

## International Migration in Focus

When the World Trade Organization (WTO) meets in Hong Kong SAR for its sixth Ministerial Conference December 13-18, one of the major negotiating issues on the table between the developed and developing countries will be the movement of peoples for work, otherwise known as international migration.

As globalisation transforms the world, making states, societies, economies and cultures in different regions of the world increasingly integrated, the rapid transfer of capital, goods, services, information and ideas from one country and continent to another is providing millions of women, men and children with better opportunities. Much of this transfer, especially the transfer of labour, is facilitated by people on the move.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), international migration will enable the global economy to expand at more than 4% in 2005, generating trillions of dollars in new income.

The principal forces driving international migration are the '3Ds': differences in Development, Demography and Democracy. Because these differentials are widening, the number of people seeking to migrate will continue to increase.

So far, however, the liberalisation of capital, goods, services and information transfer has proceeded much faster than for international migration. For countries and the increasingly mobile private sector enterprises, access to knowledge and skills has become a key determinant of competitiveness and success.

But change has also brought challenges. Countries understand that the economic, social and cultural benefits of international migration have to be more effectively realised, while seeking ways to better address the negative consequences of cross-border movement, such as disparities in standards of living and levels of human security.

This issue is of critical relevance to the travel and tourism industry because all forms of people movement involve a travel component. At the same time, the industry, too, needs a ceaseless supply of trained personnel at all levels, from airline pilots to rank-and-file workers.

A plain-language effort to explain its technicalities as part of the WTO negotiating process has been published in the November-December 2005 issue of *PATA Compass* magazine.

This edition of *Issues & Trends* seeks to complement that report and place the critical importance of international migration into a broader perspective. International migration was first addressed by the PATA Strategic Intelligence Centre in the February 2003 edition of *Issues & Trends* ("Migrant Workers on the Move"), but the issue has now gained added importance.

### KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

The following is drawn from a report by the Global Commission on Migration set up by the United Nations and released in October 2005.

#### How many international migrants are there?

- There are nearly 200 million international migrants in 2005, counting only those who have lived outside their country for more than one year and including 9.2 million refugees.
- This is equivalent to the population of the world's 5th largest country – Brazil.
- 1 in 35 people is an international migrant – 3% of the world's population.
- Numbers are increasing rapidly – from 82 million international migrants in 1970, 175 million in 2000, to nearly 200 million today.

## *in many parts of the world, labour unemployment*

### **Migrant women**

- Almost half the world's international migrants are women (48.6%).
- Some 51% of migrant women live in the developed world, compared with 49% in the developing world.
- There are more female than male international migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Oceania, Europe and the former USSR.

### **Where are the migrants? (Year 2000)**

- 56.1 million are in Europe (including the European part of the former USSR), accounting for 7.7% of Europe's population.
- 49.9 million are in Asia, accounting for 1.4% of Asia's population.
- 40.8 million are in North America, accounting for 12.9% of North America's population.
- 16.3 million are in Africa, accounting for 2% of Africa's population.
- 5.9 million are in Latin America, accounting for 1.1% of Latin America's population.
- 5.8 million are in Australia, accounting for 18.7% of Australia's population.

### **Which are the most important host countries? (Year 2000)**

- The USA has 35 million – 20% of the world's migrants.
- The Russian Federation has 13.3 million (7.6%).
- Germany has 7.3 million (4.2%).
- The Ukraine has 6.9 million (4.0%).
- India has 6.3 million (3.6%).
- Migrants comprise more than 60% of the total population in Andorra, Macau SAR, Guam, the Holy See, Monaco, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

### **Which are the most important origin countries?**

- The Chinese Diaspora has an estimated 35 million people abroad.
- The Indian Diaspora has some 20 million.
- The Filipino Diaspora has some 7 million.

### **How has the distribution of migrants changed?**

- From 1980 to 2000, the number of migrants living in the developed world increased from 48 million to 110 million – compared with an increase from 52 million to 65 million in the developing world.

- Today, some 60% of the world's migrants live in the developed world.
- In 1970, migrants comprised 10% of the population in 48 countries – this had increased to 70 countries by 2000.
- From 1970 to 2000, the proportion of the world's migrants living in North America rose from 15.9% to 22.3%, and in the former USSR from 3.8% to 16.8%.
- From 1970 to 2000, the proportion of the world's migrants living in other parts of the world decreased from 34.5% to 25% in Asia, 12% to 9% in Africa, 7.1% to 3.4% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 22.9% to 18.7% in Europe, and 3.7% to 3.1% in Oceania.

### **Why do migrants move?**

- Wage disparities – 45.7% of people earn less than US\$1 per day in Sub-Saharan Africa, 14.4% in South Asia, and 10.4% in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Unemployment rates – 12.2% in the Middle East and North Africa, 10.9% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 6.6% in industrialised economies.
- Differences in life expectancy – 58 years in low-income countries, 78 years in high-income countries.
- Education gaps – 58% of women and 68% of men are literate in low-income countries, while high-income countries have almost full literacy. Primary school enrolment in low-income countries is around 76%, while there is almost full enrolment in high-income countries.
- Demographic gradients – on average, 5.4 children are born to each woman in Sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 3.8 in the Arab World, 2.5 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 1.4 in Europe.

### **What are migrants' economic contributions to host countries?**

- In 2000, some 86 million of the world's migrants were economically active – more than 50% of all migrants.
- Foreign workers comprise more than 5% of the labour force in eight European countries.
- From 1975 to 2001, the number of foreign workers in Japan increased from 750,000 to 1.8 million.
- Skilled immigrants and family members constitute more than 50% of migrants entering Australia, Canada and New Zealand.



Migration has proven to be a politically explosive issue in a significant number of countries, to the extent that it seems to have played an important role in determining the outcome of several elections. In many societies, citizens are expressing concerns, both legitimate and unfounded, about the arrival of people from other countries and cultures. Media outlets across the world report a constant stream of stories related to migrants and migration, many of them focusing on the more sensational and negative aspects of the issue.

The discourse on migration has thus become a highly polarised one at national, regional and global levels, with limited common ground between the different constituencies that have an interest in the issue.

## THE GLOBAL COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

In December 2003, the United Nations set up a Global Commission on International Migration, bringing together 19 people from different parts of the world with a variety of high-level international experience, with a mandate to:

- Promote a comprehensive debate among states and other stakeholders with respect to migration;
- Analyse gaps in current policy approaches to migration;
- Examine inter-linkages between migration and other global issues; and
- Present appropriate recommendations to the UN Secretary-General, governments and other stakeholders.

The Commission focused generally on people who had been living outside their country of origin for more than one year, as well as on temporary migrants. While it considered the situation of individual asylum seekers and the nexus between asylum and migration, it did not examine issues related to large scale refugee situations in developing countries. Nor did it address the issue of internal migration and internal displacement.

The Commission witnessed many examples of good practice in international migration, both by states and by other stakeholders, including international organisations, the private sector and civil society. It heard of many success stories: migrants who gained new skills while working abroad and who returned to their own country and established successful businesses; asylum seekers who escaped from persecution in their own country and who found safety in another state; migrant communities that have successfully integrated into their adopted country while maintaining their culture and links with their country of origin; and governments and international organisations that have worked closely together in order to protect the victims of human trafficking.

But the Commission also encountered the contradictions, constraints and challenges of current migration policies. In some parts of the world, negative attitudes towards migrants persist, despite the fact that entire sectors of the economy depend on foreign labour. States which have ratified the core UN human rights treaties are not implementing the provisions of those legal instruments, with the result that many migrants continue to experience exploitation, discrimination and abuse.

Some governments admit considerable numbers of migrants to their country but fail to invest in the integration process that is required for those people to realise their potential and make a positive contribution to their new society. At the same time, certain migrants do not respect the law of their host countries, and as mentioned above, can also pose a serious threat to public security.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission concluded that the international community needs new approaches to capitalise on the opportunities and to meet the challenges associated with international migration. It highlighted the following issues:

**Capacity building:** States and other stakeholders, especially but not exclusively those in less prosperous regions of the world, lack the capacity required to formulate and implement effective migration policies. Officials dealing with the issues of migration, development, the labour market, education and health need access to more timely, accurate and detailed migration data.

They require more extensive professional training, a better knowledge of migration issues, institutions and law, as well as an understanding of the way in which migration and other policies impact each other. They need resources to monitor and evaluate the impact of their policies and programmes, and they should be able to draw more systematically upon the experience and expertise gained by other countries.

**Coherent migration policies:** Government representatives from every part of the world have openly acknowledged the difficulties they encounter in formulating coherent migration policies. In many instances, they are confronted with competing priorities and short-term demands from different government ministries and from different constituencies outside government. Important decisions taken in areas such as development, trade, aid and the labour market are rarely considered in terms of their impact on international migration.

## *by reducing poverty levels, curbing the population.*

every year, joining the estimated 12 million people who are trapped in conditions of forced labour.

In Asia, many migrants move on the basis of temporary labour contracts, while in parts of the Americas and Africa, irregular migration is far more prevalent. Traditional countries of immigration such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA continue to accept migrants for permanent settlement and citizenship, while Middle Eastern countries usually admit international migrants for fixed periods and without any expectation of integration.

Many countries are eager to recruit migrants who are specialists in information technology and engineering, but they are equally eager to attract migrants who are able to provide high-quality care to elderly people and children.

Indeed, there would appear to be an emerging convergence of interests between richer and poorer countries. In simple terms, the former are running short of working-age people, while the latter have such people to spare. Logic suggests that one outcome of this situation should be a growth in the scale of authorised labour migration from developing to high-income countries. But that is not currently the case. Much of today's migration taking place between poorer and richer regions is irregular in nature.

### SECURITY CONCERNS

The linkage between migration and security has become an issue of even greater international concern. Recent incidents involving violence committed by migrants and members of minority groups have led to a perception that there is a close connection between international migration and international terrorism.

Irregular migration, which appears to be growing in scale in many parts of the world, is regarded by politicians and the public alike as a threat to the sovereignty and security of the state. In a number of destination countries, host societies have become increasingly fearful about the presence of migrant communities, especially those with unfamiliar cultures and who come from parts of the world associated with extremism and violence.

Although these are real and legitimate concerns, in many parts of the world, labour migration has contributed towards security and political stability by reducing poverty levels, curbing unemployment and expanding the experiences and opportunities available to the population.

Migration can be an empowering experience that enables people to enjoy a greater degree of human security. Returning

migrants and exiles have assumed important leadership roles in many nascent democracies that are emerging from years of authoritarian rule.

### TENSIONS BETWEEN MARKETS AND STATES

In recent years, an apparent tension has arisen regarding the interests of the state and the interests of markets and the corporate sector in relation to international migration.

The movement of people is still confronted with a wide range of official controls. While such controls impinge most directly upon unskilled migrant workers, even skilled professionals and the employees of multinational corporations often find that their relocation is obstructed or delayed by restrictive policies and cumbersome procedures.

The corporate sector is increasingly anxious to resolve such problems. Private enterprises that wish to boost their competitiveness and expand their markets feel that they must be able to recruit their employees much more freely and on a global basis. If they are unable to do so, they may move part or all of their enterprises to countries where they are able to find the people they need.

However, the concerns of states are still predominantly embedded in local politics. Governments are often concerned that by facilitating the entry of foreigners to the national labour market, they will reduce employment opportunities for citizens, offend public opinion and lose electoral or popular support.

While they may acknowledge the economic case for a more liberal approach to international migration, many governments are also worried that admitting additional numbers of foreign nationals, even on a temporary basis, will have negative consequences for the stability of society and ultimately the security of the state.

This tension between markets and the state, between national interests and the globalisation process, will be an increasingly important element of the discussion on international migration in years to come.

### POLITICAL ISSUES

All over the world, international migration has been very high on the public, political and media agenda. While the precise issues at stake may vary from place to place, the prominence of the discourse is unmistakable.



# *Migration has contributed towards security and political stability and expanding the experiences and opportunities available to t*

## **What is the demographic impact of migration in host countries?**

- From 1990 to 2000, international migration accounted for 56% of the population growth in the developed world, compared with 3% in the developing world.
- From 1990 to 2000, immigration accounted for 89% of population growth in Europe.
- From 1995 to 2000, Europe's population would have declined by 4.4 million without immigration.
- From 1995 to 2000 immigration accounted for 75% of population growth in the USA.

## **How much money do migrants send home?**

- Formal transfers of remittances were worth about US\$150 billion in 2004.
- Perhaps an additional US\$300 billion is transferred informally.
- Formal transfers are almost triple the value of official development assistance.
- Formal transfers are also the second largest source of external funding for developing countries after foreign direct investment.
- The top three remittance-receiving countries in 2004 were Mexico (US\$16 billion per year), India (US\$9.9 billion) and the Philippines (US\$8.5 billion).
- The top three remittance-sending countries in 2001 were the USA (US\$28 billion per year), Saudi Arabia (US\$15 billion), Belgium, Germany and Switzerland (US\$8 billion).

## **How important is irregular migration?**

- An estimated 2.5 million to 4 million migrants cross international borders without authorisation each year.
- At least 5 million (10%) of Europe's 56.1 million migrants in 2000 had irregular status.
- Some 500,000 undocumented migrants are estimated to arrive in Europe each year.
- An estimated 10 million migrants live in the USA with irregular status.
- An estimated 50% (4.8 million) of the Mexican-born population in the USA in 2000 had irregular status.
- Some 20 million migrants with irregular status live in India.
- An estimated 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked each year.
- Migrant smugglers and human traffickers make an estimated US\$10 billion profit each year.

## **What is the number of refugees and asylum seekers?**

- Some 6.5 million of the world's 9.2 million refugees live in developing countries.
- From 2000 to 2004, the global refugee population decreased by 24%.
- Refugees represent 23% of international migrants in Asia, 22% in Africa and 5% in Europe.
- Pakistan hosts the largest number of refugees – just over 1 million (11% of the global total).
- From 1994 to 2003, some 5 million people applied for asylum in the industrialised countries – refugee or equivalent status was granted to 1.4 million (28%) of them.
- In 2004, 676,000 applications for asylum were submitted in 143 countries, representing a 19% decrease from 830,300 in 2003.
- In 2004, 83,000 refugees were resettled, mainly in the USA (53,000), Australia (16,000) and Canada (10,000).

## **THE GLOBAL JOBS CRISIS**

Because they are unable to find adequately compensated livelihoods at home, people in developing countries look for jobs elsewhere. While many continue to move within the developing regions, a growing proportion are moving to find work in the world's more prosperous states. The creation of new employment opportunities is vital in developing countries as large numbers of young people enter the labour market.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General Mr Juan Somavía has said: "The global jobs crisis is putting security, development, open economies and open societies all at risk. This is not a sustainable course."

ILO statistics indicate that in 2004, some 185 million people around the world were unemployed. Over the previous ten-year period, the industrialised states were the only ones to experience falling unemployment rates. In every other region, they either remained stable or increased.

According to the ILO, around 550 million of the people in work are living on less than US\$1 a day, while almost half the world's 2.8 billion workers earn less than US\$2 a day. In some developing countries, the majority of people in the labour force are working in the informal sector of the economy, where wages and working conditions are unregulated. According to the US State Department, between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked

Many other stakeholders, including local authorities, the private sector, NGOs, civil society institutions and migrant associations, are well placed to contribute to the formulation and implementation of migration policy, especially to ensure that migration policies and programmes are culturally sensitive, take account of local specificities and recognise the importance of gender issues.

The Commission observed that on too many occasions, there is a significant gap between the legal commitments that states freely enter into when they ratify human rights treaties, and the extent to which they implement those commitments in practice. While this problem is related to the question of capacity, it is also often an issue of political will.

**Interstate consultation and cooperation:** This is of paramount importance as a basis for formulating and implementing migration policies. Such policies have traditionally been regarded as the preserve of sovereign states, but there is growing recognition that migration is an inherently international issue, requiring cooperation between states at the subregional, regional and global levels.

**Consultation between multilateral organisations:** Finally, there is a need for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the different multilateral international organisations working in the field of migration. These organisations have acknowledged that they often work in a disconnected manner. While this situation derives in part from the competitive spirit that characterises interagency relations, it is also a result of a lack of coherence at national level within those states that govern and fund these organisations.

## CONCLUSIONS

A key issue in the future will be whether an appropriate balance can be found in the supply and demand for migrant workers. In terms of demand, to what extent and under what conditions will the world's more prosperous states be prepared to admit migrant workers from other parts of the world? And with regard to supply, what can be done to provide the citizens of developing countries with better jobs and higher levels of human security at home so that they do not feel compelled to migrate?

Just as water finds its appropriate level, so too do people need to find places where they can live, work and raise families in a normal way. This issue is not going to go away, and the travel and tourism industry may need to keep more than just a casual eye on how it unfolds.



*Issues & Trends* is published monthly for the members of the Pacific Asia Travel Association.

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