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**Lesson 10 Global Migration**

This lesson will look at global migration and its impact on both the sending and receiving countries. Although we will cite numerous challenges relating to migration, migration should not be considered a “problem.” There is nothing moral or immoral about moving from one country to another. Human beings have always been migratory. It is the result of their movements that areas get populated, communities experience diversity, and economies prosper. Thus, rather than looking at migration in terms of a simplistic good vs. bad lens, treat it as a complex social phenomenon that even predates contemporary globalization.

What is Migration?

There are two types of migration: internal migration, which refers to people moving from one area to another within one country; and international migration, in which people cross borders of one country to another. The latter can be further broken down into five groups. First are those who move permanently to another country (immigrants). The second refers to workers who stay in another country for a fixed period (at least 6 months in a year). Illegal migrants comprise the third group, while the fourth are migrants whose families have “petitioned” them to move to the destination county. The fifth group are refugees (also known as asylum-seekers), i.e., those “unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.”'?

Demographers estimate that 247 million people are currently living outside the countries of their birth. Ninety percent of them moved for economic reasons while the remaining 10 percent were refugees and asylum-seekers. The top three regions of origin are Latin America (18 percent of global total), followed by Eastern Europe and Central Asia (16 percent), and the Middle East and North Africa (14 percent). On a per country basis, India, Mexico, and China are leading, with the Philippines, together with Afghanistan, only ranking 6th in the world. The top 10 country destinations of these migrants are mainly in the West and the Middle East, with the United States topping the list.

Fifty “percent of global migrants have moved from the developing countries to the developed zones of the world and contribute anywhere from 40 to 80 percent of their labor force. Their growth has outstripped the population growth in the developed countries (3 percent versus only 0.6 percent), such that today, according to the think-tank McKinsey Global Institute, “first-generation immigrants constitute 13 percent of the population in Western Europe, 15 percent in North America, and 48 percent in the GCC countries.”'56 The majority of migrants remain in the cities. The percentages of migrants in cities are 92 percent in the United States, 95 percent in the United Kingdom, and 99 percent in Australia. Once settled, they contribute enormously to raising the productivity of their host countries

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The migrant influx has led to a debate in destination countries over the issue of whether migrants are assets or liabilities to national development. Anti-immigrant groups and nationalists argue that governments must control legal immigration and put a stop to illegal entry of foreigners.'\*\* Many of these anti-immigrant groups are gaining influence through political leaders who share their beliefs. Examples include US President Donald Trump and UK Prime Minister Theresa May, who have been reversing the existing pro-immigration and refugee-sympathetic policies of their states. Most recently, Trump attempted to ban travel into the United States of people from majority-Muslim countries, even those with proper documentation. He also continues to speak about his election promise of building a wall between the United States and Mexico.

The wisdom of these government actions has been consistently belied by the data. A 2011 Harvard Business School survey on the impact of immigration concluded that the “likelihood and magnitude of adverse labor market effects for native from immigration are substantially weaker than often perceived.” The fiscal impact of immigration on social welfare was noted to be “very small.”'° Furthermore, the 2013 report on government welfare spending by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) clearly shows that native-born citizens still receive higher support compared to immigrants.'\*

The massive inflow of refugees from Syria and Iraq has raised alarm bells once again, but has not proved to be as damaging as expected. The International Monetary Fund predicted that the flow of refugees fleeing the war in Syria and Iraq Would at th, grow Europe’s GDP, albeit “modestly,” in Germany, the inflow of refugees from the Middle East has not affected social welfare programs, and had very little impact on wages and employment, In fact, they have brought much-needed labor to the economy instead

**Benefits and Detriments for the Sending Countries**

Even if 90 percent of the value generated by migrant workers remains in their host countries, they have sent billions back to their home countries (in 2014, their remittances totaled $589 billion).'\* In 2014, India held the highest recorded remittance ($70 billion), followed by China ($62 billion), the Philippines ($28 billion), and Mexico ($25 billion).'® These remittances make significant contributions to the development of small and medium-term industries that help generate jobs.’® Remittances likewise change the economic and social standing of migrants, as shown by new or renovated homes and their relatives’ access to new consumer goods. The purchasing power of a migrant’s family doubles and makes it possible for children to start or continue their schooling.

Yet, there remain serious concerns about the economic sustainability of those reliant on migrant monies. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) observes that in countries like the Philippines, remittances “do not have a significant influence other key items of consumption or investment such as spending on education and health care.” Remittances, therefore, may help lifting “households out of poverty...but not in rebalancing growth especially in the long run.” More importantly, global migration is “siphoning qualified personnel, [and] removing dynamic young workers."

This process has often been referred to as “brain drain.” According again to the McKinsey Global Institute, countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia have lost one-third of their college graduates. Sixty percent of those who moved to OECD destinations were college graduates, compared to just 9 percent of the overall population in the country. Fifty-two percent of Filipinos who leave for work in the developed world have tertiary education, which is more than double the 23 percent of the overall Filipino population.

Furthermore, the loss of professionals in certain key roles, such as doctors, has been detrimental to the migrants’ home countries. In 2006, some 15 percent of locally trained doctors from 21 sub-Saharan African countries had emigrated to the United States or Canada; the losses were particularly steep in Liberia (where 43 percent of doctors left), Ghana (30 percent), and Uganda (20 percent).

Governments are aware of this long-term handicap, but have no choice but to continue promoting migrant work as part of state policy because of the remittances’ impact on GDP. They are equally “concerned with generating jobs for an under-utilized workforce and in getting the maximum possible inflow of worker remittances.” Governments are thus actively involved in the recruitment and deployment of works, some of them setting up special departments like the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training in Bangladesh; the Office of the Protector of Emigrants within the Indian Labor Ministry; and the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency (POEA). The sustainability of migrant-dependent economies will partially depend on the strength of these institutions.

**The Problem of Human Trafficking**

On top of the issue of brain drain, sending states must likewise protect migrant workers. The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation lists human trafficking as the third largest criminal activity worldwide. In 2012, the International Labour Organization (ILO) identified 21 million men, women, and children as victims of “forced labor,” an appalling three out every 1,000 persons worldwide. Ninety percent of the victims (18.7 million) are exploited by private enterprises and entrepreneurs; 22 percent (4.5 million) are sexually abused; and 68 percent (14.2 million) work under compulsion in agricultural, manufacturing, infrastructure, and domestic activities. Human trafficking has been very profitable, earning syndicates, smugglers, and corrupt state officials profits of as high as $150 billion a year in 2014.Governments, the private sector, and civil society groups have worked together to combat human trafficking, yet the results remain uneven.

**Integration**

A final issue relates to how migrants interact with their new home countries. They may contribute significantly to a host nation’s GDP, but their access to housing, health care, and education is not easy. There is, of course, considerable variation in the economic integration of migrants. Migrants from China, India, and Western Europe often have more success, while those from the Middle East, North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa face greater challenges in securing jobs. In the United States and Singapore, there are blue-collar as well as white-collar Filipino workers (doctors, engineers, even corporate executives), and it is the professional, white-collar workers that have often times been easier to integrate.

Democratic states assimilate immigrants and their children by granting them citizenship and the rights that go with it (especially public education). However, without a solid support from their citizens, switching citizenship may just be a formality. Linguistic difficulties, customs from the “old country,” and, of late, differing religions may create cleavages between migrants and citizens of receiving countries, particularly in the West. The latter accuse migrants of bringing in the culture from their home countries and amplifying differences in linguistic and ethnic customs. Crucially, the lack of integration gives xenophobic and anti-immigrant groups more ammunition to argue that these “new citizens are often not nationals (in the sense of sharing the dominant culture).”

Migrants unwittingly reinforce the tension by “keeping among themselves.” The first-time migrant’s anxiety at coming into a new and often “strange” place is mitigated by “local networks of fellow citizens” that serve as the migrant’s safety net from the dislocation of uprooting oneself. For instance, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of California provides initial support for new Chinese migrants, guiding them in finding work or in setting up their small businesses (restaurants and laundromats) in the state and elsewhere.’ The drawback of these networks is that instead of facilitating integration, they exacerbate differences and discrimination.

Governments and private businesses have made policy changes to address integration problems, like using multiple languages in state documents (in the case of the United States, Spanish and English). Training programs complemented with counseling have also helped migrant integration in Hamburg, Germany, while retail merchants in Barcelona have brought in migrant shopkeepers to break down language barriers while introducing Chinese culture to citizens. Whether these initiatives will succeed or not remains an open question.

**Conclusion**

Global migration entails the globalization of people. And like the broader globalization process, it is uneven. Some migrants experience their movement as a liberating process. A highly educated professional may find moving to another country financially rewarding. At the other end, a victim of sex trafficking may view the process of migration as dislocating and disempowering.

Like globalization, moreover, migration produces different and often contradictory responses. On the one hand, many richer states know that migrant labor will be beneficial for their economies. With their aging populations, Japan and Germany will need workers from demographically young countries like the Philippines. Similarly, as working populations in countries like the United States move to more skilled careers, their economies will require migrants to work jobs that their local workers aré . beginning to reject. And yet, despite these benefits, developed countries continue to excessively limit and restrict migrant labor. They do so for numerous factors already mentioned. Some want to preserve what they perceive as local culture by shielding it from newcomers. Other states use migrants as scapegoats, blaming them for economic woes that are, in reality, caused by government policy and not by foreigners,

Yet, despite these various contradictions, it is clear that different forms of global interdependence will ensure that global migration will continue to be one of the major issues in the contemporary world. Countries whose economies have become entirely dependent on globalization and rely on foreign labor to continue growing (e.g., Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and even protectionist Japan) will actively court foreign workers. Likewise, countries like the Philippines with an abundance of labor and a need for remittances will continue to send these workers.

Hence, it is inevitable that countries will have to open up again to prevent their economies from stagnating or even collapsing. The various responses to these movements—xenophobia and extreme nationalism in the receiving countries; dependency in the sending countries—will continue to be pressing issues.