



Migration and Transformative processes in Rural Areas

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ABSTRACT:

Migration is a natural outcome of structural and rural transformation processes that go along with development. As agriculture and rural sectors transform, sectorial growth linkages spur the emergence and expansion of urban industrial and service sectors, which in turn pull workers from rural sectors to urban areas. At the rural household level, temporary, seasonal, and permanent migration has been shown to have significant benefits on income diversification, resilience, and productivity-enhancing investments. As such, migration is a key contributor to and consequence of rural and structural transformation. Nowadays, the migration of people to the cities is proceeding at historically unprecedented rates, especially in developing countries. A large part of the explanation of urbanization can be found in the economic stagnation of rural areas. Nowadays, more than 3 billion people over the world live in rural areas and a quarter of them in extreme poverty. Rural transformation in general has been conceptualized as modernization, rural development, changes in economic structure, and the migration of the population from the farming sector to the non-farming sectors of the economy

Key Words: Migration, Rural Transformation, Sectorial Growth, Pull Factors, Structural Transformation etc.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is the movement of people, either within a country or across international borders. It includes all kinds of movements, irrespective of the drivers, duration and voluntary/involuntary nature. It encompasses economic migrants, distress migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs,) refugees and asylum seekers, returnees and people moving for other purposes, including for education and family reunification. In 2015, there were 244 million international migrants, representing an increase of 40% since 2000. They included 150 million migrant workers. About one-third of all international migrants are aged 15–34. Women account for almost half of all international migrants. A large share of migrants originate from rural areas. Around 40% of international remittances are sent to rural areas, reflecting the rural origins of a large share of migrants. 40% of international remittances are sent to rural areas, reflecting the rural origin of a large share of migrants. International remittances are estimated at three times the size of official development assistance. Internal migration is an even larger phenomenon, with 763 million internal migrants according to 2013 estimates. Internal and international migration are often interconnected. In 2015, 65.3 million people around the world were forcibly displaced by conflict and persecution, including over 21 million refugees, 3 million asylum-seekers and over 40 million IDPs. A quarter of global refugees reside in only three countries (Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon). In 2014, more than 19 million people were internally displaced because of natural disasters.

The role of migration in transformative processes

Structural transformation and migration:



Development economics concepts – along with historical evidence – indicate a positive causal relationship between structural transformation and migration. The reallocation of economic activity and resultant declining share of labour devoted to agriculture is normally accompanied by a movement of labour from rural to urban areas.

Importantly, the catalyst of this transformation is increased productivity in smallholder agriculture – a change which kick-starts wider transformations throughout rural sectors, eventually leading to broader economy-wide changes. Specifically, and as described in the literature (see Timmer 2005; World Bank 2007; Hazell et al. 2007; Byerlee et al 2009; de Janvery and Sadoulet 2010; and Ellis 2013), increases in the incomes of small-scale rural producers tend to result in expenditure patterns that promote growth in the rural non-farm economy by providing markets for local consumption goods, and input provision and marketing services for agriculture. Consequently, a virtuous cycle is set in motion, in which rising incomes in smallholder farming are sequentially followed by rapid growth in the non-farm sector, driven by the expanding demand for higher-value non-farm products. At this point, policies linking agriculture and other rural sectors with urban areas and improved transport infrastructure provide opportunities for further rural income growth, and increase the availability of affordable food and other key rural goods in cities Overall it is important to stress that successful transformation processes, in particular those that generate decent jobs (many of which will be concentrated in emerging industrial and service sectors), are inevitably associated with a degree of migration.

Slow transformation and migration:

In general, rural transformation and, consequently, the wider processes of structural transformation have proceeded at a much slower rate in many developing countries than might be expected in the context of increased growth rates. Underinvestment in rural infrastructure and key sectors such as agriculture, as well as alarming rural-urban gaps in education and health, are among the constraints holding back rural and structural transformation. Incomplete and unachieved structural transformation suggests that the urban growth experienced in recent decades has often not been accompanied by proportionate increases in waged jobs.

As a result, in many countries, the trend of employment transfer into modern industry over the long term has been much slower than expected (IMF 2013). This has tended to constrain the opportunities available for migrants.

This scenario is particularly the case in the presence of high levels of inequality. Where income and productivity gains are not broad-based, but instead confined to a small, relatively privileged group, the expected typologies of migration are likely to be different. More specifically, under conditions of high inequality, structural transformation processes would likely be less advanced as a result of incomplete rural and agricultural transformation, while non-farm sectors would not have sufficiently grown to absorb rural migrants into waged work.

While the pull of emerging opportunities in urban industrial and service sectors has been a key characteristic of economies undergoing transformation and development, rural-to-urban migration that is driven by significant rural-urban inequalities can be associated with a range of undesirable trends. This situation contributes to the expansion of cities which are marked by stark inequalities between a



wealthy elite and rising numbers of people living in extremely poor conditions – often in slums. From a migration perspective, a situation where movements of people are driven by significant inequalities carries with it the risk of a range of undesirable outcomes – including exploitative working arrangements, people trafficking, unsafe and unhealthy travel and living arrangements. Moreover, where migration and urbanization advances without the support of robust processes of rural and structural transformation, there are specific implications with respect to food security and poverty. Most obviously, the absence of a productive local agricultural sector leaves countries relying on food imports. This, in turn, leaves populations vulnerable to fluctuations in world food and energy prices, as has been witnessed during the recent food price crises. Indeed, the number of undernourished people in the world rose sharply between 2006 and 2009, reaching over a billion people for the first time since 1970, with rising food prices cited as a leading driving factor in this trend (FAO 2009).

Migration and rural livelihoods

Remittance impacts on rural livelihoods:

Remittances – international and internal – play a key role in supporting and enhancing the livelihoods of people in developing countries. International remittances, projected to reach US\$435 billion in 2014, are a key source of external resource flows for developing countries, far exceeding official development assistance and more stable than private debt and portfolio equity flows (World Bank 2014). Crucially, an estimated 40 per cent of these transfers are sent to rural areas. Internal remittances, however, appear to flow to an even larger number of households than international remittances – not unexpected, given the predominance of internal compared with international migration.

There is much evidence on the association of remittances with key drivers of rural transformation, such as increased investments in rural businesses, physical and human capital, and information and communication technology (as detailed, for example, in Ratha [2013], World Bank [2011], and IFAD and FAO [2008]). Remittances also provide an important source of rural income diversification, serving as insurance against adverse shocks (Ratha 2013), which is especially important, given the lack of access to and limited range of insurance products in rural areas. These uses of remittances all point to a significant association with key drivers of rural transformation. These effects are in need of more research and examination – in particular, the impact of internal remittances is an area that deserves more attention and analysis by researchers, planners and policymakers.

Human capital implications:

Opinions are generally positive on the effects of migration and remittances on health and education, though some of the available evidence gives reason for caution. Clearly, an educated and healthy rural workforce will be a prerequisite to bring about sustainable and inclusive rural transformation. Indeed, Timmer (2007) notes that in countries where successful transformations have been achieved, significant human capital investments – particularly in young people – have been made.

With this in mind, it is noteworthy that in households where at least one member has migrated and is sending remittances, children have shown improvements in health outcomes and the likelihood of enrolling and remaining in school (World Bank 2011; IFAD and FAO 2008). This effect appears to be



stronger when remittances are sent by migrant fathers to mothers (Malone 2007; and INSTRAW and IOM 2007, as cited by IFAD and FAO 2008). However, it has been noted in some cases that preventative health care, such as breastfeeding and vaccinations, is less common among migrant households, while parental absence has sometimes led to increased incidence of risk-taking health behaviour relating to alcohol and drug use (IFAD and FAO 2008). It is also notable that migration – or the future possibility of migration – can enhance human capital. Lucas (2014), for example, highlights induced education among those intending to leave, even if they actually end up remaining in rural areas and using their skills there.

The same author also notes the knowledge benefits accruing to rural communities as a result of transfers of knowledge from migrants who return to their communities of origin, as well as the creation of wider commercial opportunities through better access to information. These human capital-enhancing implications can be expected to be positive drivers of productivity, innovation and entrepreneurship – all key drivers of rural transformation.

On the other hand, there are legitimate concerns around rural areas losing a significant share of their young and educated labour force through migration, particularly given that young and educated people are observed to be more likely to migrate. Understanding differentiated impacts of diverse forms of migration will be needed to promote a more nuanced debate on its role in different rural contexts.

Labour market impacts:

Migration – both seasonal and permanent – can play an important role in improving the efficiency of labour and supporting rural livelihoods. Seasonal labour mobility allows workers to increase their incomes through work in nearby towns and cities, at the same time as reducing underemployment during the agricultural lean season in communities of origin. In many countries that have undergone successful poverty-reducing transformations, seasonal migration is continuing to be a significant driver of rural livelihood resilience.

Outmigration from rural areas has been associated with higher wages in the rural areas of many transforming countries. This has been particularly noticeable in Asia since before 2000, when significant rural labour mobility has been occurring in conjunction with structural transformation, with the trend becoming more marked in the past decade, in India, rural wages expanded by 35 per cent between 2005 and 2012 – all of these being increases in real terms. Where data are available, they show that differences have narrowed between female and male wages, and between more and less prosperous regions (Wiggins and Keats 2014b).

Certain decent work considerations are inherent to migration issues. Due to the informal nature of most urban labour market segments where rural migrants are often concentrated, finding reliable data is problematic. However it is generally accepted that migrants often enter into working arrangements that are typified by several decent work deficits. Long working hours, low pay, lack of social protection and bargaining rights are among the realities often facing migrant workers. From a gender perspective, it must be noted that the extent to which migrant women are able to enjoy higher wages in urban sectors appears to be limited in comparison to their male peers. According to Chant (2013), gender barriers in access to decent employment and earnings in informal enterprise mean that migrant women are less



likely to benefit from income gains associated with migration. Thus, while employment opportunities in larger towns and cities frequently play a role in supporting rural livelihoods, there are clear issues with respect to the quality of employment (and sometimes exploitation) that migrants may have little choice but to accept.

Environmental impacts:

Migration affects – and is affected by – the myriad of environmental and climatic challenges which people in both rural and urban areas are facing. A growing proportion of rural people are affected by climate-related livelihood stresses, such as droughts, floods, unpredictable weather patterns and shocks. As land is farmed more intensively, the risk of soil degradation increases, while off-site effects such as groundwater depletion, agrochemical pollution and loss of biodiversity are liable to be exacerbated. In addition, as land pressures intensify the increased use of marginal (i.e. lower potential) land, damages to ecologically fragile systems are inevitable. These land pressures are influenced by migration processes.

Opportunities for migration are linked to the extent of pressures on agricultural land. In Asia, farm sizes have already – or are about to – peak and are expected to decline in the decades ahead, as a result of migration and structural transformation, as well as age demographics (Masters et al. 2013). The expansion of opportunities in non-farm sectors and the emergence of modern industrial economies that have flowed from the development of agriculture are leading to declines in rural populations and a subsequent lowering of pressure on farmland in the continent’s transforming countries. In addition, migration can be seen to provide a coping strategy for rural households reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods – particularly in situations of extreme climatic and environmental threat – or a risk mitigation strategy by diversifying household incomes through remittances. In this context, it is relevant to point out that hundreds of millions of people (up to 1 billion by some estimates) are expected to flee their homes as a result of climatic and environmental pressures by 2050 (IIED 2010). On the flipside, rural-urban migration has been reported to worsen environmental vulnerabilities in cities and surrounding areas, as rising demand for urban housing against sluggish supply forces migrants to settle in ecologically vulnerable and overcrowded areas (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye 2014).

Clearly, the way that migration and structural transformation evolves, and whether it is managed by suitable policies, regulations and safeguards, will have important implications on the natural environment and climate. In turn, this will shape the nature of rural change and transformation, as rural sectors and rural people rely to a large degree on natural resources for their livelihoods.

Changes in family relations and gender roles:

Migration can have diversified effects on social development and the way that households and communities work and live together. These effects are by no means uniform and vary according to socio-economic and cultural factors across different locations. In particular, differentiated social impacts of migration are strongly dependent upon the gender of the migrating household member. The latter has implications for the allocation of household labour and workloads, and is therefore relevant for the social dimensions of rural transformation.



In many cases, it has been observed that male migration has increased women's workloads, often forcing them to work longer in fields (IFAD and FAO 2008; Paris et al. 2009). On the other hand, some studies have found that male migration leads to an increase in women's empowerment, as women take on greater management and decision-making roles in the absence of their husbands (Oucho et al. 2014; Paris et al. 2009). Indeed, many women have expressed appreciation of the increased freedom and autonomy resulting from their husband's migration (Appendini 2009). Female migration has also been found to contribute to women's empowerment in terms of access to paid employment outside the family and relaxation of often rigid gender norms experienced in their rural communities of origin. However, it should be noted that disadvantages in terms of access to decent employment, training, financial and physical assets, and representation in governance structures remain prevalent among many female migrants (Chant 2013).

When women migrate, men are often obliged to take on further household tasks and childcare duties that in many rural societies are traditionally still the domain of women (Ramirez et al. 2005, as cited by IFAD and FAO 2008). In terms of family and social relations, the documented consequences of migration are mixed, with some negative social trends observed in many cases as a result of migration. In the case of male migration, there is anecdotal evidence of an associated increase in the incidence of marital infidelity and family break-ups (Thin 2009). In addition, in some studies, women have reported problems such as feelings of loneliness, depression and insecurity as a result of their husbands migrating (Paris et al. 2009). In cases where the migrating family member is female, surveys have pointed to heightened risks of various antisocial behaviors among husbands and children left behind, for example, alcoholism and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (Tolstokorova 2009). Reliance on remittances from female spouses in traditionally patriarchal societies has also been seen to adversely impact upon the self-esteem of non-migrating husbands (IFAD and FAO 2008).

With respect to social empowerment, it should be noted that sociocultural gendered norms dictate the attitudes towards migrants – especially the young ones – in their rural communities of origin. In some communities, the migration of young men is regarded as a rite of passage – with those staying often ridiculed and labelled as idle. In contrast, young women who decide to migrate may be viewed negatively by their families and members of the community (Tacoli and Mabala 2010). These gendered attitudinal differences shape the social status of young women and men in rural communities, impacting upon feelings of self-worth and confidence – and underpinning their incentives to adopt different livelihood strategies.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the linkages between rural transformation, migration, and sustainable and equitable development, within an overall context of increasing population shares living in urban areas. It has shown how different rural transformations lead to different outcomes in terms of structural



transformation and migration, and the need for wider recognition of the positive role migration frequently plays in supporting key aspects of rural transformation.

Internal migration plays an important role in shaping opportunities for poor households to escape poverty, and in transforming rural and urban spaces. Where suitable policies are in place to support migrants within a broad agenda of pro-poor, balanced rural and urban development, opportunities for poverty reduction are significant. At the same time, more research is needed to understand the interplay between these dynamics. In particular, more knowledge is needed on mobility – especially within countries – including size, composition, motivations and outcomes. The relative neglect of internal vis-à-vis international migration within policy debates also needs to be redressed.

Fortunately, international development discussions – in particular those surrounding the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda – indicate a broadening acknowledgement of these priorities. In particular, the proposed Sustainable Development Goals affirm the important role of key aspects of rural transformation – empowering smallholder farmers, leveraging rural-urban linkages, achieving gender equality. Encouragingly, the importance of supporting and protecting the rights of migrants is also highlighted. Though much remains to be done in terms of agreeing on implementation and financing arrangements – and leveraging national support and ownership of agreed-upon priorities – the prospects for building a more sustainable and equitable world, where rural and urban transformations support each other and help create fairer and more sustainable societies, appears promising.

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