

"The priestly leaders of the Parsis were brought before the local ruler, Jadhav Rana, who presented them with a vessel full of milk to signify that the surrounding lands could not possibly accommodate any more people. The Parsi head priest responded by slipping some sugar into the milk to signify how the strangers would enrich the local community without displacing them. They would dissolve into life like sugar dissolves in the milk, sweetening the society but not unsettling it. The ruler responded to the eloquent image and granted the exiles land and permission to practice their religion unhindered if they would respect local customs, and learn the local language, Gujarati."

—Parsi Legend

About

Migration is a development challenge. About 184 million people—2.3 percent of the world's population—live outside of their country of nationality. Almost half of them are in low- and middle-income countries. But what lies ahead?

As the world struggles to cope with global economic imbalances, diverging demographic trends, and climate change, migration will become a necessity in the decades to come for countries at all levels of income. If managed well, migration can be a force for prosperity and can help achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

World Development Report 2023 proposes an integrated framework to maximize the development impacts of cross-border movements on both destination and origin countries and on migrants and refugees themselves. The framework it offers, drawn from labor economics and international law, rests on a "match and motive" matrix that focuses on two factors: how closely migrants' skills and attributes match the needs of destination countries and what motives underlie their movements. This approach enables policy makers to distinguish between different types of movements and to design migration policies for each. International cooperation will be critical to the effective management of migration.

Main Messages

- **Focus on people who live outside their country of nationality**. The main difference between a migrant and a non-migrant is citizenship (or lack thereof) of the destination country and its associated rights. Once a migrant is naturalized, they no longer are a migrant: they face the same challenges and opportunities as other citizens—albeit in some cases with the added difficulties encountered by national minorities.
- **Recognize the complexity and the increasing necessity of cross-border movements**. About 2.3 percent of the world's population—184 million people, including 37 million refugees—live outside their country of nationality. Some 43 percent live in low- and middle-income countries. Many countries, at all income levels, are both the origin and destination of migrants at the same time. Because of demographic divergences and climate change, migration will become increasingly necessary over the next decades for countries at all income levels.
- **Distinguish between various types of movements to identify appropriate policy responses.** How well migrants' skills and attributes *match* the needs of destination countries largely determines the economic effects of their movements. The *motives* underlying movements determine destination countries' obligations under international law.
  - **Maximize net gains when people bring skills and attributes that strongly match the needs of their destination society**—for them, their countries of destination, and their countries of origin.
  - **Provide international protection to refugees in a manner that can be sustained, financially and socially**—because most refugee situations last many years.
  - **Reduce the need for distressed movements**, while respecting migrants' human rights and dignity—and recognize development's key role in this effort.
- **Manage migration strategically— in both origin and destination countries.** Governments in origin countries should make labor migration an explicit part of their development strategy, while governments in destination countries should use "strong match" migration to meet their labor needs.
- **Manage cross-border movements differently.** Use bilateral cooperation to strengthen the match of migrants' skills and attributes with the needs of destination economies. Organize regional and global responses to address refugee movements and reduce the need for distressed movements. Develop new and predictable financing instruments. And listen to voices that are currently underrepresented in many policy debates.

Main Messages: English | عربي | Español | Français | Português | Русский | 中文

Chapter Summaries



Overview

English | عربي | Español | Français | Português | Русский | 中文

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Chapter 1. The Match and Motive Matrix

The report's framework, the Match and Motive Matrix, draws from labor economics and international law to identify priority policies for four types of movements based on who moves and under what circumstances. Where a migrant fits in the Match and Motive Matrix depends in part on their human capital and personal characteristics and, in part, on the policies of the destination countries. Over time, the challenge is to enhance migration outcomes by strengthening the match of all migrants' skills and attributes with their destinations.

SPOTLIGHT 1: History

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight



Chapter 2. The numbers: Understanding who moves, where to, and why

Migration is a response to global imbalances, such as large welfare differences, and to shocks such as conflict and violence. Some 184 million people live outside of their country of nationality, about 20 percent of whom are refugees. About 43 percent live in low- and middle-income countries. Many countries at all levels of income are now both countries of origin and destination.

SPOTLIGHT 2: Data

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight | Spotlight Figures



Chapter 3. The outlook: Changing patterns, needs, and risks

Unprecedented demographic transitions, including rapidly aging societies in both high-income and middle-income countries and booming populations in low-income countries, will make migration increasingly necessary for countries at all levels of income. Whether countries allow migration to help reduce the expected mismatches between labor supply and demand caused by these demographic shifts will largely determine economic and social trajectories at all income levels. Climate change is compounding other drivers of mobility.

SPOTLIGHT 3: Methodological considerations

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight



Chapter 4. Migrants: Prospering—and even more so with rights

Cross-border migration has proved to be a powerful force for poverty reduction for people in low- and middle-income countries. When migrants' skills and attributes strongly match the needs of their destination society, migrants reap significant benefits. But there are costs too, both economic and human. Formal access to the labor market, such as documented legal status and the right to work and to change employers, are key for benefits to fully materialize.

SPOTLIGHT 4: Gender

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight | Spotlight Figures



Chapter 5. Origin countries: Managing migration for development

When migrants' skills and attributes are a strong match with the needs of destination countries, origin countries benefit as well, such as through remittances and knowledge transfers. However, the absence of migrants also has a downside for their families and origin countries, including brain drain in some countries. Origin countries can maximize their gains by implementing proactive policies and making labor emigration an integral part of their poverty reduction strategy.

SPOTLIGHT 5: Measurement of remittances

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight | Spotlight Figures

Chapter 6. Destination countries: Maximizing gains through economic and social policies

Destination countries gain significantly from the contributions of migrants whose skills and attributes strongly match their needs—even more so if migrants are allowed and able to work formally at the level of their qualifications. But there are costs too—for the use of public services, support for nationals who are negatively affected, and social integration. Destination countries can adopt policies that increase their gains, by facilitating economic and social inclusion.

SPOTLIGHT 6: Racism, xenophobia, and discrimination

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight | Spotlight Figures



Chapter 7. Refugees: Managing with a medium-term perspective

Because refugees move for safety, they are not always able to reach destinations where their skills are in demand. This entails costs for the host country. Refugee situations tend to last for years, and they should be managed in a manner that can be sustained over time—both financially and socially. Host countries can reduce their cost through policies that foster internal mobility, self-reliance, and inclusion in national services. International responsibility-sharing is key to managing these costs, and it requires complementing global efforts with regional action.

SPOTLIGHT 7: Internal displacement and statelessness

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight | Spotlight Figures



Chapter 8. Distressed migrants: Preserving dignity

Some migrants move without skills that match the needs in the destination country—and they are not refugees either. Such movements are often distressed—irregular and taking place under harrowing circumstances. Destination countries have the prerogative to accept or not such distressed migrants, but implementing restrictive policies without undermining migrants' dignity has proved difficult. The challenge is to reduce the need for such movements, and development plays a critical role in this regard.

SPOTLIGHT 8: "Root causes" and development

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Data | Chapter Figures | Spotlight | Spotlight Figures

Chapter 9. Recommendations: Making migration work better

Making migration better will require countries to adopt policies that enhance the development effects of migration on their societies. The benefits of cross-border movements can also be increased (and the costs mitigated) through international cooperation. Bilateral and multilateral approaches are needed, as are better data, fit-for-purpose financing instruments, and bringing underrepresented voices to the debate.

Key Messages | Chapter | Chapter Figures | Policy Recommendations

The Report



Migrants, Refugees, and Societies

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Report Launch Event



This event was streamed live on Tuesday, April 25 | 10:00–11:30 AM (EDT)

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→ WDR 2023 Launch Presentation

Multimedia



VIDEO | APR 25, 2023

Why Countries May Start Competing for More Migrants | World Development Report 2023



VIDEO | APR 26, 2023

Summary of the World Development Report 2023 Key Findings



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BLOG

Better mobility for migrants, refugees, and societies

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