

## **UN report calls for widespread reforms to make the most out of migration**



4 October 2009 – Migration benefits the people who move, their host communities and those that stay behind, the United Nations' latest Human Development Report says, calling today for wide-ranging reforms to maximize those gains and to protect the rights of migrants – now estimated to be one out of every seven humans.

The annual report, written by independent experts and commissioned by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), proposes reforms to migration policies in source and destination countries that it says are politically feasible and will increase people's freedom and strengthen human development.

"Migration, both within and across borders, brings significant gains across the board, which could be further enhanced by better policies at home and abroad," said Jeni Klugman, the lead author of the report, which is focused on the theme of migration and released worldwide today.

Nearly 1 billion people are migrants, according to the report, with the overwhelming majority – 740 million – moving internally within their own countries. Less than three out of every 10 trans-national migrants move from a developing country to a rich one.

The report says the facts defy widely held beliefs about the economic impact of migrants, demonstrating instead that they typically enhance economic output in their new communities, give more than they take and have only a small effect on public finances.

Immigration tends to boost employment in host communities and helps lift rates of investment in new businesses, as well as deepen social diversity and increase the capacity for innovation.

Source countries also benefit through remittances, both cash and social, in the form of reductions in fertility, higher school enrolment rates and the empowerment of women. The exodus of highly skilled workers such as doctors, nurses and teachers is also more of a symptom than a cause of failing public systems in those States.

Migrants themselves can benefit enormously, with research indicating that people from the poorest nations enjoy a 15-fold increase in their incomes when they move to a developed country. School enrolment rates double and child mortality rates plunge.

While the report does not advocate for the wholesale liberalization of international migration, it points out that the populations of industrialized countries are ageing and these societies will increasingly need migrant workers, especially in low-skilled fields.

Existing entry channels for workers should therefore be widened, according to the report, while restrictions against internal migrants should be eased.

Cutting the transaction costs of legal migration channels, the report stresses, will also reduce the appeal of illegal options and help to regularize the flow of people from one country to another.

In addition, it calls for destination communities to take steps to ensure that migrants have basic human rights, especially regarding access to health care and education, and do not have to endure widespread discrimination and xenophobia.

Source countries should also include migration as a specific component of their development strategies, while destination communities and migrants are being called on to work together more on solutions to their problems.

The report notes that polls show that residents of destination countries generally support further migration when jobs are available and value the economic, social and cultural gains that a more diverse population can bring.

But, warning that the current global economic crisis has induced some countries to pressure migrants to leave or to cut their intake of new arrivals, Ms. Klugman spoke out against "a protectionist backlash."

She added that people will continue to try to move anyway to reap the economic benefits, and that the record of certain countries indicates that liberalizing migration laws and policies actually work.

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