

**Abstract**

**Migration and Development in Asia**

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No dimension of the massive demographic, social and economic change, which has swept across Asia in the last two decades, has been more dramatic than or as far reaching in its impact as the increase in personal mobility. Population movement between and within Asian nations and to countries outside of Asia has increased greatly both in scale and diversity, and mobility is now an option for most Asians as they assess their life chances. The relationship between mobility and development, however is a complex and two way one, although the understanding of that relationship remains limited generally but particularly in the Asian region. Data relevant to investigating the relationship are in short supply and the research regarding it is patchy. The present paper seeks to assess the current state of knowledge with respect to population movement and development in the Asian region.

The paper begins with a summary of developments in population mobility in Asia over the last two decades. The conceptualisation of population movement adopted here is a broad one, which goes beyond traditional demographic definitions of internal and international migration as permanent displacements of population within or between countries. Such movements have been of significance in Asia and need to be considered, but consideration must also be given to non permanent circular moves within and between nations, which have increased in importance even more than permanent relocations as a result of the revolutions in transport means and costs on the one hand and in information and communication technology on the other. Emphasis is placed not only on the demographic implications of movement but also on the networks which are proliferating within and between Asian countries and their implications not only for future flows of people but the flows of money, trade, goods, ideas and information.

Consideration is then given to who is involved in the new mobility. It has been argued that in Asia there has emerged a complex web of mobility systems within and between Asian countries involving rich and poor, skilled and unskilled, male and female, forced and unforced migrants and legal and illegal movers. Generalisation is extremely difficult. The conventional wisdom is that it is not the poorest who move yet in Asia some of the poorest and most peripheral areas are influenced most by migration. When this knowledge is combined with the evidence, that not only is much movement circular but even when migrants move permanently they tend to maintain strong linkages with origin areas, it means that the new mobility does offer real opportunity to create flows of capital from rapidly expanding regions and countries to lagging areas and nations. On the other hand, areas of out-migration often suffer from the loss of their

brightest and best due to migration so that development efforts at home are stifled by the lack of people with skills and entrepreneurial and leadership qualities.

It is argued that the developmental effects of migration in origin areas are strongly influenced by the nature of the migration and the particular context of origin and destination. What this means is that there are no simple generalisations regarding the developmental effects of migration and that the impact which mobility has in origin areas can be strongly influenced by policy interventions. The final part of the paper examines the contexts where population movement has had positive effects on development and looks at policies which can enhance positive effects of migration and ameliorate its negative effects.