

MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
A DUTCH PERSPECTIVE
An essay by Jos van Beurden

Globalisation has changed the world we live in and confronts all of us, both in the South and in the North, with an urgent question. How can we work together to make the global village into a coherent and liveable whole? Globalisation has had a dramatic effect on the planet and on the volume of migration flows. In our world, migration is a normal occurrence and has led to the creation of transnational networks.

As transnational citizens, many migrants contribute to quality of life around the world. They seek new opportunities across borders, become integrated into their host societies and help support their families at home. And that support leads to what in the Netherlands has traditionally been called development cooperation. The aid sector is beginning to realise the importance of migrants to that cooperation. Is globalisation driving migration and development into a kind of marriage? That is possible. But first the two sides have to come to a well considered agreement.

Is a wedding on the cards? At the end of 2005, the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation awarded, for the first time, a structural grant to a migrant organisation. The Seva Network Foundation, established in The Hague, received €5 million for an education programme in India and Nepal. According to the organisation's press release, this award 'means there is at last recognition of the substantial contribution migrant communities in the Netherlands make to aid and assistance in their countries of origin.' Reports on the link between migration and development have been emerging for some time from development organisations such as the World Bank, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other bilateral donors, as well as from migration organisations such as the IOM and from the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has announced a High Level Dialogue (HLD) on the subject to be held in September 2006, the first top-level meeting devoted to this issue.¹

Migration and the migrant in 2006

According to some, we live in an era of 'unprecedented migration'. Yet migration is an ancient phenomenon. The first migrants arrived in Europe around 700,000 years before Christ. They came from Africa and settled in parts of what today is Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Bohemia. The new continent offered them cattle, food and better shelter. Around 2000 years ago, epidemics depopulated the Roman Empire. A couple of centuries later people left the Arabian peninsula for Egypt and Sudan because of climate change. From 1680 onwards Huguenots seeking religious freedom fled Roman Catholic France in great numbers and settled in the Low Countries. The economic crisis in the nineteen twenties and thirties and the devastation caused by the Second World War forced many Dutch people to seek a new life in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. From the nineteen sixties onwards countless numbers of people from the Mediterranean area came to the Netherlands to find work.

¹ The IOM has made a number of recommendations for the HLD, see www.un.int/iom-HLD.html.

So we should think twice before saying that migration nowadays is ‘unprecedented’. Around 1900 the number of migrants as a proportion of the world population was over 2.5%. In 1960 that figure was roughly the same.² After that date it began to rise. According to various sources, the number of 76 million recorded in 1960 rose to 82 million in 1970, 175 million in 2000 and almost 200 million in 2005.³ That is around 3% of the world population. Strong economic growth in the West has made the flow more one-sided, from the Southern hemisphere to the Northern hemisphere.

Number of migrant (in millions) per continent in 2000

Continent	Number	Percentage of population
Europe	56.1	7.7%
Asia	49.9	1.4%
North America	40.8	12.9%
Africa	16.3	2.0%
Latin America	5.9	1.1%
Australia	5.8	18.7%

Source: IOM (2005b), GCIM (2005a)

Major host countries

Country	Number (millions)	Percentage of total migration
United States	35.0	20.0%
Russian Federation	13.3	7.6%
Germany	7.3	4.2%
Ukraine	6.9	4.0%
India	6.3	3.6%
Netherlands	1.6	0.9%

Migrants constitute around 60% of the population of Andorra, Macau, Hong Kong, Guam, Vatican City, Monaco, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Source: IOM (2005b), GCIM (2005a)

Major countries of origin

Chinese diaspora	35 million
Indian diaspora	20 million
Philippine diaspora	7 million

Source: GCIM (2005a)

² De Haas, 2005.

³ This includes 9.2 million refugees, but not roughly 25 million internally displaced people. See IOM, 2005b, GCIM, 2005.

Globalisation

A number of dramatic changes that emerged towards the end of the 20th century led to what we call globalisation.⁴ These include the technological revolution and the rapid development of information technology. The first to benefit were the military and the global corporations. Both needed more freedom of movement of information while multinationals also sought greater freedom of movement for money, goods, services and persons. Other sectors of society too benefited in many ways.

One of the consequences of the new information technology was the increasing visibility of wealth inequalities. Radio and TV graphically illustrate those inequalities even in the most inaccessible parts of the world, while new consumption patterns and expensive imported products are imposed on local populations. Tales of foreign luxury also trickle through in email and text messages from family or neighbours working abroad. Although many poor people have become less poor in recent decades, the gap between rich and poor has grown in many places. Differences in income have grown over the last few years in 53 of the 73 countries for which UNDP has figures. The 2.5 billion people who have to live on less than two dollars a day represent only 5% of world income, while 54% of that income belongs to the richest 10%.⁵

A second radical change was the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet system. This changed a bipolar world into a unipolar one. In this new phase, the rich countries generally show interest in poorer and unstable states only if they have a direct economic interest in the state in question. Since these events, violence and internal conflict have greatly increased in many countries. Examples include the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. The disappearance of centrally controlled economies left little in the way of obstacle to the march of capitalism. Business units, managers and capital are moved with ever greater frequency over the global chessboard, while national borders are less and less of a hindrance.

Globalisation and migration

The knowledge acquired from the technological revolution that people in other parts of the world are better-off has become a driving force behind migration. The illusion of a luxurious life in Europe or the United States acts as a magnet where Africans or South Americans are concerned. The fact that some lose their lives on the way, are misled and exploited, does not prevent them taking enormous risks. African boat migrants die at sea from the coasts of Mauritania to the shores of Italy. Hundreds of thousands of Central American migrants become trapped in appalling conditions in Mexico.

Millions of people have had to abandon their homes as a result of the growth in violent conflict. Some, like the Sudanese, have travelled to another location in their own country. Others, like many Afghans, have crossed borders in the belief that they will one day return. Still others have drawn the inevitable conclusions and gone to find a better life elsewhere. In day-to-day reality, it is often virtually impossible to make a distinction between refugees and migrants. UNHCR points out that modern migration patterns make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between the various groups on the move.⁶ It uses the term 'mixed migration' to

⁴ Castells, 2000, Vol. I, pp. 1 ff, 247 ff.

⁵ UNDP, 2005.

⁶ UNHCR, 2006.

describe a combination of poverty, marginalisation, and politically driven displacement that drives people out of their countries. In some cases, refugees cross a border to become migrants in another country. In others, a migrant who can find no work or housing in one country finds asylum in another.

Migration is often motivated by people's desire to improve their living conditions and at the same time by the pressure of circumstances. For those who succeed, it may be true that 'all's well that ends well'. But many others fall into the hands of human traffickers, or fail to do well in their new country and end up in a hostile environment. Badly informed public opinion in many developed countries demonises immigrants. People's prejudices are stubborn: migrants steal their jobs, undercut wages and are a burden on social services.⁷ How painful their situation can be and the clash of cultures they face are described more clearly in novels than in research literature.⁸

Thanks to the new information technology migrants do have much more contact with home than in the past. Telephone companies in countries of origin offer cheap calls to countries with large migrant populations. Direct contact via Internet is often even cheaper. This means that migrants are much more aware of what is happening at home and how well (or badly) things are going.

More freedom of movement for migrants

Although globalisation has enormously increased human mobility – just look at the growth in international air traffic and foreign holidays – serious limitations on labour mobility are still imposed by borders, controls, rules, policy and xenophobia. This does not apply to highly educated migrants. They are welcome in global cities with global workers. It is a long time since Silicon Valley in California was the only high-tech industrial area. In the Netherlands, Philips has set up a cosmopolitan High Tech Campus for eight thousand researchers, most of them foreign. They are recruited by Philips and other companies under the slogan 'open innovation'.

In very many other cases migrants hit a wall, and are refused entry to Europe or some other 'fortress'. It then becomes clear that, to paraphrase George Orwell, some migrants are more equal than others. In most EU states, immigration is something that has to be controlled. The debate is in full swing. In the Netherlands (where the issue of the admission of workers from Poland currently overshadows that of the entry of Africans and Asians) and the other member states, ruling political parties and the unions keep a sharp eye on who may be admitted and who not – and who should leave. Germany has 200,000 visas per year available for foreign workers, but preferably those with the 'best brains'.

In the United States, a country that became great through immigration, the arrival of migrants is a matter of the national interest. In its first hundred years, its gates stood wide open and immigration was 'managed by default'. In the nineteen nineties 800,000 migrants were admitted annually, most for the purposes of family reunification, under employment schemes or on humanitarian grounds.⁹ Since the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon immigration controls have been stepped up. The fate of hundreds of thousands of South

⁷ IOM, 2006c.

⁸ See Isegawa, 1998; Beyala, 1998; Ugresic, 2005 and Pool, 2005.

⁹ Niessen & Schibel, 2003.

Americans who arrive from Mexico without papers increasingly resembles that of African immigrants on the Spanish coasts.

Through changes in the international labour market – another consequence of globalisation – the demand for women workers has increased and more of them migrate than in the past. In 2006 almost half of all migrants are women, in North and South America, Oceania, Europe and the former Soviet Union slightly more than half. For example, 80% of the half a million Filipino labour migrants in Europe are women. The feminisation of migration is also visible in certain countries of Asia and Africa.¹⁰ Around 70% of the mostly Asian migrants in Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore are women. They have contracts for less than five years and work as domestic workers, nurses, in factories or the entertainment industry. Well educated women from Nigeria and Ghana go to Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Others find work in the strongly growing economies of Gabon, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, while the demand for labour in the education and health sectors in some African countries with a high levels of HIV/AIDS is expected to increase.

Women as a proportion of total number of migrants

Area	1970	2000
Worldwide	47.2	48.6
Africa	42.7	46.7
Asia	46.6	43.3
Latin America & Caribbean	46.8	50.2
North America	51.1	50.3
Oceania	46.5	50.5
Europe	48.0	51.0
Former Soviet Union	48.0	52.1

Source: UN (2003)

Brain drain and brain gain

One result of the one-sided migration flow from South to North in the age of globalisation is a brain drain. The departure of 20,000 doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses and other highly skilled people per year has been called one of the greatest obstacles to development in Africa. The 19th century ‘scramble for Africa’ has become a ‘scramble for African skills’. African countries have had to attract 150,000 foreign professionals to fill the gaps. Much of its foreign aid is spent on doing so. In particular, countries with a long history of conflict, such as Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan have lost a large proportion of their skilled workers. Ethiopia recruits teachers from Nigeria and India.¹¹ Other developing countries are experiencing the same problems.

Yet the departure of professionals is not entirely bad news. Most labour migrants are literate but not especially highly educated. Governments in some countries of origin train more people in certain professions than the country itself needs as a matter of policy, because they are much in demand in other countries. The Philippines, for instance, are happy to see their nurses leave for the Middle East, Europe or North America. Some migrant entrepreneurs play

¹⁰ Orozco, 2006; Adepoju, 2004.

¹¹ Tebeje, 2005; IOM 2005b.

an innovative role in countries like Mexico, Turkey and India.¹² They channel their knowledge and experience back to their countries of origin via transnational companies that would never have existed without migration. They combine the spirit of enterprise in their own countries with that in their host countries. Rather than a brain drain, this is a brain gain and ‘brain circulation’.

Attempts have been made to alleviate the brain drain. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom, for example, have made funds available to pay nurses in Zambia a better wage, so that they have less incentive to migrate. The Netherlands and the IOM have launched a project to encourage Ghanaian doctors in the Netherlands to return temporarily to work in their home country.¹³ A country like China does not prevent emigration by skilled workers, but makes it more attractive for them to return by providing facilities to those prepared to invest. Others are given prestigious posts in government or the universities.¹⁴ Some migrants have set up virtual networks for the transfer of knowledge and experience. There are dozens of these. The South African Network of Skills Abroad (SANSA) has members in 68 countries.¹⁵ Some Chinese migrants in the US provide distance learning to compatriots to help China integrate further into the international community.¹⁶

Free movement of migrant funds, goods and services

The contribution made by globalisation to the freer movement of funds, goods and services is also questionable. Most migrants regularly send money home. This is increasing as the number of migrants grows. In 2005, migrants transferred 232 billion dollars through official channels, the highest amount ever.¹⁷ Of that amount, 167 billion went to developing countries. In comparison, in 1970 migrants and refugees sent two billion dollars to developing countries. Ten years later, that amount had risen to 17.7 billion dollars. In 1990 it amounted to 31.1 billion dollars.¹⁸

But it is probable that migrants and refugees send at least half of that amount again through informal channels. Every country of origin has its own system, all based on trust. A migrant hands over cash to a broker, who makes contact by telephone, fax or email with a broker in the country of origin. The second broker ensures that the right amount is paid to the migrant’s family. Indians call this system *hawala*, Pakistanis *hundi* and Chinese migrants call it *fei chien*, literally ‘flying money’. Ghanaian migrants in the Netherlands also have their own methods of transferring money, and send more through informal than formal channels.¹⁹

The rapidity with which funds can be transferred nowadays has created new phenomena, such as ‘flash capital’, but migrant money still travels comparatively slowly. Costs can be exorbitant: on average, 13% of the principal. The smaller the amount, the higher the costs.²⁰ Consequently, migrants who suddenly need to remit a small amount to cover, for example, medical costs for a relative, lose out. Yet sometimes the costs diminish. The cost of transfers from the United States to Mexico have fallen by 60% since 1999. A website in the UK helps

¹² De Haas, 2005; Maas, 2002b.

¹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005, First Report on Development and Migration.

¹⁴ IOM, 2005b.

¹⁵ Tebeje, 2005.

¹⁶ Dunn, 2004.

¹⁷ World Bank, 2005.

¹⁸ De Haas, 2005.

¹⁹ Mazzucato, 2005.

²⁰ IOM, 2005b; Mutume, 2005.

migrants find the best channel for their cash.²¹ And the informal banks and brokers used by many migrants usually charge between 1% and 5% in costs.²²

After 9/11 the use of official channels declined. Certain banks were seen as dubious and were boycotted. This made official remittances to countries like Somalia more difficult. Only small amounts may be transferred there now. And finally, the authorities and banks in host countries do not distinguish between different types of transfer. Most of them do not grant tax relief on money transfers for development purposes or to allow children to study, for instance.

Transnational networks

Globalisation has led to the rapid growth of transnational networks, not just between migrants but also between businesses, aid organisations, or academics. Migrants are even more highly motivated to join such networks. They often form a small minority in their host country and are under great pressure to adapt. By maintaining contact with the home front, and with relatives or compatriots in other places in the world, they safeguard their roots. Particularly in the case of migrants on temporary employment contracts, remittances make a planned contribution to the family economy. The sphere of activity of migrants is no longer restricted to the nation state in their countries of origin and host countries. They see the world as a global village and are in contact with the diaspora in other host countries. If the conditions elsewhere are better, they may decide to move on again.

Ruben Gowricharn, professor of Multicultural Cohesion and Transnational Studies at Tilburg University in the south of the Netherlands, places the concept of transnationalism in opposition to the older concept of the diaspora. Both are characterised by mobility. But while the key element of diaspora is the dispersal of a people and the associated, undiminishing desire to return, that of transnationalism is more a philosophy of integration. Not integration in a single country, but in what he calls a transnational, democratic system. In this view, the concept of democracy is no longer the exclusive domain of the nation state. The transnational democratic system is focused on promoting equality, is participative, representative and transparent: it is a system that fosters inclusion.

Gowricharn distinguishes between different types of transnational community. In 'family transnationalism' a family has one or more migrant members, and the family economy is based on their remittances. 'Religious transnationalism' occurs amongst Muslims, Christians and Hindus. 'Political transnationalism' is largely a feature of refugee communities. The Cubans in Florida are perhaps the most well-known example, though Mauritanian refugees fall into this category too. Dispersed over Senegal, France and countless other countries, Mauritanian exiles use intensive contact via Internet to pursue their primary aim: to bring about change in their country of origin.²³ Political transnationalism is also a phenomenon amongst migrants from countries such as Sudan and the Philippines, but is less dominant. And finally there is 'cultural transnationalism'. Here it is no longer people from a single country but a wide range of people from different national backgrounds who feel connected to one another. Examples include young South Asians all over the world who share a liking for Bollywood films. Some even learn Hindi in order to understand these films better.²⁴

²¹ DFID, 2005.

²² Divided into real costs, profit margin and currency charges.

²³ Voets, 2002.

²⁴ Gowricharn, 2005.

Cultural transnationalism shows that transnational networks consist not only of migrants. Large groups of young people from a wide range of countries relate to each other through a preference for a certain kind of music or other art forms. In the Rap Around the World programme, Dutch rapper Ali B. maintains close contacts with rappers in Tanzania, Malawi and Senegal.²⁵ Business people, academics, activists and politicians are all members of transnational networks. And all these forms of transnational activity are leading to a new concept of citizenship. While in the past a citizen was regarded as national of a state and thus primarily loyal to that state and its government, in the era of globalisation people have become world citizens and have a number of different loyalties. Migrants have a loyalty to their country of origin, their host country and ‘their’ diaspora elsewhere in the world. A Bollywood fan or rap lover has a loyalty to a varying number of people in different countries. Activists, such as the alter-globalists, are loyal to a common, transnational cause. Globalisation has added a genuinely new dimension to the concept of the world citizen.

Migrants and remittances

Do globalisation and transnationalism have implications for international cooperation? Indeed they do. So many in fact that the time has come to shift the focus in the migration debate from migration as a security problem to migration as a source of development potential. For many developing countries remittances from migrants are of crucial importance. Indeed, in 36 of the 153 developing countries they are larger than any other capital flow. In Sri Lanka they exceed income from tea, its major export commodity. In Mexico they exceed direct foreign investment and are equal to the revenue from oil.²⁶

Money transfers in 2004

Country	Amount in dollars
India	23 billion
Mexico	17 billion
Philippines	7 billion

Source: IOM (2005b)

In total, capital flows from migrants amount to three to four times the amount of official development aid (between 60 and 80 billion dollars). However, the Netherlands forms a striking exception to the rule that migrant transfers exceed aid. The Netherlands spends around €3.8 billion a year on international cooperation. The total amount that migrants transfer through official channels is much lower: according to the IMF, they remit 1.5 billion dollars a year, almost 40% of official development aid.²⁷

According to the World Bank, remittances can make a substantial contribution to the well-being of migrants and their families, and ultimately to prosperity in their countries of origin. At the presentation of the *Global Economic Prospects 2006* report, WB Chief Economist François Bourguignon said that transfers by migrants are ‘an important way out of extreme poverty for a large number of people’. That is something of an exaggeration. Many labour migrants who find work in a neighbouring country in West Africa and send money home do

²⁵ Rap Around the World is an initiative developed by *Plan Nederland* (the Dutch branch of Plan International). In addition, Music May Day is an organisation located in the Netherlands whose aim is to promote transnational links between young people through music and dance.

²⁶ IOM, 2005b.

²⁷ Wets, 2004.

indeed help relieve 'extreme poverty'. But the migrants who are able to travel further, from Asia or Africa to the Middle East, Europe or North America, have rarely come from a situation of 'extreme poverty'. They come from relatively well-off families that could raise the money to cover all the costs associated with migration.

Poorer families, as I discovered in villages with many migrants in Bangladesh, are envious because this is impossible for them. However, they sometimes benefit from economic activities funded by migrant remittances. In villages with large numbers of migrants fine new houses have been built. But many migrants only return for holidays or after retirement. The village economy only benefits from them during a short period of time.

Remittances make a greater contribution to development if they are stable. That is rarely the case. Countries like Cameroon, Cape Verde, Niger and Togo sometimes receive half as much in one year as in another. For countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Ghana and Nigeria, the difference can sometimes be 100%. In Burkina Faso transfers fell from 187 million dollars in 1988 to 67 million in 1999 and 50 million in 2003, the consequence of civil war in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, where many Burkinese work.²⁸

Although such transfers reduce the worldwide gap between rich and poor, it is quite possible that they actually increase that gap in the countries of origin.²⁹ My own observations in villages with many migrants in eastern Bangladesh would tend to confirm that.³⁰ The remittances received by the village of Sreepur have impacted on power relations there and sometimes reversed them. Certain farming families who have one or more sons in the Middle East and southern Europe have become the new elite.

Migrants and development

That brings us to the issue of what 'development' really is. In a village like Sreepur, it is largely economic development, almost elite development, with a spin-off for the poor. The social element is missing, whereas traditional aid organisations have always targeted social development. Their efforts are never focused on a single family, but on an entire target group, village, region or country. They have long emphasised that much of the money and goods supplied by migrants go to meet the direct consumer needs of their families. And do not therefore contribute to development.

To an extent they are correct, although the word 'consumer' needs to be defined in the right context. What in the developed world is classed as 'consumer spending' may be regarded in a very different light in developing countries. Valentina Mazzucato of Amsterdam University heads a long-term study of transnational networks amongst Ghanaians. She looked at the expenditure of remittances on a funeral in Ghana. The Ghanaian concerned, who lives in Amsterdam, spent €6,500 on a relative's funeral in Ghana. Of that amount, 40% went to a wide range of businesses in the capital Accra (printing work, printing T-shirts, mortuary costs, coffin-maker, ambulance service, dance group, paint shop etc). One fifth of the money went to businesses in Kumasi (rental company, transport company, tailors, drinks suppliers etc). Another fifth was spent in the deceased's home village (café, vegetable seller, butcher, local

²⁸ Mutume, 2005.

²⁹ IOM, 2005a.

³⁰ Van Beurden, 2005.

brewers). The local café's turnover in the weekend of the funeral equalled its entire annual turnover.³¹

Hein de Haas, who moved from Nijmegen University to Oxford University, studies migrants in southern Morocco. Fifty percent of male adults there have either moved to another region of Morocco, or have emigrated. The internal migrants do not earn much more than those who stay put, unlike the foreign migrants. The latter use their earnings to invest in farming and to build houses. Three-quarters of new housing in the region is paid for from remittances. Over 40% of households with one or more international migrants have sunk a well and purchased a diesel pump, compared with less than 20% of households without migrant family members. Remittances are further used for developing the land.³²

No-one would deny that land improvements are a form of development. One reservation is that the migrant's community does not directly benefit. Is transferring money for funerals or house-building a form of development? Anyone who says no is using too narrow a definition of development, say Mazzucato and De Haas. The new housing often offers women greater freedom of movement. It allows them to escape the yoke of their in-laws. They are a form of capital investment and life insurance. These transfers have led to economic growth and, for the house-builders themselves, to stability. Although money sent for the schooling of a cousin or medical care for a parent remains within the family, it can be defined as an investment in human capital, and therefore as development.

In addition to money, the importance to development of goods and services supplied by migrants should not be underestimated. These are more difficult to quantify than money, but no less important. There are a rapidly growing number of 'hometown associations' (HTAs), small philanthropical organisations that collect goods and funds for the home front and offer services there. Latin American HTAs in the US work together with local authorities in the country of origin to fill gaps in education and health services, and in the areas of water, sanitation and other basic infrastructure. A group of Pakistani professionals in Boston offers 50,000 dollars each year for the best business plan for a business in Pakistan, the US or both.³³ Finally, some migrant communities in the North become a market for products from their countries of origin. I know from my own observations that Bangladeshi migrants in the UK and North America import chutney and date palm syrup from Bangladesh.

Migrants in the Netherlands and development

While the Netherlands was still an emigration country in the nineteen fifties, today it is an immigration country. The arrival of large groups of migrants was related to its colonial history, the Cold War, and demand on the Dutch labour market. From the former colonies came Chinese, Moluccans, Surinamese and Antilleans. From behind the Iron Curtain came Hungarians, other East Europeans, Vietnamese boat refugees and others. From southern Europe and later from Turkey and Morocco came labour migrants. After the end of the Cold War, they were joined by countless migrants from poor countries and areas of conflict in the South. Since the war on terrorism began, the stream of migrants has been substantially reduced.

³¹ Mazzucato, 2005.

³² De Haas, 2005.

³³ Van Heelsum, 2004.

Almost all those migrants send money, goods and services back home. Most do it on an individual basis. Some have set up organisations. According to the report *Migrantenorganisaties in Nederland* (Migrant Organisations in the Netherlands) written by Anja van Heelsum and commissioned by the Institute of Multicultural Development in Utrecht, there were a few years ago almost 4000 organisations set up by migrants and refugees in the Netherlands. Most of these are Turkish, followed by Surinamese and Moroccans. Religious organisations are the most common, organisations with development cooperation as their core task or important activity the least. Only 1% of the Turkish, Surinamese and Moroccan organisations are concerned with this issue. An important exception is Moluccan organisations: 117 or 30% of these are concerned with international cooperation, prompted in part by recent political and climatological events in the island group.³⁴

Nevertheless, there is a strong impression that the number of migrant organisations involved in development cooperation is increasing. Some of them combine support for projects in their country of origin with projects for compatriots in the Netherlands, helping them to become economically self-sufficient and to integrate. The most financially powerful is the Seva Network Foundation, which as stated earlier has received a grant of €5 million from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Seva brings together organisations from the Hindu diaspora in the Netherlands, supports activities in developing countries as well as capacity development in the Netherlands, thus contributing to the integration of this group in Dutch society. The Ethiopian DIR foundation combines promoting the integration of Ethiopians in Dutch society with support for sustainable development in Ethiopia. In the Netherlands DIR provides Dutch lessons and a course in information technology. In Ethiopia it supports projects for women and the disabled. Similar organisations exist for migrants from Burundi, Ghana, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, Suriname, Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines and other countries. These institutions have often been in existence for a number of years and have recently begun to adopt a more public stance. A common complaint is that the development sector still fails to listen to them.

Institutions such as Seva and DIR are prime examples of transnational networks offering a new form of commitment and new networks. They often have grass-roots contacts that many aid organisations and donors lack. They change in a fundamental way the relationship between North and South. Traditional development aid is based to a much greater extent on differences and inequality. 'They' are poor and unable to solve their own problems. 'We' are rich and have power, knowledge and money. The transnational networks listed above work towards transnational partnerships on the basis of equality. But at the same time, they can learn much from aid organisations and donors about the professional side of international cooperation. This would benefit both their practical efforts in the South and their relations with governments here and European institutions.

Dutch migration policy

Dutch policy on migration consists of numerous separate policy areas: there is a policy on asylum-seekers, family reunification, invited refugees, and knowledge migrants. It is not easy to coordinate all these areas to arrive at a coherent, overarching policy. Ministries that look at migrants from the perspective of the criminal justice system or security policy see different things than a ministry seeking a role for migrants in developing their countries of origin.

³⁴ Van Heelsum, 2004.

The Development and Migration policy memorandum issued in July 2004 by Agnes van Ardenne, Minister for Development Cooperation, and Rita Verdonk, Minister for Immigration and Integration, was the first attempt to coordinate the various policy areas. The two Ministers believe that if the Netherlands wants to keep the flows of migrants manageable, its first priority should be to work on the situation in their countries of origin. In effect, this builds on the old idea that the best migration policy is development. They want to bring the two policy areas closer together and the memorandum contained a number of suggestions. They are prepared to help rejected asylum seekers on their return to their countries of origin. They support initiatives to recruit migrants through virtual education, network organisations and incentives for temporary return. An example of the latter is the recently launched Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals (TRQN) programme, developed and implemented by IOM.

The Ministers wish to develop capacity in the countries and regions of origin to improve the reception of refugees. Money transfers must become less expensive. Migrant and development organisations must cooperate more effectively. Migrant organisations must be more closely involved in policymaking.³⁵ In reports that have been published since 2004, the first steps towards achieving these aims have been described, but it is still too early to judge the success of the new policy. For the moment, efforts seem largely focused on the return of migrants – controlling the flow – and less on learning to accept that migration can contribute to the vitality and development of societies, that migration is a normal phenomenon and that migrants possess enormous development potential.

Differing interests

Many governments, both in countries of origin and host countries, want to manage migration. Host countries have always been keen to control migrant flows. Every migrant who wanted to enter the US after 1892 was first taken to Ellis Island. There various investigations were carried out and one in every fifty sent back to where they came from. Once the quota of migrants from a particular country was exceeded, no-one else was allowed in. Many host countries tend towards a targeted migration policy aimed at easing their labour shortages and keeping a particular kind of person out. The latter aim is often based on fear. Since the war on terrorism began, countries are more interested in whether someone from a specific group of migrants is a terrorist than whether he or she has something to offer.

That need to manage migration also exists in the South. Countries of origin are eager to earn from their migrants. They would prefer remittances to come through official channels and are much in need of foreign currency. Migration helps reduce unemployment in countries of origin. And managing migration flows would help them combat abuses such as human trafficking. One example of a country in the South that wants to manage its migration flows is Bangladesh. Since the end of 2001 it has had a Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment, which promotes migration but limits the number of women migrants. Between 1976 and the end of 2004, 3.8 million Bangladeshis officially migrated. Less than 1%, or 17,784 (official figure) were women. The government believes that female migrants face too many risks. Even greater barriers are placed in the way of uneducated women. Partly as a result, 45,000 women left to work in other countries through unofficial routes.³⁶

³⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004.

³⁶ IOM, 2005a.

High Level Dialogue

In the past few years governments and intergovernmental organisations have realised that an intergovernmental dialogue and cooperation are necessary for an effective approach to migration issues.³⁷ Since the nineteen nineties they have been consulting on questions such as spontaneous migration and people trafficking. That led to the establishment in 1994 of the Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) where government representatives engage in informal consultations and reach non-binding agreements. The informal nature of the RCPs makes them more attractive and more suited to reaching consensus than formal consultations like those within the UN or the EU. RCPs are held between the countries of North and Central America (the Puebla Process), among South American countries (the Lima Process), among Asian countries (the Manila Process) and among European countries (the Budapest Process), while African countries meet each other in two large regional groups. Initially, the RCPs were primarily a forum for discussion; later concrete agreements were concluded.³⁸ The IOM plays an important role in the RCPs, both at organisational and at substantive level.

The importance of migration has also been acknowledged within the UN for a number of years now. In 2004, the UN initiated the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), a temporary think-tank with experts from all over the world whose aim was to effect a more coherent debate on migration issues. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for a High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development to be held in September 2006. It is high time such a dialogue was launched. It will offer countries of origin and host countries the opportunity to express the differences and similarities in their migration interests. The dialogue will confirm the link between migration and development at the highest level. Migration has to be mainstreamed.

Conclusion

In the era of globalisation migrants have added fascinating elements to the debate on development cooperation. They are more capable of a relationship of equals with aid recipients than many traditional donors. Partnership is more important to them than the donor-recipient relationship. The hometown associations are as keen on social development as traditional aid organisations. Migrant organisations have given deeper meaning to the concept of citizenship, creating the idea of the global citizen with a number of loyalties. Finally, they confront the North with the fact that poverty is not the South's problem and that measures in the North to redistribute wealth between North and South are urgently necessary.

The contribution made by migrants to development cooperation is not yet self-evident. It is too early to announce the wedding. For the moment, migrants have too few avenues to impact either on policy formulation or on actual development interventions. There are as yet too few facilities for migrants to remit funds for development purposes. The relationship looks for the present too much like a forthcoming *mariage de raison*, where the marriage brokers focus too much on costs and benefits and not enough on the dynamic between the different cultures that has led to so much progress and enrichment over the last few decades.

An international recognition of global dynamics and a willingness to see the day-to-day reality in most countries would make it easier for countries to develop their own coherent and flexible migration policy. A policy that is needed not so much because migrants represent a

³⁷ GCIM, 2005b.

³⁸ IOM, 2005b.

security problem, but because of their potential for both host country and country of origin. That policy can only be formulated if the various ministries work together, and it has to be flexible. Only then can migration through unofficial channels be reduced. Governments should be more aware of the great variety of ways in which migrants can contribute to development in countries of origin.

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