Return Migration

Challenges and Opportunities
Return Migration: Happening Now

- Complex, dynamic, challenging aspect of migration
- Profound consequences for countries of origin, transit, destination and migrants themselves
- Considerable impact on development, trade, health, international relations
- Capacity for countries of origin to receive returnees
- Major human rights implications
Return Migration: Happening Now

- Return of highly-skilled Indians
- Sierra Leone: post-conflict return
- Poland: return of nationals from the UK
- Philippines: return of overseas workers

Migration Increasingly Complex

Most Return Spontaneous
Return migration: Key Features for Policy Makers

- Return migration concentrated at extremities of lifecycle*
  - Involves primarily young persons recently arrived in host country;
  - Older persons, particularly those of retirement age.

- “Marked threshold effects” after a few years of residence*:
  - Majority of returns (20% to 50%) occur within the first three years;
    - Either to home country
    - On to a third country (secondary emigration)
  - After five years return rate is relatively low.

- Some countries, such as Canada, the US and New Zealand, more successful at retaining immigrants*.

* OECD: International Migration Outlook, 2008
Migrant mobility greater between countries with similar level of development*

- When income disparities greater
- Migrants more likely to stay put

Return rates to OECD countries:
- On average, twice as high as those to developing countries

Four main reasons for return migration*:

1. Failure to integrate into host country;
2. Individuals’ preferences for their home country;
3. Achievement of a savings objective
4. Opening of employment opportunities in home country thanks to experience acquired abroad

* OECD: *International Migration Outlook, 2008*
Return: last-resort or anticipated possibility?
A Comprehensive Approach To Return Management

Respect for human rights at all stages

Pre-departure

Entry

Transit

Stay

Integration and Reintegration
A Comprehensive Approach To Return Management

- Development
- Human Rights
- Health
- Trade

Return Migration
Policy and Programmatic Activities

- Pre-departure orientation for migrants participating in temporary and circular migration schemes which require return
- Information about rights & responsibilities
- Consular assistance and protection
- Information about economic opportunities in the home country
A Comprehensive Approach To Return Management

Policy and Programmatic Activities (cont.)

- Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programmes
- Short term and virtual return if conditions remain unfavourable
- Coherence between national policies and international standards
Assisted Voluntary Return & Reintegration

Key Features

- Takes account of migrant’s decision
- Must ensure respect for human rights
- Consideration of vulnerabilities
- Allows migrants and societies to prepare for return
- Provides information / counselling, financial and/or logistical support
Key Features

- Avoids legal and social stigma of forced return
  - Relevant for the image of migrants in home and host societies
- Takes into account return and reintegration capacity
- Should include reintegration assistance for individuals and their communities
- Allows for evaluation of the reintegration process
- May foster more effective contribution of returnees to home country

Origin & Destination Countries as Equal Partners
Return: Innovative Approaches

- **Short-Term**

- **Virtual Returns**
  - Transfer of skills and knowledge to country of origin
  - Physically remain in destination country
  - Use of information technology
  - Important in early post-conflict reconstruction phase
  - In an insecure environment
  - Partnerships between:
    - Governments
    - Civil society
  - Academic institutions
  - Private sector
Return and Development

Strengthening the Link

Key role for co-operation between:
- Countries of origin
- Countries of destination
- Other stakeholders – Diaspora representatives

“Brain gain”
- Assessment of labour market needs
- Special visa regimes
- Incentives (financial, social, professional)

Attract qualified nationals from abroad
- Transfer of skills and know-how
- Entrepreneurial initiatives
- Transnational contacts
- Investment capital
- Soft skills
Returnees contributions (financial and otherwise) valuable

Burden of development must not fall on individual initiative
- Private nature of any returnee’s assets
- Personal dimension of decision to contribute
- Reduce social and institutional expectations

Not a substitute for development policies or foreign aid
Concluding Remarks

Elements of Effective Return

Factoring return possibility at every stage of the migration life-cycle

Making return sustainable:
- Policies and activities addressing fundamental conditions that prompted migration in the first place:
  - Good governance
  - Political, economic, social stability

Promoting voluntary over involuntary return
Concluding Remarks

Elements of Effective Return

Making return work for:
- Individual and societal development

Respecting human rights of returning migrants

Fostering multi-stakeholder cooperation
- Partnerships between countries of origin and destination
Return Migration

Challenges and Opportunities