere in the region, notably Chile, Brazil and Costa Rica, brain drain is less of a problem, but overall LAC does not seem to benefit from the current mobility of highly skilled labor.<sup>105</sup>

For Nurse, the "problem for the Caribbean is that it is not surplus or under-employed labor that is the main group of migrants. It is the highly skilled and educated and the evidence for brain gain is limited relative to the outflow."<sup>106</sup> Nurse argued that even in a context of high unemployment, the departure of highly skilled migrants generates labor gaps and reduces productivity in specific sectors of the economy. The loss of critical human resources, particularly teachers and medical professionals exemplified his claim.<sup>107</sup> Nurse warned that the growth of the "diasporic economy does not change the fundamental structure and workings of peripheral economies. In this sense diasporization is likely to further peripheralize regions like Latin America and the Caribbean."<sup>108</sup>

### *Quality of Returnees*

Another source of criticism relates to the question of who actually returns. A number of scholars have pointed to double selectivity in international mobility. Docquier and Hillel contend that in general, return migration is characterized by negative self-selection and is rarely seen among

the highly skilled unless sustained growth preceded return.<sup>109</sup> Borjas and Bratsberg have studied the out-migration decisions of foreign-born people in the United States, and conclude that “return migration accentuates the type of selection that generated the immigrant flow.” In other words, if most of the emigrants are highly-skilled, the returnees are likely to be the least skilled of the emigrants.<sup>110</sup>

Cohen and Haberfeld also found that Israeli returnees from the United States are likely to be negatively selected.<sup>111</sup> A study by Ahlburg and Brown focusing on the Tongans and Samoans in Australia noted that there is very little evidence that those who plan to return embody significant human capital.<sup>112</sup> Likewise, Lowell and Findlay observed that, in Bulgaria, the least qualified of the emigrants return and contribute little to economic vitality. They also expressed concern that in the Philippines, the best and the brightest dominate the permanent outflow, leaving behind less-qualified workers.<sup>113</sup>

It is interesting to note that one view in China is that the truly talented people tend to stay abroad. The director of a research institute under the Chinese Academy of Sciences placed most returnees in the top 50 to 80 percent of overseas scholars, arguing that the top 20 percent remain overseas.<sup>114</sup> Zweig concluded that the returnees to Chinese Academy of Sciences interviewed in 2002 had not been particularly successful overseas. Among 82 scientists interviewed in Changsha, Guangzhou, Wuhan, and Kunming, only 2 of 82 earned over US\$50,000/year on the eve of returning, while another three earned US\$35,000-\$49,999. Very few had patents, despite the fact that 17 of them had earned PhDs overseas. Similarly, among 109 academics interviewed in 2002, only eight had salaries over US\$25,000/year, while 77 percent of them earned under US\$12,500/year. Zweig emphasized that “very few of them were leaving stable academic positions to return to China.”<sup>115</sup> But of those in his sample, 91 percent had no intention of staying abroad, which may account for their low earnings.

For Lowell and Findlay, quality is important.<sup>116</sup> Lowell, in particular, noted that “this type of ‘creaming’ of the best who stay abroad means that the effect of return migration is attenuated.”<sup>117</sup> Indeed, these studies suggest that those who return may be those that have performed relatively poorly when abroad, while the best migrants tend to stay. Of course, as Commander et al. pointed out, these observations do not necessarily hold true for all different migrant groups or countries. For example, a study testing for the presence of skill bias among returnees produced negative results when skill is measured with the Armed Forces Qualifying Test.<sup>118</sup>

Notwithstanding these criticisms, it is clear that the literature’s discussion of the developmental impact of circular migration has swung away from the zero-sum scenario of the previous decades to a more positive scenario. Indeed, as the next section will show, a section of the current literature has been devoted to discussing past and present policies designed to bring about such a desirable scenario.

## II. POLICIES ENCOURAGING CIRCULAR MIGRATION

Most of the initiatives encouraging circularity are initiated by the governments of countries of origin and specifically target the return of the highly skilled and well-financed permanent migrants and members of the Diaspora. More recently, however, the promotion of temporary worker schemes has also re-emerged as another avenue to encourage circularity. A number of sending countries have in fact lobbied receiving countries to set up such schemes. Indeed, by presupposing return, these schemes, if tailored to serve development needs, could potentially be beneficial to sending countries.

### A. Policies to Attract the Return of Permanent Migrants and the Diaspora

In the last four decades or so, some governments and international organizations have initiated policies and programs encouraging circularity among permanent migrants and members of the Diaspora. Policies are formulated either to attract returnees *directly*, mainly through the provision of an array of incentives, or to accomplish the same objective *indirectly*, by generally taking legal measures to encourage return, such as the provision of dual citizenship and flexible residence rights.

#### 1. Direct Policies

##### *Reverse Brain Drain Model*

To attract the return of the highly skilled, several governments have adopted a range of policies with striking similarities. Indeed, most of these governments, apart from offering material and non-material incentives, establish a lead coordinating body, research institutes, and/or science parks as well as networks and a database to connect expatriates to local employers and colleagues.

##### *Offer of Material and Non-Material Incentives*

Some governments have offered an array of incentives to entice potential returnees. Taiwan and Korea's return programs identified "high flying individuals," using criteria such as number of years since PhD, current position, number of published papers/citation score, and relevance to national priorities. The selected individuals are not only offered research autonomy and the opportunity to establish their own firms but also a variety of incentives including moving costs (which was dropped in the 1990s), salary top-up, subsidized house-purchase mortgages, and the like. There are also programs aimed at attracting back nationals for shorter "testing the waters" visits of perhaps one year.<sup>119</sup>

Similarly, in China, a new service center for returnees was set up in 1989, providing allocations for the housing of returnees, duty-free purchases of computers and automobiles, and offers of return airfares for self-financed students.<sup>120</sup>

Between 1994 and 1998, Jamaica implemented a “Return of Talent Programme,” which offered an array of generous financial incentives to lure returnees. Incentives include a one-time re-entry subsidy, a monthly salary subsidy, one-way air fares for the candidate and his/her immediate family, up to 50 percent of the cost of shipping of household goods, two years of full medical and accident insurance, and even equipment including machines and literature needed for the candidate’s work.<sup>121</sup>

Likewise, in Uruguay, the Sectorial Commission of Scientific Research (CSIC) was founded in 1990 at the University of the Republic. Specific initiatives include a program for the hiring of scientists with preference given to returnees, as well as an economic support program to facilitate the returnee’s reinsertion into the university environment.<sup>122</sup>

Following the end of the dictatorship in Argentina, governmental measures were also initiated to encourage the return of exiles and to build links with expatriates who could help in the country’s development efforts.<sup>123</sup> In addition to this general policy, the National Council of Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET) also implemented specific return-related efforts such as subsidizing airfare, moving and set-up costs of returnees and their immediate families.<sup>124</sup>

#### *A Lead Coordinating Body*

As can be gleaned from Table 1, some governments also assigned or created a lead coordinating body to organize these initiatives. For example, efforts have been coordinated by the Ministry of Science and Technology in Korea and by the National Youth Commission (NYC) in Taiwan. These offices enjoy consistent budgetary and administrative support from the very top of government. Uruguay likewise created the National Commission for International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which contributed to the reintegration of all types of returnees, though it played an especially important role in the reintegration of scientists and professionals with ties to the academic world. Similarly, El Salvador adopted Executive decrees creating a Vice-Minister for Salvadorians Abroad as well as an interinstitutional network dealing with expatriates.<sup>125</sup> In India, a Non-Resident Indian and Persons of Indian Origin Division was created under the Ministry of External Affairs.

Likewise, the Ethiopian government established the Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs General Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ethiopian Expatriate Support and Coordination Office as part of the country’s capacity-building efforts. Similarly, Ivory Coast established a department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deal specifically with nationals living abroad.<sup>126</sup>

**Table I      Lead Agencies and Coordinating Bodies by Country**

<u>Country</u>	<u>Lead Agency or Coordinating Body</u>
South Korea	Ministry of Science and Technology
Taiwan	National Youth Commission (NYC)
Uruguay	National Commission for Repatriation
El Salvador	Vice-Minister for Salvadorians Abroad
India	Non-Resident Indian and Persons of Indian Origin Division
Ethiopia	Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs General Directorate
Mexico	Program for Mexican Communities Abroad

*Research Institutes and/or Science Parks*

Beneath these coordinating bodies usually are a set of mission-oriented research institutes established in industrial fields dubbed critical to future industrialization.<sup>127</sup> One of the pioneers is the Korea Institute for Science and Technology established in 1966. This was followed by several other R&D institutes and engineering schools concentrated in the Seoul Science Park and Daeduk Science Town. Similarly, the Taiwanese, set out “to improve and strengthen the institutions of higher learning” by supporting centers such as the Hsinchu Science Park.<sup>128</sup> These research institutes track highly skilled nationals abroad and encourage them to return or at the very least, join professional associations of expatriate Korean or Taiwanese scientists and engineers.<sup>129</sup>

Similarly, a number science parks, special development zones, and high-tech zones have been established in China’s capital city, Beijing, as well as in most Chinese provincial cities since the 1990s.<sup>130</sup>

Drawing on the experiences in Asia, Hansen et al. noted that in 1995, the Colombian National Council of S&T (Colciencias) established Centers of Excellence to stop emigration and encourage return among the highly skilled nationals abroad. Four centers were selected out of a pool of 150 applicants. The *Centro Internacional de Física* (CIF), *Centro Internacional de Entrenamiento e Investigaciones Médicas* (CIDEIM), *Corporación para Investigaciones Biológicas* (CIB), and *Fundación para la Educación Superior y el Desarrollo* (FEDESARROLLO) were selected based on their capacity to train researchers and on their contribution to their respective field of science. Hansen et al. contend that, “given the successful outcome of similar policies outside the LAC region, such an initiative is expected to reduce the current brain drain in Colombia.”<sup>131</sup>

*Set Up and Maintain Networks and Database*

Governments such as those of Korea and Taiwan have also set up networks and maintained a database designed to help national scholars abroad find public or private employment at home and to help domestic employers identify highly educated nationals abroad. Colombia set up a similar network in 1992, which now has members in 30 countries. It fosters joint research projects, in fields such as biotechnology and robotics, mainly between European and local



universities.<sup>132</sup> Uruguay also has the same program in place to involve some of its 400,000 highly educated migrants.<sup>133</sup>

In South Africa, the government established the South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA) to connect expatriates with local experts and projects. It is maintained by the National Research Foundation, the government's national agency responsible for promoting and supporting basic and applied research as well as innovation.<sup>134</sup> The network is built on a database containing information on the location, qualifications, and other characteristics of highly qualified South Africans living abroad. Participants can take part in the network by receiving South African graduate students in laboratories or training programs, participating in training or research with South African counterparts, facilitating business contacts or initiating research and commercial projects.<sup>135</sup> There are other initiatives focused on specific sectors such as health and law, as well as databases of Diaspora members maintained by particular countries, including Nigeria, Benin, and Burkina Faso as well as in South Africa.<sup>136</sup>

Other policies adopted by some governments have not been so widely imitated. Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand, for example, have gone so far as to help establish professional associations for national scientists and engineers abroad, with branches in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Japan. The government subsidizes these associations by assisting them to organize annual symposia and covering their administrative expenses. Wade contends that “these associations are the central players in the Diaspora strategy. It has been found that scientists and engineers who maintain more active contact with the associations are more likely to return to the home country.”<sup>137</sup>

Another example is from China. Zweig argued that a “unique quality” of China’s efforts to encourage returnees is the active involvement of so many levels of government and organizations.<sup>138</sup> He writes:

Pressures for economic development and a close link between enterprises and their territorial government make the local state aggressive recruiters of overseas talent. Inter-city competition emerged in the early 1990s and has continued unabated. Preferential policies, such as subsidized home purchasing, tax breaks on imported automobiles, schooling for children of returnees, finding jobs for spouses, etc., are instituted by local governments in order to enhance their level of technical development. Personnel departments in these cities actively pursue overseas scholars, as do education and science and technology officials.<sup>139</sup>

Interestingly enough, Zweig noted that in some cases, “too many organizations engage in this arena, causing difficulties for returnees who do not know which way to turn.” The competition for talent is so stiff that cities send delegations overseas to seek talent without notifying education officials in Chinese consulates. In fact, some consulate officials only learn of these visits when they are reported in the newspaper.<sup>140</sup>

## 2. Direct Policies: Business Model

Apart from returnees with human capital, governments have also shown interest in attracting returnees with financial capital. For example, Hsing noted that since the late 1980s, China has offered generous investment packages to overseas Chinese in an effort to combine sentiment and incentives to attract investment from the Diaspora.<sup>141</sup> Hsing also pointed out the key role of local governments in attracting investors from Taiwan. "They have simplified the process and regulation of investment and made concessions in taxes and fees for Taiwanese investors. Such flexibility ... was crucial to the success of Taiwanese investment."<sup>142</sup> Ostergaard-Nielson also noted how local officials offer a hero's welcome to investors who come back.<sup>143</sup>

India, cognizant of China's success, recently created the Indian Investment Centre (IIC), a mechanism within the government investment promotion authority that specifically targets potential investors or trade partners in the Diaspora community. The IIC, described as a free "single-window" agency,<sup>144</sup> assists investments, technical collaborations, and joint ventures as well as provide a range of services tailored to attract and assist NRI investors.<sup>145</sup> Another example is the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which encourages the return of qualified nationals who bring back capital to invest in productive enterprises, although its focus is on the few wealthy expatriates who could buy entire companies.<sup>146</sup>

### *International Organizations*

Return policies are not solely the realm of governments. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) has also implemented return of talent programs in Africa called the Return of Qualified African Nationals (RQAN), and much later, the Migration and Development for Africa (MIDA) program.<sup>147</sup> IOM also initiated similar programs in Latin America, called the Reintegration of Qualified Latin American Nationals (RQNLA)<sup>148</sup> and more recently, in Afghanistan, with the Return of Qualified Afghans (RQA) program. The IOM, in collaboration with the governments of the countries of origin, identifies suitable candidates, finds them employment, finances their return, and assists with their reintegration. To entice potential returnees, incentives such as tax exemptions, financial assistance with moving costs, seed capital for starting a business, and even citizenship rights for spouses and children have been introduced.<sup>149</sup> Between 1983 and 1999, the IOM reportedly succeeded in relocating about 2,000 expatriates to 11 African countries.<sup>150</sup> However, as will be discussed later in this paper, the degree of success of such programs is still highly questionable.

A similar example is the UN's Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) program. It allows professionals, with a minimum of a master's degree or equivalent, and a significant amount of professional work experience, to return to their countries for a short period of time to impart skills acquired while abroad. Typically, TOKTEN consultants engage in tasks international consultants might otherwise perform. In lieu of professional fees, TOKTEN consultants collect daily allowances, are reimbursed for travel expenses, and receive medical insurance<sup>151</sup>

TOKTEN is especially active in the West Bank and Gaza. Since its inception in 1994, more than 400 Palestinian expatriate professionals have served in senior advisory and planning positions in various key Palestinian Authority ministries, leading Palestinian institutions, nongovernmental organizations, and private sector institutions. Moreover, about 18 percent of TOKTEN consultants have decided to return to the occupied Palestinian territories permanently.<sup>152</sup>

### **3. Indirect Policies: Dual Nationality and Flexible Residential Rights**

Governments have also adopted indirect policies aimed at creating a legal atmosphere conducive to return. This is mostly done through the adoption of dual nationality and or flexible residency rights making re-entry to home countries much easier.

Considerable evidence reveals that easier re-entry encourages migrants to return, perhaps temporarily, to their countries of origin.<sup>153</sup> A report prepared for the UK's House of Commons International Development Committee highlighted the tendency of Spanish, Portuguese, and Greek migrants to settle permanently in the countries to which they migrated prior to their countries' entry into the European Union. Once they had residency rights across Europe, the need to stay diminished. Conversely, Mexican migrants stayed longer when the United States tightened border restrictions with Mexico, "fearing that if they left they would not be able to re-enter." Given these observations, the committee concluded that "preserving the freedom to circulate seems to be a condition of workers being willing to return home."<sup>154</sup>

As Bhagwati noted, "more likely to succeed is a Diaspora model, which integrates past and present citizens into a web of rights and obligations in the extended community defined with the home country as the center."<sup>155</sup> Wickramasekara agreed, arguing that according migrants, special status through dual citizenship and other arrangements for Diaspora recognition would also contribute to more return and circulation.<sup>156</sup>

El-Khawas noted that in the past two decades, the IOM has had limited success in recruiting expatriates back to Africa. There is a lack of interest in permanent relocations, and deep concerns about the ability to return to previous occupations and to maintain residency status at host countries. According to El-Khawas, this led to a change in strategy within IOM with the focus shifting to recruiting Africans who have become naturalized citizens.<sup>157</sup>

Indeed, both in the developed and developing world, there is an increasing discussion of the potential benefits of flexible citizenship or residence rights.<sup>158</sup> A number of developing countries have in fact passed some form of dual nationality or citizenship laws. Jones-Correa noted that in 2000, ten countries in Latin America, including Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay already have such provisions.<sup>159</sup>

Levitt and Sorensen described how other countries recognize dual membership selectively, with specific signatories. Several Latin American countries have agreements with Spain and Guatemala has such an agreement with other Central American countries. Persons born in China are considered Chinese citizens regardless of whether they desire or claim dual citizenship. In 2003, India recently approved selective dual citizenship to nonresident Indians living in wealthy, industrialized countries around the world but withheld it from Indians living in poorer or less developed countries.<sup>160</sup> In Nigeria, the Senate repealed a law that took away the original citizenship of a Nigerian who became a citizen of another country.<sup>161</sup>

Some countries even grant political rights to emigrants while abroad. The expatriate community is allowed to elect representatives to the Colombian legislature.<sup>162</sup> In the Dominican Republic, expatriates can run for office from their home communities even though their primary residence is still abroad.<sup>163</sup> Several countries, including, most recently, Iraq and Peru, allow overseas citizens to vote in national elections.

## **B. Policies Adopting Temporary Worker Schemes**

Attracting the return of permanent migrants and the members of the Diaspora is just one of the options developing countries can take to reap the benefits of circular migration. Indeed, another emerging trend in the current discourse is the re-introduction of temporary worker schemes as a feasible tool to encourage circularity. It is increasingly seen as a means that not only will address the economic needs of both sending and receiving countries but of the migrants as well, in effect creating a “triple-win” situation to the benefit of everyone.<sup>164</sup> As Winters points out, the benefits of even a limited liberalization of labor mobility exceed the benefits of complete market liberalization for tradable goods. He found that the complete abolition of all trade restrictions on goods would generate only \$104 billion of welfare gains compared with \$156 billion from a limited increase on labor movement.<sup>165</sup>

Indeed, the literature is surprisingly clear on the potential benefits to be gained from a successful temporary worker scheme. For the receiving countries, there will be a steady supply of a needed work force in both skilled and unskilled occupations that is responsive to the country’s political and socioeconomic climate. Since return is presupposed, the sending countries can benefit from the inflow of investments and skills upon the migrants’ return. The migrants are also thought to gain much. Migration represents a potential livelihood strategy and an expansion of these schemes would not only increase the opportunities for more out-migration in the developing world but would also reduce the risks and vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers as illegal flows are expected to be diverted to what would then be more accessible legal channels.<sup>166</sup>

Far from disputing the adverse consequences of such programs in the past, current proponents of temporary worker schemes actually acknowledge these mistakes, arguing that they could potentially be avoided by adopting “innovative policy designs”<sup>167</sup> or, as the recently released report of the Global Commission of International Migration puts it, “carefully designed

temporary migration programmes.”<sup>168</sup> Indeed, instead of revisiting the arguments for and against temporary workers schemes, most current writings prefer to move ahead, take its “existence as given” and rather ponder the “points of leverage in a scheme’s design that could enhance the benefits” for everyone.<sup>169</sup>

Since the biggest criticism of past schemes was the “permanent” character of what was originally conceived as temporary migration, most writings have focused on ways to ensure that temporary migrants do indeed return. The recommendations currently on the table can be categorized as either the provision of carrots — mainly by introducing different kinds of incentives — or the use of sticks, mainly through tougher laws and their strict enforcement.<sup>170</sup>

## 1. Carrots

### *Longer Contracts*

For a number of experts, temporary contracts are not long enough for migrants to “generate the net financial gains necessary to make migration financially worthwhile.” This provision is particularly important for those employed in low-wage occupations.<sup>171</sup>

For example, Ruhs argues that the one-year work permits issued to migrants in low-wage occupations by the current UK Sector-based schemes (SBS) is not long enough. He noted that it is “highly questionable whether it is realistic to expect that it makes any financial sense for Bangladeshi workers — who have been the largest group of recipients of SBS permits — to migrate and work in a low-wage job in the UK for one year only.”<sup>172</sup>

Barber et al. raised the same question, noting that to “make migration work for development, temporary migrant workers simply need more time. A 12-month scheme may be too short to earn the kind of money that would set migrant workers up in business, or allow meaningful investment at home.”<sup>173</sup>

### *Financial Return Incentives*

A variety of financial incentives have also been put forward to encourage return. One that has been cited most often is the transfer of a worker’s pension benefits back to his/her country of origin. Ruhs cited a recent study indicating that merely 20 percent of migrants worldwide currently work in host countries where full portability of pension benefits is assured. He cautions that this lack of portability may hinder return migration and thus contribute to the swelling of the undocumented.<sup>174</sup>

The UK House of Commons International Development Committee Report raised the same issue further noting the “sense of fairness” in this suggestion given that upon return, migrants who leave will not be able to make any claims on their contributions.<sup>175</sup>

There are also suggestions for offering preferential interest rates on savings lodged in approved home country accounts as well as matched investment from receiving governments in approved business initiatives, health insurance or charitable contributions that could only be tapped upon return.<sup>176</sup>

### *Options of Re-Entry*

Scholars believe migrants overstay their visas in their host countries partly out of fear that they will not be able to come back again. Thus, there are also suggestions to allow the option of multiple re-entries. Programs extending the option of re-applying with some kind of preferential access to work permits potentially may give migrants the confidence to return. As a case in point, Barber et al. noted how Switzerland's long practice of allowing temporary access to its labor market on a renewable basis appears to encourage return at the end of each contract.<sup>177</sup> A similar system is in place in the Canadian-Mexico worker program.<sup>178</sup>

### *Quota System*

Another way to encourage return is to provide incentives not only to the migrants but to the migrant-sending countries as well. Quotas could be allocated for each migrant-sending country that would be adjusted periodically depending on how many migrants returned. Supposedly, this provision will make sending countries more likely to create an economic and political climate conducive to return. However, concerns are raised not only regarding this proposition's feasibility but also whether it is "fair to essentially punish future potential migrants for the sins of previous non-returners."<sup>179</sup>

## **2. Sticks**

There is also growing recognition in the literature that incentives should also be coupled with meaningful penalties for non-return.

### *Financial Security Bond*

One of the most cited forms of penalty operates through mandating the purchase of a financial security bond either paid by the worker or, more usually, the employer. Should the worker decide to overstay, the bond will be confiscated by the receiving government. As Epstein, Hillman, and Weiss noted, some countries such as Singapore, Greece, and Israel have already implemented this approach.<sup>180</sup>

### *Mandatory Savings Scheme*

Another often cited suggestion is the introduction of a mandatory saving component, whereby temporary migrants will pay a proportion of their earnings into a fund redeemable only upon return.<sup>181</sup> Barber, for example, recommended the adoption of mandatory savings schemes for

workers coming to the UK whereby 20 percent of earnings over £107 per week, plus all National Insurance contributions (NIC), will be placed in an account in the migrant's home country, redeemable only upon return.<sup>182</sup> As noted by a number of authors, savings schemes are already operational in a number of countries such as in Taiwan, and selectively in the United States and the UK.

Black noted that in the UK, migrant workers from the Baltic states working on short contracts in the hotel industry receive board and lodging in the UK while the rest of their salary is paid into their home bank account using local currency.<sup>183</sup> Schiff noted that roughly the same system is currently in place among some Jamaican workers in the United States. Mandatory savings scheme was also a feature of the now defunct Bracero Program, whereby US employers were required to withhold 10 percent of Mexican workers' earnings and to deposit them in a Mexican fund redeemable only upon return.<sup>184</sup>

#### *The Triple Combination: Financial Security Bonds, Mandatory Savings Schemes, and the Private Sector*

Schiff offers a twist on the last two recommendations not only by combining them into one scheme but also by introducing the private sector into the equation. In his proposed "solution to the guest-worker program," a typical mandatory savings scheme will be coupled by a not so typical financial security bond scheme.<sup>185</sup>

In Schiff's proposal, a private agency would provide an insurance service to the employer by buying the bond and charging an insurance premium. If the guest worker returns home, the agency redeems the bond with interest, if not, the agency will try to apprehend the overstayer to recover the bond's money. If the illegal worker is not found, then the agency forfeits the bond's money.<sup>186</sup>

According to Schiff, the introduction of private insurance agencies into the equation will likely be more efficient than utilizing the public sector since the former are subject to market forces. Moreover, the "government may not want to be perceived as 'big brother' and may prefer the function to be carried out in a more decentralized and less visible way." The political sensitivity of the issue may also force pressure groups benefiting from the illegal job market to hamper the policy's implementation, a scenario less likely to happen if the job is transferred over to the private sector.<sup>187</sup>

#### *Strict Enforcement of Laws*

Calls for a stricter enforcement of immigration laws are also becoming increasingly evident in the literature. Ruhs, for example, noted the particularly poor record of liberal and democratic host countries in enforcing the law against employers who illegally employ migrant workers. He highlights the fact that in 2002, only 53 employers were fined for immigration violations in the United States. Similarly, from 1998-2002, the UK convicted only eight employers in violation of Section 8 of the UK's Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, the law that is meant to prevent

illegal employment in the UK. In Ireland, only three employers were found guilty of violating the Employment Permits Act of 2003.<sup>188</sup>

Ruhs noted that the success of a temporary worker scheme critically depends on the host country's "willingness and capacity to strictly enforce the law against all parties — recruitment agents, employers and migrant workers — who illegally circumvent the program." For Ruhs, unless there is an effective law enforcement system in place, employers and migrant workers may find few incentives to join the TMP and may actually favor illegal employment arrangements instead.<sup>189</sup>

For Jacoby, however, the problem, at least in the US case, actually stems from the lack of a reliable, automated employment verification system. For Jacoby, immigration cannot be controlled without workplace enforcement and workplace enforcement is not possible without employee verification. She writes:

The measure of our failure is all around us. Every worker hired at every US workplace — more than 50 million new hires a year, citizens and foreign-born alike — fills out a form intended to screen out unauthorized immigrants. Virtually all businesses, big and small, comply with this requirement: the drill is as routine as a newspaper want ad. But because of a legal loophole — a glaring and long-recognized loophole — employers are not obliged to verify that the information entered on the forms is correct.<sup>190</sup>

Jacoby argued that what is needed is a process similar to credit-card verification that enables employers to "swipe a card at the point of hire and receive a response in real time from the Social Security Administration, informing them — no more and no less — whether an employee is authorized to work in the United States." The system, Jacoby emphasized, need not be "Orwellian" nor should it lead to a "national ID."<sup>191</sup>

There are also increasing calls for governments to actively penalize employers and recruiters who provide foreign workers with misleading information about employment conditions and living costs in the receiving country. There are also employers who engage in "contract substitution," whereby, a new contract is forced on the migrants upon arrival superseding the contract signed prior to departure. These practices, according to Ruhs, create situations wherein migrants are forced to overstay as their savings targets could not be achieved within the period of validity of the work permit.<sup>192</sup>

### **III. CAVEATS**

The foregoing discussion reflects the growing interest in policies encouraging more circular migration. In recent years, a number of policy-related issues have surfaced, or even more



appropriately resurfaced, in the current literature eliciting an intense and interesting discourse. Amid the optimism, it is also evident that the developmental impact of these policies is still very much conditioned by the political, economic, and social conditions in the home and/or sending country, as well as by the characteristics of the migrants, the Diaspora, and the nature of their return.

## 1. Return Policies in Context

Lucas contends that even though evidence suggests that countries can benefit from the return of permanent migrants and Diasporas in various ways, “the routes through which the major benefits are channeled, and even whether any obvious benefits are actually observed, varies very much from context to context.”<sup>193</sup>

Wickramasekara agrees, noting that “circulation and recirculation have many obvious linkages with the Diaspora options, but are not exclusively confined to it.” He argued the importance of having “conducive factors at both sending and receiving ends such as good infrastructure at home and circulation-friendly migration policies at both ends.”<sup>194</sup>

Indeed, one of the most pressing issues is the question of whether the success of some key countries, such as Taiwan, China or India, can be replicated or is even applicable to other countries. Saxenian, whose writings since the 1990s have inspired the increasing enthusiasm for “brain circulation,” cautions that not all developing economies are “positioned to reap the benefits of brain circulation and peripheral entrepreneurship.” She stressed that countries should have invested heavily in higher education, typically technical education, and achieved enough political and economic stability that immigrants will consider returning home. She writes:

It is possible that urban areas like Saint Petersburg or Buenos Aires will become more attractive to returning entrepreneurs in the future as their economies develop and eventually provide greater professional opportunities for returnees. However, large parts of Africa and Latin America lack the skill base or political openness to become attractive environments for technology entrepreneurship.<sup>195</sup>

There seems to be a general agreement in the literature that the impact of circulation policies depends on whether the political, economic, and social conditions in the home country have improved. For example, a fairly recent book by Filipino scholars contends that the dream of migrants to reintegrate back into their communities will “remain a dream unless the conditions that pushed them to work abroad are reversed.”<sup>196</sup> Pellegrino, writing about Uruguay and Colombia, noted that “to be effective, policies for reversing brain drain must, in the first place, eliminate the reasons that push individuals to decide to emigrate.”<sup>197</sup>

For Kapur, as long as political instability continues to be severe in Africa, “even in hitherto stable countries relatively well endowed with human capital such as Cote d’Ivoire, Kenya,

Zimbabwe, and Zambia, it will be hard to attract back talent.”<sup>198</sup> Moreover, he contends that given the high incidence of the brain drain from Africa, “this effort is unlikely to make a big difference.”<sup>199</sup> For Kapur, the “contrasting experiences of Africa and China point to an obvious reality.” He writes:

The home country has to be prepared to make use of the remittances and/or investments of the Diaspora, which means that its political stability and economic policies have to be conducive for economic development. The Diaspora attitude is likely to change along with the evolution and prospects of the country of origin. Timing, and therefore chance, plays an important role in the economic effect a Diaspora can have on its home country.<sup>200</sup>

El-Khawas agreed, arguing that a long-term strategy to reverse the brain drain in Africa is for governments to “improve domestic market conditions, which had previously made migration a necessity rather than a choice.”<sup>201</sup>

In the same light, Rozario and Gow “highlight the potential impact returnees could make if their number was higher, but more importantly if Bangladesh was ready for them.”<sup>202</sup> The same sentiments can be gleaned from studies on Albania.<sup>203</sup>

A 2004 study contracted by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) reflects the same critical considerations. Johnson and Sedaca wrote in their report that:

While the experts interviewed and cited in this study agree that the Diaspora option could indeed become a catalyst for business development and investment in developing countries, there are a number of issues that should be considered before attempting to tap into this potential, or, to expect such a link to occur in reality. This includes concerns over sound business climates, achieving broad based memberships and the institutional capacity of network intermediaries and IPAs [investment promotion authorities].<sup>204</sup>

Iredele and Guo contend that return migration of skilled and business people can “play a major role in transforming an economy and society but it is in a complementary way. It cannot lead or drive the change but if change has begun to occur, and there is optimism that life will be of a reasonable quality, then people are willing to take a chance.” They cautioned that “the hope that change will be propelled by skilled and business returnees or non-residents is overly optimistic” because it overlooks the negative factors influencing the decisions to both leave and return.<sup>205</sup>

#### *Chicken Is to Egg as Development Is to Return?*

These observations led some to question the nature of the relationship between circular migration and development. Specifically, there is no consensus on whether return is a trigger

for or a consequence of development. Lucas, for example, notes that in the case of Taiwan and Korea, it remains unclear how much the additional return is attributable to special government programs as opposed to these countries' rapid economic developments.<sup>206</sup>

Docquier and Rapoport likewise noted that during the 1970s, less than a fifth of Taiwanese scientists and engineers with doctorates from the United States returned to Taiwan. After two decades of impressive economic growth, the figure jumped to about one-half to two-thirds. They ask whether it is due to the economic boom at origin or to changes in the immigration policy at destination. For them, recent evidence is "quite mitigated."<sup>207</sup>

Similarly, Kapur remarked that only 16 percent of South Korean PhDs who graduated from US universities in the fields of Science and Engineering returned in the 1960s to South Korea, a proportion that rose to about two-thirds in the course of the 1980s. For Kapur, "clearly, it was not direct policies by the Korean state designed to reverse the brain drain but the sharp difference in economic conditions and prospects of Korea in these two time-periods."<sup>208</sup>

For Saxenian and Zweig, however, it is not a question of either/or. Saxenian argued that it was the "accelerated growth of the Taiwanese economy in the 1980s combined with active government recruitment that ultimately spurred a reversal of the 'brain drain.'"<sup>209</sup> Similarly, Zweig concluded that in the case of China, the "reverse brain drain" is the result of a synthesis of two factors: extensive government efforts and new funding programs along with the growing interest of many people in return, fuelled mainly by a rising China.<sup>210</sup>

#### *Diaspora Development versus Conventional Development?*

The foregoing discussion seems to fall within a segment of the current literature that characterized return policies' impact on development as either marginal or even inimical. For example, a recent report prepared by Oxford University's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) for the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) noted that "if poverty reduction is the prime aim, working with migrant diasporas does not necessarily direct financial and other resources to the areas that most need them."<sup>211</sup>

Black, in a paper on Africa, also raised this issue. He questioned whether the attention to tapping skilled African professionals in the United States and Europe is actually relevant to the poor. He writes:

... although such linkages may be relevant to pro-poor policy, it is important to bear in mind that they may not: e.g. the private capital transfers of such migrants may not filter down to sectors of the economy where the poor are found, whilst the return of professionals may have little impact on services targeted at the poor.<sup>212</sup>

In the same light, Lucas contends that in the case of India, the implications for overall employment creation and ultimate poverty reduction are less apparent. He contends that:

There may be close to half a million IT professionals employed in India, yet this figure is small in relation to a total labor force of more than 330 million. It is unclear quite how large are the multiplier effects of spending by the nouveau riche IT professionals and of backward linkages from software training and other service sectors, but they would need to be very major indeed to impose any serious impact on India's poor.<sup>213</sup>

Kapur even went as far as to argue for the "danger that the very euphoria engendered by the Indian Diaspora's success in IT and the resulting imitation in India is sucking technologically savvy talent from many other important development areas by bidding up the price of talent." He continues:

... this means that, in many other sectors that are critical for the well-being of the majority of the population, be it health research or agricultural technology development, the supply pool of talent is running dry.<sup>214</sup>

Khadria, posing the same observation in India, even argued for the need of a major paradigm shift. The focus should not be on "exogenous return of resources (remittances, technology, return migration) but rather on the enhancement of the productivity of the resident work force." According to Khadria, this could be done through development in education and health that the NRIs can foster endogenously.<sup>215</sup>

Even the UK House of Commons Committee on International Development report reflects the same concern. The report noted that if the economic and political conditions in the country are not attractive, encouraging return and facilitating successful integration would be a "labour-intensive" and difficult process that is "likely to fail" and yet "place huge demands on a developing country, raising the potential for instability, conflict and renewed out-migration." The report continues:<sup>216</sup>

Donors, who provide incentives and opportunities for returnees in an environment which is not conducive to sustainable development, are throwing their money away. If developing countries are to benefit from the sustainable return of their migrants, they need to pursue policies — better governance, less bureaucracy, and economic growth — which will make migrants want to return, and which will ensure that those migrants who have returned have a sense that they, and their country, are moving towards a brighter future.<sup>217</sup>

As Philip Martin noted, subsidizing the return of substantial numbers of Africans would be expensive. Sussex University's Black, in an interview with the *Financial Times*, described subsidized return-of-talent programs as "expensive failures."<sup>218</sup> Indeed, a recent survey

conducted by IOM found that physical returns are not a “priority” for most countries partly due to the cost of return programs.<sup>219</sup>

Johnson and Sedaca framed this issue as a Diaspora-development versus conventional development dilemma. They argued that in general, the success of a Diaspora initiative “depends on the same fundamentals, tools and practices that contribute to the success of other development projects within a particular focus.” Thus, they recommended to USAID not to develop new or innovative projects targeting Diaspora groups. Rather, they contend that “efforts could focus on ways to employ the Diaspora as another avenue through which development can be facilitated — while promoting the same development tools that have seen positive results in other conventional development programs.”<sup>220</sup>

In the same vein, Hugo argues that the role of government in tapping the Diaspora should be “one of facilitation and removal of obstacles to return rather than one of major interventions.” He writes:

There would seem to be scope for the introduction of programmes that facilitate and encourage the return migration of Asian expatriates with skills and experience deemed to be of national importance. It can build on the wish of many to return to their home country ... [However] This should not amount to subsidizing normal headhunting activities, but should rather be reserved for truly outstanding individuals who will make a major contribution to the local economy and society.<sup>221</sup>

## **2. Temporary Labor Schemes in a Liberal World?**

Like return policies, scholars also question temporary labor schemes concerning context, although the focus this time is on the receiving countries. Specifically, there is a concern whether the restrictions associated with temporary worker schemes are compatible with a liberal democratic framework. For example, Black noted how UK trade unions criticize mandatory savings schemes because they allegedly constituted a breach of basic human rights as well as a loophole to circumvent minimum-wage legislation.<sup>222</sup>

Indeed, in cases where temporary worker schemes seemed to have worked, in the sense that migrants do in fact return, governments have adopted and enforced stiff punishments for overstaying such as fines, imprisonment, and even physical punishment.

Chalamwong, for example, noted the case of Singapore where overstaying guest workers face not only the confiscation of bonds but also mandatory caning and up to six months’ imprisonment for illegal entry. Singapore even passed tough laws penalizing employers who hire illegal workers, including a fine of up to \$60,000 and/or prison terms of six months to two years. In cases when more than five illegal foreign workers are employed, employers can also be caned. Further, people who abet illegal entry or offer shelter to illegal offenders suffer the same

penalties as employers hiring illegal workers. According to Chalamwong, roughly similar laws are enforced in Malaysia. The same laws are also found in Japan and Thailand but without provisions allowing for corporal punishment.<sup>223</sup>

Apart from these punishments, governments have also adopted rules that severely restrict the rights of temporary workers. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), for example, Zachariah et al. note severe restrictions on family reunification for emigrant workers earning below 3,000 dirhams a month. For Zachariah et al., this prohibits nearly 75 percent of Indian emigrants from bringing their wives and children resulting in “serious social and psychological problems among young male migrants.” Moreover, UAE’s labor policy generally segregates migrant workers from the host society. Almost 70 percent of contract workers are reportedly housed in worker camps located away from the city and are transported on a daily basis by the employers to their work sites.<sup>224</sup>

As Ruhs asks, “can these restrictions of migrants’ rights, and some of the other policies necessary to make TMPs [temporary migration programmes] work, be justified — and advocated — as desirable labour immigration policy measures in a liberal democracy?”<sup>225</sup>

For Ruhs, the answer is two-fold. At the theoretical level, it “depends on one’s preferred ethical framework for evaluating public policies” while at “more practical level ... it is a much better alternative to illegal immigration or permanent immigration programmes.” He emphasized that “current permanent labor immigration programs benefit a few skilled migrant workers, but leave much larger numbers of low-skilled workers in low-income countries excluded from the global labor market,” a status quo that is unlikely to change anytime soon given the political reality in receiving countries.<sup>226</sup>

Schiff seemed to reflect the same sentiment. He acknowledges that his proposal discussed earlier that combines mandatory savings, financial security bonds, and a private insurance agency with apprehending power, “may be unappealing to some.” He, however, explains, that

The policy should be compared not with the alternative of not having the policy because it is likely that the guest-worker program will not take place in that case or will not last. The policy should be compared to the alternative of potential guest-workers remaining in their home country, where their situation is likely to be worse.<sup>227</sup>

Collyer, weighing in on the issue, acknowledges the problem implicit in treating migrants as no more than mobile labor. He noted that the “enforced isolation from social and family ties in the country of origin would raise human rights issues” chiefly under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights. However, he similarly contends that at a practical level, “temporary labour migration schemes appear to offer the best possibility for compromise between the interests of the governments and societies of origin and destination.”<sup>228</sup>

For Ruhs, the challenge is to adopt a balanced approach that is “both realistic, in that it takes account of existing realities in labour immigration policymaking ... and idealistic, by actively promoting the interests of migrant workers and their countries of origin.”<sup>229</sup> Thus, every temporary worker scheme will involve at least some trade-off between economic gains and human rights.

The exact nature of the trade-off is of course a source of debate. Papademetriou, for example, argued that temporary labor schemes must include a pathway to permanent residence. He contends that “visas for workers in low-wage, low-value added economic sectors (mostly but not exclusively in service industries) should lead the way in an expanded visa environment.” He continues:

Some of those visas will be temporary; they should, however, have a tough but fair and clear path to permanency. Imaginative financial incentives for return are an excellent idea, but will not work in many cases. Some workers will still want to stay and some employers will still want to keep their most reliable employees. Both should have a legal means for doing so.<sup>230</sup>

### **3. Temporary Labor Schemes: Prescription for the Developed World?**

Another critical issue concerning temporary labor schemes is that they are designed primarily to address the needs of the receiving countries and not the sending countries. Specifically, scholars pointed out migrant-receiving countries’ preference of hiring highly skilled migrants as well as their tendency to retain the highly skilled by providing easier access to permanent residency once migrants’ contracts expire.

#### *Unskilled Anyone?*

The UK House of Commons International Development Committee report noted that migrant-receiving countries are often eager to “employ the skills of high-skilled migrants, but are less enthusiastic when it comes to low-skill migration.”<sup>231</sup> In development terms, this is “regrettable as developing countries have plentiful supplies of low-skilled labour to export but cannot spare their highly-skilled personnel.”<sup>232</sup>

As Wets argued, the demand for unskilled migrant labor in receiving countries is simply lower than the supply in developing countries.<sup>233</sup> He writes:

Apparently the world is facing an oversupply of labour in the developing countries on the one hand, and simultaneously a shortage of labour due to ageing of the population in a part of the industrialized world. One and one adds up to two. It should not be so difficult to imagine that this can be beneficial for all parties involved. ... Unfortunately, there is a skill mismatch on the global labour

market. The labour market is not a uniform market, but a layered market, with supply and demand on each level.<sup>234</sup>

The House of Commons report further noted how the UK government deserves considerable credit for opening up legal channels for temporary migration in particular sectors such as the reform of the seasonal agricultural workers scheme and the introduction of sector-based, short-term work schemes for the hospitality and food manufacturing sectors. However, it admitted that still “more can be done.”

There is scope to make such schemes deliver progress towards the UK’s international development objectives ... DFID, and through DFID, other development stakeholders — including migrants’ organisations and labour ministries in key migrant-sending countries — should be consulted when the UK Government is designing and revising temporary migration schemes ... The input of development stakeholders would make the schemes work better for the UK and deliver more benefits to developing countries.<sup>235</sup>

Indeed, it is unclear to what extent the growing interest in temporary migration schemes will lead to the actual opening up of the global labor market to the unskilled. There seems to be a concern that any opening will be very limited. If the current WTO negotiations in GATS Mode IV, the temporary movement of labor, are indicative of migrant-receiving countries’ take on this issue, then this growing concern could very well be warranted.

Wurcel noted the clear bias toward higher-level personnel in terms of commitments made with respect to Mode IV.

Even though there is no difference between the schedules of developing and developed country members in this respect, it is clear that the greatest losers of this tendency are the poorest nations. This is so since developing countries are typically capital-poor and recipients of foreign investment, rather than a source of it. Therefore, the commitments made in respect to the movement of natural persons avoid the aspect that would benefit them most: labour-intensive services.<sup>236</sup>

It is interesting to note that even the UAE, a traditional importer of unskilled labor, introduced measures to make the recruitment of unskilled labor costly, supposedly to force the private sector to invest in modern technology. It is believed that as long as cheap unskilled labor is available, the private sector will make such investments. Thus, Zachariah et al. predict that the future demand in the UAE will be for skilled workers.<sup>237</sup>

The developmental implication of the preference for the highly skilled is striking. Indeed, economic models of increasing labor mobility predict that both developing and developed countries alike gain much more if the labor migration is low skilled.<sup>238</sup>



### *Are the Skilled Returning?*

There is also growing concern about whether the skilled migrants in a temporary scheme will in fact return home once their contracts end and whether receiving countries will encourage them to do so. In the United States, for example, about 100,000 temporary skilled workers receive permanent residency every year.<sup>239</sup> Lowell estimated that about “half of those admitted under the US temporary high skilled program to meet shortages in high-end occupations ultimately remain in the United States as permanent residents.”<sup>240</sup> As Patrick Duffy, a human resources attorney at Intel, indicated “the H-1B visa is just one step in making these workers US workers.”<sup>241</sup>

Findlay, focusing on the UK, noted that there has been a slight increase in the number of migrants from Africa and Asia seeking to extend their work permits.<sup>242</sup> There is also a slight increase in the number of extensions with the largest chunk going to work permit holders from the Indian subcontinent.<sup>243</sup>

For Findlay and Lowell, it is critical to encourage return at the end of fixed term contracts to increase the opportunity for others in developing countries to gain work experience.<sup>244</sup> Findlay recommended making return a condition of issuing visas as well as more strongly discouraging employers from applying for visa extensions.<sup>245</sup>

## **4. Idealized Return?**

Apart from being conditioned by the political, economic, and social conditions in the sending and receiving countries, there is also increasing agreement in the literature that the impact of policies encouraging circularity also depends on the characteristics of the migrants, the Diaspora, and the nature of their return.

Skeldon raised the “danger” inherent in essentializing the Diaspora into “a coherent, homogeneous entity rather than the constantly changing and fractured phenomenon that it appears to be.” He argued that Diasporas can be “highly heterogeneous.”<sup>246</sup> As Newland noted, Diaspora groups in many cases are even a major source of funds for the support of political groups that foment violence and for the purchase of war materiel.<sup>247</sup>

Thus, calls to differentiate return are still quite evident in the current literature. Cerase’s analysis of almost 30 years ago that “return of innovation” is the most relevant to development still holds ground today.<sup>248</sup> Levitt and Sorenson pointed to studies suggesting that return after a brief period abroad is less likely to contribute to development. This is especially true among low-skilled returnees who had to return unexpectedly and/or were unable to adapt to the host country. They noted the greater developmental potential of returning migrants with savings and a much longer stay abroad.<sup>249</sup>

Indeed, the optimal length of migration is still a highly unsettled issue. For example, a case study of India suggested that expatriates can contribute to the home economy more effectively

after being away for 10-15 years.<sup>250</sup> Likewise, Black et al.'s study in Ghana found that in general, self-employed returnees spent longer times abroad.<sup>251</sup> On the other hand, Thomas-Hope, looking into Jamaica, suggests that return among the highly skilled is more successful within the first five years of going abroad.<sup>252</sup>

Further, Kapur noted that the "potential importance of Diaspora" also depends on the income gap between the host and the destination country.<sup>253</sup> A study on Eritrea corroborates this claim. It found that the skills and training returnees from other developing countries gained as well as the amount of capital they brought are not sufficient to improve their standards of living. Except for a few professional and businessmen who came from more prosperous countries of the Middle East, Europe, and North America, the majority of returnees are described as "living from hand to mouth."<sup>254</sup>

Another issue relates to whether the returnees may not be universally welcomed by those who stayed behind. Given its heterogeneity, they may be "viewed as having fled from a difficult regime or hard economic conditions to live an easy life." Thus, as Skeldon puts it, those who stayed behind may not necessarily welcome them back "with open arms."<sup>255</sup>

For example, Zweig noted that Chinese efforts to promote a return wave created a great deal of "bad blood" between returnees, called the "returning sea turtles faction" and stayers, called the "land turtle faction."<sup>256</sup> He writes:

The decision of units to favor "outsiders" who have studied overseas over long-term members of their unit who have not been abroad has been criticized as "giving up a son to get a son-in-law." In fact, at a meeting of academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Premier Wen Jiabao reportedly warned against overemphasizing the role of returnees.<sup>257</sup>

Keren et al. also noted this problem in China, arguing that the special treatment returnees enjoy, although inevitable given that it might be the only way to entice them back home, also create tensions between returnees and their local counterparts.<sup>258</sup>

Ammasari's focus interviews reveal that the same tensions are also at work in Ghana. Returnees are widely branded by the locals as either "have been to" or "too known," terms which "reflect their 'know it all' and often arrogant and condescending attitude [of returnees] towards those who never moved."<sup>259</sup>

Solimano, commenting on Latin America, also cited the deep-seated "culture of distrust" toward returnees as one of the main obstacles in luring talent back home. "In Latin America, many people look with fear and distrust at colleagues who return from successful careers abroad. ... Instead of hostility, there should be a mentality change, a new policy of open doors."<sup>260</sup>

What is even more interesting, however, is Ammassari's finding that an "increasing number of returnees are starting to realise that they do not know it all." She writes:

In fact it is often claimed that, having been abroad for prolonged time periods, returned migrants have lost contact and thus realistic insight into their home context; nonmigrants are frequently considered more knowledgeable in this respect ... <sup>261</sup>

The policy implication of this particular observation is important. As Ammassari argues, although migrants gained critical human and social capital abroad that can be transferred back home, non-migrants have in the meantime accumulated more "location-specific" social and human capital. Migrants' broader frames of reference, which are critical to innovation should then be complemented by non-migrants' more thorough knowledge and understanding of the local context. Thus, policies should also focus on strengthening the relationship between returnees and stayers.<sup>262</sup>

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The issues surrounding a development policy based on attracting returnees or one relying on a temporary workers' scheme are complex. As the foregoing discussion highlighted, a number of scholars remain skeptical over the nature and extent of the developmental impacts of these policies.

There is a concern that the effectiveness of a return policy can be hindered severely by the dismal political, economic, and social conditions still prevalent in most sending countries as well as by the heterogeneity of migrants and the sometimes less than ideal dynamics of return. Temporary worker schemes' seeming incompatibility with a liberal democratic framework and their tendency to satisfy first the political and economic imperatives of receiving countries and not necessarily the developmental needs of sending countries were also raised.

Notwithstanding these concerns, however, it is also clear that, unlike the previous decades, circularity's impact on development can no longer be easily dismissed as negligible or even negative. The potential developmental benefits that could accrue from a more circular movement of people are enormous, especially in an increasingly transnational world. The challenge still is to understand this new reality and to determine in what circumstances a successful circular migration policy has been and could potentially be realized.

Clearly lacking are concrete policy recommendations that identify the specific contexts in which a return policy or temporary worker scheme can work for development. The developing world deserves more than blanket assessments blaming its political, economic or social conditions. Rather, what it needs are effective and actionable policies that not only recognize the existence of economic, social or political barriers, but that are actually designed to deliver positive results

amid these barriers. This requires thinking outside the box, an endeavor that the bulk of the current policy literature has yet to address seriously.

To this end, a more detailed, comprehensive, and solid research base is needed within which effective and actionable policy interventions can be rooted. The current research base on migrants and Diaspora is still largely driven by the agenda of receiving countries. For example, detailed studies of permanent migrants and members of the Diasporas have largely focused on integration issues and their impacts on the receiving country's economy and society. The same can be said of studies on temporary worker schemes. Given that such schemes have been around in the Middle East since the 1970s as well as in the newly developed countries in East Asia since the 1980s, it is surprising that there are few studies on their developmental impact.

There is a need to broaden the research base by engaging in more detailed and empirical studies of migrants and the Diasporas, with a focus this time on their developmental impact upon return. The surveys and qualitative case studies on return that have surfaced in recent years, although welcome developments themselves, generally have a small sample frame and are mostly concentrated in few regions, such as East and South Asia and, more recently, West Africa. More representative surveys and detailed qualitative studies, especially in other parts of the world, are needed so that stronger conclusions can be confidently deduced.

In these studies, particular attention should be given to differentiate the temporary or permanent character not only of the migrants but, more importantly, the dynamics of return. The circumstances leading to temporary return, especially of permanent migrants, and how it impacts development are still largely unexplored outside the key countries in South and East Asia. In the same vein, the tendency of temporary migrants to re-migrate shortly after returning home is widely cited but its impact on development has yet to be closely explored.

In measuring the impact of permanent or temporary return on development, non-economic variables are also largely neglected. Circular migration has widespread social and political ramifications that do not necessarily figure in measures of economic performance. Development is not just economic growth but it also connotes social and political transformation as well as the general improvement of the well-being of migrants and those left behind. Studies intending to capture circular migration's impact beyond the sending country's economy are important in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the circular migration – development nexus.

Another area in need of further research centers specifically on returnees who worked in low-wage sectors. Given that a good number of migrants, especially temporary migrants, engage in low-wage jobs, it will be useful to understand the extent of their contribution to human capital transfer upon return. Current studies in this area have largely focused on the transferable "skills" of the highly educated and/or highly paid returnees while wrongly labeling those on low-wage positions as "unskilled."

Given the still formative stage of the research base on circular migration, it is not surprising that the policy literature can still be found wanting in a number of respects. Although there are discussions of the past and present policies of governments and international organizations alike, most are descriptive in tone rather than evaluative. Indeed, quantitative and qualitative evaluations of these policies are either lacking, unavailable for public consumption or hard to come by.

Thorough case studies of successful and unsuccessful return policies are needed to extract “lessons learned” and “best practices.” Comparative studies across regions and time are particularly important given that the question of context is often raised. In these efforts, the goal should be to identify the specific techniques and approaches of programs that have the most as well as the least developmental impact.

Particular attention should also be given to formulating policy recommendations on temporary worker schemes that reflect the developmental needs of sending countries. The renewed interest in these schemes has already produced a number of policy suggestions. With few exceptions, however, the recommendations so far have focused on how to ensure return with very little consideration of how return itself will affect the social and economic well-being of migrants and the development of their respective sending countries both in the short and long term. The development dimension is still largely marginalized in the national policy debates concerning temporary worker schemes.

Ultimately, however, the deepening of the literature on the circular migration – development nexus is not possible without the availability of reliable data and information. The nature of the transnational movement of people requires data to be collected from countries of origin and countries of destination, which in turn calls for coordination of such data from various sources. As already noted by a number of authors, the permanent settlement migration paradigm still defines our data collection systems. Thus, no system is yet in place to capture adequately the contemporary movement of people. Without adequate data to anchor one’s conclusion, the option of playing it safe by doing little remains strong. In this scenario, the developing world may end up with policy recommendations that may satisfy their authors, but rarely their supposed beneficiaries.

# NOTES

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