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Background Paper

MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Executive Summary

The paper contrasts and compares the evidence on internal migration in Asia to gain a better understanding of the links between migration, poverty reduction and development. Recent field studies across Asia show that internal migration is growing and, if managed properly, can play an important role in poverty reduction and the redistribution of the benefits of location-specific growth to underdeveloped regions. As always, there are differences in the specific drivers of migration, the conditions under which people migrate, wages of migrant workers, the costs and risks of migration and the impact of remittances on the household and the wider economy, depending on the respective locations. Current development policies need accompanying measures to make migration less risky and expensive for both those leaving and those staying behind.

Fresh evidence from a range of sources, including official statistics, village studies by academics, NGOs and donor agencies indicates that the main new pull factors attracting people from the overpopulated and fragile rural hinterlands is the spread in urban services, manufacturing and construction. The result is a growing tide of rural-urban migrants. Even if migrant jobs are in the risky informal sector, the gains to be made can be several times higher than wages in rain-fed agriculture. Seasonal pushes have now been superseded by all-year pulls in many locations. At the same time, rural-rural migration from poor areas to rich areas for fish processing, plantation and peak season operations continues to be important.

Although the question whether migration perpetuates or reduces poverty will never be wholly resolved, this paper argues that migration has led to a rise in disposable incomes in many rural areas, and this can lead to better living standards. Concerns over worsening inequality as a result of migration are also addressed and recent evidence of the equalizing effects of migration presented. In particular, substantial remittances can offset the effects of the loss of local labour that were feared by many analysts, and also stimulate the local economy and land market over time. The manner in which remittances are utilized varies, and although much is used for sometimes criticized consumption purposes, the paper argues that these, too, can have positive impacts on sending households and exert a multiplier effect on the economy, in turn leading to a virtuous circle of poverty reduction and development in the countryside. The paper also highlights a common problem with pessimistic migration analyses; namely that they fail to pose the converse question of what these households would have done in the absence of the opportunity to migrate. The paper concedes that although migration is not the ideal solution to employment generation and poverty reduction, it is turning out to be an important route out of poverty in places where conventional development efforts have had limited success.

On a more cautionary note, the paper draws attention to the threats these virtuous circles created by migration can face, especially in sectors where protective policies regarding some industries are removed and competition from other countries is severe. The example of the ready-made garment industry is discussed in some detail as it has attracted millions of rural-urban migrants across Asia in the last decade. The end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) in 2005 will inevitably result in the closure of less competitive garment manufacturing units. It is argued that countries such as Cambodia and Bangladesh could face disastrous consequences, such as downward spirals in the economy and pushing retrenched workers into dangerous occupations,

unless timely efforts are made to retrain workers and open up other areas for diversification.

The projects and policies reviewed in the paper indicate that scattered efforts are being made in this direction, but that most are still at the conceptual stage. The slow policy response is in part due to inadequate data sets and methods for understanding migration and remittance flows. Another barrier is the traditional orthodoxy of tackling local poverty mainly by pouring more resources into poor and marginal areas, without due regard to the limitations of doing so. Added to this is the fear by the middle-class population of overburdened cities that denies poor labourers basic rights, while exploiting their cheap labour. In the meantime, poor people are braving a range of adverse circumstances to access new markets and opportunities. Migrants remain one of the most vulnerable social groups in any country, and women are particularly vulnerable to underpayment, sexual abuse and heavy workloads.

The paper is presented in three sections, starting with the main patterns of internal migration by region. These are contrasted and compared, and major policy challenges identified. We touch upon the issue of cross-border migration, especially in countries with porous borders and where both sides belong to culturally similar groups, as in the case of India and Bangladesh, or Cambodia and Viet Nam. The first section also discusses the (lack of) adequacy of data sources. This is followed by a discussion on migration and poverty reduction both in terms of poverty as a driving force of migration, and the impact of migration on poverty. The relationship between migration and inequality is also discussed. The last and most detailed section of the paper provides a review of policy and programmatic approaches using examples of good practice. It explores ways in which migration might be incorporated into development policy and practice, and identifies knowledge gaps and research needs, especially for the improvement of data on migration.

A. Main Patterns of Internal Migration in Asia

More people migrate internally in many countries

International migration has attracted a great deal of policy attention in recent years, obscuring the fact that internal migration is often far more important in terms of the numbers of people involved, and perhaps even the amount of remittances they send back home. This is especially true of large and populous countries such as China and India. For example, there are between 60-120 million internal migrants in China against a mere 458,000 people migrating internationally for work (Ping 2003). In Viet Nam, roughly 4.3 million people migrated internally in the five years before the 1999 census, whereas the number of international migrants was below 300,000 (Anh et al. 2003). In India, too, internal migration numbers run into millions, while international migration is only a fraction of this (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003). Likewise, in Nepal rural-rural migration from poor mountain areas to the agriculturally prosperous plains accounts for 68 per cent of total population movement, while rural-urban movements make up only 25 per cent (Bal Kumar 2003) despite the country's image as an exporter of *Ghurkha* workers, where mountain dwellers go to the plains to work as drivers, security guards and similar occupations. There are references to the importance of internal labour migration and remittances in many other countries, including Bangladesh (Afsar 2003), Pakistan (Gazdar 2003), Cambodia (ADB 2001), Viet Nam (Anh et al. 2003, Government of Viet Nam 2003), Lao PDR (Acharya 2003), Mongolia (Tsogetsai Khan 2003).

Clearly, there is a high degree of spatial mobility among workers, not just concerning the scale of movements, but also the increase in the diversity of migration streams in terms of the distance, destination, nature of work and gender composition of the migrant workforce, as the following paragraphs show. The drivers of these movements include regional imbalances in employment opportunities, improved communications, road and transport networks and changing aspirations of the younger generation.

Temporary migration is increasing

Developing country populations have never been static and people have moved around a great deal for a number of historical, cultural, climatic and economic reasons. However, as we will see in the coming paragraphs, recent household surveys together with anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been a dramatic increase in internal and cross-border population movements. In many poor countries rural-rural migration still dominates as labourers from poorer regions travel to the agriculturally prosperous, often irrigated, areas where there is more work. Rural-rural migration typically involves poorer groups with little education or other assets, as it requires lower investments.

Although still not the main form of migration in many developing countries, rural-urban migration is rapidly gaining in importance, especially in urbanizing economies, as rural-urban wage differentials grow and the returns from migration increase. Even in poorer Southeast Asian countries, such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia, rural-urban labour migration has been on the increase in recent years due to urbanization and industrialization (Acharya 2003).

As expected, there is a great deal of diversity in migration streams and the drivers differ according to history, social context, markets and policy environments. The countries and geographical regions discussed below¹ illustrate various differences and the policy challenges they present. The available evidence suggests that migration patterns in South Asia are similar to Southeast Asia to the extent that a lack of opportunities at home, unequal regional development, urbanization and manufacturing are major drivers. Differences relate to the macroeconomic context, especially the shock of the economic crisis of 1997, as well as the expansion and shrinking of specific sectors, such as the garments industry or the bicycle rickshaw economy. There are also differences related to the ethnic/caste profile of migrating communities and their different propensities to migrate, as well as gender, with more women migrating in Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia urbanization and the expansion of manufacturing, especially for export, have led to an enormous rise in both short and long-term migration. Although the economic crisis of 1997 radically altered the economic context and migration streams, and hit informal sector occupations particularly badly, it did not curtail or reverse the long-term growth in labour migration. While some labour markets did shrink, others in different locations and sectors emerged. Return migration has emerged as a phenomenon that warrants attention. Now, with greater integration of

¹ For some, including Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan and Viet Nam, greater detail can be found in the specific country papers.

regional economies, there is also more cross-border migration, which we also touch upon.

In general, migration and commuting have been greatly aided by relatively good road networks, communication technology and export market links that have emerged as many countries have opened up their economies. Temporary migration is increasingly important, particularly in the movement to large cities. Sheng (1986) for instance, maintains that the population of some cities grows by 10 per cent during the dry season owing to temporary migration.

Thailand²

In Thailand, migration flows are generally from the poorly endowed northern areas to the south. Temporary moves, which include both seasonal and other forms of short-term movements, have been estimated to account for one-third of all migration with lengths of stays of one month or more. Although precise statistics are lacking, comparisons of the 1998 Census and the 1996 Demographic Survey show that the number of persons leaving their rural place of residence in Thailand increased. Data also show that people are moving over greater distances as more people move to a different province. More than half of the people who changed their place of residence had moved to another rural area. But, over time, there has been a decrease in rural-rural migration and an increase in rural-urban migration.

Thailand stands apart from Cambodia and Lao PDR because there are remunerative jobs (including many in the non-farm sector) in rural areas. But the economic crisis of the late 1990s had a major effect on migration patterns. According to the Labour Force Survey conducted by the National Statistics Office, roughly 15.6 per cent of the people over the age of 13, or seven million people, were migrants in Thailand in 1995, the year before the economic crisis hit. But the figures for 1997 were much lower, with roughly 327,000 workers moving from agriculture to manufacturing; 532,000 to construction, 215,000 to commerce and 130,000 to the service sector. Construction and services were the worst hit sectors. Return migration increased, causing unemployment in rural areas. But it appears that this trend was reversed in 1999, with workers going back to towns and cities (Sauwalak 2000, cited in Paitoonpong et al. 2001).

There has been a clear trend towards the feminization of migration in Thailand. The ease with which women can enter and leave many urban occupations and hence circulate between rural and urban centres, has been observed in northern Thailand by Singhanetra-Renard (1981, 1987), Women combine agricultural work with a variety of urban occupations, particularly petty trading and work in the construction industry. The employment of women is greatest in the five major export-oriented, labour-intensive industries, which are electrical machinery, electronics and computer parts; textiles and ready-made garments; chilled, frozen and canned food; precious stones and jewellery, and footwear Clausen (2002). Employment in the sex-trade is also significant which, while bringing more disposable income to women and their families at home, may put them at great personal risk. Recognizing the special needs of women migrants and enabling them to access safe and remunerative jobs will be crucial.

² The findings summarized in this section are derived from Acharya 2001; Godfrey et al. 2001, Paitoonpong et al. 2001 and Guest 2003.

Viet Nam

There has been a perceptible increase in temporary migration of labourers, workers traders and carpenters from rural to urban areas, such as Ha Giang and Hanoi.³ Other studies confirm this: Grace (2002) notes that Ho Chi Minh City experiences a massive seasonal influx of people to its outskirts when the Mekong River floods. Regional cities such as Da Nang, Ba Rai-Vung Tau and Can Tho are also major destinations for rural migrants. There is much migration from the Red River Delta. A study conducted by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in the region, while noting an increase in long-distance migration, also notes the high levels of short-distance temporary migration to nearby destinations and Hanoi. Most migrants covered in the study preferred long-term leave permits rather than registering as permanent migrants at the destination. This allows their families to continue to cultivate their land on their behalf (IIED 2004). Another migration stream from the Red River Delta was to the Central Highlands, which, until recently, was a major coffee producing area (Winkels 2004).

Easy access to remunerative jobs and urban facilities by rural-urban migrants is made very difficult by the elaborate and complex KT⁴ classification system for residents. Reforming this could bring many benefits to both migrants and the economy.

Cambodia

Although poorer and less urbanized than Viet Nam and Thailand, Cambodia has also recently witnessed a sharp increase in rural-urban migration as more young girls and women migrated to urban areas to work in garment factories, as domestic helpers, bar girls and sex workers (ADB 2001, Acharya 2003). Roughly 3 per cent of the labour force was employed in garment manufacturing units (Sok et al., 2001). But, as will be discussed later in the paper, the phasing out of the MFA is threatening the garment industry in Cambodia as it is likely to face stiff competition from other countries. There are fears that this could push women into dangerous occupations, such as prostitution.

The 1997 economic crisis had negative impacts here too. According to surveys conducted by the Cambodia Development Resources Institute (CDRI), the most severely hit internal migrant jobs were petty traders (women), cyclo drivers and porters, scavengers (men and women), waitresses, rice field workers, garment workers, motorcycle taxi drivers and skilled and unskilled construction workers.

Otherwise rural-rural migration dominates: a 1996 survey on labour and migration conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning in Cambodia, covering 20,000 households spread across 667 villages and urban settlements across the country found 570,000 migrants in the population aged seven and above. Of these, 72.5 per cent were rural-rural migrants working in agriculture and fisheries. According to this survey, 70 per cent literacy rates among male migrants were slightly higher compared to 69 per cent in non-migrating households. However, development practitioners in the country indicate the lack of literacy as well as difficulties for ethnic minority migrants as important barriers to obtaining safe and remunerative jobs. The problem of trafficking is serious and represents a difficult challenge for the country. Cross-border migration and trafficking into Thailand is being addressed at

³ According to Participatory Poverty Assessments conducted by the Government of Viet Nam in 2003.

⁴ See p. 16 for details concerning the KT classification system used in Viet Nam.

the policy level with the help of international organizations such as the IOM and ILO, and considerable progress has been made in signing MOUs to protect the rights of migrants. But more needs to be done to address the issue of internal migration; it is conspicuously absent from the National Poverty Reduction Strategy of 2003-05.

Lao PDR

There is relatively little formal information on internal migration in Lao PDR. Anecdotal evidence shows that there is much migration of labour to timber processing areas.⁵ A migrant worker earns roughly 20,000 kip a day (USD1) but the contrast with agricultural wages is not as pronounced as elsewhere, because rural wages can be as high as USD1.5-2/day in plantation work. Here, too, urbanization and industrialization, especially in Vientiane Municipality, Svannakhet, Pakse, Thakek and Louang Prabang, have become major drivers of rural-urban migration and this is increasing. Although data are not available, increased settlement in urban areas is visible. The impact of the Asian economic crisis was minimal and does not appear to have significantly affected migration patterns (NSC and NERI⁶ 2001). Some women migrate to the two garment manufacturing units in the country, but in much lower numbers than in other Southeast Asian countries (Acharya 2001).

Low levels of formal education and ethnic differences pose important policy challenges for Lao PDR. A government study highlights the problems of young women and men from ethnic minorities migrating from remote areas to towns and cities for work. They are at great risk of exploitation because of their limited knowledge of Lao, especially women. This severely limits their ability to engage with healthcare workers, extension workers, traders and others outside the village.⁷

Indonesia⁸

As shown in a number of studies by Hugo from the 1970s show, Indonesia has also witnessed an increase in circular or temporary migration. A longitudinal study of 37 villages in Java carried out over the period 1967-91 (Collier et al. 1993) concluded that most of the landless rural families in Java have at least one person working outside of the village in a factory or service job. Indonesians are moving over an increasingly wide area to improve their and their family's life chances. Census data relating to migration reveal that interprovincial migration within a province has increased drastically over the last thirty years. Data show a 67.8 per cent increase in the proportion of Indonesian males who have lived at least once in a province other than their own in the late 1990s. The figure for women was 98.2 per cent. Individual mobility has been transformed with greater ownership of motorcycles and motor cars, and by the rapid development of public transport.

The economic crisis of 1997-98 changed the economic context in Indonesia, which had the effect of influencing both existing patterns of labour mobility and also setting off new mobility patterns in response to the crisis. Jobs in Java seem to have been hit

⁵ According to Anthea Kerr, working in Lao PDR for over 3 years with the UN and international NGOs.

⁶ National Statistical Centre and the National Economic Research Institute of Lao PDR.

⁷ National Poverty Eradication Programme, 8th roundtable meeting, Vientiane, 4-5 September 2003, Government of Lao PDR.

⁸ This section draws on Hugo (2003) and the ILO report "Migration: opportunities and challenges for poverty reduction", one of 12 technical briefing notes for the Poverty Alleviation Committee in Indonesia, "Working Out of Poverty: an ILO Submission for the Indonesia PRSP".

especially hard, triggering a net outflow of people to the outer parts of the country where large projects for the extraction and processing of natural resources such as minerals, oil and timber employed migrant labour. At the same time, there was an increase in return migration: censuses showed that up to a fifth of all interprovincial migrants were return migrants.

Ethnicity also poses difficulties for migrants in Indonesia. Migrants comprise more than 200 distinctive ethno-linguistic groups. Universal education and improved transport and communication networks have made a difference, but more efforts are needed in this direction.

China

In China a number of changes have occurred simultaneously, all fuelling the movement of people. They include market liberalization and the spread of export-oriented manufacturing, and the lifting of employment and movement controls (Ping 2003, Zhao 2003). Many migrants are unregistered temporary migrants, often referred to as the “floating population” who may outnumber registered migrants by approximately 4 to 1 (Guest 2003). Liu and Chan (2001) note that non-*Hukou* migration has greatly increased in the post-reform period. These migrants tend to concentrate in coastal regions and cities, peripheries of cities and construction sites and factories. But a long term-study conducted by the Ford Foundation on labour mobility in China since 1994 (Wu 2001) finds that these increases stabilized after the economic crisis set in, and that the coastal areas were not absorbing as much labour as it used to. Competition between migrant and urban workers was increasing in large cities, where state enterprises were restructuring and applying policies that excluded migrant workers. Migrants have therefore begun to move to small and medium towns in other destinations. However, the 4 provinces of Guangdong, Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangsu and the cities of Beijing and Shanghai continue to absorb nearly 80 per cent of all flows.

The Ford Foundation study also found significant return migration rates of around 2.5 per cent, with the ratio being almost twice in the western region. While returnees have used entrepreneurial skills to establish enterprises and small businesses in some areas, the overall skill level of returnees was found to be lower than the average for all migrant workers, possibly reflecting the rising skill requirements in the urban and non-farm labour market. Building human capital will be a key area to focus on in the future, as it could remove the barriers faced by uneducated people in accessing emerging remunerative markets.

South Asia

Bangladesh

A study of internal migration in Bangladesh (Afsar 2003) based on the analysis of data sets generated by the United Nations, the ILO and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, showed that all types of migration had increased significantly. Rural-urban migration was found to account for nearly two-thirds of outmigration from rural areas.⁹ The share of rural-to-rural migration was 10 per cent compared with 24 per cent for overseas migration.

⁹ On the basis of panel data generated from 62 randomly sampled villages in Bangladesh (Rahman et al. 1996).

The latest estimates by the Coalition for the Urban Poor of migration into the capital of Dhaka indicate a 6.3 per cent annual increase in migration.¹⁰ (Dhaka is the most common destination because of it offers greater work opportunities. Most people look for work in the garments industry, rickshaw transport and the domestic sector. Rapid urbanization is creating these kinds of jobs that exert a stronger attraction than traditional push factors such as frequent natural disasters and poverty and destitution. The garment industry currently employs around 1.8 million people (80 to 90 per cent of whom are women) in more than 3,500 small and medium-sized factories spread around 'Export Processing Zones' and urban areas of Dhaka, Narayangonj, Chittagong and Khulna.

India

Recent official statistics show that rural-rural migration continued to dominate, accounting for roughly 62 per cent of all movements in 1999-00 (Srivastava and Bhattacharyya 2003). Workers from backward states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan routinely travel to the developed "green revolution" states of Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat for the transplant and harvesting season.

However, new insights into migration in terms of patterns, causes and effects are continuously emerging. This section presents illustrative case study material obtained from discussions with field practitioners, NGOs, donor organizations and in-depth multidisciplinary village studies:

Three important trends may be discerned:

1. Very high levels of temporary migration
2. An increase in rural-urban migration due to a variety of new pushes and pulls
3. A greater propensity to migrate among certain castes

An estimated 20 million people migrate temporarily each year in India.¹¹ High levels of temporary migration are reported in a number of village studies. For example, a study of Bolangir district in Orissa estimates that nearly 60,000 people migrated during the drought of 2001 from that district alone (Wandschneider and Mishra 2003). Bolangir is one of the three infamous KBK (Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi) districts in Orissa with persistently high levels of poverty. Studies in the drought-prone areas of West Bengal by Rogaly et al. (2002) observe that over 500,000 tribals, muslims and lower caste people migrate seasonally to the rice-growing areas of the state.

Madhya Pradesh shows similarly high levels of outmigration from both drought-prone and forested tribal areas. For example, Deshingkar and Start (2003) found that more than half the households in four out of six study villages in Madhya Pradesh included migrant family members. The proportion was as high as 75 per cent in the most remote and hilly village with infertile soils. A study by Mosse et al. (1997) of the first phase of the Western India Rainfed Farming Project (Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan) funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) revealed that 65 per cent of households included migrants. A few years later another study in the same area found that in many villages up to three-quarters of the population to be

¹⁰ Personal communication with Mostafa Quaium Khan, Executive Director.

¹¹ An informed guess by policy researchers on the DFID-funded Western India Rainfed Farming Project (see Jones and de Souza).

absent between November and June (Virgo et al. 2003). In Andhra Pradesh, a study by Society for the Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD)¹² in the highly drought prone and poor district of Ananthapur similarly showed an increase in migration between 1980 and 2001¹³ (Rao 2001). Migration among small and medium farmers has increased mainly because of the lucrative Bangalore market which pays Rs.100 to 150 per day, nearly three times more than the local wage.

Karan's study of labour migration in northern Bihar based on primary survey data collected in 1981-83 and 1999-2000, from six randomly selected villages (two each in Gopalganj, Madhubani and Purnea districts) showed that increasing rural-urban migration to work in the non-farm sector was the new trend. The traditional destinations of rural Punjab and Haryana are not as popular as they were 20 years ago because fewer jobs were available as agriculture became more mechanized. He found that migration rates had almost doubled from 7.5 per cent to 13.4 per cent of the total population during the intervening period. There had been an increase in long-term migration, but this concerned mainly the upper and wealthier classes. Though migration duration for the poor also increased, there were still more short-term migrants among them. Roughly 24 per cent migrated to work as non-farm labour in 2000 against 3 per cent in 1983. The figures for agricultural labour were 15 and 1 per cent, respectively. Dayal and Karan (2003) studied 12 villages in Jharkhand, using household surveys and PRA methods. They found that one-third of the households had at least one member migrating. Short-term migration was higher among poorer groups, involving over 80 per cent of the landless and 88 per cent of illiterates.

Studies conducted by the Society for the Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD) in Rajasthan show very high migration rates. In Jhadol *tehsil* of Udaipur, a typically drought prone area, 50 to 75 per cent of the population migrates seasonally to work in agriculture in Gujarat. In Girva, another drought prone *tehsil*, 25 per cent of the households have commuters who work in sand mining, stone quarrying and construction work and another 25 per cent migrate over long distances to work as, e.g., truck drivers, while a further 10 to 15 per cent work in service sector jobs in the urban informal economy.¹⁴

These are just a few examples; a number of other village studies show very high levels of temporary migration, particularly in the case of underdeveloped regions.¹⁵ The main point is that, in the absence of other opportunities to diversify locally, many households are exploring opportunities outside the village.

An important but under-researched dimension of migration in India is the relationship between migration and the caste system. Some studies have noted that certain castes

¹² The Society for the Promotion of Wasteland Development is an internationally respected NGO working in India on participatory management of natural resources. The study was part of a larger research study on Household Livelihood and Coping Strategies in Semi-Arid India", by the Natural Resources Institute, UK.

¹³ Based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews across eight villages.

¹⁴ Personal communication with Viren Lobo.

¹⁵ See, e.g., the work by Singh and Karan (2001) on Bihar; Dayal and Karan (2003) on Jharkhand; Mangain (2003) on Uttaranchal; Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Projects (APRLP) (2003) on Mahbubnagar, Andhra Pradesh; Khandelwal and Katiyar (2003) on South Rajasthan and Grameen Vikas Trust, Mosse, Virgo et al. (2003) on Madhya Pradesh; Rafique and Rogaly (2003) on West Bengal. See also Breman (1985, 1993), Ghosh and Sharma (1995) Bora (1996), all cited in Karan, 2003.

and tribes have a higher propensity to migrate. Deshingkar and Start (2003) for example, found that the scheduled tribes had higher migration rates in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Similar observations have been made by Dayal and Karan (2003) regarding Jharkhand: whereas 15 per cent of scheduled castes and tribes migrated, only 8 per cent of upper castes and 3 per cent of “other backward castes” migrated.

This is related to the generally poorer asset base and lower education levels of these social groups. A study of northern Bihar shows that migration rates among SCs and backward castes have risen more strongly than for other castes (Karan 2003). Migrant job markets are often segmented along caste lines at the destination, and discrimination may prevent lower castes from earning as much as others for the same work. Policy needs to approach the issue of discrimination and social exclusion in conjunction with other measures to support migrants.

Until very recently there was not a clear-cut official position on temporary migration in India and how to make it a less painful process. But there has been a perceptible shift in official attitudes indicated by state-level multi-stakeholder meetings held during 2004. Both Andhra Pradesh and Orissa have deliberated on the issue of migration and how to tackle it within the respective states, and also alongside the issue of cross-border migration from Orissa to the brick-kilns of Andhra Pradesh. Programmatic approaches that have emerged from this process are covered later in this paper. Issues of underpayment and renegeing on contracts are common.

Regional migration

Whereas political boundaries may seem binding and the populations they contain may seem distinct from each other, the day-to-day reality is that many of these borders are quite porous and that there is a steady flow of goods and people across them. Given their similar cultures and ethnic backgrounds, this kind of migration is closer to internal migration than international migration. A good example of this is the India-Bangladesh border. For many Bangladeshis living near the Assamese border, Guwahati is the largest day labour market, and they congregate daily at railway and bus stations to find work on Indian construction sites or farms. Indian officials view this kind of migration with alarm as they are wary that the migrants will establish themselves, send for their family, acquire a work permit and then eventually a ration card which entitles the family to all kinds of pro-poor schemes.

Cross-border migration, especially of Cambodians and Lao workers to Thailand for unskilled jobs, and Vietnamese into Cambodia for semiskilled jobs, such as construction foremen, machine mechanics or wood processors is common. A study conducted in 2001 found that border controls were lax and fees paid to officials ranged between USD50-100 in 2001. No work permits were needed. Informal levies of 1,000-20,000 *riels* per month may be charged. Laos also receives skilled workers from neighbouring countries. However, thousands of illegal workers are being deported from Thailand due to shrinking work opportunities there.

Two small-scale rapid assessment surveys conducted by CDRI in 2000 (cited in Godfrey et al. 2001) showed much mobility across the Thai-Cambodian border. Cambodians currently represent about 9 per cent of the over one million irregular migrants currently thought to be working illegally in Thailand, usually in unskilled

jobs and often in sweatshop conditions.¹⁶ Thailand also hosts large numbers of irregular migrant workers from Myanmar and Laos.

Other processes are also shaping regional cross-border migration, such as the globalization of production processes, trade and foreign investment, heightening the interdependence of neighbouring economies. A few urban centres with large markets, manufacturing, technology, skills and resources have emerged as strategic places attracting migrant workers from neighbouring regions and countries. Examples include border towns, such as Mukdahan in Thailand and Savannakhet in the Lao PDR, which are evolving into areas of major interface between the Lao PDR's natural resources and Thai capital and skills. Another example is Lao Cai in Viet Nam, a border crossing point between Yunnan Province of China and Viet Nam. There the trade sector is growing at an astonishing 40 per cent annually (ADB 2003). Similarly, towns such as Sisophon and Battambang on the southern corridor in Cambodia are becoming subregional centres linking production and trade.

The CDRI surveys mentioned earlier show intensive commuting across the Cambodia-Thailand border with women commuting or staying away for a few weeks at a time to work in planting, weeding, harvesting rice, corn and sugar cane. Long-range migrants are better off and work as construction labourers, porters, farm workers, garment workers and unskilled workers. On the coast they work in fish processing, restaurants and shops. Long-distance migration declined after 1997, and it is likely that subsequently some migrants switched to commuting over shorter distances due to the economic crisis and internal political conflict.

The feminization of migration

More women are migrating for work independently and not only to accompany their husbands. This so-called "autonomous female migration" has increased because of a greater demand for female labour in certain services and industries, and also because of growing social acceptance of women's economic independence and mobility. In fact, the feminization of migration is one of the major recent changes in population movements.

The majority of female rural-urban migrants in East and Southeast Asia are young and unmarried, and the concentration of this group in urban areas is particularly pronounced in the 'mega cities' (Guest 2003). For instance, there are several types of interprovincial movements in Indonesia, where females outnumber males. The women migrating to cities tend to have low levels of education and obtain work as domestic workers or in the informal sector; women with secondary education work in the formal sector, especially in the expanding factories in the Botabek (Bogor, Tangerang and Bekasi) area. A study of the cities of Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh estimates that 40 to 45 per cent of migrants are female (Grace 2002). The pattern in China is still largely male-dominated as shown by a number of studies (Zhao 2001, 2003) owing to both cultural reasons that restrict female mobility and the nature of the demand for manual workers in urban areas. Even so, more women are migrating to labour-intensive industries in areas such as Guangdong. Although the migration of women has increased rapidly in South Asia, it is still not on a scale with Southeast Asia, possibly because of cultural factors. However, the migration by women to the urban garment manufacturing industry is notable in both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

¹⁶ Cambodia - Cambodian-Thai Labour Migration Workshop, IOM press briefing notes, 22 June 2004, <http://www.iom.int/en/archive/pbn220604.shtml>.

Societal norms and gender-based stereotypes may exclude women from better paid work and result in lower payment of women for the same work. Breman (1996) observed that migrant women in Gujarat, carrying out equivalent tasks to migrant men earned considerably lower wages. However, in Thailand the commercial sex sector provides one of the few areas in which relatively high incomes can be obtained (Archavanitkul and Guest, undated).

Problems faced by migrants

Whether or not migration is poverty reducing, migrants travel and live under very difficult conditions. Poor immigrants usually stay in slums or even less secure accommodation. The estimates for Indian metropolises are sobering: roughly half of the population in Mumbai and 40 per cent in Delhi live in slums.¹⁷ Roughly 500,000 people migrate to Delhi every year mainly to work in the 95,000 factories there, or as workers in teashops, vendors and drivers. Of these, 400,000 move into the 1,500 illegal colonies and 1,000 slums in the city (Simha 2003), with very poor access to clean water, sanitation or electricity. Even those who earn reasonable amounts face constant threats of eviction, disease, sexual abuse, underpayment and police harassment.

Mosse et al. (2002) observed in their study of Madhya Pradesh, that migrants work long hours in harsh conditions, where injuries are common without adequate medical assistance or compensation. Water, fuel, sanitation and security are major problems. They quote a study by an NGO (DISHA) in Gujarat that found that over half of migrants slept in the open, and the rest had very perfunctory accommodation. They face harassment, abuse, theft, forcible eviction or the demolition of their dwellings by urban authorities or police. The sexual exploitation of women by masons, contractors, the police and others is routine but goes unreported by women for fear of possible consequences (loss of employment, violence). Migrants do not have right to food subsidies and have to spend a sizeable portion of their wages on basic food supplies. A study conducted in Baroda city in Gujarat (cited in Mosse et al. 2002) estimated that 56 per cent of migrants interviewed spent more than 75 per cent of their income on food, and another 74 per cent spent 40 per cent of their income on other necessities, including fuel, soap, tea and medicines. Rents are also substantial. Probably the most serious loss induced by migration is children's schooling. When entire families migrate, children stay behind to do household chores while the parents work.

In Bangladesh poor people in Battala and Bastuhara spoke about the high levels of insecurity faced by migrants during a participatory poverty assessment conducted there as part of the World Bank's Voices of the Poor series (Narayan and Petch 2002). Rickshaw pullers lose their rickshaws if they are late with rental payments, factory workers may be fired immediately if they miss a day of work, as they can easily be replaced by others. Workers are also at great risk if they attempt to organize. The owner of one garment factory in Battala cut employee wages to compensate for his losses during a strike.

Viet Nam has established an elaborate classification system - the KT system - which ranks inhabitants according to different residence categories, from the most stable,

¹⁷ Report of the Working Group on Watershed Management for the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

KT1, KT2, to the most unstable, KT3, KT- 4. Normal access to basic services and public facilities such as water supply, electricity, health care, schooling, notary public services, land and house ownership largely depends on which KT category the inhabitant belongs to. The same rule applies to getting a formal job. Temporary and illegal residents, KT3 & 4, are deprived of normal access to urban services and opportunities: they have to secure the most basic services, e.g. water, at ten times the normal price. Other services, such as schooling, are totally inaccessible. They are limited to informal jobs, depriving them of better opportunities to escape poverty faster. Other problems include the increased risk of HIV/AIDS. Migration also strains family relations and places greater burdens on women and older people left behind.

The inadequacy of quantitative surveys

Data on migration are inadequate owing to the inability of most censuses and demographic surveys to capture seasonal and part-time occupations. Where migration is covered, it usually concerns only registered migrants; illegal migrants, who are mainly poor, are missed.

Inability to capture part-time occupations and unregistered migrants

Starting with the example of China: official data do not cover the huge number of unregistered “floating” migrants, who are often involved in short-term work. Estimates vary between 50-120 million, giving an indication of the accuracy of the assessments (Ping 2003). Liu and Chan (2001) further note that the six major data sets on national migration¹⁸ are not comparable, because they use different categories of reasons for migration. There are several differences between the *hukou* statistics (which only cover *Hukou* or *de jure* migration) and the census surveys (which cover *de facto* migration), thus hindering meaningful comparisons.

Southeast Asian data on migration are similarly inadequate. Thai census data do not capture much of the temporary and circulatory migration (Archavanitkul et al. 1993). Hugo (2003) notes that the examination of rural-urban migration in Indonesia is made difficult by the fact that national census migration data do not differentiate between urban and rural origins of migrants, and do not detect migration within provinces where a great deal of rural to urban migration actually occurs. Some indication of the importance of intraprovincial rural-urban migration is evident in the results from the 1995 intermediary survey. But it does not detect interprovincial movements since it only counts movements inside *kabupaten* boundaries.

In Pakistan, too, rural-urban migration and urbanization remain underemphasized because of definitions of “urban” and “rural”, and also the way that surveys collect information (Gazdar, 2003). The Population Census is the main source of data and this can only capture permanent relocations. Other datasets, such as the Labour Force Survey and the Integrated Household Surveys, provide more detailed information on place of origin (rural or urban), but they also use the census to define their sampling frames.

¹⁸ The 1986 Urban Migration Survey, the 1987 One Percent National Population Survey, the 1988 Two Per Thousand Fertility Survey, the 1990 Census, the 1995 One Percent National Population Survey and the household (*hukou*) registration migration statistics.

Serious underestimation of mobility

Even where data are better, as in India, the inability to capture part-time occupations and unregistered migrants can lead to completely flawed conclusions. The major sources of migration data in India, namely the National Sample Survey and Census, show that overall migration has actually decreased recently (Kundu 2003) because they do not adequately cover temporary migration, while official statistics may even suggest a decline in migration rates. In a fascinating case study in the arid Panchmahals district of Gujarat (Shylendra and Thomas 1995), a village that supposedly is completely dependent on agriculture according to official statistics (98.4% of the households and 97.7% of the labour force reported agriculture as their primary occupation in the NSS survey of 1993-94) was described as actually being very diversified. The study conducted by the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) shows that, in fact, 90 per cent of the households were engaged in non-farm activities, and seasonal migration was so high that 44 per cent of the labour force migrated, with the average number of persons migrating from each household standing at 2.2, including women (Shylendra 1995).

Missing rural-rural migration

Probably the most serious problem from the poverty viewpoint is that official statistics on rural-rural migration are very scarce and inaccurate owing to the scattered locations of sending and receiving areas, and the difficulty in enumerating all the streams. In general, the finer details of mobility are best captured through multidisciplinary methods. For example, Deshingkar and Start's research in 12 villages of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh (2003) used a combination of household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews, and found six different migration streams in AP and nine in MP, all distinct from each other in a variety of ways.

B. Poverty and Internal Migration

The relationship between poverty and internal migration is neither linear nor simple. Overall, the evidence to date suggests that those with limited access to land and other assets are more likely to migrate.

Box 1: Migration as a Survival or Accumulation Strategy

While many studies on migration have tended to emphasise the impoverishing effects of migration, they have rarely posed the question of what these households and individuals would have done in the absence of the opportunity to migrate. In Indian writings, the term "distress migration" and "migration for survival" have often been used to explain migration by the poor as a response to natural calamities and other shocks (Murthy, 1991; Reddy 1990; Rao, 1994, Mukherjee 2001, who calls it "distressed" migration). Distress migration has also been noted in a variety of African contexts by the participatory poverty assessments (PPAs), though not necessarily using the same terminology.

But there is compelling evidence that the returns from migration can improve over time as migrants acquire more knowledge, confidence and skills, enabling them to cut out exploitative middlemen and contractors. The concept of accumulative migration (Deshingkar and Start 2003) has been gaining acceptance. Rao's (2001) study of Andhra Pradesh distinguishes between "migration for survival" and "migration for additional income". He observes people from Rayadurga district were migrating for survival in the 1970s, but changed to migration for additional income in the 1990s. Another example is Bihar, where earlier studies described distress migration, and more recent ones, such as the study by Karan (2003), describe migration in much more positive terms. In the PPAs, synthesized in "Crying out for Change" migration was identified by both men and women as an important factor leading to upward mobility: the importance of migration was greatest in Asia, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean, and less so in Africa.

For example, in Cambodia migration is most pronounced from the densely populated provinces of Kompong Cham, Prey Veng, Kandal and Takeo, which, according to the 1997 socio-economic survey, are characterized by small farm size, which is much below one hectare in three provinces (Godfrey et al. 2001). Zhao Zhu (2003) finds land size has significant negative effect on migration in China. Each additional *mu* (a Chinese unit of measure) of land reduces the probability of migration by 4.4 per cent if the decision model is individual-based, and by 2.8 per cent if the decision model is household-based. In contrast, Yao's (2001) study of the relationship between land and migration in China suggests that egalitarian land distribution promotes labour migration.

Comparisons between migration levels from northern Bihar in 1982-83 and 1999-2000 (Karan 2003) show that the propensity to migrate among the middle categories of landowners (2.5 - 5 acres) fell, while it rose for those at extreme ends of the spectrum. Half of the landless and marginal farmers owning one acre of land were sending members out. Higher castes with land were also migrating in larger numbers to work in more remunerative jobs.

The poorest usually cannot migrate because they do not have enough labour¹⁹ or the resources required for start-up investments on tools and other assets, transport, food and shelter. The move often involves bribes, and loans that have to be repaid. There is accumulating evidence of the existence of a 'migration hump',²⁰ even in the case of internal migration, where an initial rise in household wealth leads to an increase in migration rates. For example, Du (2004) analyses two complementary household datasets from China's poor areas to examine how migration affects the rural poor in China. They found an inverted U-shape relationship between household endowments and migration.

While poverty is an important driving force, cultural factors also play an important role. In Indonesia, for example, there has been a long tradition of certain communities responding to poverty through particular mobility strategies. As we discussed previously, caste is also an important determinant of migration in the case of India.

New pull factors

The pull created by the demand for labour created by growing modern industrial complexes and the gap in rural and urban wages has been discussed since the 1950s. There have since been many models and debates on what motivates people to migrate, including theories of expected as opposed to actual wage differentials. Other pull factors include the desire to acquire skills or gain new experiences. In the case of voluntary migration of the poor for economic reasons, the wage gap is probably the

¹⁹ The availability of labour within the household is a strong determinant of the likelihood to migrate. Having one extra member in the household increases the relative likelihood of that household migrating by 17% in Andhra Pradesh and 19% in Madhya Pradesh. A rise in the ratio of working to non-working members in the household also increases the relative likelihood of migration by nearly 75% in Andhra Pradesh and by 221% in Madhya Pradesh. Focus group discussions and participatory wealth ranking of migrating households corroborate these findings: labour-scarce households do not migrate (Deshingkar and Start 2003).

²⁰ The curve plotting the initial increase, and then the decrease of outward mobility with the growth of national economic productivity.

most important pull factor and the most important recent determinants of this appear to be urbanization and the spread of manufacturing.

Box 2: Urbanization

Urbanization has become a major driver of internal migration. Rates of urbanization influence rural-urban wage differentials: an increase in the demand for labour in urban areas can push up urban wages and increase migration. Rural-urban differences in average incomes increased in many South and East Asian countries during the 1990s, especially in China (IFAD 2001, Eastwood and Lipton 2000). Current ESCAP projections are that urbanization rates in South and Southwest Asia will soon exceed other regions in Asia (Guest 2003). This is already beginning to be reflected in the growing importance of rural-urban migration.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, informal sector jobs do offer prospects for accumulation and to exit poverty because, even if wages are not higher than in rural areas, more work is available and there are unmatched opportunities for switching rapidly between different non-farm jobs where entry barriers are low (e.g. security guards, street vendors, bicycle rickshaw pullers, house maids, porters, attendants, petty traders etc.).²¹ The previously mentioned study in Gujarat observed that urban incomes were so lucrative that not even government employment schemes, such as the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and irrigation could reduce outmigration (Shylendra 1994). In a paper on internal migration in Pakistan Gazdar (2003) notes that many rural poor describe destinations such as Karachi as *Ghareebon ki maan* (the “mother of poor people”) because of the prospects they offered for remunerative work. Wages of casual daily labourers can range from Rs 40 in southern Punjab, to 150 in Karachi. A recent study by Thanh et al. (2005) in the Red River Delta shows that migrants prefer urban destinations as wages are higher there.

Even where urban incomes are not much higher than in rural areas, urban work may be available more regularly than rural work, which is often tied to the crop season. Many informal sector jobs actually become illegal because very few permits are issued and this fuels an enormous system of bribery and corruption known as the “licence permit raj” in India.

Is there more migration from poorer villages?

The literature on migration suggests that poorer villages (usually unirrigated and/or remote) tend to be the “sending” areas, and urbanized locations or richer villages (irrigated and/or well connected) the “receiving” areas (Dev and Evenson 2003, Kundu 2003). Indeed the situation is encountered in many semi-arid, forested and arid parts of India, as demonstrated by many case studies.²² Here, too, generalizations are difficult; anecdotal evidence from Lao PDR,²³ for example, suggests that migration is higher from the richer flood-prone areas and not poorer drought-prone regions, because the richer communities in flood-prone areas along the Mekong are better connected to the outside world and better able to take advantage of migrant labour markets when their lands are flooded. Inequality may be a more important driving force, as the much quoted Indian Village Studies project of the Institute of

²¹ See Harris 2004.

²² See, e.g., the work by Singh and Karan 2001, Karan 2003 in Bihar and Dayal and Karan 2003 in Jharkhand, Rao 2001 and APRLP 2003 in Andhra Pradesh, Khandelwal and Katiyar 2003 in South Rajasthan, and Grameen Vikas Trust in Madhya Pradesh, Rogaly et al 2001 and Rafique and Rogaly 2003 in West Bengal and the Western Orissa Livelihoods Project (WORLP) in Orissa.

²³ Personal communication with Anthea Kerr.

Development Studies (Connel et al. 1977, Lipton 1980) argued. They found that unequal, not the poorest villages had the highest rates of out-migration. We return to the subject of migration and inequality below.

Are internal remittances contributing to poverty reduction?

Although the individual quantities are smaller, the total volume of internal remittances is likely to be enormous because of the numbers of people involved, especially in China, Southeast Asia and South Asia. While consensus is being reached on the capacity of migration to reduce poverty, or at least prevent further impoverishment at the household level, there is still no agreement on whether migration reduces inequality.

Poverty reduction at the household level

The strongest evidence of internal remittances contributing to poverty reduction is from economies where urbanization and manufacturing have increased significantly, and where rural-urban migrants earn substantially more than they would in rain-fed farming. In situations where urban wages are high and employment is regular (even if informal) remittances can be significant.

Internal remittances may contribute substantial amounts to rural household budgets. In China, a recent Ministry of Agriculture sample survey of 20,089 rural households estimated that, in 2004, the remittance contribution by migrant workers to rural household incomes was about to overtake earnings from agriculture (quoted in Harris 2004). These projections were made on the basis of the previous year's figures, where the 98 million or so rural outmigrants remitted roughly USD 45 billion (Rmb 370 billion), up 8.8 per cent from the previous year. Mosse's study of migration in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat in India found that 80 per cent of cash income in project villages was derived from migration. Karan's study in Bihar showed that remittances accounted for one-third of the average annual income of landless and marginal households sending migrants. By caste, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and Muslims earned 29 per cent of their income through migration. The Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP) in Bangladesh estimates that migrants in Dhaka remit up to 60 per cent of their income to relatives. For the sending households, remittances provide up to 80 per cent of the household budget. The study conducted by Dayal and Karan (2003) of 12 villages in Jharkhand states that 98 per cent of the migrants reported an improvement in their lives because of migration. Remittances accounted for 23 per cent of the annual household income in sending households. Migrant households have a better diet and spend on average 15 per cent more on food than non-migrating households. 13.3 per cent of those owning 5 - 20 acres of land spent their additional income on productive uses. In addition, wages increased in the village due to migration-induced labour shortages.

There is a gender dimension too: women may remit more of their earnings than men, because of a deeper commitment to the welfare of their families. Osaki's (1999) study of Thai migrants shows that women are better supporters of the families left behind.

However, there are doubts relating to the potential for poverty reduction of remittances. It has been widely observed that the investment of remittances into productive uses is limited, and that consumption spending is greater. But this is not necessarily a problem, as consumption can include a variety of uses that may have a

positive impact on the general wellbeing of the family and kin. Remittances can be used for many purposes (see Box 3).²⁴

Box 3: How remittances are invested

- Daily needs and expenses, including food, which improves food security and nutritional status.
- Medical/healthcare expenses or education, which can improve the livelihood prospects of future generations.
- Consumer durables (bicycles, motorbikes, milling machines, kiosks, televisions, stereos) some of which can contribute to income generation.
- Improving or building housing.
- Buying or leasing land or livestock.
- Investment in socio-cultural life (birth, wedding, funerals).
- Loan repayments (often loans contracted to pay for the cost of migrating).
- Savings.
- Income or employment-generating activities.
- Purchase of cash inputs into agriculture (hired labour, disease and pest control, etc.), resulting in better cultivation practices and higher yields (Carter, 1997); investment in agricultural implements or machinery (water pumps, ploughs etc).

An analysis of Chinese remittance data (de Brauw et al. 2001) shows that the loss of labour to migration has a negative effect on household cropping income in source areas. However, they provide evidence that remittances sent home by migrants compensate for the lost labour effect, contributing to household incomes directly and indirectly by stimulating crop and possibly self-employment. Taking into account both the multiple effects of migration and the change in household size, they found that migration increased household per capita income between 14 and 30 per cent. The work by Yang (2004a) in areas of high outmigration in China shows that total grain output in several locations declined by less than 2 per cent, while disposable household income increased by 16 per cent as a result of migration. Du et al. (2004) analysed two complementary household data sets from poor areas in China to gather empirical evidence on the role of migration in poverty alleviation. Remittances were found to have an important effect on measured poverty rates concerning both the migrants themselves and the household members left behind.

Similar evidence is emerging from South Asia. Research in poor and dry parts of Rajasthan (Conroy et al., 2002) shows that, whereas urban poverty has increased, rural poverty has declined partly due to increased remittances. In Bangladesh, Rahman et al. (1996, quoted in Afsar 2003) found that the extent of poverty was much lower (around 30%) for households having migrant members than for non-migrant households (around 60%), based on an analysis of panel data sets. The proportion of those who perceived themselves as poor, or extremely poor, declined from around 60 to 30 per cent between 1990 and 1995. From her study of readymade garment (RMG) sector workers, Afsar (2001) estimated that, from no income of their own prior to migration more than 80 per cent were able to earn enough to keep themselves above the poverty threshold after migration. Her research challenged the conventional wisdom that migration transfers rural poverty to urban areas. She also provides evidence on urban immigrant households having improved their incomes since arrival. At the same time, household incomes in rural sending areas have benefited

²⁴ Adapted from Sander's (2003) study on international remittances, many of which also apply to internal remittances; also from IIED (2004) and Deshingkar (2004a).

from remittances received from migrant family members. Migration of workers also helped to reduce the unemployment rate, one of the major problems in Bangladesh (Afsar 2000). In Pakistan, the Federal Bureau of Statistics which provides information on incomes from different earning sources, collected data showing that remittance receiving households are disproportionately located in the upper income deciles (Gazdar 2003).

A recent study by Luttrell et al. (2004) in Viet Nam highlights the importance of mobility and migration as a positive livelihood option for the poor in coastal areas, who depend on fisheries and agriculture with sharp seasonal fluctuations and long slack periods. Remittances are a vital and important part of the economies of most households. Agricultural production provides just enough for domestic food, but other purchases often depend on remittance incomes. A new study of Nhat and Ngoc Dong villages in the Red River Delta area shows that migration has been particularly important in raising the standards of living in Nhat, where 36.8 per cent of households have at least one migrant, and remittances account for 17 per cent of household income (Thanh et al. 2004).

A survey of internal migrants in Cambodia conducted by CDRI in 2000 shows that many households reported positive impacts – 11 bought land, 40 opened small businesses, 25 built a house and a few bought motorcycles. 57 per cent of the households with a long-range migrant were able to meet short-term food and farming requirements in 1999. Almost all short-range migrants were able to save money. They also reported development of skills, such as construction and tailoring (Godfrey et al. 2001). The wage difference between agricultural work and unskilled work in Phnom Penh is very large: workers in paddy fields earn 4,000 *riels* (roughly one US dollar) per day, while the prevailing wage rate for unskilled/semiskilled workers in the city is 6,000-10,000 *riels* (Pon and Acharya, 2001). Garment factories, pay at least USD 45 a month; with overtime payments, most such workers are able to net USD 60-75 per month (Sok et al., 2001).

Migration and inequality

In the early 1980s Lipton asserted that rural-urban migration does not tend to equalize incomes either between or within regions for the following reasons:²⁵

- a) The selective nature of migration, providing higher returns to the better off and better educated, prevents equalization within areas of origin.
- b) There are costs and barriers associated with migration, including access to information about opportunities, which tends to steer the gains of migration towards the rich.
- c) The absence of the most productive household members leads to a lowering of labour-intensity, which, according to Lipton, is “socially maladaptive, especially in the medium run, while the rural work force is growing much faster than other, scarcer factors of production”.
- d) The volume of net remittances is usually low, and
- e) Return migrants are likely to be the old, sick and unsuccessful, and skills brought back are unlikely to be of much help.

²⁵ Taken from de Haan 1999.

For a number of migration analysts these concerns remain just as valid today. For example, despite the fact that migration is seen as an important route towards poverty reduction in China there are still concerns that the poor and unskilled will face barriers because of the registration system and lack of education in an increasingly skills-based economy. Rural-urban and inter-regional inequalities have increased and the poor continue to be concentrated in the west, far remote from China's booming coast (World Bank, 2001).

On the more positive side, migrant remittances are thought to reduce inequality because poorer families migrate and any increase in their incomes will reduce differences in the village (see works by Oberai and Singh). Studies by Guest (1998) in Thailand have shown that remittances help to reduce rural household income inequalities as well as inter-regional inequality. New research in Thailand shows that remittances help to redistribute income towards poor provinces, resulting in a lower level of cross-province inequality in household incomes (Yang 2004b). Osaki's (1999) research in Thailand also argues that remittances contribute to the equalization of income distribution among households having outmigrants.

In addition, migration may provide an escape from social hierarchies and in that way increase equality, at least in the destination areas where discrimination based on ethnicity can be less strong than in traditional villages. For example, Breman observed that migrants broke away from caste-prescribed behavioural norms of subservience at the destination. Participatory poverty assessments conducted in India by the World Bank in 1997 and 1998, reported that migration had eroded the hold of the upper castes on lower castes as they were no longer dependent on degraded land and local labouring for survival.

Remittances and overall economic growth

On the basis of research in Bangladesh, Afsar (2003) argues that remittances help to expand business in agricultural products and construction materials. Remittances also helped to generate savings, the major source of capital in the absence of institutional credit on easy terms. She believes that migration and remittances have invigorated the land tenancy market in rural areas: the proportion of tenant farmers increased from 42 per cent to 57 per cent between 1988 and 2000, and the land under tenancy cultivation increased to 33 per cent, an 11 per cent rise from 1988.

Similarly, the ILO study of internal migration in Indonesia concludes that migration to urban areas can be associated with macroeconomic growth. The most obvious impact of remittances is to support the subsistence and incomes for resident households of the migrants. Remittances increase individual household income, which stimulate demand, creating local markets and jobs for non-migrants.

Two studies in Thailand by Guest (1998) show that remittances are an important supplement to household income and have a multiplier effect on the economy with many major items of expenditure, such as construction materials and labour procured locally. Anh (2003) draws similar conclusions based on data from Bangladesh, China, Viet Nam and the Philippines. Anh identifies migration as a driver of growth and an important route out of poverty with significant positive impacts on people's livelihoods and wellbeing and concludes that attempts to control mobility will be counterproductive. The flow of money, goods and services between rural and urban areas can create a virtuous circle of local economic development by increasing

demand for local agricultural produce, stimulating the non-farm economy and absorbing surplus labour (Tacoli 2004). But this depends on access to infrastructure and a conducive trade/market environment. But, downward spirals resulting from migration have also been noted. For instance, the study conducted by Winkels of migration from the Red River Delta to the coffee producing highlands argues that it has resulted in environmental deterioration, economic and social exclusion of local inhabitants in the destination areas, unequal access to opportunities for migrants and exacerbated inequality. Temporary migration contributes more to the development of better off regions in the north rather than the development of the central highlands.

Generalizations on the positive outcomes of migration are not desirable; what can be said with some certainty is that there is growing evidence of potentially positive impacts and, with supportive policies, such instances are likely to be encountered more frequently.

Investment by migrants and returnees in sending areas

Returning migrants can bring skills, funds, information about markets and new technologies and different values back to their native village. This can lead to far-reaching changes. For instance, Zhao's (2001) study of Chinese migrants indicates that return migrants are more likely to invest in farm machinery, especially for harvesting, ploughing and threshing. Supporting return migrants in their endeavours should certainly become a policy objective. There have been some efforts in this direction, albeit not always successful.

C. Policy and Programmatic Approaches and Good Practice

Current policy approaches

Migration as a policy field represents the special problem of being at once everyone's concern (ministries of labour, agriculture, urban development, rural development, social protection and women and child welfare) and also nobody's concern. Though examples of good practice are few and far between, they nevertheless offer important lessons.

Also, owing to the greater political profile of international migration, there appear to be more concerted efforts in this area through government departments and civil society organizations, as in the case of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Added to this is the problem that migration has tended to fall between several stools and, at best, there is a migration desk attached to a regional office or department. Programmes on rural and urban development may often have a perspective on migration, but this is implicit in their approach. We examine the current policy approach to migration as well as implicit migration-related issues in rural and urban policies.

Current Policy responses are grouped into different categories depending on whether they are aimed at labour supply and demand, or are measures targeted at rural and urban areas, or measures that aim to reduce the risks of internal migration and enhance the benefits of migration for development.

Policies aimed at labour supply and demand

The Chinese²⁶ government is pilot testing labour migration agreements among sending and receiving provinces. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security announced several measures aimed at improving the conditions for millions of farmer-workers currently working in cities. The measures include asking companies to abolish all limitations and unreasonable fees on such workers seeking employment. Public consultation organizations are also urged to offer services to farmer-workers free of charge. Local governments have been asked to draw up professional training and education plans for workers.

While internal migration continues to be somewhat neglected in Southeast Asian countries, efforts are being made in the areas of trafficking and cross-border migration. An MOU has been drawn up between the Thai and Cambodian government to create a bilateral administrative process that provides structured employment procedures in such areas as recruitment, a mechanism for the return of migrant workers after their contracts expire, labour protection guidelines and prevention and intervention mechanisms to combat irregular migration and human trafficking. To what extent these measures will in fact help the poor who have to resort to dangerous means of migration is not clear.

India has initiated policies aimed at coordinating state efforts in labour sending and receiving areas. In the last year at least two meetings were organized in this regard at state level. In Orissa the meeting was organized by the DFID-funded Western Orissa Rural Livelihoods Project (WORLP) and brought together government officials and NGOs. While still at the initial stages, the WORLP intends to devise ways to mitigate the adverse effects of migration. It will identify accessible opportunities for upward trajectories that the poor can access, and find ways of supporting them. Residential care centres have been established by the government in sending areas for the children of migrant workers.

In Andhra Pradesh the Commissioner for Rural Development is in the process of improving the database on seasonal migration, especially cross-border migration from Orissa into Andhra Pradesh. This is being done in conjunction with the DFID-funded Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project. A special cell is being created within the Rural Development Commission under the direct supervision of the Commissioner to monitor the labour welfare measures. There are discussions with NGOs, such as Action Aid, to develop a suitable migrant support programme. Initial ideas include the possibility of issuing passbooks that migrants can carry with them to minimize harassment and facilitate access to services. A tripartite agreement between labour unions, labour contractors and employers is being discussed. NGOs are being entrusted with the task of improving awareness in sending villages of existing laws²⁷ designed to protect the rights of migrants. Meetings will also be held at the village level between employers (in this case brick kiln owners) and local government

²⁶ All information on China in this section is derived through personal communication with Hans van de Glind, Manager/Chief Technical Advisor, ILO-IPEC project to prevent trafficking in girls and young women for labour exploitation in China (CP-TING project).

²⁷ Existing central and state legislation in India includes the Minimum Wages Act (1948); the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979); the Contract Labour System (Regulation & Abolition Act) (1970), the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (1975), for women under the Equal Remuneration Act (1976), the Construction Workers Act (1996), or the Factories Act (which sets a handling limit for women of 20kg).

representatives to increase awareness of such laws and legislation. NGOs will be engaged by the labour department to monitor the implementation of such legislation.

More meetings at the state level between the labour ministers of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh are planned to discuss the issue of cross-border migration. Meetings between government officials from different districts within the state on the issue of migration are also planned. The possibility of providing migrants with access to subsidized food will be taken up by the Department of Rural Development with the Food and Civil Supplies Department. The government will also provide day-care facilities for working migrant mothers at brick kilns. Schooling for the children of workers will also be provided at brick kilns.

Policies aimed at reducing the risks and costs of migration

The Chinese Ministry of Labour and Social Security has removed the working card requirement for migrant farmer-workers in towns and cities. Previously, farmers needed such permits to work in provinces outside their place of birth. The ministry has also asked local labour and social security departments to reform policies and cancel illegal charges targeting migrant workers. In addition, it is working on a draft law on household register management to create conditions for free population movements and settlement.

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions has submitted a proposal to the Legal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, suggesting the ministry concerned issue a law for rural migrant employees to safeguard their legal rights, and advising the State Council to establish a special working committee on protecting these people.

The Chinese ILO CP-TING project, which aims to prevent the trafficking of young women and girls for labour, has succeeded in improving the conceptual understanding of migration and trafficking among policymakers. Hans van de Glind, the project manager, believes that migration will continue and many will use irregular channels if legal channels are not available. This puts them at risk of trafficking and exploitation as it is very difficult to protect the rights of migrant workers if their movement is not managed through safe channels. The project is trying to develop cheap, fast and transparent labour migration channels on a larger scale, geared especially towards those with low education and skills levels.

The project was set up in collaboration with the Chinese authorities (through the All China Women's Federation) and it is roughly half a year into operation. The aim for the first year is to improve the conceptual understanding of trafficking - from a narrow understanding that trafficking is “abduction and kidnapping of babies for adoption and selling of women for marriage purposes”, to a broader one that also recognizes that many young girls leave villages voluntarily for lack of local opportunities. As many are neither well prepared nor well informed, they are vulnerable to trafficking in the migration process. Based on such improved awareness and understanding the project aims to improve the knowledge base on the issue. In the second phase (years 2 and 3), pilot models will be tested in selected target counties in 'sending' provinces (Anhui, Henan and Hunan) and selected target cities in 'receiving' provinces (Guangdong and Jiangsu). The final phase of the project in years 3 and 4 will involve work to influence policy. The project has already been represented at a national conference on migration and employment of rural women in

China, organized by the State Council Poverty Alleviation Leading Group and ACWF.

In India a now well-known example is that initiated by the Grameen Vikas Trust in Madhya Pradesh under the DFID funded Western India Rainfed Farming Project. GVT has worked closely with the local government of source villages and has developed an informal system of identity cards for migrants, which give them some protection against official harassment. GVT has liaised with NGOs in the neighbouring state of Rajasthan to set up migrant resource centres that provide them with information on job availability, wage rates and their rights.

Another example of a successful migrant support programme is the Aajeevika Bureau set up by an NGO, Sudrak, for migrants from southern Rajasthan. It is active in the following migrant support activities:

- Providing skills training to rural migrants and assisting with their placement in better paid jobs.
- Setting up a registration, information and tracking service for rural migrants.
- Supplementary education and skills training for children of migrant families.
- Research on migration processes across other blocks of south Rajasthan in order to determine future action.

Sadhana, an NGO from Andhra Pradesh, has started a residential school for the children of migrants in a high migration area of Medak district with support from UNICEF and the district administration. Now the children of migrants can stay behind and continue with their education. Such migrant support programmes appear to have been more successful than official programmes in ensuring fair pay and better working conditions. The key ingredients here appear to be a good rapport with potential beneficiaries, good social mobilization skills and a genuinely participatory and democratic approach. Such attributes are more commonly encountered in NGOs rather than bureaucracies, and continued support from government and donors is important.

Migrant-friendly financial services

However not all support services can be provided by civil society organizations. The private sector has an important role to play in providing migrant-friendly financial services. A widely acknowledged cost faced by migrants is the transfer of remittances. Formal banking channels are inaccessible to uneducated and poor people for a variety of economic and social reasons. Informal transfer mechanisms, such as the *hawala* system, or sending money through friends and relatives, are common. A few experiments to reduce the costs of sending remittances are being undertaken, but most focus on international remittances (see work by Siddiqi in Bangladesh). One example related to internal remittances is the ICICI bank in India that is currently conducting a household survey in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, to throw light on the usage patterns and needs for financial services for savings, credit and insurance (personal communication with Bindu Ananth, ICICI Bank). Similar surveys will be repeated in other major urban destinations. It is not clear why and how the initiative was undertaken, but it appears that banks are now viewing migrants as an untapped customer pool. If the services they design prove to be successful, other banks may follow suit.

Welfare funds

The idea of welfare funds for informal sector workers has gained currency in India and some have been piloted, but their success is mixed. The core idea is that these funds will provide social security for workers. Kerala has introduced a fund and it has provided some measure of social security to workers. But its functioning is embedded in the bureaucratic system, giving rise to a number of problems (Kannan 2002). Some modifications will have to be made to improve its accessibility for the poor before it can be replicated in other states.

Lessons can also be drawn from the experience of welfare funds for international migrants. A comparative study of welfare funds in the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Pakistan conducted by Tan (2004a) shows that, although they provide similar services, the mode of delivery made the Sri Lankan model more effective. It used existing specialized institutions for delivery, such as insurance companies, schools and banks rather than attempting to do so internally as the Pakistan model did. However, the benefits offered do not reflect actual risks, such as, e.g., loss of lifetime income. In practice, risk varies greatly according to destination and occupation, but this is rarely reflected in the insurance policies. Nor are the funds able to deal with contract violations, a common complaint. Tan suggests that a system of tracking addresses of employers will help. But as Mosse notes in respect of India, workers may never know the name of the ultimate employers or even see their face because of the multiple layers of contractors and subcontractors involved.

What emerges from these examples is that, to make migration a less arduous process, migrant support requires some combination of:

- better access to information on the job market;
- mechanisms that allow access to services, food and the like and reduce exposure to potential harassment;
- personal insurance against risk;
- improved education facilities for the children of migrant families, and
- more accessible transport systems and better infrastructure.

Rural-rural migrants have are in the greatest need of support because they are often poorer, invisible to the official regulatory system and much more vulnerable to abuse and hazardous living conditions. A clear focus on women and children in support programmes is important, given their especially vulnerable position.

Policies aimed at enhancing human capacity

A joint circular was released in 2004 by the Chinese ministries of agriculture, finance, labour and social security, education, science and technology and construction urging local governments to launch training programmes for the local rural migrant labour force. Called the Sunshine Programme, this is a major initiative across the six ministries on vocational training for 10 million rural labourers who plan to move to non-agricultural industries, or to migrate to cities. The programme has been launched in poor areas and in provinces with high outmigration rates. The central government has invested 250 million *yuan* in this and an additional 300 million *yuan* are being contributed by provincial governments. Of the 1.5 million farmers trained so far, 80 per cent have found jobs.

The State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development, and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce have signed an agreement to work together to provide training or jobs for underprivileged people, including migrants and potential migrants.

Programmes aimed at improving the understanding of migration

In China several departments and academic institutes, such as the Research Center for the Rural Economy of the Ministry of Agriculture, have launched in-depth studies on rural mobility to better understand the causes and consequences of migration.

The Bangladesh government has become aware of the importance of migration and many organizations are engaged in research, advocacy and interventions for migrant workers, but most of the efforts are concentrated on the higher profile international migrant community. Internal migration is not receiving either sufficient attention or funding.

Policies aimed at maximizing the benefits of migration

The Asian Development Bank is supporting work on the impact of regional integration in the Greater Mekong Subregion on the poor living along border areas. The focus is on the East-West and Southern Corridors of the GMS, spanning Viet Nam, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Thailand. The issue of migration will be at the forefront of the work as the most direct influence that increased integration has on people living near the borders. Specific benefits arising from cross-border movements (more job opportunities, access to better services, etc.), as well as negative consequences (more competition for jobs, human trafficking, increased crime, disruption of social capital, discrimination of migrant workers, etc.) will be researched.²⁸

Policies on urban development

While rural development departments are clearly moving ahead, urban policies remain hostile to migrants in some cases. An example is the Delhi Master Plan that is not friendly to migrants. Another example is the “Mee Mumbaikar” campaign launched by the Shiva Sena in the Indian city of Mumbai that capitalized on peoples’ fears of a disproportionate influx of people from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, although there are no official statistics to substantiate this. The Sena further alleged that the culture of the people from those states is altering the ethos of Mumbai.²⁹ Bangladeshi migrants are also being targeted.³⁰

Policies on rural development

Although not stated explicitly, many rural development programmes also aim to control migration. The underlying rationale can be found in the literature on common property resource management, watershed management and agricultural development that is replete with statements of expected declines in migration flows due to

²⁸ Personal Communication with Mr. Janmejay Singh, ADB.

²⁹ A parochial project LYLA BAVADAM Frontline Vol:20 Iss:10, <http://www.flonnet.com/fl2010/stories/20030523004803200.htm>

³⁰ Thousands of Bengali-speaking Muslims who migrated to Mumbai over the years, sources: Binoo Nair, “Sena renews plans to flush out B’deshis”, Mid Day, 5 December 2004; Nithin Belle, “Sena to launch drive on issue of immigration”, Khaleej Times, 6 December 2004.

successful employment creation and resource regeneration³¹ Watershed development aims to increase employment through labour-intensive soil and water conservation. Besides the short-term effects of watershed development on rural employment, there is a widespread belief that if watershed management (WSD) programmes succeed, then they will reduce the flow of migration. WSD implementation can affect migration through an increase in short-term employment as well as long-term productivity gains.

Incorporating migration into development policy

A policy framework

Classic dual economy models (e.g. Lewis) predicted that an expanding modern sector would draw cheap labour from the countryside where the marginal productivity of labour is zero. Such models viewed migration as an integral part of the development and modernization process that would even out inequalities and benefit both sending and receiving areas. Most neo-classical approaches to migration analyses used the basic tenets of rational choice, maximization of utility, expected net returns, factor mobility and wage differentials. The logical conclusion of these models was that wage differences would eventually disappear and migration would cease. But we know now that wage differentials persist and circulatory movements have become a way of life.

Structuralists, such as Breman, challenged neo-classical theories arguing that there was no equilibrium, and the kinds of dependencies evident in global configurations also shaped migratory flows where cheap labour was exploited by capitalists leading to accumulation by the latter at the cost of the former. Migration, it was argued, was no more than neo-bondage and could never lead to poverty reduction or asset accumulation for the migrant. Rather than reducing inequality as predicted by the neo-classical economists, structuralists argued that it exacerbated it.

Policy responses to migration have been conditioned by these ideological positions. Those who believed that migration was impoverishing and worsened inequality have sought to discourage it, while those who saw it as a redistributive process believed in letting it continue unfettered. This paper argues for a position that is somewhere in between: recognizing the potential benefits of free movement, but also recognizing that power relationships and imperfect markets exist, thereby compromising the benefits to poor labourers. Looking at the primary evidence on the patterns and returns to migration, a policy framework that is guided by the principles of the *Sustainable Livelihoods Approach* seems to be in order. At the heart of the analysis is the *migrant* and the household that he or she belongs to. The migrant's ability to climb out of poverty is not just a function of his or her education, health and other assets, but also depends on the dynamics within the family in respect of resource allocation and the gender division of labour. These prospects are also conditioned by the outside context, as determined by the interplay of institutional, cultural, political, social and economic factors. A range of social science disciplines are employed to understand who migrates, for what reasons and the implications of migration for the individual, family and society at large.

³¹ See, for instance, the International Food Policy Research Institute's (IFPRI) evaluation of National Watershed Development Project Rainfed Areas (NWDPRAs), India, by Kerr et al., and studies of common property resources (CPR) rejuvenation in Rajasthan, cited in Chopra 2000.

Interventions in the area of internal migration therefore cannot nor should be the responsibility of one sector or one ministry alone. Rather, a more holistic approach needs to be taken where different components of rural livelihoods are viewed together. On the diagnostic side a number of disciplinary approaches may be adopted. Thus, economic theories should be employed to understand the impacts of labour depletion on household economics and inequality; social theories should aim to understand the importance of networks, and anthropological theories should aim to understand the importance of ethnicity and culture. In the tradition of structuralists, there is a need to acknowledge the importance of social hierarchies and power relations in shaping the different outcomes experienced by different social groups. Migration policy needs to tackle migration at different levels, through institutions that are geared to different sectors (labour, gender, agriculture, rural development, social welfare and urban development). There may be a case for creating a separate coordinating body to prioritize and sequence the needed interventions.

With these general guiding principles in mind, some areas for policy attention at the macro level can be identified:

Fostering rural-urban linkages

At the macro level there is a need for countries to foster rural-urban linkages in order to create the virtuous circles described previously and to broaden the perspective on rural and urban and not view them as distinct and separate. Some countries in the Mekong region are working towards this. For example, the Lao PDR has committed itself to strengthening rural to urban market linkages to support its rural development strategy. A recent project introduced in small towns in the Lao PDR demonstrated a significant potential impact of urban investments on the surrounding poor rural hinterland in terms of increased non-farm jobs for the rural poor, among other things. Viet Nam has also recognized the importance of rural-urban linkages. A principal thrust of its Central Region Development Strategy (2000) and the Viet Nam Urban Forum is to enhance rural-urban linkages. In other countries, such as Cambodia, with a relatively higher share of rural populations, an inadequate understanding of rural-urban links and migration led to a tendency to focus development efforts solely within rural boundaries (ADB 2003).

Moving away from a focus on agriculture as the sole route to poverty reduction

Current poverty reduction policies tend to focus on agriculture. There is little doubt that the majority of the poor live in rural areas and are largely dependent on agriculture. But a number of authors are now questioning whether this necessarily implies that investing in agriculture is the best way of reducing poverty (Song 2004, Deshingkar 2004). Agricultural growth rates remain low despite vast investments. The latest figures suggest that average aggregate agricultural growth is less than 2 per cent a year, which is too slow for poverty reduction in many rural areas. Not only that, the growth rate in South Asia is declining. The connections, if any and of what kind, between this and growing mobility need to be better understood.

Given the massive scale of investment needed to install even basic infrastructure in weakly integrated rural areas, and the growing search for jobs in urban areas, donors and policy makers should be addressing the question of whether more should be done to facilitate the mobility of people. This is particularly relevant as experience shows that the prospects of strong agriculture and natural resource based growth in the more remote and dry areas can continue to be poor even with infrastructure in place.

Predicting collapse and supporting diversification

In the planning process it is important to recognize which sectors are important for migrant labour and to predict how these will fare in the future. Where downsizing or collapse is predicted, it is important to anticipate, and prepare for, the consequences. In the case of the export garment industry, it appears that preparations have been inadequate in Bangladesh, one of the hardest hit countries. Christian Aid (2004) has warned that the end of the MFA could push thousands of women into more risky occupations, including prostitution. They urge companies to assume more responsibility for mitigating adverse impacts, including the provision of cash to compensate laid-off workers and providing retraining through mechanisms that actively encourage women to participate, and resisting the temptation to lower labour standards in an effort to compete. Instead, it urges them to introduce the social and labour safeguards incorporated under the ILO's SA8000 standard.³²

In Cambodia, another affected country, multi-stakeholder policy discussions on the impact on women workers of the MFA phase-out have been organized by UNDP, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNIFEM (personal communication Samvada Kheng, Gender Specialist, ADB Cambodia). The ADB is also providing training to migrant women to help them to diversify.

The informal economy

Another area needing attention is the role of the informal economy and its potential for poverty reduction. Many governments continue to regard it as a low-productivity sector that perpetuates poverty and all kinds of social ills. Many activities in the informal sector in fact continue to be illegal because very few permits are issued. But, because the overwhelming demand for and supply of these services, they continue and support the rent-seeking among petty officials and policemen that has assumed vast proportions as they are not above benefiting from the (illegal) livelihood strategies pursued by a majority of the poor in the informal sector. Clearly, there is a need to regulate the informal sector in ways that support multi-locational livelihood strategies; but, as Box 4 shows, this is not an easy proposition and there are few successful examples.

Box 4: The bicycle rickshaw economy and policy challenges

In Bangladesh and India pulling a bicycle rickshaw is one of the main activities for poor and illiterate people when they move to the cities. In Bangladesh this is the second most important economic activity for the poor, after cropping (personal communication with Bijoy Kumar Barua, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development). In New Delhi there were some 73,000 licensed and 300,000 unlicensed rickshaws in 2001. Partially in response to civil society group pressure, the government of India repealed the Cycle Rickshaw Bye-laws, and thus control over registration and regulation of rickshaws in 2001 in order to foster a more pro-poor environment. The impounding of rickshaws by the municipal corporation of Delhi (MCD) and by the Delhi police ended, barring a few "no rickshaw zones". However, this caused the numbers of rickshaws to literally explode to over 700,000 in just one year,³³ and the emergence of so called rickshaw-lords, people who own about 10,000 rickshaws each and charge a rent of Rs 50-60 per 12 hours, confronting the government with the problem that rent seeking by officials was replaced by rent seeking by these rickshaw lords. In case a rickshaw driver is unable to pay the rent, he faces the

³² SA8000 is the first social accountability system, devised by Social Accountability International, aimed at ensuring that retailers, brand companies, suppliers and other organizations maintain just and decent working conditions throughout the supply chain. SA8000 is based on international workplace norms set out in the ILO conventions, on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

³³ "Rickshaw mafia have a free run", The Hindu, Nov. 24, 2002.

threat of being beaten up by the owner and having his belongings confiscated. Because of these unforeseen problems and also because intelligence reports had suggested that many rickshaw pullers were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, the change in legislation was reversed.

At the same time, training in skills and education to help migrants to secure better paid jobs and to match their capabilities with the emerging high-skill sectors remains a priority. Du's study of Chinese migrants showed that supply side factors (viz., education, land and labour availability of the household) are much more important than demand side factors in affecting migration decisions. They therefore recommend an emphasis on the building of human capital, and the creation of information networks. The efforts of the Chinese government in this area have been discussed above. Elsewhere this is being left largely to market forces as a study of international migrant training programmes by Tan (2004b) shows.

The importance of improved infrastructure cannot be overstated, and many donors and national policies have rightly identified this as a priority area. Associated with this is the need for more accessible transport services that have been shown to have a major impact on mobility.

Research needs and means of information sharing

Levels and patterns of migration need to be reassessed as the general understanding is seriously distorted by the way data collection is conducted and structured, and where the emphasis on quantitative data tends to miss the finer details of mobility patterns. While it is probably unrealistic to expect large-scale surveys to engage everywhere with in-depth and highly time consuming analysis, it should certainly be possible to include some case studies using multidisciplinary approaches and a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. The extent to which such studies can be undertaken to throw more light on migration processes will depend on the availability of financial, human and institutional resources, and there is a clear need for donor assistance to build the necessary capacity in these areas. Better information on migration and its potential role in poverty reduction is also likely to lead to a change in official attitudes, and help in fostering a better understanding of the ways in which policy can both support migration and respond to its effects.

There are already many high quality studies on migration enabling a process of mutual 'cross learning' regarding sampling frameworks, study designs, the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods used, as well as research skills. One example is the long-term study on rural-urban mobility being conducted by the Ford Foundation in China since 1994. This unique study provides vital information on population movements and the socio-economic consequences of such movements.

Non-governmental organizations have followed more innovative methods. Examples from Southeast Asia include the work by Gubry in studying migration to Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). A novel survey technique, called the tracing survey, was used to trace migrants from Can Giuoc district, a rural area in the Mekong Delta region to HCMC. This enabled the researchers to get the opinions both of the parents who remained in the countryside, and of the migrants living in HCMC about their move. Research by *Villes en Transition (VeT)*³⁴ in Viet Nam also deserves mention. VeT is working on raising the awareness of the adverse impacts of the residence registration

³⁴ VeT is a French NGO working in Viet Nam since its creation in 1995 in the field of urban development and social equality.

on the urban poor in HCMC and Hanoi. This will complement the mid-term Ho Chi Minh City census implemented by the Provincial Statistic Office (PSO) and supported by the World Bank, which includes questions directed to migrants, including the unregistered.

UNDP in Myanmar is planning a study on international and internal migration in Myanmar (personal communication with Peter Resurrecion). The study, which is due to be completed in the first half of 2005, will be used to design appropriate HIV prevention education interventions for migrant workers.

In India, Seva Mandir, a reputed NGO in Rajasthan, has begun a detailed study on adolescent migration in an effort to introduce effective measures for the prevention of HIV/AIDS (personal communication with Ian MacAuslan, consultant, Seva Mandir).

Workshops and meetings involving participants from these projects could facilitate 'cross learning'. In addition, major livelihood projects, such as the DFID-funded livelihoods projects across Asia and Southeast Asia, could incorporate specific studies and support programmes for migration. As mentioned before, two Indian livelihood projects have already made some progress in this direction. Other donor-funded programmes could also incorporate specific work on migration. Discussions with World Bank and ADB officials in Viet Nam and Cambodia show that, while there is considerable interest in this area, little has yet been done in terms of actual programme development. The World Bank is considering work on labour migration in the Mekong Subregion (personal communication with Pierre Fallavier). Core interests are to: (i) improve knowledge about labour migration issues in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) with a special focus on the socio-economic impact of migration on both sending and receiving countries; (ii) raise awareness of decisionmakers about these issues and their significance for poverty reduction, and (iii) strengthen the capacity of governments and development partners to refine and implement a regional system to regulate labour migration.

Conclusions

Internal migration will continue in countries with strong regional inequalities. Besides considering means of improving the understanding of the causes and effects of migration, as well as designing programmes to reduce the costs of migration, policymakers need to ask more fundamental questions about the best approaches towards reducing poverty and inequality. The current obsession with agriculture and rural development is shifting needed attention away from the powerful potential of non-farm occupations and the possible diversification through mobility to tackle poverty that has hitherto proven very difficult to reduce through the sole targeting of poor areas and the poor living there. Ensuring remunerative and safe employment in manufacturing and urban services should be a pursued policy goal and viewed as complementary to other rural development policies in the effort to reduce poverty in the countryside. Migration needs to be understood from a livelihoods perspective and policies need to be designed through multidisciplinary and multisectoral study and analysis.

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Annex

The Migrant Labour Support Programme (MLSP)³⁵

The Migrant Labour Support Programme (MLSP) launched within the framework of the Western India Rainfed Farming Project aims to identify ways for poor tribal migrants to maximize the benefits from seasonal migration, and to replicate these approaches in tribal districts and destination areas.

Key components of the MLSP approach are the registration of migrants by the local government, the issuing of identity cards and employment record books, and making accident and life insurance available to tribal migrants. Migrants have to pay 5 Rupees (about 10 cents) plus the cost of a photo per ID card, but are very willing to do so. The MLSP had issued 10,000 ID cards by mid-2004 and expects to issue another 5,000 during 2005. The main advantage of carrying a card is that it offers some protection against official harassment from police who are on the lookout for 'trouble makers' (a common perception of tribal migrants). In source districts the project has worked closely with the police who have also agreed to certify the ID cards. Nearly 500 migrants have purchased life or accident insurance, a number that is expected to grow quickly. By mid-2005, the MLSP pilot project is likely to have directly benefited over 100,000 people (migrants and their families) and will be ready for upscaling.

Two kinds of centres have been set up under the MLSP - the migrant information centres (*Palayan Suchana Kendra* PSK) in home areas, and Migration Resource Centres (MRCs) in destination areas. The PSKs act as information and training centres for migrants, working closely with local government in registering the workers and providing ID cards. They act as a channel of communication between migrants and their families back at home.

The MRCs offer support for migrants in destination areas, providing information on jobs and where migrants can find assistance and support. The MRCs also assist migrants in case of disputes with employers about unpaid wages or other issues.

PSKs and MRCs work closely together in remitting earnings from destination areas to families in source areas; in fighting legal cases for non-payment of wages, and in providing ways for migrants to communicate with their families at home. Both centres run training courses for migrants on their rights. There are nine PSKs at present in Jhabua, Ratlam and Dahod districts and three MRCs, one each in Ahmedabad city and Vadodara town, two important destinations. The third is at Ratlam, a district town where migrants from tribal districts often congregate before catching buses or trains to destination areas.

GVT works in close partnership with the district administrations and local governments in home areas. Although it does not profess to take a rights based approach as such, GVT works with other NGOs, such as DISHA in Ahmedabad, which are active in working for construction workers' rights.

After the initial success of the programme, district administrations have indicated their desire to expand the number of PSKs in their districts in partnership with GVT.

³⁵ Based on a note prepared by Steve Jones and Ken Desouza.

Reducing the costs of migration

This is being done through:

- Job information.
- ID cards and training on labour rights to help migrants to withstand harassment and exploitation when travelling and in destination areas.
- Loans for migrants at 'reasonable' interest rates, to enable them to migrate.
- Means for migrants to communicate with their families at home.

Increasing the returns of migration

This is being done through:

- Skills training to enable migrants to access higher paying jobs.
- Less risky ways of saving and transferring funds home.
- Supporting migrants in disputes for the non-payment of wages.

Provide awareness training on migrant rights

The training is aimed at:

- *Mukkadams* (local labour recruiting agents);
- government officials in source and destination areas;
- contractors in destination areas;
- urban populations who generally hold negative views on migrants, especially tribals.

Assist migrants to access basic services

The focus of this element is on:

- the Public Distribution System (the state system of subsidized foodgrains for people living below the poverty line);
- basic education;
- health, i.e. information on the location of the medical centre, how to access it, and similar assistance;
- access to drinking water.

Advocacy work

This is aimed at government officials in districts and state capitals on migration issues to change policies and programmes (e.g., transfer of education, health and PDS benefits between states).