



A FORTNIGHTLY BULLETIN OF CURRENT NTS ISSUES CONFRONTING ASIA

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THE MANY FACES OF MIGRANTS: Exploring the Nexus of Migration and Human Security

Abstract: *Against the backdrop of the changing global demographic trends, this edition highlights issues which mitigate migration as a viable strategy to cope with threats to human welfare and dignity. It does so by exploring the linkages between migration and non-traditional security threats.*

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Overview of Global Migration Trends

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimated that there are more than 200 million international migrants as of 2008 and almost half of the global migrant population comprise women, who in particular, outnumber men in the region of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Europe hosts the largest numbers of migrants which stands at nearly 71 million.

The value of global remittance by migrants sent through official channels was estimated to have reached US\$ 337 billion in 2007 which represents a 99 per cent increase compared to 2002. Perhaps, more significantly, US\$ 251 billion of the US\$ 337 billion remitted in 2007 went to developing countries.

Also, the global migration trend shows that migration occurs almost equally in South-South and South-North migration. South-South migration refers to movement between developing countries, while South-North migration refers to movement from developing countries to developed countries.

The IOM's World Migration Report 2008 shows that 61 million people were involved in South-South migration while 62 million people were involved in South-North migration, as of 2005.

Global demographic trends

Current demographic trends in developed countries show that without immigration, the working age population in these countries is expected to decline by 23 per cent by 2050.

Within the same period, the working age population for Africa is expected to triple from 408 million in 2005 to 1.12 billion while another study claims that China and India are likely to account for 40 per cent of the

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FACTS AND FIGURES ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION (World Migration Report 2008)

1. More than 200 million estimated international migrants in the world today.

2. Almost half of all migrants are women (49.6 per cent) with more women migrants than men in every region of the world except in Africa and Asia/Middle East.

3. South-South migration (i.e. movement from developing countries to developing countries) is as significant (61 million people) as South-North migration (i.e. movement from developing countries to developed countries) which comprised 62 million people in 2005.

4. The projected annual net figure of migrants moving to more developed regions for 2005-2010 is 2.5 million people and that of 2005-2050 is 2.3 million. This is 40 per cent higher than the average annual net migration figure of 1.6 million people flowing to developed countries during 1960-2005.

5. Europe (including Central Asian countries) hosts largest numbers of migrants at nearly 70.6 million people in 2005.

6. North America is second, hosting more than 45.1 million migrants, followed by Asia with nearly 25.3 million migrants. The Middle East hosts 18.8 million migrants, Africa 16.9 million, South America 6.6 million with Oceania having the least at 5 million.

7. However, Oceania has the highest share of migrants (15.2 per cent) as part of the total population.

8. Remittances sent through official channels estimated to have reached US\$ 337 billion in 2007, a 99 per cent increase over the figures from 2002.

9. US\$ 251 billion of the US\$ 337 billion remitted in 2007 went to developing countries.

Source: International Organization for Migration

global workforce by 2030.

In addition to this, a recent United Nations (UN) Population Division Policy Brief reports that most countries in the less developed regions have experienced major reductions in fertility since 1970, although high fertility is still particularly prevalent among the 49 least developed countries, 31 of which had fertility levels above five children per woman around 2005.

The fertility of the least developed countries dropped by just 0.4 of a child from 1970 to 1985 (from 6.5 children per woman to 6.1) and was still a high of 5.4 children per woman in 1995.

World population to exceed nine billion by 2050

The UN in a recent press release projected that the world population will reach seven billion by early 2012 which is an increase from the current 6.8 billion and will continue to surpass nine billion people by 2050.

Most of the additional 2.3 billion people will enlarge the population of developing countries, which is projected to rise from 5.6 billion in 2009 to 7.9 billion in 2050, and will be distributed among the population aged 15-59 and 60 or over because the number of children under age 15 in developing countries will decrease.

In contrast, the population of the more developed regions is expected to change minimally and would have declined to 1.15 billion were it not for the projected net migration from developing to developed countries, which is projected to average 2.4 million persons annually from 2009 to 2050.

What Does It All Mean?

The impact of population growth and economic development on migration

High fertility and rapid population growth in some developing countries create pressures to emigrate by taxing infrastructures, education, health and social service systems and the environment. At the same time, migration has become an important component of population growth in countries where fertility has declined.

In some parts of Europe and Asia, migration is mitigating population decline resulting from below-replacement fertility and population ageing. Net migration has already either prevented population decline or contributed to population growth in a number of countries, according to the United

Nations Population Fund (UNFP).

Furthermore, the normal remittance transfers of some US\$150 billion were reported in 2004. Possibly twice this amount was transferred informally. These financial transfers are growing in significance. And in many countries, they are larger than either development assistance or foreign direct investments.

Available data show that women send home a higher proportion of their earnings than men. These contributions feed and educate children and generally improve the living standards of the loved ones left behind. In other words, international migration has a positive impact on the social and economic development of the sending countries while simultaneously contribute towards the economy of the receiving countries.

Migrants that transfer monies through the formal channel contribute towards the GDP of the receiving states and the GNP of the sending states.

According to the UNFP, migration is increasingly perceived as a force that can contribute to development, and an integral aspect of the global development process. Therefore, migration considerations are being incorporated into Poverty Reduction Strategies and broader planning policies which will thus have an impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The Many Faces of Migrants

Exploring the linkages between Migration and Poverty



Economic Migrants

Substantial evidence suggests that slower population growth and investments in reproductive health and HIV prevention (particularly among adolescents), education, women's empowerment and gender equality reduce poverty.

A central premise of the International Conference Population and Development (ICPD) is that the size, growth, age structure and rural-urban distribution of a country's population have a critical impact on its development prospects and on the living standards of the poor.

Poverty is multidimensional: impoverished people are deprived of services, resources and opportunities, as well as income. The ICPD realised that investing in people and empowering individual women and men with education, equal opportunities and the means to determine the number, timing and spacing of their children could create the conditions to allow the poor to break out of the poverty trap.

Therefore, migration either internally or internationally represents a coping strategy and alternative for migrants who seek better economic opportunities.

The majority of migrants crossing borders thus are in search of better economic and social opportunities. Economic migrants are the world's fastest growing group of migrants.

Globalisation has increased the mobility of labour,

"The majority of migrants crossing borders are in search of better economic and social opportunities. Economic migrants are the world's fastest growing group of migrants...globalisation has increased the mobility of labour, and a decline in fertility and working-age populations in many developed countries is leading to a rising demand for workers from abroad to sustain national economies."

left: Economic migrants in Bangladesh migrate from rural to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities. Some gain employment as rickshaw peddlars.



Rohingya migrants look out from the window of a police van before being transported to provincial court to hear illegal entry charge at Paknam police station in Ranong province, south-western Thailand Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2009.

source:
(AP Photo/Apichart Weerawong)

[click here for the full story at TheHunffingtonPost.com](http://TheHunffingtonPost.com)

ROHINGYAS: THE FORGOTTEN MINORITY?

The Rohingya are a Muslim population from western Burma. Numbering almost two million, they are concentrated in just three townships located along the Burmese-Bangladeshi border, known as Northern Rakhine State.

Conquered by the Burmese in the early nineteenth century, the Rohingya and their Rakhine Buddhist co-nationals have been treated more like a subjugated minority than as members of Burmese society. In 1982, the Burmese government stripped the Rohingya of their citizenship, formally codifying an ongoing campaign to encourage them to leave the country.

Official Burmese government policy on the Rohingya is repressive. The Rohingya need authorization to leave their villages and are not allowed to travel beyond Northern Rakhine State. They need official permission to marry and must pay exorbitant taxes on births and deaths.

Religious freedom is restricted, and the Rohingya have been prohibited from maintaining or repairing crumbling religious buildings. Experts generally agree that conditions in Northern Rakhine State are among the worst in the country.

Rohingya refugees commonly cite land seizures, forced labor, arbitrary arrests, and extortion as the principal reasons for flight. Once a Rohingya leaves his or her village without permission, he or she is removed from official residency lists, and can be subject to arrest if found.

With few options available to the Rohingyas in Bangladesh, more and more people are risking their lives to travel to Malaysia to seek livelihood opportunities. The number of Rohingya boat people originating from inside Burma and from Bangladesh is increasing, despite the dangers posed by dishonest brokers, substandard boats, and the Thai navy.

Although many have lost their lives at sea or were caught and detained by Burmese authorities, many more continue to reach Malaysia. In all, an estimated one million Rohingya now live in Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, the Middle East, and farther afield.

Source: Refugees International

and a decline in fertility and working-age populations in many developed countries is leading to a rising demand for workers from abroad to sustain national economies.

New patterns of migration have arisen, and many countries that once sent migrants abroad, for example Argentina, Ireland and South Korea are now experiencing migrant inflows as well.

One study finds that almost half the households in Albania were exposed to some form of migration in the 1990s. For rural Albanians migration is one of the preferred coping strategies to escape poverty. Tirana is the main destination for internal migration, a process that appears to have accelerated in the second half of the 1990s.

Greece is by far the most important destination for temporary migrants, chosen by 8 of 10. Greece is also the main destination for permanent migrants (accounting for 49 per cent), followed by Italy (35 per cent). Almost half the family members who have left households since 1990 are now living abroad.

Remittances play an important part in the income strategy of Albanian households, accounting for 13 percent of total household income. According to the 2002 LSMS survey, 28 percent of households received some form of private transfer from individuals or institutions in the 12 months before the survey.

Exploring the linkages between Migration and Conflicts

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

According to Refugees International, as of 2007, there are 25 million IDPs compared to 10 million refugees. Since the Second World War, more people have been displaced due to internal conflicts rather than inter-state war.

The conflicts in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have led to the mass displacement of its people which have inevitably thrown them back into poverty and dispossession.

In a recent press statement, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson revealed that another 11,000 people have been uprooted in the latest Lords Resistance Army (LRA) attack around the village of Banda in the north-eastern in mid-March, bringing the total number of people displaced by the militia group's repeated raids in the Haut Uele district of Oriental province to over 188,000 in the last six months.

The displaced Congolese, whose homesteads were pillaged and burned by the LRA, now live with host families. Many of the IDPs are scattered in Niangara, Bangadi, Ngilima, Mbengu, Ndedu and Dakwa in Haut-Uele district. An estimated 105,000 are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

With regard to Sudan, Refugees International (RI) reported that approximately two million people have returned to extreme poverty, with few ways to earn a living, access to health care or send their children to school.

RI warned that a lack of basic services and infrastructure combined with the recent drop in oil prices and the subsequent economic crisis threatens to destabilise south Sudan. The Government

of Sudan has been unable to pay salaries for months, including army salaries, and it has a cash flow shortage of \$100 million per month, (please refer to info box for more details).

Stateless People

Refugees International estimated that 12 million people in the world are not citizens of any state and are therefore deprived of their rights.

Stateless status often keeps children from attending school and condemns families to poverty. Because statelessness often originates in past conflicts and disputes over what constitutes national identity, granting citizenship, which can only be done by national authorities, is inherently difficult. A case in point would be the Rohingyas. Among Burma's ethnic minorities, the Rohingya stand out for their particularly harsh treatment by the Burmese authorities and their invisibility as a per-

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secuted minority.

Despite decades of severe repression, there has been minimal international response to the needs of this extremely vulnerable population compared to other Burmese refugees, (please refer to the info box on page four for more details on the Rohingyas.)

However, the situation seems somewhat better for the Biharis in Bangladesh.

Past refusal by Bangladesh to recognise the Urdu-speakers as citizens is rooted in the country's violent creation. Fleeing the religious persecution that followed partition from India in 1947, this Muslim minority, sometimes called "Biharis," settled in East (now known as Bangladesh) and West Pakistan.

In 1970, when civil war between East and West Pakistan broke out, many Urdu-speakers sided with West Pakistan, with atrocities committed on both sides. After Bangladesh's independence, Pakistan refused to accept all Urdu speakers who sought admission for fear of stoking ethnic tensions, particularly in the Sindh.

Bangladesh, which is mostly Bengali, suspected that the Urdu speaking minority had supported the enemy. Over time, perceptions of the community's status became muddled by prolonged residence in camps established in urban areas by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the largely unaddressed history of inter-communal violence, and the determination of some community members to migrate to Pakistan.

In May 2008 judgment, the court held that any Urdu speaker born in Bangladesh, or whose father or grandfather was born in Bangladesh, and who was a permanent resident in 1971 or who has permanently resided in Bangladesh since 1971 is a citizen "by operation of law."

Persons who affirm or acknowledge allegiance to a foreign state (such as Pakistan) may be disqualified, however. The court directed the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) to enrol majority age Urdu speakers who wish to be registered and to issue them national identity cards (IDs) "without any further delay." Now with citizenship rights, one petitioner in the case declared, "We can live in Bangladesh with dignity."

Unlike the labour and economic migrants and climate change refugees, for the stateless people such as the Biharis and Rohingyas, migration may offer their best chance of securing better socio-economic conditions.

Unfortunately, without any legitimate travel documentation and personal identification, they are left with limited recourse besides pursuing irregular migration channels which often lead to further human insecurities.

For instance, in January 2009, the Indonesian foreign ministry announced that it will repatriate the 174 Rohingyas it found drifting within its territory as economic migrants.

According to the news report, these migrants were found in a rickety boat off northern Sumatra and were believed to have been survivors from a group of about 1,000 Rohingya who were allegedly abandoned at sea by the Thai navy.

"The number of people affected and the damages inflicted by extreme weather – mainly due to torrential rain, bursting rivers, violent winds and insidious droughts – have been unprecedented. Environmental degradation around the world is creating a new category of people known as "environmental refugees," and what's more, the refugees' ranks are growing rapidly..."

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that there will be 150 million environmental refugees by 2050. The Institute for Environment and Human Security, affiliated with United Nations University, estimated the number of environmental refugees at 20 million in 2005 and predicted the number could be 50 million as early as 2010.



Exploring the linkages between Migration and Climate Change

Climate Change Refugees

Back in December 2005, the UN reported the world's first incident of climate refugees. A small community living in the Pacific island chain of Vanuatu has become one of, if not the first, to be formally moved out of harm's way as a result of climate change.

The villagers have been relocated higher into the interior of Tegua, one of the chains' northern most provinces, after their coastal homes were repeatedly swamped by storm surges and aggressive waves linked with climate change.

The relocation, under a project entitled Capacity Building for the Development of Adaptation in Pacific Island Countries, underlines the increasingly drastic measures now underway to conserve low-lying communities as a result of the rise in human-made emissions to the atmosphere.

Another community which is currently forced to relocate due to rising sea water is the community from Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. Salt water due to rising sea level has led to degradation of natural resources such as fresh water and plantation.

"There are no longer bread fruit trees, banana trees, swampy taro...there's hardly anything that you would grow out there..." lamented former resident Paul Tsube according to the news agency France24.

The number of people affected and the damages inflicted by extreme weather – mainly due to torrential rain, bursting rivers, violent winds and insidious droughts – have been unprecedented.

Environmental degradation around the world is creating a new category of people known as "environmental refugees," and their ranks are growing rapidly said the UN.

Particularly vulnerable are people whose lives are already threatened by abject poverty, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, inadequate housing and insecurity.

Those living in disaster hotspots – such as in flood plains or in cyclone tracks are exposed to repeated climatic shocks that just compound their vulnerability. With the threat of extreme weather events in the future, the demand for disaster re-

sponse can only rise, as will the costs.

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