

## **Policy implications**

The findings from *Development on the Move* provide some useful insights for policymakers. We hope that as well as providing some insight into which specific policy levers could be used to maximise migration's contributions to development, this report also helps policymakers to look beyond the immediate imperatives that often seem to drive migration policy.

At the individual and household level, this project contributes further evidence that in almost all cases migration can be an important way of improving livelihoods and expanding capabilities. This is an important reminder to policymakers and practitioners that migration should not be seen

Primarily as a 'problem' for development. While it may create challenges migration does allow people – many of who may have few alternatives – to improve their own standard of living and that of their families and others to whom they remit. The evidence suggests, moreover, that through spillover effects such as business creation it may also improve development outcomes, even for people without a direct relationship with a migrant.

That said, poor economic opportunities in developing countries drive migration and may also make return less attractive. Plus, while migration is improving many outcomes for people in developing countries, these changes tend to be incremental. Nothing in the findings of this project suggests that migration is

transformational at the societal level, or that alone it can be relied on to act as a national strategy for development. Rather, the fact that people are migrating in order to achieve certain goals (and are not being attracted back by opportunities at 'home') should be taken as a reflection of people struggling to achieve their aims and improve their lives in their country of origin, and that more needs to be done to promote sustainable national development. This is not news – policymakers do not need migration to remind them of the need for development – but it is important to note because there is a danger that migration and its benefits are used as a reason for development to be pursued with less urgency, when it should be seen as another indicator that successful long-term development strategies must be devised and pursued.

An equally important implication of this project's broad framework has been to underline the complexity of impacts that migration can generate. For example, while large-scale emigration from one particular sector (such as health) can in some instances have a negative impact, there are many other ways in which the departure of those migrants may be having positive impacts on the society they have left behind. *Development on the Move* has cast light on some of the better known of those impacts (such as the economic benefits of remittances) and those that have not been studied as much (such as

attitudes to gender equality). The research suggests that any attempt to intervene based on a narrow or short-term view of migration's impacts could be counterproductive.

More generally, the findings emphasise how powerful a force migration is – it is very common; it is successful in improving key aspects of migrants' and others' lives; and the policies put in place around it can shape but not control or determine it. This implies that policies that acknowledge and even facilitate people's migration ambitions are likely to be more effective than those that inhibit and frustrate them.

As such, policies that open legal routes for migration that make it easier for migrants to invest and buy property in their country of origin while away; or that reduce remittance costs are likely to boost migration's development impacts, as are all policies that recognise and work with the grain of people's migratory intentions and migrants' interactions with their country of origin. In contrast, policies that try to stop emigration, to induce return without changing the wider policy environment, or even those that are simply poorly connected to the lives migrants live (such as policies that try to induce migrants to invest in community development projects over which they have little control or to which they have few links) are much more likely to fail. Good policy interventions should be based on a sound understanding of migrants' motivations and real life experiences, and should 'go with the flow' of migration as an unstoppable fact of life in the 21st century.

Finally, by taking a wide definition of international migration (examining all movements of three months or more both into and out of a country), and looking at all sorts of interactions (going beyond remittances to consider ideas and attitudes transmitted from abroad, for example), this project has also uncovered new evidence of the scale, nature and even the impacts of migration. In some countries there has been much more short-term migration of a duration that falls below the generally accepted threshold of what is defined 'migration'. It also may not be officially recorded as migration by immigration agencies. For example, when a Jamaican goes to the United States and works cash-in-hand for a few months before returning home, this is generally not classed as international migration. Yet such behaviour does seem to be common in some contexts and potentially has development impacts as important as those from longer-term migration. The project also finds that new communication technologies appear to be transforming the ways that migrants can interact with their home countries.

Policymakers interested in managing migration, let alone harnessing its development benefits, should recognise, then, that today's migration patterns do not mirror those of yesterday. While migration may be an age-old human strategy for seeking betterment, the conditions under which migration takes place and the nature of its impacts seem to be evolving constantly.