

Migration and Development – Contribution from Rt Hon John Battle Member of
Parliament for Leeds West, UK.

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I speak as a Member of a Parliament for the inner city constituency of Leeds West in the North of England. And by way of context there are 26 languages spoken within a mile of my home. In my own constituency in Leeds, if it wasn't for migrant Labour – the Irish who helped build the city in the 19th century; those from the Indian sub-continent who came to work in the textile mills; and now the doctors and nurses from across globe – Leeds would not be as it is or work as it does. At the local level there is a real need for a clear distinction between asylum and migration policies. Having served as a minister in the DTI and the foreign office I now serve on the international development select committee which monitors the budget and policy of the department for international development (DFID), we interrogate ministers on their decisions and make recommendations for policy improvement. In June 2004, our committee published a report Migration and Development : how to make migration work for poverty reduction. It was an extensive report based on nine months of detailed research and enquiry and taking evidence from a wide range of interested bodies.

It is key to stress people have been on the move since human life began. Migration is neither a new phenomenon, a failure of development, nor a substitute for development and significantly the major migration in our own times is within country and from rural areas to the increasing cities.

The IDC report “Migration and Development” report stressed there is a development dimension to migration. Our starting point was to dispel the myths. Firstly, the myth that there is a tidal wave of migrants about to crash on our shores in the UK, and secondly, to understand that migration is not primarily about people moving from developing to developed cities. Most migration takes place between developing countries, 2/3rds of all refugees are within developing countries, and nor is it necessarily the poorest and most desperate who migrate.

Our conclusions of the report were that firstly, well managed migration is hugely important economic and politically because of the links it forges between countries. (significantly globally it is estimated over \$300bn is sent home each year by international migrants originally from developing countries. Invested well these funds could play a major part in reducing poverty, but it cannot be assumed that policies which help migrants will help the poor in developing countries. Migration focuses on Economic reasons but also relates to HIV/AIDS treatment, environmental degradation, and global pressure on international trade flows. If governments can manage migration, we can unlock many more benefits for poor people in developing countries. The World Bank has put a figure on this potential. It estimates that by 2025 migration could put over US \$140 billion a year into the pockets of poor people in poor countries.

Our second conclusion was that legal migration to the UK can have its benefits. But we also need to tackle illegal activities, the illegal trafficking and illegal working in the UK, and at the same time protect migrants rights through legislation and enforcement.

Thirdly, we called for more research and better data on migration patterns and flows nationally and internationally.

Fourthly, we criticised developed countries for providing aid to help developing countries – whilst helping themselves to doctor's, nurses and teachers who prop up basic public services in developed cities like the UK. In 2001, the UK introduced a code of practice on international recruitment of health workers, restricting pro-active recruitment from developing countries by NHS employers.

Fifthly, international recruitment could be better regulated to prevent the “brain drain” of skilled workers from developing cities.

Sixthly, Temporary migration schemes and mechanisms to encourage the return of migrants to their home countries must be designed to capture the development benefits of migrants.

Our seventh conclusion was that development potential of remittances must be captured by encouraging remittances, reducing the costs of sending money home and improving the investment climate and potential for remittances in developing cities.

The Eighth conclusion was that the UK government should engage more with the diasporas learning from them about strengthening the relationship between migration and development

Our ninth conclusion was that the UK government should establish effective partnerships in developing countries and through international organisations to manage migration for poverty reduction. DFID is supporting a joint programme with the Government of Malawi to strengthen the capacity of Malawi's public health sector. The emergency human resource programme aims to double the number of nurses and triple the number of doctors in Malawi's public service. It is expanding training capacity and pays top-up salaries to attract and retain key health workers. 40% more doctors, 50% more clinical and 33% more nurses are now working in Malawi than four years ago.

Our final conclusion was that Government itself, Departments such as DFID must ensure that in all departmental discussions about managed migration policies are supportive of the UK's objectives for international development. Managing migration implies understanding the business cycle and the operation of lead in times. The demand for key sector workers can often be out of sync with the numbers completing training and the demands of the economy of the time.

With the global financial crisis now seeping into local economic recessions the nature of the debate on migration has now shifted and there is loss of focus on development. As I stressed at Prime Ministers questions recently now should be the time to put tackling the waste of poverty at home and internationally, locally and globally at the centre of economic policies. Migration and development must not now be a marginalised debate.

We need fair-trade, removing barriers to products , not more protectionism , freeing trade through the WTO but not increasing the restrictions on the movement of labour.

We needed greater co-ordination between receiving countries and countries of origin. Greater co-ordination of department with receiving countries, for example the

Department of trade and the department of education, and health working together with DFID on the issue. A policy to encourage skilled and professional migration, fairness through a points based immigration system. Migration needs to be better researched. Notably, migration did not feature in poverty reduction strategy papers nor in the MDGs. Migration must be seen not as a security matter but as a mechanism to creating better (and mutually beneficial) trade links.

In the EU there is interest in exploring the concept of circular migration. In principle, this can work in two directions. Developing country national living in the EU being able to return to countries of origin to help their development, and people in developing countries being able to come to developed countries under controlled temporary worker schemes, possibly on a number of occasions. Safeguards would need to be put in place to ensure that any such scheme remains circular in character and, as far as the UK is concerned, it would be necessary to ensure that such an initiative was compatible with the UK's new points based immigration system. The UK has a commitment to monitor the effect of UK migration policy, including of the points based immigration system on development.

Policy coherence in the UK

The FCO, DFID and the Home office (UK Border Agency) work closely on migration, and there is good regular consultation at official level. Every few months there are also trilateral meetings on migration and other issues between FCO, DFID and Home Office Ministers. Departments co-operated in the setting up of returns and reintegration fund in 2008. This is a cross-departmental initiative which will incentivise returns and support reintegration of returnees in developing countries.