



The World Today

Analysing Global Migration

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During the period of October 29 to November 5, I was invited to participate in a workshop at the Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies. Entitled, “*A Working for Young Scholars from the Global South*”, it was the second of its kind in which young scholars were invited to present their Ph.D Thesis and were able to receive candid comments from their peers from other ‘South’ Universities. It also presented an opportunity to visit as many of the inter-governmental institutions as possible in Geneva. One of the most unforgettable experiences was a visit to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) which is the principal intergovernmental organization in the field of migration. Needless to say, emanating from the speeches and the wide range of literature from the IOM several key facts and issues presented themselves.

IOM works in the few broad areas of migration management: migration and development, facilitating migration, regulating migration and addressing forced migration. Cross cutting activities include the promotion of international migration law, policy debate and guidance, protection of migrants’ rights, migration health and the gender dimension of migration. While working closely with governmental and non governmental partners, the IOM provides policy and technical advice to governments on the regulation of migrant labour and other migratory movements, and carries out programmes to assist governments and migrants with selection/recruitment, language and cultural orientation, consular services, liaising, reception, integration and return.

These services, tailored to each programme, are provided during all states of the process: information and application, interview and approval and post-approval. IOM has performed over 1.5 million immigration medical evaluations around the world and provides logistic and travel assistant to migrants.

Despite progress over the past decade, it is striking how many countries still do not have comprehensive migration policies or the mechanisms to develop them. There is a growing recognition that migration impact analyses should figure in development project planning, but inadequate research and patchy data often inhabit movement from theory to action.

The business community needs to be drawn into the migration debate. Whether in source countries or receiving countries, the business community plays a critical role in the economics of migration – as both a provider and a consumer of goods and services. Yet it has usually been absent from the table, especially at the international level. It is time

now for real partnership between governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private business sector and civil society.

Better mechanisms are needed to match supply and demand of labour globally. The labour market is increasingly global. Migration has become a vital element in improving the world's stock of human capital - thanks to temporary labour migration schemes and circular migration patterns but also via 'virtual' transfer of skills by diasporas.

Mechanisms to measure and match supply and demand in the global labour market, to provide frameworks for humane, safe and orderly flows to meet the needs, and to maximize the development potential of migration, have not kept pace with these developments. For female labour migrants in particular, better protection from abuse and trafficking could also come through the introduction of regulated and more flexible migration schemes. The absence of such schemes often means that the only way to migrate is through irregular channels, making women even more vulnerable.

The development potential of diasporas needs to be explored and enhanced. There is growing focus on the potential of diasporas to be key motors of development and not only through their remittances, as enormous and crucial as these have become in many parts of the world including Jamaica and Guyana in the Caricom region. The cost of remittances must be reduced and there must be sound national policies to ensure that the diasporas' relations with their home countries are enhanced for the benefit of all concerned.

Regional consultations are a key tool for international understanding and action. Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) are widely recognized to have been a crucial element in fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and increasingly concerted action in response to shared migration challenges over the past decade or so. While their informality and their specificity are understood and accepted as contributing to their success in the sensitive field of migration more could be done to achieve cross-fertilization and to benefit from good practice and lessons learned.

Better understanding of migration law will benefit states and migrants alike. In 2004, the IOM began the task of compiling and disseminating information about the vast body of existing international migration law. These efforts no doubt must be encouraged by the international donor community and the RCP's must take advantage of them in the context of development of their migration management capacities. Among other things this would contribute to improving both knowledge and understanding about the rights of migrants – and better treatment of migrants as a result.

With intra-regional migration within the CSME and a continuous migration stream from the Caribbean to North America and Western Europe especially, it would serve the region well, to work closely with the IOM for the benefit of its migrants.