



MIGRATION POLICY PRACTICE

Short articles to better connect migration
research, policy and practice worldwide

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CONTENTS

- 2 Welcome to Migration Policy Practice**
Marie McAuliffe, Charles Kwenin, Richa Arora and Jenna Blower
- 4 Relaxing the ban on female migration:
Will it help solve the economic crisis in Sri Lanka?**
Bilesha Weeraratne
- 11 Breaking a vicious cycle: Education as a solution to Afghanistan's woes**
Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi and Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi
- 18 The cost of mobility: International students at the tertiary level**
Rica Agnes Castaneda and Ashika Niraula
- 26 Will we lose our doctors? Migration plans of Polish medical students**
Maciej Duszczek, Dominika Pszczółkowska, Kamil Matuszczyk and Sara Bojarczuk
- 31 Integration of human mobility in the green economy
and related policies in the IGAD region**
Tamara Ulla, Noora Mäkelä and Jyri Jäntti
- 39 Training and mobility needs for the green transition**
Sam Huckstep, Ipek Gençsü and Martina Castiglioni
- 46 Unlocking the potential of forecast-based remittances for anticipatory action**
Beza Tesfaye and Ellen Reid





Welcome to *Migration Policy Practice*

Marie McAuliffe, Charles Kwenin, Richa Arora and Jenna Blower¹

Migration and mobility trends are evolving in sometimes dramatic ways, shaped by global transformations in the domains of geopolitics, technology and the environment (including climate change).² Displacement events are on the rise and the development setbacks brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic are proving difficult to overcome, with the COVID-19 legacy likely to impact global migration dynamics for the foreseeable future. We know that migration and mobility occur unequally, and that when major transformations are underway, migrants in the most vulnerable situations tend to feel the effects more significantly. Further compromising the challenges to achieving safe and well-managed migration is the rapid spread of misinformation and disinformation about migration and migrants.

Amidst these global transformations, the imperative is to produce timely and accurate evidence-based research, data and analysis for migrant-responsive policymaking and programming at the local, regional and international levels. It is in this context that the *Migration Policy Practice* series, under new leadership, seeks to enrich our collective understanding of the dynamic dimensions of international migration for policymakers, practitioners and scholars alike – worldwide.

As readers may know, *Migration Policy Practice* began in 2011 and has transitioned to a new editorial team within the recently established Department of Policy and Research at the IOM

Headquarters in Geneva. The Department thanks the former editors, Frank Laczko and Solon Ardittis, for their work on *Migration Policy Practice* over more than a decade.

As part of the revitalization of *Migration Policy Practice*, IOM Research ran an expression-of-interest process for the selection of the publication's new co-editors, whom we are delighted to be joining forces with – Charles Kwenin, from the University of Ghana, and Richa Arora, from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). The editorial team is led by Marie McAuliffe, PhD, Head of the Migration Research and Publications Division of IOM, supported by Associate Editor, Jenna Blower (IOM and York University). The IOM Publications Unit, led by Valerie Hagger, continues to provide production services. Together, the editorial team spans the boundaries of migration scholarship, migration policy and migration practice with decades of experience in the field, across diverse geographic and geopolitical settings.

Under the new leadership of *Migration Policy Practice*, with the support of a new Editorial Advisory Committee (refer to the text box for the membership), we seek to include contributions from migration researchers, policymakers, practitioners and other experts. *Migration Policy Practice* aims to deliver topical analysis, which would be useful in policy, programmatic and operational settings, as well as contributing to migration research, while at the same time supporting greater geographic diversity in authorship and content. *Migration Policy Practice* will be covering a wide range of globally relevant topics, such as climate-related migration and displacement, gender dimensions

¹ Marie McAuliffe, IOM; Charles Kwenin, University of Ghana; Richa Arora, GIZ; and Jenna Blower, IOM and York University.

² See, e.g. IOM, "Report overview: Technological, geopolitical and environmental transformation shaping our migration and mobility futures", in: *World Migration Report 2022* (M. McAuliffe and A. Triandafyllidou, eds.) (Geneva, 2021).



of migration, COVID-19 impacts on migrants and migration, migration and development, global talent, diaspora engagement, regional and international cooperation on migration, artificial intelligence (AI) and migration, migration data innovation, foresight initiatives, and counter-trafficking and -smuggling, among many others. *Migration Policy Practice* aims to highlight new methodologies in the field of migration and showcase opportunities for innovative policies and practices for State and civil society actors.

This first issue produced under the new editorial leadership includes short peer-reviewed articles that resulted from a global call for abstracts. The call garnered significant interest, receiving 91 abstracts from 43 countries covering a wide range of topics and geographic areas. Based on our experience with this first call for abstracts, we would like to share insights, tips and suggestions through online IOM Research webinars scheduled for 15 March 2023. Two webinars will take place to accommodate time zones. You can find more details and register for the 9.30–11.00 (CET) session [here](#) or the 16.30–18.00 (CET) session [here](#).

We are delighted to include in this issue articles on the gendered impacts of migration, with a focus on the Family Background Report (FBR) policy in Sri Lanka (Weeraratne), for example, and the links between gender, education and displacement in Afghanistan (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi). In keeping with an examination of education and migration, articles in this issue attend to the migration patterns of international students vis-à-vis the cost of mobility (Castaneda and Niraula) and what it means for key sectors such as health care, specifically in Poland, and its impacts on the migration plans

of Polish medical students (Duszczyk et al.). Certainly, labour migration to meet skills gaps globally remains an imperative area for research and policy development, and two articles in this issue zero in on mobility and labour migration in the context of the green economy (Ulla et al. and Huckstep et al.). Indeed, addressing the impacts of environmental change on migration and displacement demands foresight. The last article (Tesfaye and Reid) examines new policy approaches to climate change through forecast-based remittances that seek to proactively ameliorate the impacts of climate disasters.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Marie, Charles, Richa and Jenna

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Relaxing the ban on female migration: Will it help solve the economic crisis in Sri Lanka?

Bilesa Weeraratne, PhD¹

Abstract

Riddled with an economic crisis, Sri Lanka, in an effort to increase female departures for foreign employment and related remittances, partially reversed the controversial Family Background Report (FBR) policy that restricted mothers of children younger than five years of age from migrating for foreign employment. During its implementation since July 2013, the policy was opposed by those arguing in favour of women's rights, responsibility and vulnerability while supported based on the mother's role in a child's development and welfare and in the family unit. Despite both arguments, the continuation of the policy was largely political.

Yet, in an unexpected turn of events, the severe foreign exchange shortage in Sri Lanka resulted in all manners of reasoning for policy continuation to be superseded by a new macroeconomic argument that reversal can lead to an increase in foreign exchange earnings. Using gender-disaggregated monthly departure data for labour migration and monthly data on total remittance receipts to Sri Lanka for the 2012–2022 period, this article provides a descriptive analysis to evaluate the capacity of the FBR policy reversal to contribute to address the foreign exchange and the larger economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Introduction

In the global setting, the COVID-19 pandemic is considered one of the major reasons for the economic challenges since 2020. But in the case

of Sri Lanka, the COVID-19 pandemic was more of a proverbial “last nail in the coffin”. When the pandemic hit, the preconditions for an economic crisis was already brewing in Sri Lanka. In the international macroeconomic front, the high import bill, unsustainable debt obligations, instability and low earnings from exports, as well as terrorism,² affected tourism sector, and the unrealistic exchange rate aggravated foreign exchange challenges in Sri Lanka. In the domestic economy, low outputs, challenges to agricultural production due to import ban on fertilizers, food security issues, import restrictions, high import costs and the printing of currency in the face of government expenditure exceeding national revenue contributed to multiple crises ranging from fuel and energy challenges to rampant inflation and a fiscal crisis. As such, the pandemic aggravated the pre-existing economic challenges, political crisis and hastened the inevitable near collapse of the Sri Lankan economy.

Sri Lanka's foreign reserves, which stood at USD 7.6 billion at the end of 2019, gradually declined to USD 3.1 billion by the end of 2021. From March to June 2022, remaining reserves were around USD 1.8–1.9 billion.³ As noted by the then-finance minister, in May 2022, the usable foreign reserves were as low as less than USD 50 million.⁴ In this context, increasing worker remittances was considered one of the most viable mechanisms to address Sri Lanka's foreign exchange issues.⁵ The performance of remittances during the early stages of the

¹ Bilesa Weeraratne is a research fellow and Head of Migration and Urbanization Policy Research at the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka.

² The Easter Sunday attacks in 2019 severely affected Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

³ Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), *External sector*, data set (2022).

⁴ Bharatha Mallawarachchi, *Sri Lanka foreign reserves at record low, politics in crisis*, AP News, 4 May 2022.

⁵ CBSL, *Workers' remittances*, data set (2022).



pandemic justified such banking on worker remittances. Specifically, despite the initial decline in the first quarter of 2020, remittances to Sri Lanka recorded a 6-per-cent growth from 2019 by the end of 2020, standing at a total of USD 7.1 billion. However, monthly remittances in 2021 recorded a consistent downtrend from January to December, to end up with a 23-per-cent annual decline at USD 5.49 billion.⁶ There were many reasons attributed to this decline in remittances to Sri Lanka. One major reason was the decline in stock of migrants overseas due to both high returns during the pandemic and few departures during the pandemic and initial stages of the economic crisis. In this context, various measures were taken to increase departures for foreign employment, including revisiting the Family Background Report (FBR) policy, which restricted female migration for foreign jobs.

Evolution of the Family Background Report policy

The FBR policy, introduced in June 2013 as per Circular 13/2013, aimed to discourage women from migrating in the short term, with the long-term objective to minimize the adverse implications on women and children left behind. It was operationalized by Foreign Employment Development officers (FEDOs) visiting potential female migrants at home and validating information on their FBR applications, mainly that pertaining to care arrangements for children who would be left behind, and determining whether or not to recommend the mother for foreign employment. At its introduction, women with children younger than five years of age seeking domestic work were not recommended for and thus restricted from migrating for domestic work abroad, while women with older children or those who held other occupations

were not barred. In 2013, the FBR policy also specified the maximum age for female domestic work abroad as 55 years, while the minimum age was staggered according to country of destination – 25 years for Saudi Arabia, 23 for other Middle Eastern countries, and 21 for all other countries. The relatively higher minimum age for Saudi Arabia imposed by the FBR is aimed at discouraging young and inexperienced women from migrating for domestic work and facing adverse consequences in the workplace.

In August 2015, the FBR directive was extended to cover all females seeking foreign employment in any occupation, while the upper age limit for those required to adhere to the policy was revised from 55 down to 50 years. In 2017, this upper age limit was further reduced to 45 years. By January 2017, the determination of the FBR decision was passed over to a committee comprising officials related to the ministries in charge of labour migration, women's affairs, child affairs and health at the divisional secretariat level, instead of an individual determination by a FEDO at the grassroots level. During the COVID-19, to facilitate faster FBR processing and greater migration, separate FBR forms were introduced for females with and without children. In its most recent revision in June 2022, the FBR policy was relaxed by decreasing the child's age to 2 years, to promote migration during the economic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Arguments for and against the Family Background Report

During this nine-year period, the FBR policy was justified and criticized along several lines of reasoning. In the early stages, the policy was supported on the basis that female migration was often a “rash” decision and the FBR would “provide mothers sufficient space to take a considered decision to migrate rather than decide in compulsion of events” and to provide

⁶ CBSL, External sector.



proactive family support mechanisms to address vulnerabilities in addition to the necessary information through pre-departure training.⁷ Another argument for the FBR was its capacity to reduce the adverse implications on children left behind and the associated “family breakdown”.⁸ This was mainly based on arguments of child’s rights and the cultural norms of parenting. Specifically, the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare (MFEPW) stresses that “compared with maternal absence, paternal absences are not unusual or rare in the life of Sri Lankan children and they are comparatively less disruptive”.⁹ Justified along these arguments, the MFEPW was of the view that the “[FBR] is neither an act of discrimination against women, nor a restriction of their freedom of movement and the right to work”. Instead, the MFEPW viewed the FBR as “as one of the most proactive interventions made to safeguard the rights of children in a most vulnerable social stratum”. Moreover, drawing on United Nations conventions, the MFEPW underscores that the dynamic nature of rights and the involvement of multiple identities (i.e. “mother” versus “labour force participant”) challenges the ability of human beings to have discrete identities with equally discrete and separate rights.¹⁰

Countering above, the first wave of arguments against the FBR were put forward during its initial years. For instance, the United Nations challenges the requirement for the husband’s consent in the FBR policy as an implicit imbalance

of power of two spouses in a relationship.¹¹ Moreover, as the United Nations highlights, the requirement for separated or divorced women to prove that the separation has been legally determined, blurs the “personal/private and the ‘public’ domain[s] of women’s lives”.¹² At the same time, the United Nations stresses that the need for unmarried women to obtain the written and signed permission of a guardian contradicts with the Sri Lankan Constitution, which recognizes those over 18 years of age as adults and thus not under the guardianship of parents.¹³ At the same time, the FBR was criticized for discriminating women on many levels. Such discrimination include that in the context of asymmetry in parenting, spousal relationships and care roles in the household.¹⁴ Another line of criticism was based on the lack of focus in the FBR on alternatives for women restricted from migration. The United Nations emphasizes these nuances as “there is only superficial proposing of stereotyped alternatives with the availability of such being minimal”, as the provided alternatives for foreign employment are often negated, arguing that “when the woman’s mind is set to migrate, alternatives do not matter to them”.¹⁵ Moreover, in 2015 a court case was filed against the policy, due to its the absence of consultation prior to its implementation.¹⁶

The second wave of arguments against the FBR policy were based on observed and evaluated impacts. Specifically, literature notes that in addition to decreasing departures of females for labour migration, the FBR policy also increases the vulnerability of female migrant workers due

⁷ Sri Lanka, Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare (MFEPW), *Response by the Government of Sri Lanka to the joint allegation letter dated 28 January 2014 issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)* (No. 207/2014, HR50), pp. 2 and 3 (items 2–5), 27 May 2014.

⁸ United Nations, *Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers: The Impact of Sri Lankan Policies on Workers’ Right to Freely Access Employment* (Colombo, 2015).

⁹ MFEPW, *Response by the Government of Sri Lanka to the joint allegation letter dated 28 January 2014 issued by the OHCHR*, p. 10 (item 12(VII)).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ United Nations, *Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers*.

¹² Ibid., p. 23.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.; Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, *Migrant Labour Reforms: Tackling the Family Background Report* (Colombo, 2015); Bilesha Weeraratne, *Migration and gender outcomes: Analysis of selected policies in Sri Lanka*, KNOMAD Working Paper 35 (Washington, D.C., KNOMAD, 2018).

¹⁵ United Nations, *Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers*, p. 48.

¹⁶ Ibid.; S.S. Selvanayagam, *Women’s rights activists file petition against FBR*, *Daily Mirror*, 4 December 2015.



to its inadvertent effect of promoting departure for employment on visitor or tourist visas, misreporting employment classification and forging credentials.¹⁷ Similarly, while the FBR policy restricted departures of lower-skilled female workers, the same policy has inadvertently increased departures of higher-skilled female workers.¹⁸ Additionally, recruitment agents were against the FBR policy, as it led to unnecessary delays in the recruitment process.¹⁹ As a result, many recruitment agents stopped recruiting foreign domestic workers (FDWs), limiting foreign employment opportunities for low-skilled workers initially and, later, all females.²⁰ Similarly, Gamburd shows that the restrictive implications of the FBR policy on migrants and their families narrows the household's employment options, destabilizes its fiscal strategies and potentially harms multiple generations of kin.²¹ Gamburd succinctly summarizes the overall skepticism of the FBR as "proportionally, migrant cases with serious negative outcomes for children were exceptions, and...they should be handled by the social services profession, rather than [being] addressed with blanket policies', as 'the remedy is worse than the original problem'".²²

As such, by 2022 the FBR policy was revised and considered for repeal on many occasions based on lobbying by various actors. For instance, in

2016, a parliamentary subcommittee reviewed the FBR policy. As noted in literature, supported by rigorous empirical evidence and stakeholder perceptions, the ministry in charge and the regulatory body of labour migration – Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) – supported the idea of repealing the FBR policy. However, the subcommittee favoured the continuation of the policy, largely for political reasons. Going a step further, in 2019, a Cabinet-appointed committee went on to recommend relaxing the FBR policy. However, this was eventually not approved by the President and the FBR policy continued to be in effect.

Family Background Report and remittances

In an unexpected turn of events, the severe foreign exchange shortage in Sri Lanka paved the way for all reasoning for policy continuation to be trumped by a new macroeconomic argument that policy reversal can lead to an increase in foreign exchange earnings. As noted by *ECONOMYNEXT*, "Sri Lanka's Cabinet has approved a measure to remove the family background report from the mandatory requirements for females to go abroad and earn in foreign currency as the country is grappling forex shortages".²³ Theoretically, relaxation of the FBR will lead to more departures of female migrants and a larger stock of Sri Lankan migrants overseas, which can drive remittances up. Nevertheless, when the overall economic context is considered, the capacity of greater female migration through a relaxed FBR to increase remittances does not involve a simple or straightforward mechanism. Such complication is mainly brought about by the various underlying motives to remit.²⁴ These

¹⁷ United Nations, *Sri Lankan Migrant Domestic Workers*; Bilesha Weeraratne, *Protecting the welfare of children and its casual effect on limiting mother's labour migration*, *International Migration*, 54(5):59–75 (June 2016); Weeraratne, *Migration and gender outcomes*; International Labour Organization (ILO), *Sri Lankan Female Migrant Workers and the Family Background Report* (Colombo, 2018); Notes from the sixth meeting of the Sri Lanka Expert Committee on the Establishment of a Social Security Scheme for Migrants on establishing a social security scheme for migrant workers (2020).

¹⁸ Bilesha Weeraratne, *Ban on female migrant workers: Skills-differentiated evidence from Sri Lanka*, WIDER Working Paper 2021/44 (Helsinki, United Nations University–WIDER, 2021).

¹⁹ ILO, *Improving Recruitment Agency Business Practices in Sri Lanka* (Geneva, 2020).

²⁰ ILO, *Sri Lankan Female Migrant Workers and the Family Background Report*.

²¹ Michele Ruth Gamburd, *Migrant emplacement: Gendered subjects, state regulations, and the discursive erasure of elders in Sri Lanka*, in: *Caring for Old Age: Perspectives from South Asia* (R. Mandoki and C. Brosius, eds.) (Heidelberg, Germany, Heidelberg Studies on Transculturality, 2020).

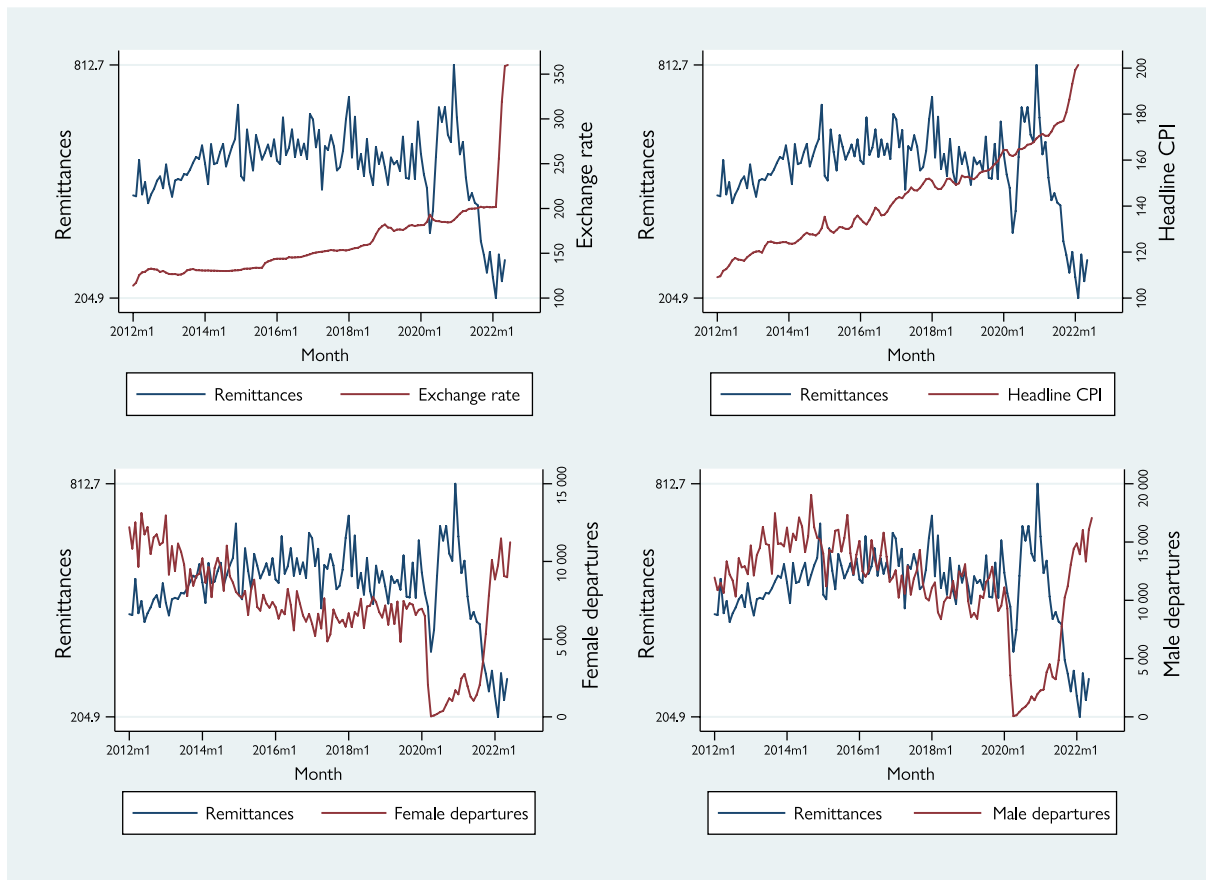
²² *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²³ *ECONOMYNEXT*, *Sri Lanka allows women with young children to go abroad for work after money printing*, 28 June 2022.

²⁴ Supriyo De, Ergys Islamaj, M. Ayhan Kose and S. Reza Yousefi, *Remittances over the business cycle: Theory and evidence*, Working Paper 11 (Washington, D.C., KNOMAD and World Bank, 2016).



Figure 1. Monthly departures, remittances, inflation and exchange rate, 2012–2022



Source: Author's illustration of CBSL, [External sector](#), data set (2022); CBSL, [Workers' remittances](#), data set (2022); CBSL, [Prices, wages and employment](#), data set (2022); SLBFE, Administrative data on migrant worker departures from Sri Lanka (2022), provided to the author by the bureau.

include the *altruistic* motive, whereby migrants remit for the welfare of those left behind, while with the *exchange* motive, remittances enable family left behind to purchase goods and services in the market to compensate for the absence of the migrant. With the *insurance* motive, the family pays forward the cost of migration with the understanding that the migrant will send remittances during times of hardship. With the *inheritance* motive, potential inheritances act as an enforcement device in the implicit familial contract in the *insurance* motive previously identified. Here, the migrant's expectation of a bequest from the family ensures a steady stream of remittances to the family in times of need. With the *investment* motive, migrants send

remittances to increase family income, and family members act as agents managing the funds sent by the migrants.

As evident in bottom panels in Figure 1, while departures for labour migration declined in March of 2020 and remained very low till May of 2021, monthly remittances quickly recovered to pre-pandemic levels. But as monthly departures were rising from mid-2021 onwards, the downtrend in monthly remittances continued. Since January 2022, monthly departures of both male and female migrants had surpassed pre-pandemic levels. Yet monthly remittances were approximately 50 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. For instance, monthly remittances reached



USD 259 million in January 2022, whereas January 2021 recorded a much higher USD 581 million. Similarly, remittances stood at USD 325 million in August 2022, much lower than the USD 665 million and the USD 447 million received in the same month in 2020 and 2021, respectively. This suggests that since early 2020, the volume of remittances has not moved in tandem with that of departures. Moreover, as indicated in the bottom-right panel of Figure 1, departures of females have been declining since the introduction of the FBR policy in 2013. However, remittance inflows were unaffected by this drop in departures due to the FBR policy. As such, given the prevailing unusual socioeconomic context, and the absence of a decline in remittances due to the introduction of the policy, current monthly departures for labour migration are not likely to be a key determinant of remittances to Sri Lanka in the near future.

One socioeconomic aspect that can overshadow the impact of increased female departures due to a relaxed FBR is the growing importance of informal remittance channels. As highlighted by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL), “the expansion of the Hawala channels due to large exchange rate differentials between the formal and the grey market” for foreign exchange have contributed to the decline in formal remittances to Sri Lanka.²⁵ Similarly, rising inflation and foreign exchange rates, sluggish economic performance and economic and political uncertainty in the country negatively influence formal remittances. Lueth and Ruiz-Arranz and Weeraratne et al. show that remittances to Sri Lanka are procyclical.²⁶ As such, when GDP growth rate

declines, remittances are likely to decline as well. Similarly, the prevailing high inflation and foreign exchange rates in Sri Lanka are counterbalancing the impact of the exchange motive in remittances. In Sri Lanka, in July 2022, the headline National Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 67 per cent relative to the same period in the previous year. Amidst such high inflation, remittances under exchange motive may have increased to ensure consistent purchasing power through remittances sent to left-behind households (see top panels in Figure 1). Nevertheless, the depreciated foreign currency exchange rate now offers more LKR per USD for a given amount of remittance. Then the exchange motive leads to decreasing the USD amount remitted. These macrotrends are also confirmed with micro-level data. As noted in Weeraratne et al., micro-level evidence based on “qualitative data shows that due to the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions in the country, migrant workers are hesitant to remit altogether and prefer to send the minimum amount to support their family members” in Sri Lanka while retaining the remainder in the country of destination.²⁷ As such, relaxing the FBR policy and sending more female migrants alone is not a guaranteed mechanism to increase remittances.

Conclusion

While there is potential for a relaxed FBR policy and for the related increased departures of females to increase remittances to Sri Lanka, it is important to view this potential in the context of motives to remit, prevailing socioeconomic conditions in Sri Lanka, and previous arguments for and against the FBR. The sudden shift in policy focus away from previously highlighted child rights and parenting practices raises concerns about the validity of these arguments and if they were a

²⁵ CBSL, *Annual Report 2021* (Colombo, 2021).

²⁶ Erik Lueth and Marta Ruiz-Arranz, *Are workers' remittances a hedge against macroeconomic shocks? The case of Sri Lanka*, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Working Paper 7 (Washington, D.C., IMF, 2007); B. Weeraratne, T. Bandara and T. Ekanayake, *Understanding Informal Remittances: Evidence from Sri Lanka* (South Asian Labour and Mobility Network, 2022).

²⁷ Weeraratne et al., *Understanding Informal Remittances*, p. 20.



mere luxury that could be pursued only in good times. At the same time, arguments against the FBR policy confirm that relaxing it would increase gender equality and female departures. However, the available evidence indicates that in the short term, the positive impact of FBR relaxation will be overpowered by the negative impact of exchange rate dynamics and related informal remittance channels, resulting in low remittances. Similarly, concerns about the stability of the economy with regard to rising inflation, fiscal imbalances, high foreign debt and low foreign reserves would negatively affect remittances. As such, greater stability in the Sri Lankan economy

achieved by eliminating parallel markets for foreign exchange, greater price stability, overall economic growth, fiscal consolidation, and a debt-restructuring programme facilitated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are other factors that would contribute towards the return of remittances to Sri Lanka to its usual path.

Therefore, while aiming for higher remittances through policy changes that affect the departure and the stock of migrants overseas, such as FBR policy relaxation, it is equally important for Sri Lanka to focus on improving the economic situation.



Breaking a vicious cycle: Education as a solution to Afghanistan's woes

Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi and Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi¹

Afghanistan is one of the world's most impoverished countries, with one of the lowest literacy rates and highest rates of long-running civil conflict. The combination of these features underpins the multifaceted nature of the insecurity that has led to the displacement of many Afghans. This article argues that the lack of access to education, particularly for women, is one of the primary causes of insecurity and displacement in Afghanistan. It calls for global action to resolve the issue through the promotion of education for people in the country and Afghan migrants and refugees in their host countries.

Why is the literacy rate low in Afghanistan?

Afghanistan has always ranked among the ten countries with the lowest levels of literacy in the world. In 1979, only 18 per cent of people were recorded as literate, with the figure increasing to 31 per cent by 2011 and 43 per cent by 2018.² Despite the promising, if slow, progress over the last two decades, there remains a substantial gender gap. In 2018, around 55 per cent of men were literate, compared to 30 per cent of females. The question thus arises as to why the literacy rate been exceptionally low in Afghanistan for decades. The following arguments try to briefly explain the reasons underlying this deprivation:

- (a) Given the long-running civil war, Afghanistan has been struggling with poverty and without having reliable resources to invest

in planning and development.³ Public social services and welfare, including health care and education, have not been prioritized for a long time due to inadequate infrastructure, and many people, particularly women and rural residents, have been left behind in access to health and education services. On the one hand, struggling with the high level of poverty, families often send children, particularly sons, to work to contribute to the household income instead of enrolling them in schools. On the other hand, the insecurity has discouraged families to send their children to school outside their community.

- (b) Alongside the country's high population growth rate, which has resulted in a large number of school-age children, there has been a shortage of teachers and school facilities, particularly in rural areas. In other words, there is a significant unmet demand for education.
- (c) The interrelationships between illiteracy, lack of access to developmental infrastructure, poverty and insecurity in Afghanistan has led to the displacement and forced migration of many people. By August 2022, there were around 3.4 million people internally displaced by conflict, and there is an estimated 6.9 million documented and undocumented Afghans, including around 2.1 million registered refugees residing in either the Islamic Republic of Iran or Pakistan (Figure 1). Indeed, displacement in turn disrupts education development.

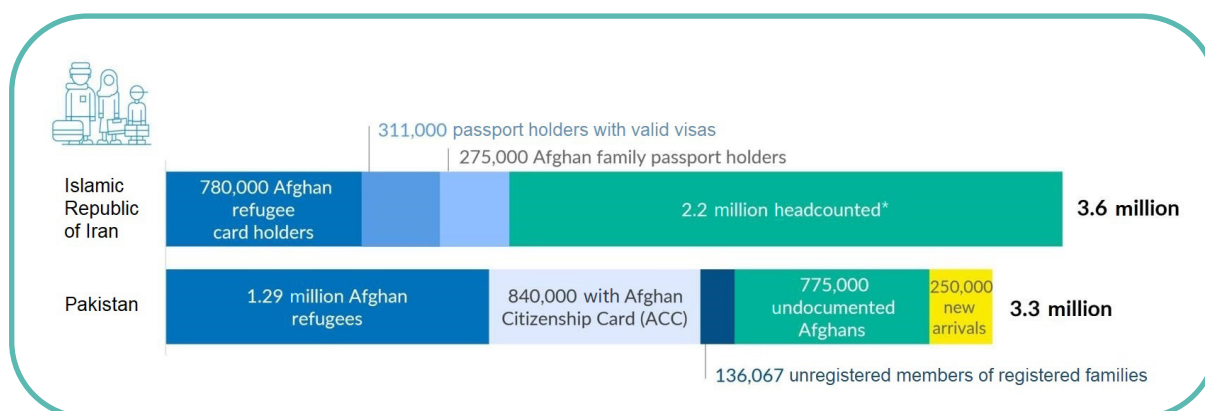
¹ Meimanat Hosseini-Chavoshi is a research associate at the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research (CEPAR) of the University of Melbourne, Australia. Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi is a professor of demography at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, and a visiting fellow professor at the School of Demography of the Australian National University.

² World Population Review, *Literacy rate by country 2022*, data set (2022).

³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Economic instability and uncertainty in Afghanistan after August 15: A rapid appraisal*, report (Kabul, 2021).



Figure 1. Number of Afghan refugees and migrants in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan (August 2022)



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Afghans in Iran and Pakistan*, Operational Data Portal on the Afghanistan Situation (2021) (accessed on 10 September 2022).

Note: * The number includes new arrivals. In 2022, the Government conducted a “recount” of the previously headcounted population and extended this recount to all undocumented Afghans residing in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including those who had newly arrived following the events of 2021 in Afghanistan. By the end of August 2022, according to different statements by various government officials, 2.2 million Afghans had been provided with a headcount slip.

In addition to being associated with instability in the country, Taliban rule has negatively affected aspirations for and access to education, particularly for women and girls. Afghanistan had a gender-mixed and inclusive educational system before the Taliban took control of the country in the 1990s. The number of women in higher education rose during the 1980s, and roughly 40 per cent of the students were female by the early 1990s.⁴ With the rise of the Taliban in 1996, women were barred from schooling and deprived of the right to work. Majority of girls’ schools were shut down, and gross enrolment fell from 32 per cent to 6.4 per cent. By the end of the Taliban’s rule in December 2001, over 80 per cent of schools had either been destroyed or severely damaged, and women were banned from higher education in Taliban-controlled areas.⁵

The Afghan education sector underwent exponential development after the fall of the Taliban in 2001. As a result, there was a significant increase in school enrolment, with more girls than ever attending schools (more than 3.6 million were enrolled in primary and secondary education)⁶ and many obtaining a postgraduate degree. The increase of girls in secondary education was particularly marked, with nearly 40 per cent enrolled in 2018, compared with only 6 per cent in 2003.⁷ Higher education in Afghanistan also changed post-Taliban. As of June 2020, there were 172 higher education institutions in Afghanistan, of which 128 were private and represented 53.3 per cent of all tertiary-level student enrolment.⁸

⁴ Mohammad Hadi Ahmadi, *Higher education of Afghanistan under the Taliban rule: review and analysis of past and current impacts*, report (Berlin, YAAR e.V, 2022).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Emma Batha, *Taliban U-turn leaves Afghan girls shut out of school*, news article on the Thomson Reuters Foundation website, 23 March 2022.

⁷ Ibid.; Grant Farr, *Female education in Afghanistan after the return of the Taliban*, article on the E-International Relations website, 23 April 2022.

⁸ Ahmadi, *Higher education of Afghanistan under the Taliban rule*; Fazlullah Akhtar and Amit Ranjan, *Afghanistan’s education sector: Prospects under Taliban rule*, article on the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (ICPS) website, 11 October 2021.



Despite the progress made during the 2001–2021 period, Afghanistan's education system came to a halt after the Taliban took over again in August 2021 and announced that education for both boys and girls would be suspended beyond the sixth grade and would resume only after the Afghan New Year (23 March 2022). The need to revise the school curriculum based on its interpretation of Islam, which included designing an “appropriate” female curriculum, as well as uniforms, was the reason that the Taliban gave for the school closures. The Taliban ruled that only women could teach at girls' high schools and that university courses could be offered to women on condition of physical partition between female and male students.⁹ Despite their promise, the Taliban leadership announced on 23 March 2022 that girls' schools would not be reopened,¹⁰ pushing girls out of school and casting serious doubt on the Taliban's commitment to girls' education.

The unexpected takeover by the Taliban in August 2021 invited fear and concern for the higher education sector. Many university professors, lecturers and students left Afghanistan for other countries. Students who stayed in Afghanistan have become unable to continue their studies due to economic hardship. Indeed, laws imposed by the Taliban, including gender segregation in school campuses, increased the cost of attending private universities, many of which have been or are being closed. On 20 December 2022, the Taliban issued an order suspending all women from attending university. The highest level of education most Afghan girls will be able to attain is the sixth grade – the final year of primary school.¹¹ A letter, confirmed by a spokesperson

for the higher education ministry, instructed Afghan public and private universities to suspend access to female students immediately, in accordance with a Cabinet decision.¹²

There is also a fear of persecution among ethnic groups, particularly the Hazara, and students, as evidenced by the 30 September 2022 suicide bombing incident in one of their education centres in the Kabul neighbourhood of Dashti Barchi, whose residents are predominantly Hazara. The bombing killed close to 50 female students who were sitting for a practice exam.¹³

In brief, there is no sign that the literacy rate and the level of educational attainment in Afghanistan will improve in the foreseeable future, placing considerable constraints on development efforts.

Displacement and migration to the Islamic Republic of Iran

The migration of Hazara and Pashtun ethnic people from Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan dates back to at least the last two centuries. Schmeidl identifies seven phases of Afghan forced movements. There have been several displacement phases due to a civil war and conflicts that started with the 1978 invasion by the former Soviet Union.¹⁴ Forced displacement escalated after the first advent of Taliban in 1996 until 2000. Such movements slowed down for a few years after the United States-led intervention in 2001 and before the deterioration of security during the period 2007–2014, after which refugees returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Europe to Afghanistan, and internal displacement increased simultaneously.

⁹ Ashley Jackson, *The ban on older girls' education: Taliban conservative ascendant and a leadership in disarray*, report (Kabul, Afghan Analysts Network, 2022).

¹⁰ Grant Farr, *Female education in Afghanistan after the return of the Taliban*.

¹¹ Diaa Hadid, *'The Taliban took our last hope': College education is banned for women in Afghanistan*, *NPR*, 20 December 2022.

¹² *Al Jazeera*, *Taliban says women banned from universities in Afghanistan*, 20 December 2022.

¹³ Catherine Putz, *Students killed in attack on education center in Kabul's Hazara neighborhood*, *The Diplomat*, 3 October 2022; *France24*, *Death toll tops 50 in suicide attack on female Afghan students, UN says*, 3 October 2022.

¹⁴ Susanne Schmeidl, *Four decades of Afghan displacement*, article on the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung website, 23 January 2019.



The recent escalation in displacement related to the allied troop withdrawal and Taliban takeover in August 2021 comprises the “eighth phase” of the forced movements of Afghans.¹⁵

Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran have been the main host countries for Afghan refugees. In addition to the long history of religious pilgrimages by Hazara Afghans to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the modern history of Afghan immigration to the neighbouring country began in the late 1970s. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from 1979–1989 saw a massive exodus of 3 million Afghans to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The civil war in Afghanistan between 1989 and 1993 also resulted in a new wave of forced migration to its neighbour involving especially the educated and urban middle class. The repressive rule of the Taliban and fighting between the Taliban and opposition groups set off further migration to the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹⁶ With the fall of the Taliban in 2004, there was some repatriation, but continued conflicts led to the continuation of the Afghan migrant flows to its neighbour. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 800,000 refugees of various nationalities live in the Islamic Republic of Iran, of which 780,000 are Afghans.¹⁷ Additionally, it is estimated that some 2.2 million undocumented Afghans and nearly 600,000 Afghan passport holders live in the country (Figure 1). According to various government estimates, between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Afghans have fled to the neighbouring country since the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan in 2021.¹⁸ Unofficial figures indicate that more than 5 million Afghans are currently in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Afghans face a protracted situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and their long-term residence has led to the emergence of second- and third-generation Afghans in the host society.¹⁹ Given Afghanistan's high fertility rate, the age structure of Afghan migrants in the neighbouring host country is younger than that of the native-born population, which has implications for education, employment and housing, among other needs.

Education among Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Iranian education policy for Afghan refugees has fluctuated with changes in government attitudes to the influx of refugees. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran adopted an “open door” refugee policy granting asylum to Afghans on a *prima facie* basis. This coincided with the Islamic Revolution in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Afghans were treated as “religious migrants”. Accordingly, Afghan refugees were granted access to education on the same basis as Iranian nationals. In the 1990s, the Islamic Republic of Iran started to incrementally reduce services, including education, to Afghans. However, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and so-called “Afghan self-regulated schools” provided literacy classes outside of the Iranian public education system. These schools were established by the Afghan community in response to Iranian legislation to preclude “undocumented” Afghan children from being enrolled in State-run schools.²⁰ Enrolment in those schools requires no documentation, but they suffer from a number of disadvantages compared with Iranian public schools.

¹⁵ IOM, *The “Eighth phase” of Afghan Displacement: Situating the Top Ten Issues for Policymakers*, Migration Research Series, No. 71 (Geneva, 2022).

¹⁶ Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi, Diana Glazebrook, Gholamreza Jamshidiha, Hossein Mahmoudian and Rasoul Sadeghi, *Return to Afghanistan? A study of Afghans living in Tehran, Mashhad, and Zahedan*. Afghanistan and Research, report (Kabul, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2005).

¹⁷ UNHCR, *Afghans in Iran and Pakistan*.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi and Rasoul Sadeghi, *Integration of Afghans in Iran: Patterns, levels and policy implications*, *Migration Policy Practice*, 6(3):22–29 (September 2016).

²⁰ P. Wickramasekara, J. Sehgal, F. Mehran, L. Noroozi and S. Eisazade, *Afghan households in Iran: Profile and impact*. International Migration Paper No. 8 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2006).



In 2015, the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, issued a decree on the necessity of all Afghan children to have access to formal schooling in the Islamic Republic of Iran regardless of their status. Based on this decree, Afghan children were allowed to be enrolled in Iranian public schools.

Table 1. Number of foreign-born students in Iranian primary and secondary schools, including Afghan migrants and refugees, 2013–2019

Year	Total foreign-born students	Afghan students
2013	394 446	329 000
2015	386 000	360 000
2016	405 000	369 000
2017	453 000	419 000
2018	474 000	443 000
2019	511 000	480 737

Source: G. Karimi, Deputy Minister for Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran, [Foreign students cost 2,000 billion for Iran](#). Interview by *Shargh Daily*, Tehran, 20 September 2020.

As a result of these developments, there has been an improvement in the education of Afghans in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and both first and second generations have recorded significant upward mobility.²¹ Moreover, Afghan youths have been attending higher education in Iranian universities and other educational institutions. In 2019, around 57,000 foreign nationals were studying at Iranian universities, the majority of whom were from Afghanistan, with some having received scholarships from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.²²

Despite the inclusiveness of Iranian education policy for Afghans after 2015, the implementation of the policy has faced challenges. As in many other host countries, foreigners who reside in the Islamic Republic of Iran without a legal permit are usually denied access to public and welfare services, including being issued a national ID card, and are consequently unable to enjoy the privileges of banking services and Internet access. Thus, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many refugee families, especially those living in city outskirts, were denied access to online education – mainly due to the lack of access to or inability to source smartphones or inadequate coverage of communication services in their neighbourhoods.²³

Indeed, the exodus of documented and undocumented Afghans to the Islamic Republic of Iran since August 2021 has resulted in a large number of school-age children demanding to be enrolled in Iranian public schools. It has been reported that around 560,000 migrant children were enrolled in Iranian schools during the 2021–2022 academic year,²⁴ and with the re-emergence of Taliban came a new wave of Afghans coming to the neighbouring country, resulting in an estimated additional 100,000 to 110,000 school-age children of undocumented Afghans demanding to be enrolled in Iranian public schools.²⁵

In July 2022, the International Affairs Office of the Ministry of Education issued an executive order on the enrolment of foreign students in Iranian public schools for the educational year. According to the statement, foreign students

²¹ Graeme Hugo, Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi and Rasoul Sadeghi, [Refugee movement and development: Afghan refugees in Iran](#), *Migration and Development*, 1(2):261–279 (December).

²² Bahram Salavati, *Iran Migration Outlook* (Tehran, Iran Migration Observatory, 2020).

²³ Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi, [COVID-19, economic recession, and the refugee situation](#), *International Migration*, 59:289–292 (May 2021).

²⁴ Nastaran Farrokheh, [The endless waiting of immigrant students](#) (East roundtable on increasing barriers to school enrollment of Afghan children). *Shargh Daily*, 12 September 2022.

²⁵ *Fararu*, [It is estimated that there are 100,000 to 110,000 illegal students in Iran](#), 9 September 2022.



holding any of various types of documentation would be permitted to be enrolled in public schools. However, it has been anticipated that some students would not have the appropriate documentation, but according to the Minister of Education, these students would eventually be enrolled in schools, as has been the case before.²⁶ It should be noted that the contributions of UNHCR and other international agencies to the schooling of refugee children in the Islamic Republic of Iran has been minimal, and most of the burden in this regard falls on the Iranian Ministry of Education.

Discussion and policy implications

There is little argument that improvements in education and poverty reduction are fundamental to finding ultimate solutions to the violence, insecurity and conflict in nations like Afghanistan. Educational deprivation is particularly serious for human security²⁷ and, in fact, illiteracy is considered a form of insecurity. Illiteracy is said to be both a factor leading to and a consequence of displacement, and Afghanistan is a true example of this claim.

Education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a basic human right, and the 1951 Refugee Convention calls upon States to ensure that refugee children have access to education.²⁸ Forced migration, and the resultant refugee status it confers on people, has significant impacts on the life of children and the youth, particularly disrupting their education and human capital formation, which, in turn, determines their integration into their host society.²⁹ Not having access to

education leaves refugee children vulnerable to child labour, trafficking, abuse, early marriage and many other risks.³⁰ Education is the key to successful integration in the host society, as it provides access to modern ways of thinking and increases the confidence of refugees and migrants to actively engage in their host society. Advancement of education results in successful interaction with the native-born population, in turn leading to improved social and economic opportunities. Furthermore, education empowers women, which, in turn, results in better job opportunities and their participation in the host society's labour force, and consequently improves their and their family's health, well-being and overall quality of life.

Therefore, investments in assisting refugees to develop their human capital need to be part of refugee policy and practice. Such policy must always have a basis in the protection of the rights and safety of the displaced. However, it also needs to recognize that migration, albeit forced, can ultimately deliver positive outcomes not only for the refugees themselves, but also to their places of origin and the communities they settle in, whether permanently or temporarily. Such positive outcomes are not always guaranteed, however, and developing policy and practice that facilitate them is an important priority.³¹

Conclusion

This paper has illustrated the low level of literacy in Afghanistan and has argued that security will not be attained and experienced without access to education, which is a problem that particularly affects women. Despite the progress made in Afghanistan and among Afghan migrants in the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now* (New York, 2003).

²⁸ United Nations General Assembly resolution 2198 (XXI) on the [Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees](#) (A/RES/2198(XXI)), adopted on 16 December 1966.

²⁹ Sonja Fransen, Carlos Vargas-Silva and Melissa Siegel, *The impact of refugee experiences on education: evidence from Burundi*, IZA *Journal of Development and Migration*, 8(6):1–20 (December 2018).

³⁰ Maia Sieverding, Caroline Krafft, Nasma Berri, Caitlyn Keo and Mariam Sharpless, *Education interrupted: enrollment, attainment, and dropout of Syrian refugees in Jordan*, Working Paper No. 1261 (Giza, Egypt, The Economic Research Forum, 2020).

³¹ Graeme Hugo et al., *Refugee movement and development: Afghan refugees in Iran*.



Islamic Republic of Iran, there remain challenges to these migrants' access to education due to the costs involved, in addition to legal barriers. The following actions are suggested to improve the literacy and education of Afghans in both Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- (a) The Taliban regime is urged to lift the ban on Afghan girls' access to secondary and higher education for Afghan girls, and to promote the already-established higher education system in Afghanistan.
- (b) The international community must continue efforts to protect the rights of Afghan women and girls to access education and work and provide support towards this endeavor.
- (c) International agencies and governments are urged to provide additional financing and, if necessary, redirect existing funds to support education infrastructure, in order to facilitate the inclusion of refugee children and youth in formal and non-formal education systems in host countries.
- (d) NGOs and Afghan self-regulated schools should be empowered to take the lead in providing education to refugees and forced migrants, particularly those who lack documentation and need support.
- (e) There is a need to address education and skills development for Afghan refugee children in host countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan so that they can join the labour market and improve their livelihoods for their families.³²

Lutz et al. argued that with literacy and education, a person's future will be different.³³ It has also been found that improvements in education, particularly for women, will lead to democracy.³⁴ Afghans have been struggling with illiteracy, poverty and insecurity for decades. They deserve a better world – one that is literate, richer, safer and more secure for living. Access to and improvement of education, particularly for women, is the way out of this vicious cycle, and it is our responsibility to help them to go that direction in the twenty-first century.

³² See, e.g. Astrid Skala-Kuhmann and Ismael Nouns, [Education and skills development in the context of forced migration](#), policy brief presented at the G20 Germany 2017 Summit (Think 20 Dialogue), Hamburg, Germany, 7–8 July 2017.

³³ Wolfgang Lutz, William P. Butz and Samir KC, *World Population and Human Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁴ Wolfgang Lutz, Jesús Crespo Cuaresma and Mohammad Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi, *Demography, education and democracy: Global trends and the case of Iran*, *Population and Development Review*, 36(2):253–281 (June 2009).



The cost of mobility: International students at the tertiary level¹

Rica Agnes Castaneda and Ashika Niraula²

An overview of international student mobility

Over the past 60 years, there has been a significant increase in the number of international migrants. *World Migration Report 2022* presents a timeline showing that there were only around 85 million international migrants in 1970, which increased to nearly 250 million in 2015 and 281 million in 2020.³ International students at the tertiary level account for 6.3 million under the inbound mobility type (i.e. students from abroad studying in a given country) during that same year – a figure that grew from 2.1 million in 2000.⁴ It is estimated that this number is poised to hit the 8-million mark by 2030,⁵ a five-year delay in a 2012 projection by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.⁶ While, as studies have noted, the COVID-19 pandemic slowed these movements down in some parts of the world, owing to forced immobility due to lockdowns and border restrictions around the beginning of the second quarter of 2020, steady growth has been recorded overall

(Figure 1).⁷ Among popular international student destination countries, the United States of America and Australia saw negative percentage changes in enrolment, at –1.8 per cent and –5.1 per cent, respectively, between 2019 and 2020.⁸ During the third quarter of 2021, the United Kingdom rebounded with all-time-high student enrolment that was more than double the intake of 111,311 during the same quarter in 2020.⁹ Similarly, France saw an 18-per-cent rise (compared to the pre-pandemic period) in student applications for academic year 2022–2023.¹⁰ In yet another country, Canada, study permit applications steadily increased from 388,000 in 2020 to 452,000 by the end of August 2022.¹¹

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³ IOM, *World Migration Report 2022* (Geneva, 2021).

⁴ UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), *Global flow of tertiary-level students*, data set (2021).

⁵ *Envisioning Pathways to 2030: Megatrends shaping the future of global higher education and international student mobility* [slide presentation]. Presented by Rahul Choudaha and Edwin van Rest at the Envisioning Pathways to 2030 webinar, January 2018.

⁶ OECD, "Indicator C4: Who studies abroad and where?", in: *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators* (revised edition, Paris, 2014).

⁷ Peter Adey, Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and David Tyfield, *Pandemic (im)mobilities*, *Mobilities*, 16(1):1–19 (February 2021); Chris Strods, Alex Berka and Sarah Linney, "Effective global mobility and international recruitment during a pandemic", in: *Radical Solutions for Education in a Crisis Context* (D. Burgos, A. Tlili and A. Tabacco, eds.) (Singapore, Springer, 2021), pp. 53–67; Laura Silver, *Amid pandemic, international student enrollment at US universities fell 15% in the 2020–21 school year*, Pew Research Center website research article, 6 December 2021.

⁸ United States, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), *2021 SEVIS by the numbers report* (Student and Visitor Exchange Information System (SEVIS) annual report on international student trends) (Washington D.C., 2021); Institute of International Education (IIE), *Project Atlas: A quick look at global mobility trends*, infographic (2020); Australia, Department of Education, Skills and Employment, *International student enrolments in Australia 1994–2020*, data set (2020).

⁹ Peter William Walsh, *Student migration to the UK*, The Migration Observatory (of the University of Oxford) briefing, 23 September 2022. The 2019 total figure for the United Kingdom reported by IIE was close to 500,000. (IIE, *Project Atlas: A quick look at global mobility trends*, infographic (2019).)

¹⁰ Campus France, *France sees a record rise in foreign students*, Campus France website news article, 8 September 2022.

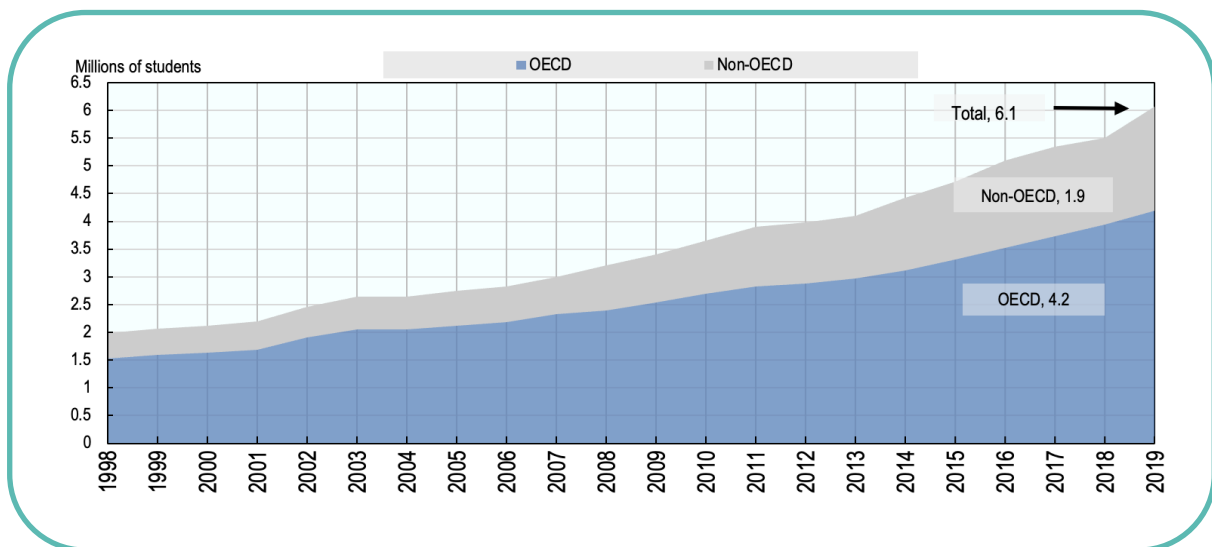
¹¹ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), *International students to help address Canada's labour shortage*, Government of Canada website news article, 7 October 2022.



China, traditionally the largest exporter of overseas students, is now an emerging foreign student destination country, hosting approximately 500,000 international students, around 450,000¹² of whom were locked out

of the country at the onset of the pandemic. In August 2022, the country decided to finally open its doors, albeit gradually, welcoming back foreign students in long-term academic studies.

Figure 1. Growth in international or foreign enrolment in tertiary education worldwide (OECD and non-OECD countries), 1998–2019



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators* (Paris, 2021).

Note: The data sources use similar definitions, thus making their combination possible. Missing data were imputed with the closest data reports to ensure that breaks in data coverage do not result in breaks in time series.

Against the backdrop of a global race for recruiting talent, many developed countries have introduced integrated study migration pathways to attract and retain international students, as they are often considered a valuable pool of future highly skilled immigrants. For example, the Government of Canada has introduced the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP), which allows foreigners who graduated from eligible Canadian learning institutions to obtain open work permits to gain valuable Canadian work experience. Once an international

graduate obtains skilled work experience in Canada through the PGWPP, he or she becomes eligible to apply for permanent residence through the Canadian Experience Class (under the Express Entry System).¹³ Similarly, Australia has its Temporary Graduate visa (subclass 485), which comes in categories based on whether an international graduate has skills and qualifications that are in demand in specific occupations (i.e. Graduate Work Stream and Post-Study Work Stream).¹⁴

¹² IIE, *Project Atlas: A quick look at global mobility trends*; Pola Lem, *China will again welcome international students*, *Inside Higher Ed*, 1 September 2022.

¹³ Government of Canada, *Post-Graduation Work Permit Program* section (2022).

¹⁴ Australia, Department of Home Affairs (DHA), *Temporary Graduate Visa* section (2022).



UNESCO defines an international student as “an individual who has physically crossed an international border between two countries to participate in educational activities in a destination country, where the destination country is different from his or her country of origin”.¹⁵ Host countries have their own definitions, employing varying distinctions, of the international student category for purposes related to processing admissions. The United States, for example, categorizes international students in terms of the visas they provide them with, highlighting the “non-immigrant” aspect of such visas, indicating that international students have no direct pathways to permanent residency.¹⁶ In Canada, international students include those on student visas, as well as refugees, with neither having permanent residency status in the country. Furthermore, there is a distinction between the concepts of “international student” and “foreign student”, the latter including permanent resident students.¹⁷ In Australia, an international student is defined as someone who is not an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident, New Zealand citizen or holder of an Australian permanent resident humanitarian visa.¹⁸ China defines a foreign student as a foreign citizen with a foreign passport who is registered or enrolled in one of the country’s higher education institutions to receive academic qualifications or non-academic qualification education.¹⁹

In the European framework, international students are divided into the “foreign student” and “credit-mobile student” categories.²⁰ The first group refers to non-citizens currently enrolled in higher-education

(i.e. degree) courses and includes students holding temporary study permits and those with permanent resident status. The latter refers to exchange students or “study-abroad” students who only receive a small proportion of credits from a foreign educational institution while they remain enrolled in their home countries, as is the case with students in the European Union’s Erasmus Programme.

Prior research on international student migration and decision-making often focused on international students’ choice of destination and rationale for choosing a particular university and study programme. The choice of where to migrate for higher education shows an essentially geographic pattern, with a higher flow of international students to English-speaking countries due to the perceived better education quality and increased prospects of career advancement there.²¹

In this policy paper, we highlight the pre-departure economic costs of applying for an “endorsement” in the host country in order to carry out an educational pursuit abroad – that is, the study visa – and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on international student migration. A two-pronged approach is taken: We look at the cost of securing a study visa to a country with historically high tertiary-level international student intakes (Table 1 provides an overview of these countries, with percentage figures of the world total), noting auxiliary requirements that need to be met to facilitate visa application. We also profile the destination markets of international students, indicating that international student migration does not occur on an equal playing field. Rather, it takes place amid economic and structural inequalities that influence the selection of international students, often acting as detrimental factors for certain groups and levels of study.

¹⁵ UIS, *Internationally mobile students* (definition) (2015); IOM, *International Students* section, Migration Data Portal (2020).

¹⁶ Nick Clark, *What defines an international student? A look behind the numbers*, *World Education News + Reviews*, 1 September 2009.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada, *International students* (definition) (2011).

¹⁸ Hazel Ferguson and Harriet Spinks, *Overseas students in Australian higher education: A quick guide*, Research Paper Series (Canberra, Parliament of Australia, 2021).

¹⁹ *China Daily*, *Rules on foreign students’ enrollment in China’s colleges and universities*, 12 June, 2017; Yuting Zhang and Yu Liao, *Higher education for international students in China: A review of policy from 1978 to 2020*, *ECNU Review of Education*, 4(4):873–889 (December 2021).

²⁰ IOM, *International Students*.

²¹ Minh Hoang, Massoud Moslehpour and Victoria Seitz, *Decision-making model of Vietnamese students studying higher education in England*, *IAFOR Journal of Education*, 7(2):131–148 (November 2019).



Table 1. Enrolment of tertiary-level international students in selected destination countries, 2019 and 2020

Destination	2019	% of world total	2020	% of world total	% change
Australia	509 160	8.3	458 279	7.3	–11.1
Canada	279 167	4.6	323 157	5.1	13.6
China	450 000	7.4	450 000*	7.1	-
France	24 378	4.0	252 444	4.0	2.4
United Kingdom	48 019	8.0	550 877	8.7	11.2
United States	976 852	16.0	957 475	15.2	–2.0
World	6 100 000	100	6 300 000	100	3.2

Source: OECD, *Enrolment of students by country of origin*, data set (2022).

Note: * China's 2020 data is absent, as COVID-19 lockdown measures prevented new intakes. The same figure as 2019 is thus assumed for 2020.

Financial cost of student mobility

Highly skilled migration, including that of international students, is often taken as a win-win-win scenario for: (a) the country of origin, due to remittance inflows; (b) the migrants themselves, due to the opportunity to improve their career trajectories and social status; and (c) the host country, as migrants bring with them new skills and cultural diversity. And while these benefits have been discussed and debated in both policy and practice, the question of “How much does migration for studies cost?” (elaborated in Table 2) and “Who will pay for it?” are often ignored. The cost of study permit and

visa application varies among the top destination countries as much as the requirements of the application process. It is important to note that there are also nuances, based on existing ties and agreements with specific countries, that may render the application process easier for some applicants and create barriers for others. For example, in Canada, the Student Direct Stream allows legal residents of certain countries (i.e. Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and Viet Nam) to obtain their study permits faster.

Table 2. Overview of application requirements for an international student visa (plus pre-visa requirements) and average tuition fees in traditional destination countries (in USD)

Traditional destination countries	Visa application fee	Pre-requisites (non-exhaustive list) ^a	Average tuition fees (annual) ^b
Australia	USD 440 (subclass 500)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC): USD 320 (minimum for 12 months) (single)* • Genuine temporary entrant • Financial capacity • English language ability <p>* The amount is the base cost for minimum coverage for a single person for 12 months (i.e. the amount is five times more if it is for a couple and 9 times more if applying as a family).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English language course: USD 189 (per week) • Foundation courses: USD 9,800–21,000 (total) • Bachelor's degree: USD 12,600–28,400 • Postgraduate degree: USD 14,000–32,000



Traditional destination countries	Visa application fee	Pre-requisites (non-exhaustive list) ^a	Average tuition fees (annual) ^b
Canada	USD 114 (study permit)* *Not a study visa (i.e. does not allow entry to Canada; a visitor visa or electronic travel authorization (eTA) is issued once approved).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biometrics (if required): USD 65 • Qualify as fully vaccinated • Proof of acceptance by a designated learning institution (DLI) • Proof of financial capacity • Proof of good health (through a medical exam (if required)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International undergraduate: USD 26,400 • International graduate: USD 15,400
China	USD 30–230 (student visa; cost depends on applicant's nationality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of admission • Foreigner physical examination record • Registration of accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public universities: USD 2,500–10,000 (free if the study programme is offered by an institution in another country with a campus in China (e.g. Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom) • Private universities: USD 30,000–40,000
France	USD 50–100 (cost depends on applicant's nationality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of travel/stay* • Proof of financial capacity • Proof of accommodation <p>* For those entering their first year of medical education (<i>première année commune aux études de santé</i> (PACES)/ License 1) or any of the <i>Écoles Nationales Supérieures d'Architecture</i> (ENSA), a preliminary admission application (<i>demande d'admission préalable</i> (DAP)) stamped by the Cultural and Scientific Cooperation (SCAC); for others, an acceptance letter from the concerned university/ institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate: USD 3,709 • Postgraduate (excluding PhD): USD 5,050 • PhD: USD 509
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • USD 418 (applying from outside the United Kingdom) • USD 565 (applying from the United Kingdom) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biometrics (if required) • Proof of offer by a licensed student sponsor • Proof of financial capacity: at least USD 2,900 • Proof of knowledge of English • Tuberculosis test • Health-care surcharge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture-based undergraduate degree: USD 11,200–29,000 • Undergraduate medical degree: USD 66,000



Traditional destination countries	Visa application fee	Pre-requisites (non-exhaustive list) ^a	Average tuition fees (annual) ^b
United States	USD 160 (F1, M1 and J1 types)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) registration: USD 350 • Proof of financial capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community college: USD 6,000–20,000 • Bachelor's degree: USD 20,000–40,000 • Postgraduate degree: USD 20,000–55,000 • English language studies: USD 700–2,000 (monthly)

Source: Australia: DHA, [Temporary Graduate Visa](#); DHA, [Explore Visa Options for Studying in Australia](#) section (2022); Government of Australia, [Living and Education Costs in Australia](#) section (2022); Canada: Government of Canada, [Study in Canada as an International Student](#) section (2022); Statistics Canada, [Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study \(current dollars\)](#), data set (2022); China: *THE Student*, [The cost of studying at a university in China](#), 8 February 2018; France: Government of France, [Visas: Student](#) section (2017); United Kingdom: Government of the United Kingdom, [Study in the UK on a Student Visa](#) section (2022); *THE Student*, [The cost of studying at a university in the UK as an international student](#), 6 October 2022; United States: Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, [Student Visa](#) section (2022); IDP Education, [How much does it cost to study and live in USA for international students?](#), webpage (2022).

Note: ^a No amounts are specified for items for which fees vary across countries of origin or across institutions within the same country of origin (e.g. the tuberculosis test and English language test for the United Kingdom).

^b Data on fees are accurate as of 2022, except for China, for which the latest data available is for 2021.

Table 3. Proof of financial capacity: minimum amount indicated (in USD), as of September 2022

Destination country	Amount required (per month)	Exemption
Australia	USD 1 174	None
Canada	USD 833	None
China	No information available	None
France	USD 816	None
United Kingdom	USD 1 520 (courses in London) USD 1 165 (courses outside London)	Citizens of countries listed under the “differential evidence requirement” scheme
United States	USD 1 000–1 500	None

Other substantial fees attached to a visa application includes the payment for the technology for capturing data, storing information about the applicant and maintaining the system used for these, most of which is online (e.g. the SEVIS system of the United States). Biometrics capture is a requirement to complete the application process, as part of a programme to collect information. Proof of financial support is usually required when applying for a travel visa, although this is not always the case. The documentation should indicate that a potential international student has enough financial

resources to live in the destination country for at least one year. This requirement means that a substantial amount of funds is needed to migrate for education (Table 3). There are many ways to fund education, and proof of financial capacity can be addressed through a letter that indicates funding through scholarships and grants, in addition to bank statements (i.e. usually covering the three to nine months immediately prior to the application date). This requirement may also be determined on a per-country basis. Citizens of countries listed under the United Kingdom’s “different evidence requirement” scheme do not



need to prove to have enough money to study in the country, for example.²²

Other prerequisites are context-related. For instance, Canada requires applicants to be fully vaccinated, while the United Kingdom requires a tuberculosis test for applicants from a list of countries.²³ Canada and China require a physical examination (with Canada specifying “proof of good health”) in asking for a health record. Australia requires overseas health insurance coverage early in the application process, while the United Kingdom might need international student aspirants to pay an “immigration health surcharge (HIS)” as part of application requirements. France and China seek proof of accommodation as an application requirement.

There often are two academic tuition fee categories at universities, one for domestic students and another for international students. If a student is eligible for the domestic tuition rate, he or she pays lower school fees compared to their international counterparts. Such discriminatory tuition fee policies are often based on one’s citizenship. For example, non-European students often have to pay full tuition fees, as opposed to lower European Union “home fees”, in Denmark, France, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Slovakia and Sweden.²⁴ Furthermore, majority of destination countries have restrictions in place in terms of employing foreign and international students, which reflects and reinforces both the existing global power hierarchies and structural inequalities, as well as influencing the decisions of potential international students on whether to and.

International students and the pandemic

Given the intensification of economic globalization and advancements in science and technology (e.g. the emergence of diverse digital technologies for communication) and transportation (e.g. more affordable airfare), as well as the growth of transnational institutions (e.g. the internationalization of higher education and the expansion of multinational companies), almost every country in the world has been affected by global immigration. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the related border closures, quarantine measures and flight bans halted international migration, including that of international students, in an unprecedented way. Furthermore, many universities were temporarily closed and many potential international students faced practical challenges to gathering the necessary documents due to the closure of all non-essential institutions. On the one hand, many faced uncertainty regarding the visa decision due to backlogs at the immigration offices. On the other hand, the ever-changing pandemic-related circumstances in both the international students’ home countries and host countries heightened experiences of precarity and worries about their futures among those who had already migrated.²⁵ Nevertheless, many countries introduced measures to offer permanent status to international students, such as the Temporary Residence to Permanent Residence Pathways in Denmark and financial support, such as Canada Emergency Student Benefit, to mitigate the financial impacts of the pandemic on students and new graduates.

²² Government of the United Kingdom, [Tuberculosis tests for visa application](#), webpage (2022).

The list of countries under the “differential evidence requirement” is available at www.gov.uk/student-visa/money.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hans Lundin and Lars Geschwind, [Exploring tuition fees as a policy instrument of internationalisation in a welfare state – the case of Sweden](#), *European Journal of Higher Education* (November 2021); Benjamin Dodman, [Taking universal out of university: Why foreign student fees challenge France’s education model](#), *France24*, 20 January 2019.

²⁵ Amrita Hari, Luciara Nardon and Hui Zhang, [A transnational lens into international student experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic](#), *Global Networks* (June 2021).



Conclusion

The migration decision-making process is often regarded as an outcome of migrants' rational and one of many highly complex decisions. From this perspective, international student migration is regarded as the net result of the interplay between costs and benefits, in particular the probability of higher wages after the completion of studies and acquisition of permanent residency abroad. What is often taken for granted is that migrating to a new country is costly and requires a substantial financial commitment, which not everyone can afford. The market for international student mobility has proven to be good business for a wide range of general and niche industries in both countries of origin and destination. From education providers to third-party education consultancies acting as middlemen, to travel agencies and relocation services – such expenses form a basic checklist for those who intend to study overseas. On top of these private institutional requirements, we also have the State's share of profit from these movements, through study visas and documentary requirements (which include, among others, proof of financial capacity or a security bond). Due to such financial prerequisites, many potential international students are not able to migrate for higher education despite their aspirations to do so. In order to address the financial disadvantage position of the talented international students, many developed countries have initiated fully funded government scholarship programmes that target developing countries in particular, such as the Australian Awards, the Fulbright Foreign Student Program (United States) and Chevening Scholarships (United Kingdom).

The list of requirements necessary for the visa "project" alone is a test of ingenuity and grit. It also goes to show that cost is not only financial. It can include investments of time, effort (physical and otherwise) and resourcefulness. The lack of coordination among government agencies

and institutions in sending countries and the bulk of requirements being asked by destination countries has created an environment where these non-monetary costs are overwhelming enough such that it has created a need to delegate these tasks to private service providers, such as education agencies, thereby monetizing the cost of the time, legwork and planning/organization involved in the application process. This has led to the demand for agencies as brokers in the process. Over the years, we have seen incremental improvements in government online platforms with the goal of – as one senior analyst from the IRCC puts it – "making it simple enough that you don't need someone else to do it for you", highlighting individual agency. Information on the steps to follow during the application process have become more intuitive. The use of context-specific questions has made the visa application webpages of France and Canada more "information-compact", thus avoiding sending users and inquiries to different pages for information. Users can choose their respective applicant profiles and are given the appropriate information on how to proceed.

There are still things that leave much to be desired, especially in justifying the high costs being levied on aspiring foreign and international students. As technology improves and drives costs down, those who choose to venture into the foreign study application process as one of the many experiences an international student will go through, the high costs should at least offer ease of the process, or shorter waiting times for application results. As the application is a tedious process due to the preparation required, it should not be prolonged so much that lives and livelihoods are disrupted to a "point of no return", only to accommodate extensive periods of waiting related to visa decision waiting times, and following full and partial closures of essential businesses, including the institutions facilitating visa processing, during the pandemic.



Will we lose our doctors? Migration plans of Polish medical students¹

Maciej Duszczyk, Dominika Pszczółkowska, Kamil Matuszczyk and Sara Bojarczuk²

The mobility of highly skilled persons is a universal phenomenon of the present time. Within this phenomenon, the migration of medical personnel deserves particular interest and explanation. The mobility of this professional group is going to continue and likely rise in the coming years because of competition between States suffering from shortages of doctors and other medical staff. The migration of highly skilled people, including doctors, have specific expectations for migration. For instance, in the case of doctors, besides salaries, other equally important factors include the opportunity to gain skills and undertake employment in the preferred specialization, the organization of the health-care system and employment conditions in the country of destination, and especially working time, including on-duty time.

According to forecasts, member States of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) alone will experience a shortage of approximately 400,000 doctors by 2030.³ This may contribute to increased inequalities in access to health care in Europe and worldwide.⁴ Among doctors working in

26 OECD member States in 2017, 16 per cent were educated abroad, and the number has been growing.⁵ However, there are significant differences between OECD States in this regard. In 2017, the highest rates of doctors born abroad were recorded in Israel (57.8%) and – among European States – Ireland (42.3%) and Norway (39.7%). Poland, with a rate of 1.9 per cent, was fourth from last (ibid:86). The pandemic will intensify the trend to supplement medical personnel with migrant employees.

In such a context, Poland is likely to be under severe pressure. It already has the fewest doctors in the European Union – 2.4 per 1,000 residents, which is lower than the European Union average of 3.5.⁶ This is coupled with a rapidly ageing population and a continuous outflow of medical personnel (doctors, nurses and midwives, among others) after Poland's accession to the European Union.⁷ Poland's membership in the Union and the highly rated level of education at Polish medical universities mean that doctors migrating to countries in the European Economic Area do not have to undertake or undergo lengthy procedures for the recognition of their qualifications.

The emigration potential of Polish medical university graduates

Even though the migration of medical personnel is very often commented upon in the media and

¹ This paper was written as part of the research project, "Migration plans of medical students and their implementation. Will they really leave?", financed by the National Science Centre of Poland, within the OPUS programme (contract no: UMO-2020/39/B/HS5/00464).

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³ Richard Scheffler and Daniel Arnold, *Projecting shortages and surpluses of doctors and nurses in the OECD: What looms ahead*, *Health Economics, Policy and Law*, 14(2):274–290 (April 2019).

⁴ OECD, *Contribution of migrant doctors and nurses to tackling COVID-19 crisis in OECD countries*, policy response to COVID-19, May 2020.

⁵ OECD, *Recent Trends in International Migration of Doctors, Nurses and Medical Students* (Paris, 2019), p. 5.

⁶ OECD, *Health at a Glance 2021: OECD Indicators* (Paris, 2021).⁷

⁷ Piotr Żuk, Paweł Żuk and Justyna Lisiewicz-Jakubaszko, *Labour migration of doctors and nurses and the impact on the quality of health care in Eastern European countries: The case of Poland*, *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 30(2):307–320 (June 2019).



by politicians in Poland, little scientific research has been carried out, so far, to investigate the migration potential of medical university graduates.

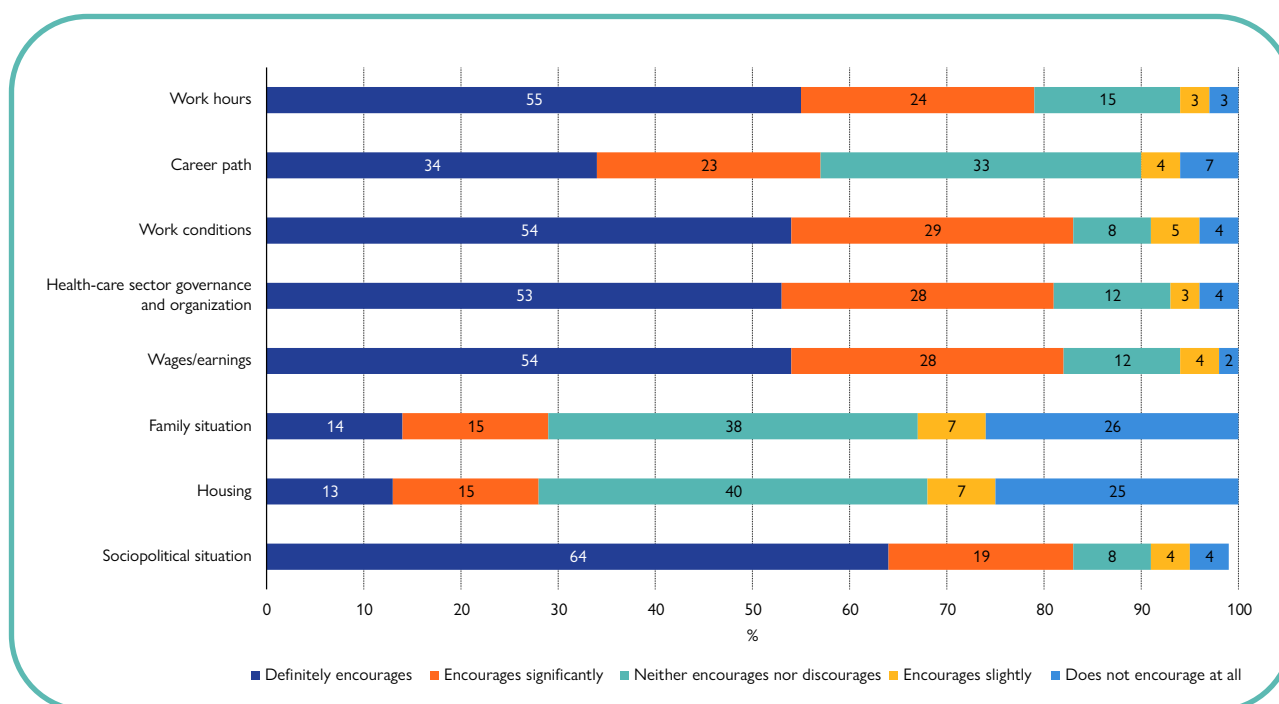
Through an online survey among Polish students in their last year of medical studies, we investigated the factors encouraging young doctors to leave Poland. The survey was conducted in February 2022 at four large Polish medical universities—one each in Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk and Białystok. A total of 205 Polish students completed the questionnaire. Among the respondents were 125 women and 80 men, which mirrors the gender balance among medical students and doctors in Poland. The survey link was emailed to students by their universities and advertised through student councils' social media accounts.

An initial question about the quality of public health care revealed that future doctors were very critical of the situation in Poland: 76 per cent believed that the state of the country's health care was bad or very bad from an employee's

perspective and even more – 82 per cent – as experienced by patients. Respondents assessed the probability that they would emigrate on an 11-point Likert scale, and four groups were identified. Those who reported the highest probability of emigrating (8–10 on the scale) constituted 20 per cent of the sample; those with a medium probability of considering emigration (5–7 on the scale) made up 34 per cent; and those with a low likelihood of migrating (1–4 on the scale) constituted 37 per cent. Only 9 per cent of respondents reported that they certainly would not leave (0 on the scale).

Respondents reported the sociopolitical situation and health sector work conditions in Poland as the two most important factors related to wanting to leave the country. Other significant factors that discouraged participants from pursuing medical careers in Poland were the lower wages, the organization and governance of the public health-care system and the long work hours.

Figure 1. Push factors and the degree to which they encourage respondents to leave Poland



Note: The graph shows the percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the survey question, "To what degree do the following factors encourage you to leave Poland?" Some factors do not have a 100-per-cent total due to rounding.



Open-ended questions provided further insight into what exactly the respondents had in mind when they chose the sociopolitical situation response. Several respondents underlined homophobia, the lack of marriage and adoption rights for homosexual couples, and the illegality of abortion. Such were rather the concerns of educated Poles from large cities.⁸ Other respondents mentioned issues more particularly related to working in the medical profession and dominant attitudes among the public towards medical staff – namely patients’ lack of respect for their doctors and the misconception that doctors are responsible for the dysfunctionalities of the health-care system. These findings were in line with the degree to which respondents agreed with the statement, “Hate speech directed at doctors significantly increases their will to emigrate”. A nearly unanimous 93 per cent reported that they either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement, while only 3 per cent were of the opposite opinion. The inclusion of the question regarding hate speech in the survey was prompted by public debates on the matter that had taken place in Poland in the months and years preceding the study. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2017, for example, young doctors went on strike to protest their low pay and the understaffing of hospitals. At the time of the survey, in addition, a government proposal to increase the accountability and culpability of doctors in cases of malpractice was the subject of heated public debate. Several survey respondents mentioned regulations concerning the legal responsibility of doctors as a factor that might be pushing them out of Poland.

Respondents’ migration plans were placed rather far into the future: Asked about what stage in

their careers they were planning to leave the country, most respondents envisioned that they would do it after completing their specialization training (which means several years after graduation) or after their internship (about a year after graduation). Very few respondents wanted to leave immediately after graduation or the national medical final exams (Lekarski Egzamin Koncowy (LEK)). Despite most of the respondents not having any significant personal connections that could facilitate the migration process, a significant percentage had already started preparing for their eventual departure from the country. Most notably, 45 per cent had started studying the language of their target destination country, with the most frequently considered destination countries being Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Norway.

Most (58%) of the respondents could not predict how long their intended migration would last. For those who could, the largest group (25%) planned to stay abroad for 10 years or longer. Few respondents gave answers suggesting that the migration would last less than two years.

Migration and the COVID-19 pandemic

The migration potential of medical staff in recent years may well have been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and how the public health system dealt with this challenge. Our survey, which targeted Polish medical students specifically, aimed to gauge the potential impact on the migration plans of future doctors. An analysis of existing literature shows that similar research has not been conducted before, with the exception of one study carried out in Ireland.⁹ The said study demonstrated the occurrence of

⁸ Centre for Public Opinion Research (Centrum Badań Opinii Społecznej (CBOS)), *Stosunek Polaków do osób homoseksualnych [The attitude of Poles towards homosexual people]*, Komunikat z Badań [Research Communication], No. 121 (2021) (in Polish).

⁹ Niamh Humphries, Jenifer Creese, John Paul Byrne and John Connell, *COVID-19 and doctor emigration: the case of Ireland*, *Human Resources for Health*, 19(29):1–10 (March 2021).



at least two migration strategies among doctors in the front lines of the fight against the pandemic, referred to as “COVID returners” and “COVID would-be emigrants”. The qualitative research revealed attitudes of patriotism among Irish doctors employed abroad, which translated into decisions to migrate back to Ireland shortly after the pandemic. On the other hand, having worked in Ireland during the pandemic and, especially, experiencing the inefficiency of Poland’s public health services, reinforced the desire of some physicians to leave the country.

To what extent has the experience of working in a COVID-19 ward influenced the migration plans of medical students in Poland? According to the ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science of October 2020, students at medical universities were allowed to complete compulsory internships in COVID-19 wards. The rectors of the medical universities also created lists of students interested in volunteering during their free time. Students were paid no less than 200 per cent of the minimum salary for work in the position which they occupied. There is no official data showing the scale of interest in such placements among medical students.

According to 61 per cent of the students surveyed, the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic “increased” or “greatly increased” the likelihood of Polish medical students emigrating. Only 3 per cent of respondents indicated that the pandemic decreased the likelihood of medical graduates leaving Poland.

Only one in five (22%) of the surveyed students had worked in a COVID-19 ward, with 35 per cent of them reporting that the experience increased the likelihood of them going abroad to work. Nobody stated that it decreased such likelihood. Among the reasons they cited for considering finding employment outside the

country were organizational chaos, the lack of ward equipment, higher mortality rates in Poland and the liabilities that even unqualified staff are subject to.

At the same time, analysis of the key factors on medical university students leaving Poland shows that the experience during the COVID-19 pandemic is only an additional factor pushing their emigration. Factors related to the political and social situation in Poland and work conditions in Polish hospitals prove to be key.

Conclusion

On the migratory map of the world, Poland is transforming from an emigration into an immigration State. As a result of economic immigration and the influx of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine, the proportion of foreigners in Poland is approaching 10 per cent. At the same time, however, emigration still exceeds immigration among medical sector workers. According to data from the National Chamber of Physicians, nearly 27,000 certificates of qualifications (a requirement for those who wish to undertake employment abroad) were issued to Polish doctors in the years 2004 to 2020.¹⁰ Although their annual numbers have been decreasing (from around 1,200 in 2010 to nearly 600 in 2020), factors pushing Polish doctors to leave the country are still very strong, as our survey demonstrates. Very interestingly, this trend is not primarily related to the higher levels of remuneration they can get elsewhere but, rather, to the political and social situation in Poland, especially hate speech towards doctors, as well as working conditions in Polish health-care institutions.

¹⁰ Alicja Domagała, Marcin Kautsch, Aleksandra Kulbat and Kamila Parzonka, *Exploration of estimated emigration trends of Polish health professionals*, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(2):940 (January 2022).



It is therefore necessary to consider measures to stop the emigration of medical staff from Poland and increase the number of practising doctors. From the perspective of meeting the expectations of young doctors, improving work conditions is crucial. These new physicians expect to be able to combine work and personal life. They do not want to repeat the model of previous generations, who were forced to work several jobs and were thus exposed to very rapid professional burnout. It is therefore necessary to reorganize the health-care system so that it is possible to reduce the number of hours spent at work while maintaining the trend of rising wages. Another element in the health-care system in need of improvement is the social relations between younger and more senior doctors in hospitals. Young doctors want to be treated as partners by older colleagues and are increasingly protesting against being exploited, especially during their internship and specialization periods. An action in a completely different category that could potentially have the desired effect is the involvement of the Government and medical chambers in combating hate speech directed against doctors. They need far-reaching support so that perpetrators of verbal and physical attacks do not go unpunished. Public campaigns to increase trust in doctors would also be useful. The continuing outflow of Polish doctors has necessitated the decision to make up for the shortfall with doctors from abroad, particularly from Eastern European countries, including Ukraine. The number of physicians practising in Poland who do not have Polish citizenship exceeds 2,000. Most of them come from Ukraine (over 700) and Belarus (over 400). By the end of 2020, the law on the recognition of the professional qualifications of doctors from countries outside the European Union was significantly liberalized. The main change was granting these doctors the possibility of taking

up employment in a medical institution without having to formally complete the procedure of recognition of qualifications obtained in a non-European Union country. The liberalization of regulations has resulted in an increased interest among foreigners to take up employment in the medical profession. It is, however, smaller than expected. In 2021, the number of foreign medical professionals increased by approximately 15 per cent.

The legislation was again amended after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the welcoming of more than 1.5 million Ukrainian refugees in Poland, which resulted in an increased demand for medical services. Pursuant to the Law of 12 March 2022 on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in Connection with the Armed Conflict on the Territory of Ukraine, Ukrainian citizens holding medical qualifications from countries outside of the European Union may be granted permission to practice medicine or be granted a conditional right to practice medicine for a period of 18 months. However, the main challenge of being required to speak Polish remains, which is impossible to solve in the short term. Doctors from Ukraine who are not fluent in Polish could nonetheless help relieve the burden on the health-care system by providing services to the Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities, whose numbers in Poland are estimated to be around 2.4 million. The key dilemma to be resolved, however, is the level of integration of doctors from Ukraine in Poland. If they are fully integrated into the Polish health-care system, they are more likely to stay in Poland. A possible negative aspect to this is that it limits the health-care capacity in the sending country and may constitute a brain drain. Ukrainian doctors' skills are now, and will be in the future, very much needed in the country for it to function properly after the war.



Integration of human mobility in the green economy and related policies in the IGAD region¹

Tamara Ulla, Noora Mäkelä and Jyri Jäntti²

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)³ region, located in the East and Horn of Africa, is one of the areas on the African continent that are most vulnerable to climate variability and change, with two thirds of the region in the category of “arid or semi-arid lands”.⁴ The countries in the region are severely affected by slow- and sudden-onset weather and climatic processes and events, such as environmental and land degradation, drought, water-level changes, rainfall variability, floods, landslides and storms. These degrade ecosystems, reduce crop yields and destroy habitable areas, livelihoods, jobs, business premises and other infrastructure.

The different forms of human mobility⁵ to, from and within the region reflect the range of complex drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their homes and countries of origin. It is anticipated that the number of people migrating and people at risk of displacement will increase in the coming years.

There exists a wide range of instruments and policies at the regional and national levels that are relevant to human mobility and climate change. There is also a growing recognition of human mobility in green economy-related⁶ policies, but these policies are insufficient in the face of climate and mobility trends.

However, green economy policies can provide a framework to combine aspects of environmental protection and human mobility and take advantage of the contributions that human mobility can make to sustainable development in a concrete way. Considering the severity of the effects of climate change in the IGAD region, the enhancement of this nexus becomes even more timely and relevant.

This paper builds on a study commissioned by the IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa and was conducted in collaboration with the Regional Collaboration Centre (RCC) Kampala of the UNFCCC and the East African Development Bank (EADB). The study built on a mixed-methods approach to map the integration (or lack thereof) of human mobility in climate change and green economy-related policies and assessed the gaps and barriers impeding this integration. Additionally, it identified which green economy sectors offered the greatest opportunities to integrate mobile populations in the region.

¹ The study was commissioned by IOM under a Joint Programme: *Addressing Drivers and Facilitating Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change in the IGAD Region*, funded by the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

² Tamara Ulla is an independent project manager and evaluation consultant. Noora Mäkelä is a programme coordinator at the IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa. Jyri Jäntti is a climate change specialist for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Regional Collaboration Centre in Kampala.

³ One of the eight United Nations regional economic communities, comprising the Member States of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Uganda.

⁴ IGAD, *The IGAD Region* section (n.d.).

⁵ Mobility includes displacement, migration and planned relocation. As used in paragraph 14(f) of the Cancun Climate Change Adaptation Framework (created through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)), displacement is understood as the primarily forced movement of persons; migration, as the primarily voluntary movement of persons; and planned relocation, as the planned process of settling persons or groups of persons to a new location. Consequently, the term “migration” also covers labour migration.

⁶ A green economy is one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In that sense, a green economy is low-carbon, resource-efficient, socially inclusive, and protects and enhances biodiversity and ecosystem services. (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication – A Synthesis for Policy Makers* (Nairobi, 2011).)



Green economy policies and human mobility in the IGAD region

Relevant global policies and frameworks to human mobility and climate change include Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, among others.

The existing frameworks, norms and standards in international law, in particular international human rights and humanitarian laws, provide protection of the rights of people moving because of climate change, as they do to any human being.⁷

These are complemented by regional instruments that contain provisions tailored to the specific needs and concerns of each region. These include the African Union's Agenda 2063, as well as other African Union and IGAD frameworks and strategies, such as the 1969 Refugee Convention of the Organization of African Unity; the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention); the African Union Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018–2030); the IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework; IGAD Regional Migration Action Plan 2015–2020; and the IGAD Protocols on Free Movement of Persons and on Transhumance adopted in June 2021 by the IGAD Council of Ministers.

The IGAD countries have so far shown a strong regional commitment to climate action. This is portrayed by all IGAD member States having signed the Paris Agreement, submitted their first nationally determined contributions (NDCs), as well as national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) and/or national adaptation plans (NAPs). Additionally, the region has positioned itself among the parties that have integrated human mobility considerations more prominently in their NDCs, NAPs and NAPAs.

Regardless of the high adoption of NDCs and NAPAs, only three specific green economy policies were identified in IGAD countries. Therefore, a wider range of policies were covered by the analysis, including national development plans and other environment and climate-related policies. Almost all of the policies and strategies analysed had references to human mobility, showing high levels of awareness of the issue. However, majority of documents assessed did not perceive or draw an explicit link between climate change, environmental degradation and human mobility in the face of climate and mobility trends. Most did not include a wider concept of human mobility, overlooking many aspects of migration such as circular and labour migration, human mobility as an adaptation strategy to the adverse effects of climate change and a potential contributor to green economic growth.

⁷ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Mr Felipe Gonzáles Morales, at the seventy-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly (A/77/189), 19 July 2022.



Table 1. Green economy-related policies analysed in the IGAD region, inclusive of references and types of mobility

Scope (country/region)	Year	Policy	Reference to human mobility	Type of human mobility
Djibouti	2006	National Adaptation Programme of Action		Migration
	2008	Action Plan for Capacity-building in Sustaining Environmental Management		-
	2011	Strategy and Action Plan for the Implementation of the Great Green Wall		Relocation/ Migration
	2014	Vision Djibouti 2035		Displacement/ Migration
	2017	Nationally Determined Contribution		-
Ethiopia	2011	Climate Resilient Green Economy (Green Economy Strategy)		Migration
	2019	Climate Resilient Green Economy National Adaptation Plan (NAP)		Displacement/ Migration/ Relocation
	2021	Ten-year Development Plan: A Pathway to Prosperity		Migration
	2021 (1st, updated)	Nationally Determined Contribution		Migration
Kenya	2008	Kenya Vision 2030		Migration
	2016	Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan		Migration
	2017	Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy		Displacement
	2017	National Adaptation Plan		Displacement/ Migration
	2020 (1st, updated)	Nationally Determined Contribution		Displacement
Somalia	2013	National Adaptation Programme of Action		Displacement/ Migration/ Relocation
	2019	National Environment Policy		Displacement
	2020	Somalia National Development Plan 2020–2024		Displacement/ Migration
	2021 (1st, updated)	Nationally Determined Contribution		Displacement



South Sudan	2016	National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change		Displacement
	2018	South Sudan National Development Strategy		Displacement
	2018	First State of Environment and Outlook Report		Displacement
	2021 (2nd)	Nationally Determined Contribution		Displacement/ Migration
	2021	National Adaptation Plan		Displacement/ Migration/ Relocation
Sudan	2006	National Forestry Policy Statement		Displacement
	2016	National Adaptation Plan		Displacement/ Migration
	2020	Sudan First State of Environment and Outlook Report		Displacement/ Migration
	2021	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper		Displacement/ Migration
	2021 (interim)	Nationally Determined Contribution		Other
Uganda	2007	National Adaptation Programme of Action		Displacement/ Migration
	2015	National Climate Change Policy		Relocation/ Displacement
	2017	Green Growth Development Strategy		Migration
	2017	Uganda Vision 2040		Displacement/ Migration
	2021 (interim)	Nationally Determined Contribution		-
IGAD region	2007	IGAD Environment and Natural Resources Strategy		Displacement/ Migration/ Relocation
	2019	Kampala Declaration on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities in the IGAD Region		Displacement/ Migration
	2019	IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability		Displacement

Legend:

- Existent; all elements of human mobility mentioned.
- Existent; some elements of human mobility mentioned.
- Non-existent; no element of human mobility mentioned.
- Yet uncertain, as document is yet to be finalized.

Source: IOM and RCC Kampala, Integration of human mobility in Green Economy and related policies in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region – Summary report (Nairobi, IOM, and Kampala, RCC Kampala, 2022).

Note: A desk review of 24 existing policies was conducted (three from each country and three regional policies). In addition, the latest Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), National Adaptation Plan (NAP) or National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) documents per country were reviewed. However, for Ethiopia, the Green Economy policy selected for the desk review also serves as the NAP; for Somalia, the NAPA was selected for the desk review due to the lack of access to other relevant documents.



Gaps and barriers to integrating human mobility in green economy development

Lack of specific evidence and institutional capacities related to the green economy and its nexus with human mobility appears as the main barrier for policymaking. Lack of data and evidence is a recurring challenge regarding several aspects related to mobility (e.g. remittances, skills and competencies of mobile populations), and there is a specific lack of research linking mobility with climate change and disasters, or focusing specifically on the green economy. This makes it difficult for governments to make evidence-based decisions. There is also an insufficient common understanding of what the green economy is and how mobility can be integrated into it in a mutually beneficial way.

While most of the policies analysed in this study include an implementation framework that, in many cases, delegates responsibilities to specific institutions, limited vertical and horizontal policy coherence appears as a challenge to the effective development of the green economy, both in terms of policymaking and policy implementation. This occurs at several levels: between the global agenda and regional and national priorities, but also between initiatives at the regional and national levels and the needs of citizens and communities.

This finding is in line with results of the global mapping carried out by IOM for the Task Force on Displacement in 2018.⁸ They indicated that efforts were being made to create synergies between climate and environmental issues and human mobility, and that policy coherence was enhanced chronologically. Regardless, gaps related to policy coherence and synergies still existed during the policy development process.

Another key challenge concerns the design and implementation of green economy and related policies typically involving different levels of governments, ministries or agencies within the administrative apparatus. Insufficient or inefficient coordination, weak governance structures and, in some cases, overlapping mandates often lead to duplication of efforts and mismatched and conflicting policy guidance. Even when comprehensive policies are in place, the lack of implementation plans and presence – or allocation of resources emerges as a key barrier for change. Additionally, the lack of political prioritization of green economy-related policies hinders the capacities of governments and international partners to mobilize additional resources keeping implementation underbudgeted.

Partnerships and stakeholder coordination and collaboration are essential elements for efficient and effective policymaking and implementation. Lack of inclusion in the policy development phase creates issues starting from policy awareness and buy-in. Notably, existing policies have been designed largely without involving mobile populations and private sector actors. By overlooking the peculiarities of the different stakeholders, and without indicating clear provisions and responsibilities, the implementation of policy in practice becomes more difficult.

Another barrier is related to access to resources for the incipient green economy sectors that are linked to mobile populations. Unclear definitions of green economy and inclusivity, combined with the lack of political prioritization and awareness regarding the potential of green economy, diminish the potential for multilevel collaboration and resource mobilization. The limitedness of investment opportunities and incentives for private sector and diaspora actors, combined with the lack of adequate channels

⁸ IOM, *Mapping human mobility and climate change in relevant national policies and institutional frameworks*, analysis report (Geneva, 2018).



to move resources, further reduces access to them. In turn, the lack of funding has various repercussions on the small- and medium-scale enterprise sector, mainly preventing it from scaling up, developing sustainably and successfully engaging larger numbers of people.

In addition, although business innovations working with mobile populations or vulnerable groups, or even arising from these groups, are increasingly incipient, there are still insufficient incentives to promote a greater supply of opportunities of this kind. In addition, even when these initiatives do exist, their development, professionalization and visibility are restricted by a regulatory environment that fails to provide cohesive conditions for their optimal functioning.

Deficient access to or availability of adequate skills and job development opportunities also reduces the capacities of mobile populations and host communities to participate in the green economy. This absence of specific skills in the prospective labor force hinders the potential for new green economic activities. Correspondingly to the lack of skills, there are insufficient productive job opportunities within green economy sectors with high growth potential, such as agriculture. Therefore, host communities often lack decent employment opportunities and receive migrant workforce missing the skills needed for green economic activities, creating a barrier to development.

Simultaneously, limited job opportunities in places of origin act as a push factor, particularly among young people from rural contexts, generating a vicious circle. People migrate to urban areas and take low-paid or informal jobs that leave them in a situation of vulnerability that is sometimes even worse than their initial one.

Opportunities in incorporating human mobility in green economy development

Climate-smart agriculture, livestock and the food sector; clean and renewable energies; forestry and natural resource management; trade, circular economy and manufacturing; and water and waste management were among the economy sectors identified as having the greatest viability for green economy development in the region.

First of all, there is a need to strengthen the evidence on the links between the adverse effects of climate change, as well as that of human mobility and the green economy sector, to enhance the design and implementation of green economy and related policies.

Green investments within these sectors can result in improved productivity and profitability through the adoption of climate-smart solutions and sustainable models. Also, by facilitating the transition to a green economy, investment can lead to the creation of new jobs, thus reducing drivers⁹ for forced or irregular mobility and support mobility as an adaptation strategy for when people will eventually need to re-enter labour markets. This is particularly prominent for youth, as the population in the region is mostly young, and experiences, along with women, high unemployment rates.¹⁰ Additionally, with agriculture being the region's largest economic sector and largely employing women, adopting

⁹ "The implications of climate change for human mobility vary according to the ways that climate and environmental changes interact with the multiple drivers of migration, for different social groups, in particular times and places. Many of the socioeconomic factors which lead to vulnerability to climate change and are exacerbated by its impacts, such as inequality and a lack of employment opportunities, can also act as drivers for human mobility." (IOM, *People on the Move in a Changing Climate – Linking Policy, Evidence and Action* (Geneva, 2022).)

¹⁰ The IGAD region is diverse and densely populated, occupying a landmass of 21 per cent of the continent where the number of inhabitants in 2018 was 271 million and is still expected to grow. Seventy per cent of the population is more than 35 years old. Youth unemployment in the region is high (exceeding 20% in countries with high unemployment among the general population), and even in countries where youth unemployment rates are lower, such as Uganda and Ethiopia, poverty rates remain high. (IGAD, *IGAD State of the Region Report (Popular version)* (Djibouti, 2022).)



more holistic measures that address gender inequalities and youth participation – such as underrepresentation in the planning and implementation of rural development projects – can contribute to more inclusive economic models. To achieve this, stronger advocacy for policy reforms and building a suitable environment for green and sustainable economic development will be necessary.

The development of viable green economic sectors presents unique opportunities for the development of sustainable productive enterprises. Existing challenges related to legal barriers and access to financing can actually be a point of attraction that would lead to the channeling of greater private sector investment in the green economy, as well as diaspora engagement. The increased involvement of the private sector can enhance climate action through green job creation, additional resources, capacity-building through the provision of resilience-enhancing skills to mobile populations and vulnerable groups, as well as by promoting adaptive technologies and business models. The promotion of entrepreneurship is also a viable alternative in this regard, providing a platform to engage mobile populations in the green sector.

Knowledge and skills development linked to green economic sectors with high potential for growth can improve the labour market integration of mobile populations and hasten green economy transition. This can enable participation in the green economy, helping reduce pressure on scarce resources and the environment, contributing towards social cohesion.

Diaspora members may use knowledge and skills they have gained abroad, including entrepreneurial and business experience to contribute to sustainable development. Some diaspora networks have been explicitly

organized around specific areas of expertise, such as agribusiness, providing a structure to mobilize skills and knowledge to their country of origin. Diaspora members may also be more willing to start or invest in businesses in less stable economic or political contexts than other foreign investors, as they have local networks to help them navigate the regulatory environment and are better positioned to identify untapped market niches. However, in cases where diaspora members are seen as competitors different set of difficulties may arise.

Education opportunities are needed for building skills and to close employment gaps. Educational institutions such as technical and vocational education and training centres are a relevant element for further development and professionalization of the growing entrepreneurial sector. An increased set of transferrable skills allows mobile populations and vulnerable groups to participate in a greater diversity of sectors, also improving their likelihood to succeed in productive projects or entrepreneurial undertakings.

According to a recent regional ILO study, incoming labour migration is regarded necessary to fill skills gaps and having the potential to facilitate the transfer of knowledge, technology and skills.¹¹ However, difficulties and inadequacies in labour market information systems and insufficient schemes to attract migrant workers, including temporary labour migrants hinder the transfer of skills and effective filling of skills gaps. This does not allow mobile populations to integrate properly and fully deploy their potential, including in the green economy.

¹¹ ILO, *The Potential of Skills Development and Recognition for Regulated Labour Mobility in the IGAD Region: A Scoping Study Covering Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda* (Geneva, 2020).



Mobile populations, climate change-affected communities, women and youth can also be engaged in the green economy through the implementation (by governments, development partners, civil society or the private sector) of initiatives that seek to train, support and strengthen these groups in sustainable livelihoods linked to the green economy. This can generate income beyond subsistence and foster employability. The potential increase in purchasing power, in addition to improved quality of life, can help alleviate the economic pressures that often trigger or drive human mobility. These build adaptive capacities and support efforts that aim to avert migration out of necessity but rather as a choice.

Suggested actions for accelerating green economy development and inclusivity in the IGAD region

The green economy can create resilience through adaptive actions and grow the economy through innovative mitigation actions. However, there is a need to strengthen evidence, skills and knowledge for inclusive green economy policymaking and service delivery. Mobile populations can play an important role in the development of the green economy if they are well integrated into the labour market and education systems, and policies enable targeted investments. These can be taken forward by enhancing a whole-of-government approach and policy coherence on human mobility, climate change and green economy nexus, as well as by building up an inclusive, whole-of-society approach through engagement, skills transfers and development of mobile populations in green economic development.



Training and mobility needs for the green transition

Sam Huckstep, Ipek Gençsü and Martina Castiglioni¹

Skills needs of the “green transition”

The Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (“the Paris Agreement”) legally binds governments to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. This requires a “green transition” to a low-carbon-emissions economy, a global task of unprecedented scale and speed now only in its early stages. The scale, pace and global simultaneity of the green transition present both considerable opportunities and immense challenges – among them that of skills bottlenecks. Few governments’ plans for attaining net-zero carbon emissions incorporate skills in sufficient depth. Even fewer have begun to consider the potential of, or need for, green-skilled labour mobility.

There is no universal definition of what constitutes a “green skill”² or “green job”. The most used is that provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which defines “green jobs” as “decent” jobs that “reduce the consumption of energy and raw materials, limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution, protect and restore ecosystems and enable enterprises and communities to adapt to climate change”.³ Different assessments of the green transition’s socioeconomic effects

use variations of this definition.⁴ This, and the difficulty of predicting how the transition will play out in different countries and sectors, results in divergent estimates of the numbers of jobs that will be created and destroyed as part of the transition.

Projections highlight the potentially high impacts of the green transition on job creation and destruction worldwide. One study suggests that 65 million jobs could be created globally by 2030 (versus 37 million destroyed).⁵ Estimates are, however, typically high-level, and there is limited certainty regarding both the types of skills required by employers and their availability. This makes it hard to establish where skills gaps may be present.⁶ Where in-depth local assessments have been conducted, however, it is often evident that skills gaps are emerging or foreseeable. Failure to anticipate and remedy skills gaps will create major bottlenecks that restrict a nation’s ability to meet its emissions reduction targets. In the United Kingdom, for example, it is estimated that 60,000 heat pump⁷ installers will be needed by 2030 if targets are to be met – and there were only 900 qualified installers as of 2019.⁸ Similarly,

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² One definition of “green skills” is “the abilities needed to live in, develop and support a society which aims to reduce the negative impact of human activity on the environment” (UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNEVOC), *Skills Development and Climate Change Action Plans: Enhancing TVET’s Contribution* (Paris, UNESCO, 2021)).

³ ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Greening with Jobs* (Geneva, 2018), p. 53.

⁴ For example, a European Union Joint Research Centre study uses the ILO definition of “green job” to forecast over 800,000 jobs created in the European Union by 2030 (see, e.g. Tommi Asikainen, Abdelfeteh Bitat, Erica Bol, Veronika Czako, Alain Marmier, Stefan Muench, Ingrida Murauskaitė-Bull, Fabiana Scapolo and Eckhard Stoermer, *The Future of Jobs is Green* (Luxembourg, European Union, 2021)). By contrast, a C40 Cities report tacitly defines “green job” as “any job that contributes to [climate risk] mitigation or adaptation”, leading to the prediction that Italy alone could create 1 million green jobs by 2030 (C40 Cities, *Technical summaries and methodology: Urban climate action – GHG and jobs potential for US, South African and Italian cities*, report (London, 2022)).

⁵ The New Climate Economy, *Unlocking the inclusive growth story of the 21st century: Accelerating climate action in urgent times*, report (Washington, D.C., 2018).

⁶ HSBC, *Skills for the low carbon transition*, report (London, HSBC and Vivid Economics, 2021).

⁷ Heat pumps are a renewable energy technology that heats (and cools) buildings by transferring heat from the outside.

⁸ Green Jobs Taskforce, *Report to Government, Industry and the Skills Sector* (London, Ministry for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2021).



as regards wind power in Europe, an energy CEO has described the limited size of the workforce as a “bottleneck of competence” in scaling up the number of wind projects.⁹ The challenge that Europe faces in filling this skills gap is likely to be exacerbated by wind power expansion elsewhere: The United States, in particular, is committed to expanding its wind power capacity, but with an inadequate domestic workforce, it is likely to seek to draw on the already-stretched European labour market.¹⁰

In countries of the Global North, filling skills gaps domestically is likely to be challenging. Many of the jobs required – such as in solar panel installation or insulation retrofitting – may be unattractive to nationals due to their manual nature.¹¹ Crucially, demographic shifts in ageing populations will furthermore see increased retirements from existing workforces and smaller numbers of workers entering key sectors at a crucial time.¹² In the Global South, despite the projected rapid population growth,¹³ a lack of specialized trainers and a lack of investment in systems necessary for training green-skilled workers are also likely to see skills training scale up too slowly to meet transition needs. In this context, a combination of green skill training and labour migration is likely to be necessary to avoid skills bottlenecks that will slow the green transition.

⁹ Camilla Naschert, ‘Bottleneck of competence’: Enel Green Power CEO wary of talent shortages, article on the S&P Global website, 25 January 2022.

¹⁰ Nick Ferris, Investment in skills is key to realising the clean energy transition, article on the Energy Monitor website, 30 April 2021.

¹¹ More research regarding public perceptions of green jobs is required. In focus group discussions commissioned in the United Kingdom by Green Alliance, some participants expressed doubt regarding the physical nature of some green jobs (Public First, *Good, green jobs: How to engage the public on green jobs*, report (Long Eaton, United Kingdom, 2021)).

¹² The European Union, for example, will have 95 million fewer working-age people in 2050 compared to 2015, decreasing the share of working-age population from 60 per cent to 52 per cent. This will inevitably impact the supply of green-skilled workers, even if the total percentage working in green jobs increases significantly. (Charles Kenny and George Yang, *Can Africa help Europe avoid its looming aging crisis?*, Working Paper 584 (Washington, D.C., Center for Global Development, 2021)).

¹³ Africa has the highest rate of population growth and is expected to house more than half the global population growth between now and 2050 (United Nations, *Population* section (2022)).

The green transition and migration

Reskilling and training migrants

While migrants comprise a relatively small part (around 5%) of the global workforce, their increased access to context-specific green skills training could play an important role in supporting the rapid development and expansion of local green sectors.¹⁴ Supporting green skills training for migrants is also important for reasons of equity. Many green jobs will require minimum qualifications – migrants may not have them or may hold unrecognized certifications. Lack of access to burgeoning green sectors would both harm migrants’ financial security and reduce the flow of needed workers into vital areas.¹⁵

Projects in this area already exist, but they are thus far relatively small. In Germany, the social enterprise, LIFE e.V., provides university-educated migrant women with online training, supporting them to acquire the knowledge necessary for managerial roles in green sectors.¹⁶ In Türkiye, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) is working with the Gaziantep Chamber of Industry to train Syrian migrants in green and digital skills, providing the local labour market with in-demand skills and migrants with work opportunities.¹⁷ More opportunities for such work are available. In Colombia, for example, Venezuelan migrants with existing skills could take up jobs in the green transition after some

¹⁴ Nathaniel Mason, Ipek Gençsü, Joseph Feyertag and Alexandra Löwe, *Migration for climate action: How labour mobility can help the green transition*, working paper (London, Overseas Development Institute, 2022).

¹⁵ Joanna Hofman, Michaela Bruckmayer, Katrin Feyerabend, Simon Larmour, Mark Reed and Lydia Lymperis, *Green Jobs and Skills Development for Disadvantaged Groups* (Cambridge, United Kingdom, RAND EUROPE, 2022).

¹⁶ LIFE Bildung Umwelt Chancengleichheit e.V., *Change: Arbeiten in Zeiten des Klimawandels eine deutschlandweite Weiterbildung für Frauen mit ausländischen Studienabschlüssen* [Change: Working in times of climate change, Germany-wide further training for women with foreign degrees], report (Berlin, 2022) (in German).

¹⁷ GIZ, *Promotion of Economic Prospects Programme*, brochure (Bonn, Germany, 2022).



retraining.¹⁸ Those who have already migrated are a potentially valuable resource in the green transition. The training options that have so far been implemented have been largely successful, but more training options – and more evaluations of existing and future training programmes – are needed.¹⁹ At the same time, migrants are a subset of the far larger population of individuals in need of retraining.

Internal migration

Many of the jobs created by the green transition will be located in areas and communities that have limited skill or workforce capacity to fill the labour needs.²⁰ Furthermore, workers with transferable skills – often developed in high-carbon-emitting industries – would often be located in areas other than the main beneficiaries of the green transition. Given that an equitable and efficient green transition will need to use, to the extent possible, the skills of workers currently in high-emitting industries, internal migration will be required. Some of this migration will occur organically through employers' relocation schemes; other movement will require State assistance, such as in the form of subsidies. In Ouarzazate, Morocco, for example, a solar photovoltaic project drew on mid-skilled workers from elsewhere in the country, as well as training a pool of local technicians who could then later migrate elsewhere in the country to support the country's solar-heavy renewable energy strategy.²¹ Governments can assist internal labour mobility by supporting the retraining and

relocation of workers through measures that include place-based subsidies; labour market gap assessments; and the funding of targeted training and apprenticeships. Where possible, inequitable brain-drain caused by geographic disparities in green investment should be avoided.²²

International migration

The green skills shortage is global. The green transition thus requires careful consideration of how and where the world's human capital can best be employed, with a focus on emissions reduction and adaptation to climate change. It is important to encourage arrangements and pathways for international labour mobility that allows for the development and deployment of skills that benefit sending and receiving countries and that centres on the agency of migrant workers, while also taking into account the urgency of climate mitigation and adaptation needs. Until training opportunities are significantly increased and there are more "green-skilled" workers available in sending countries' own labour markets, green-skilled emigration that outpaces the training of (new) workers may result in labour shortages in these countries. Where migrants' green skills can contribute to greater emissions reductions in receiving countries than they could have done back home, the migration can be regarded as a climate mitigation success – that is, a climate win-win benefiting both origin and destination countries. However, this will not always be the case. The attraction of crucial skills to areas with more funding but fewer transition needs than migrants' areas of origin can have a net negative effect on the global attainment of Paris Agreement targets. In some cases, green-skilled labour bottlenecks could conceivably contribute

¹⁸ Mason et al., *Migration for climate action*.

¹⁹ Hofman et al., *Green Jobs and Skills Development for Disadvantaged Groups*.

²⁰ The distributed renewable energy sector, for example, is likely to be particularly important in rural areas with few technical experts (see, e.g. Power for All, *Powering Jobs Census 2022: Focus on India*, fact sheet (San Francisco, California, 2022)). In the European Union, some regions – for example, those dependent on coal – will lose jobs to other regions with greater green prospects (Bertrand Piccard and Maroš Šefčovič, *Green jobs and the green transition: A long, bumpy but exciting journey*, article on the Euractiv website, 17 November 2022).

²¹ Michael Renner, *Rural renewable energy investments and their impact on employment*, STRENGTHEN Publication Series, Working Paper No. 1 (Geneva, ILO, 2018).

²² In the United Kingdom, for example, the less-developed north requires support to ensure that green jobs do not cluster in already-developed areas, driving further community degradation (Ed Birkett, Alex Luke and Phoebe Bunt, *Green jobs, red wall: How green industrial jobs can boost levelling up*, report (London, Onward, 2022)).



to increased dependence on fossil fuel energy sources, with long-term negative consequences.

The green transition produces a global public good: The stability of the climate is a good “whose benefit affects all citizens of the world.”²³ All countries have an interest in ensuring that their labour recruitment does not result in shortages of key skills in areas of origin. As such, even as the negative impacts of “brain drain” are said to be frequently overstated,²⁴ the green transition is one area in which it does present real risks – and to all parties. The migration of too many skilled workers can leave their areas of origin unable to meet their own transition needs – and because this harms the attainment of a global public good, both receiving and sending countries will suffer where this is the case.

Green skills partnerships and the migration quadruple win

The universal need for green-skilled workers and the fact that the green transition to which they contribute is a global public good, no matter where their work is conducted, make this a labour market area peculiarly well-suited to so-called “transnational skills and mobility partnerships” (TSMPs). A TSMP is “an agreement between institutions that aim to link up issues associated with skills and training placement, the recognition of qualifications and (circular) migration across different policy fields in such a way that this creates a fair distribution of benefits to key stakeholders”.²⁵ Among existing TSMP

models, the most widely known is the Global Skill Partnership (GSP). A migration partnership of this type (a) involves an ex-ante bilateral agreement that is (b) established between public and private institutions and (c) aims to link skill creation and skill mobility, such that (d) migrants, origin countries and destination countries all mutually benefit from the partnership. Pilots have thus far been managed by governments.

The GSP model, referenced in the 2018 Global Compact for Migration, uses a “two-track” approach.²⁶ A destination country funds training in the desired skills in an origin country. Some of those being trained are on the “away track” and will migrate to the destination country; their training may incorporate modules specific to the destination country, such as language courses and particular certifications. Others are on the “home track” and will remain in their own country and contribute to the domestic labour market. Several GSPs have already been undertaken, including the PALIM project between Morocco and Belgium and the YES project between Kosovo²⁷ and Germany (through GIZ).²⁸ GSPs, thus far, have been largely managed by State actors. In theory, such partnerships provide a “triple win”:

- (a) Trainees receive specialist training and either the opportunity to migrate to a better-paying labour market or skills that will ensure employment in their origin country. Because of these enhanced opportunities, interest in the training area may increase, growing the skill pool.
- (b) The country of origin receives subsidized education for part of its workforce; overseas

²³ For an explanation of “global public goods”, see Moya Chin, *What are global public goods?*, *Finance & Development* (December 2021). For the argument that climate stability constitutes a global public good, see, e.g. Michèle B. Bättig and Thomas Bernauer, *National institutions and global public goods: Are democracies more cooperative in climate change policy?*, *International Organization*, 63(2):281–308 (April 2009).

²⁴ For a response to “brain drain” arguments, see: Michael A. Clemens, *A case against taxes and quotas on highskill emigration*, *Journal of Globalization and Development*, 5(1):1–39 (May 2014).

²⁵ Michael Sauer and Jurica Volarević, *Transnational skills and mobility partnerships (TSMP): Contextual factors, conceptual design and application*, report (Gütersloh, Germany, Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020), p.12.

²⁶ United Nations General Assembly resolution on the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, adopted on 19 December 2018 (A/RES/73/195).

²⁷ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

²⁸ Hannah Postel, *CGD and the development of global skill partnerships*, report (Washington, D.C., Center for Global Development, 2022).



job opportunities for workers who may otherwise face domestic unemployment; remittances (from their migrant workers); and the possibility of experienced diaspora members later engaging in development activities.

- (c) The country of destination receives skilled workers that (i) it may not otherwise have been able to easily source and/or does so (ii) possibly at a lower cost than if it had trained workers domestically.

Conventional GSPs are intended to be equitable, with benefits for both origin and destination countries. The funding, destination country gains needed labour, while the sending country gains remittances, diaspora expertise and, through the “home track”, subsidized skills training for the domestic workforce. In the case of TSMPs focused on green skills, however, the funding country should have an unusually high interest in the success of “home track” trainees beyond usual equity and development considerations. While green activities are rapidly becoming more profitable, their primary value lies in their emissions-reduction capabilities. Emissions reduction is a global public good regardless of where it takes place. Therefore, with green skills, whose primary benefit when applied is the global public good of emissions reduction, the “triple win” becomes a “quadruple win”.

All countries have an interest in ensuring that green-skilled labour market bottlenecks are addressed, wherever they may be. Unaddressed bottlenecks slow the transition, resulting in higher emissions and higher warming-related adaptation costs for everyone. The “home track” is thus not merely an equity issue for funding countries; it also benefits these countries’ own citizens.

Putting green-skilled TSMPs into practice

Two green skill-focused TSMPs are currently in their early pilot stages:

- The Move_Green project sees an initial cohort of 36 young people trained in Morocco before their facilitated movement to Andalusia, where they will receive training in managerial and technical–vocational skills relevant to green sectors. The trainees will later return to Morocco, where they will be assisted as they join or start their own businesses in the green economy.²⁹
- A new project currently being prepared by IOM and private sector partners will see two hundred individuals per year trained in climate-smart agriculture technologies in Egypt, before being given the option of facilitated migration to the United Arab Emirates. The project provides Egypt’s growing climate-smart agriculture sector with subsidized skills development and provides the United Arab Emirates with skills vital to its food security in a changing climate. This is thus an *adaptation* rather than a *mitigation* pilot, but will nonetheless provide valuable lessons.³⁰

These aforementioned projects are in their initial stages and relatively small. Each has the potential to contribute to multiple development needs, among which are climate mitigation and/or adaptation; the reduction of poverty through job creation and downstream benefits; and food security. Testing more TSMP pilots in other sectors and other pairs of countries – and conducting rigorous evaluations – will

²⁹ International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), (E)Co-development for innovation and employment in green and circular economy between Andalusia and Morocco (Move_Green), project webpage (2022).

³⁰ Henry Gordon-Smith, UAE & Egypt will face a significant shortage of skilled labor for climate-smart farms. Here’s why that’s important, AgFunder News, 19 December 2022.



be important in scaling up the labour mobility options needed to meet the green transition's skills bottlenecks.

In designing TSMPs, multiple elements need to be considered if they are to succeed with maximum impact. The first key question concerns current and predicted skills gaps in destination and origin countries. Broad “green skills” are nebulous; furthermore, green sectors are developing and changing rapidly, and it is possible that large numbers of workers in new or unanticipated jobs may be needed in the coming decades. Predicting the categories of workers whose training would be most efficient from emissions-reduction and economic standpoints requires forecasting the sequence of events in green transitions in multiple sectors. For a GSP to be maximally beneficial, the skills being developed must be of use to both origin and destination countries. Some skill areas may be more valuable to those on one training “track” than to those on another (if at all). In Zimbabwe, for example, biogas and solar are identified as high-potential avenues, and a potential TSMP destination partner may be interested in partnering in one skill area, but not in the other.³¹ Fortunately, many “base” skills, such as engineering and mid-level technician skills, will continue to be in widespread demand, and can be built upon further through on-the-job training after the education component of a TSMP. Nonetheless, better data on current and future skills shortages, especially in origin countries, is urgently needed.

Second, origin countries should be chosen according to the developmental and emissions-reduction benefits that TSMP participation could bring. Countries anticipating population

increases, for example, should already prepare for increased energy demand and increased job needs. TSMP participation could facilitate low-emissions development pathways, addressing both issues. Countries with large fossil fuel industries, similarly, will (a) possess a high level of base skills, reducing training times; and (b) may benefit from assistance in facilitating a just transition in which workers in high-emission roles are reskilled – for equity, economic and stability reasons.

Third, origin and destination countries' accreditation systems must be well-aligned to allow easy skills recognition in the destination country. Where accreditation systems diverge significantly, harmonization may not be feasible within the green transition's urgent timeframes. Where education systems for green skills require significant investment to bring them to international standards, the scale-up of education pipelines (the training capacity for producing certain skills) must be balanced against the prevention of future national skills bottlenecks. Where education pipelines do not exist, scaling them up will take time, reducing access to trained professionals for movement in the short-term. However, not supporting them for scale-up could result in domestic bottlenecks in the future. The costs of training thus require further thought. Where green skills pipelines are underdeveloped, training infrastructure will need up-front investment. These costs will be amortized across the programme and may end up cheaper per trainee, but the funds may be harder to find in the short term. Where training pipelines are well developed, by contrast, TSMPs may be uneconomical for the funding country due to more developed domestic markets raising competition and other costs. Language presents a further barrier; where possible, TSMPs should be between countries with a shared language, reducing training times. Finally, for maximum

³¹ Kristen Wiebe, Tina Andersen, Moana Simas and Marek Harsdorff, *Measuring the socioeconomic impacts of climate policies to guide NDC enhancement and a just transition: Zimbabwe green jobs assessment report* (Geneva, United Nations Development Programme and International Labour Organization, 2021).



developmental impact, TSMPs should use flexible and well-designed visa schemes that respect the needs of both employers and migrants, as well as the rights of migrants.

Conclusion

If the green transition is to succeed at the pace and scale needed to meet the mitigation and adaptation aims of the Paris Agreement, new attention must be given to skills. A key part of developing and plugging the skills gaps is labour migration. To ensure that all countries avoid skills bottlenecks, a migration model that combines facilitating context-specific migration with training is likely to be the most equitable and most efficient. TSMPs should respond to anticipated skills gaps; be conscious of both developmental and emissions-reduction needs; and align TSMP partners to ease scaling. Such programmes offer a “quadruple win”, benefiting all parties and addressing multiple policy objectives. The green-skilled training and migration agenda is new, and more research and policy work are urgently needed.



Unlocking the potential of forecast-based remittances for anticipatory action

Beza Tesfaye and Ellen Reid¹

The impact of climate change on migration, including displacement, has driven demand for appropriate policy responses, as the effects on vulnerable regions grow. Central America is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions, with countries like Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala among the top ten countries in the world exposed to climate risks.² The primary risks of a warming planet for Central American countries include more frequent, stronger storms and more extreme rainfall patterns, contributing to drought conditions.³ These trends threaten agricultural livelihoods – the linchpin of rural economies in Central America – by eroding household assets and heightening socioeconomic vulnerabilities. The resulting vulnerabilities may, in turn, influence decisions to migrate either internally or internationally. One analysis predicts that climate change may indirectly increase the number of people arriving at the Mexico–United States border to 1.5 million annually.⁴

While the primary focus of United States policy vis-a-vis Central America has been to curtail northward migration, much less has been done to leverage opportunities brought by migration to address climate-related risks. With remittances representing close to a quarter of the GDP of Central American countries, this is a missed

opportunity.⁵ Studies point to global trends of remittances used for consumption and for post-crisis recovery. Yet making remittances available ahead of disasters to support anticipatory action – defined by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) as steps taken “to protect people before disaster strikes based on early warning or forecast” – may help mitigate disaster-related losses.⁶ For instance, research demonstrates that having cash ahead of a disaster is linked to improved well-being within households impacted by floods.⁷

Although the use of remittances for anticipatory action presents a new approach in climate migration responses, it should not be seen as a substitute for humanitarian or climate finance commitments from high-income countries. Simply helping align remittance flows with exposure to risks may allow communities to weather the worst impacts of disasters. Our organization, Mercy Corps, along with Remitly, a private remittance provider, and the Institute for the Study of International Migration, is leading a pilot to test a forecast-based remittance service during hurricane season in Guatemala. This article presents insights from a qualitative assessment and preliminary implications of this initiative for programming and policy.

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² Sönke Kreft, David Eckstein and Inga Melchior, *Global Climate Risk Index 2017*, briefing paper (Berlin, Germanwatch e.V., 2016).

³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change: Summary for policymakers*, (contribution of Working Group III to the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) (Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2022).

⁴ Abraham Lustgarten, *The great climate migration*, *The New York Times*, 23 July 2020.

⁵ Manuel Orozco, *Migrant remittances to Central America and options for development*, research paper (Vancouver, Canada, World Refugee and Migration Council, 2021), p. 5.

⁶ IFRC, *Early Warning, Early Action* section (2022).

⁷ Ashley Pople, Ruth V. Hill, Stefan Dercon and Ben Brundkhorst, *Anticipatory cash transfers in climate disaster response*, Working Paper WPS/2021-07 (Oxford, United Kingdom, Centre for the Study of African Economies at the University of Oxford, 2021).



Assessment discussion in context

Prior to pilot design, we undertook an assessment in Huehuetenango, a department with one of the highest rates of outward migration in Guatemala.⁸ The assessment focused on two municipalities: Jacaltenango and Nentón. From May to June 2022, local researchers spoke with a total of 85 community members and leaders in 12 communities to explore local vulnerability to climate-related shocks, access to and use of early-warning systems, and the role of remittances. The assessment found that, overall, communities are vulnerable to climate shocks but face several challenges for effective early action.⁹ The following discussion situates these findings in their proper contexts.

Climate change impacts and adaptation

Located between the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, Guatemala is expected to experience more irregular rainfall and stronger, more frequent tropical cyclones.¹⁰ Climate change will most impact the 31 per cent of Guatemalans employed in agriculture, predominantly situated in departments such as Huehuetenango.¹¹ The rural communities in this area are shaped by a legacy of structural exclusion and violence towards indigenous groups.¹² Faced with historical and emerging vulnerabilities,

assessment participants discussed the growing impact of climate change on their livelihoods.

As identified in the assessment, droughts and heat waves during the start of the growing season (May to August) are the most important climate shocks affecting communities in Jacaltenango and Nentón. Identified in second and third place are severe rains and floods (September to October), and strong winds (May to October), both of which are associated with tropical cyclones.¹³ In 2020, the hurricanes Eta and Iota caused severe damage in Huehuetenango, destroying household investments and crops, and raising food prices and insecurity in affected communities.¹⁴

According to interviews, as changing weather patterns render the traditional agricultural calendar unreliable, farmers are adapting agricultural practices and diversifying their livelihoods. Some farmers are replacing traditional seeds with more resistant varieties and diversifying their crops for both subsistence and commercial sale. Others choose to farm only for household subsistence and seek alternative income in construction, small business or livestock.¹⁵

Planned migration is an important adaptation strategy among communities and a way to reduce vulnerability to climate shocks. According

⁸ Andrew Selee, Luis Argueta and Juan José Hurtado Paz y Paz, *Migration from Huehuetenango in Guatemala's western highlands: Policy and development responses*, brief (Washington, D.C., Migration Policy Institute), 2022.

⁹ Manuel Constantino Díaz López and Ellen Reid, *Climate information and remittances in Guatemala*, assessment report (Washington D.C., Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University; Portland, Oregon, Mercy Corps, 2022).

¹⁰ Paris Rivera, Walter Arnoldo Bardales Espinoza and Wener Ochoa, *Escenarios futuros de cambio climático para Guatemala* [Future climate change scenarios for Guatemala], in: *Primer reporte de evaluación del conocimiento sobre cambio climático en Guatemala* [First evaluation report on climate change Knowledge in Guatemala] (E.J. Castellanos, A. Paiz-Estévez, J. Escribá, M. Rosales-Alconero and A. Santizo, eds.) (Guatemala, Editorial Universitaria UVG, 2019), pp. 40–61 (in Spanish).

¹¹ International Labour Organization (ILO), ILO modelled estimates data set, in: *Employment in agriculture (% of total employment)* (2021).

¹² Santiago Lopez-Ridaura, Luis Barba-Escoto, Cristian Reyna, Jon Hellin, Bruno Gerard and Mark van Wijk, *Food security and agriculture in the western highlands of Guatemala*, Food Security, 11:817–833 (July 2019).

¹³ Gabriela Alfaro Marroquín and Rosario Gómez, *Antecedentes y contexto del cambio climático en Guatemala* [Background and context of climate change in Guatemala], in: *Primer reporte de evaluación del conocimiento sobre cambio climático en Guatemala* [First evaluation report on climate change Knowledge in Guatemala] (E.J. Castellanos, A. Paiz-Estévez, J. Escribá, M. Rosales-Alconero and A. Santizo, eds.) (Guatemala, Editorial Universitaria UVG, 2019), pp. 2–9 (in Spanish).

¹⁴ Ibid.; Coordinación Nacional para la Reducción de Desastres (CONRED), *Todo de evaluaciones en vivienda – fenómeno tropical* [All evaluations in housing – tropical phenomenon], Boletín Informativo No. 576-2020, 23 December 2020 (in Spanish); Paris Rivera, Walter Arnoldo Bardales Espinoza and Wener Ochoa, *Escenarios futuros de cambio climático para Guatemala* [Future climate change scenarios for Guatemala], in: *Primer reporte de evaluación del conocimiento sobre cambio climático en Guatemala* [First evaluation report on climate change Knowledge in Guatemala] (E.J. Castellanos, A. Paiz-Estévez, J. Escribá, M. Rosales Alconero and A. Santizo, eds.) (Guatemala, Editorial Universitaria UVG), pp. 40–61 (in Spanish).

¹⁵ Rivera et al., *Escenarios futuros de cambio climático para Guatemala*.



to assessment findings, seasonal migration to Mexico to work on coffee, sugar cane and corn farms is common among communities in the dry corridor around Nentón. Many decide to journey north to the United States for longer-term work, with the hope of being able to send more money back home.¹⁶

Access and use of climate early-warning information

Although increasingly vulnerable to climate disasters, households that participated in the assessment cannot always access early-warning information. Access varies due to weaknesses in climate information systems, local infrastructure and the affordability of television sets and the Internet. In Guatemala, official climate information flows from the National Institute for Seismology, Vulcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology of Guatemala (INSIVUMEH) to the various levels of the National Coordination for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food (MAGA). Despite the availability of early-warning information, key informants at CONRED and MAGA agreed that the effectiveness of the current system can and should be improved. Limited resources, insufficient cooperation between agencies, and staff capacity and turnover were all cited as internal factors that influence the flow of information to municipal branches and communities.¹⁷

Although information is meant to reach households via television, radio, the Internet and the Government's public address systems, three quarters of the communities covered by the assessment reported receiving little climate information. Main limitations to access are language barriers and inadequate local

infrastructure. Although several indigenous Mayan languages are spoken in Guatemala, including in Huehuetenango, national and regional media mostly use Spanish. Additionally, some geographically isolated communities lack decent radio, television and/or Internet coverage, although Internet coverage is expanding quickly across the region and, with it, the possibility of accessing weather information, especially via social media.¹⁸

When households do receive information, decisions around anticipatory action are limited by the resources at hand. The assessment found that households recognize the benefit of investing in loss and damage prevention, but also that this can be financially out of reach for households struggling to make ends meet. As a result, actions are usually taken only after climate events – not before.¹⁹

The role of remittances

The assessment found that in households with migrant members, senders and receivers tend to discuss and reach an agreement on how much money should be sent, how often money should be sent and what purpose the money should serve. In Huehuetenango, households typically use remittances for general consumption needs and larger household purchases, such as vehicles and investments in property. While remittances are a vital source of income for households interviewed during the assessment, the timing and use of remittances may not always be strategically aligned with recipient households' exposure to disaster risks. Were a household to receive remittances ahead of a disaster, assessment participants suggested that they would use them for "survival purchases", including food reserves, dry firewood, water

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 13–15.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 13–17.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 18.



and medicines. In the long term, participants mentioned the possibility of spending remittances received on disaster risk mitigation measures, including physical reinforcements to property and improvements on community infrastructure, such as containment walls along riverbanks.²⁰ As such, sharing climate disaster forecasts with remittance senders and providing incentives for making early remittance transfers may help households in Guatemala prepare for disasters by addressing information and resource gaps.

The remittance industry is thriving in countries with high rates of outward migration such as Guatemala. Money transfer companies are expanding digital services through digital apps that are easy to use and offer faster transfers and lower fees. Policymakers are, in turn, looking towards remittances as a way to improve resilience among migrant-sending communities affected by climate change.²¹ Harnessing this digital opportunity and the support of diaspora networks allows remittance services to be a new avenue for helping mitigate damage and losses incurred due to climate disasters.

Enabling forecast-based remittances

Insights from assessment interviews motivated further research through a pilot that allows climate early-warning information to inform remittance-sending behaviours among diaspora communities from Guatemala. With Remitly, we designed a forecast-based remittance service that specifically addresses the constraints identified in the assessment. To improve information access and uptake, the service proactively shares

information about the risk of disaster impacts in communities of origin with remittance senders in the United States. Senders receive in-app and email notifications when a predefined risk threshold for the occurrence of a disaster is met. To encourage early remittance sending, clients are offered a waiver on transfer fees or an equivalent discount if they send support ahead of a forecasted disaster.

Through a planned randomized control trial, the pilot will learn about the impact of this encouragement and information provision on both the behaviour of remittance senders and the well-being of recipients. While the project is ongoing, experiences and qualitative data gathered to date point to the following implications for policy, practice and research.

1. Successful models for anticipatory action, including through remittances, will require clear, pre-defined processes and agreed-upon triggers

The potential impacts of climate change and seasonal disasters on at-risk populations are increasingly predictable through advancements in science and technology, as well as the growing capacity of national, regional and international meteorological institutions. Much of the relevant data is publicly available, but the ability to translate it into effective anticipatory action requires collaboration between meteorological experts on the one hand, and humanitarian and development practitioners on the other. Although forecasting of weather patterns and disasters have become increasingly sophisticated and reliable, as with any anticipatory action system, uncertainty exists and requires designers to qualitatively decide the appropriate moment for triggering action. In the design of our pilot, deliberations with climate experts have led to the definition of forecast thresholds that would justify triggering notifications and incentives to

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 18 and 19.

²¹ IPCC, "Health, wellbeing and the changing structure of communities", in: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (Contribution of Working Group II to the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) (H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem and B. Rama, eds.) (Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, Cambridge University Press), p. 1117.



remittance senders to send early, establishing a clear process for action, roles and responsibilities. In this pilot, the issuance of a tropical storm watch or warning by the National Hurricane Center (NHC) for certain geographical areas serves as a trigger. Thresholds for sudden-onset disasters, such as tropical cyclones, benefit from clear, widely accepted forecasting and guidance from institutions like the NHC. However, slow-onset climate stressors, such as drought, face greater definitional and political disagreements in forecasting. Given the hard-felt impacts of drought on agricultural productivity and livelihoods driving food insecurity and, in some cases, migration in the region, developing approaches to mitigate slow-onset impacts through anticipatory action will be crucial.

2. Linking remittances to early-warning systems offers a unique opportunity for collaboration between non-profit, public and private actors

Although the humanitarian community has recognized the importance of anticipatory funding, most forms are still limited to dispersing funding from institutional foreign assistance donors. Facing competing priorities, institutional funders often fail to seize opportunities to prevent or mitigate the impacts of a crisis. The use of remittances in anticipatory action is therefore an innovation with wide potential for scale given the growing volume of remittances flowing to low- and middle-income countries.

The situation therefore presents a unique opportunity for collaboration between non-profit and public actors, alongside remittance actors in the private sector motivated both by humanitarian values and market share expansion. As success relies on collaboration, fostering cross-sector partnerships will enable scaling and expanding this approach. Private

sector remittance actors can take the lead in designing marketing campaigns that encourage early remittance sending, working alongside governmental, humanitarian and development organizations to establish evidence-informed thresholds for anticipatory action. As the humanitarian community tests the efficacy of forecast-based remittances, financial support from external donors to cover the costs of fee waivers and incentives can further add value to this model of private non-profit collaboration. Looking ahead, public actors involved in weather-forecasting and disaster risk reduction (e.g. national meteorological agencies in affected countries) could enter directly into more sustainable arrangements with private-sector remittance actors to provide early-warning information more efficiently.

3. Scaling forecast-based remittances could incorporate additional components

While early evidence suggests that forecast-based remittances may be effective, additional forecasting components and research can help scale and improve this proof of concept. Forecasts, including of flooding, landslides and drought, can be more geographically targeted and improved to be able to more precisely predict subhazards through Earth Observation data (e.g. vegetation data to forecast drought). Additionally, coupling continuous monitoring of seasonal and short-term weather patterns and more accurate forecasts with advancements in algorithms and artificial intelligence can automate triggers for early action. Aide from these technology-enabled improvements, future iterations of forecast-based remittance services can promote and link or facilitate access to financial products for mitigating risk, such as disaster insurance, and other strategies for asset-building, such as formalized savings, which can



deter long-term migration intentions.²² Note, however, that such linking may not be possible for sudden-onset disasters such as hurricanes, and would be better suited for protracted crises, such as drought, which give recipients more time to utilize such services and strategies.

Conclusion

Many will make the decision to migrate as climate change threatens livelihoods, assets and safety. An important adaptation strategy, migration comes with challenges and opportunities for households, communities and governments alike. Accepting this reality, diaspora communities and non-profit, public and private actors can look to flows of early-warning information and remittances to offer ways for them to work together to increase funding for anticipatory action. Beyond this pilot, our research points to opportunities to leverage remittances, more broadly, to bolster systems for disaster risk mitigation and local adaptation – critical areas for climate action that currently lack sufficient investment. Our hope is that results and lessons from this pilot study on forecast-based remittances will help shape and inspire future interventions that creatively draw on opportunities brought by migration and diaspora networks to help those impacted the worst by climate change.

²² Orozco, *Migrant remittances to Central America and options for development*, p. 10.

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