

## A Call to the Commonwealth

The modern Commonwealth is a product of the migration of its peoples, and the wise management of this powerful, human force is one of the greatest challenges for development and governance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Improved communications have revolutionized the scope of this movement since the 1960s, the age of colonial independence, and the sum of millions of individual decisions have led to wealth and safety for some, anxiety and xenophobia in others.

The Ramphal Commission on Migration and Development, established in 2010, has been set up under the leadership of the Honourable P J Patterson, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, to advise Commonwealth governments and agencies on how they may adopt mutually beneficial, and practical policies to maximize the benefits of international migration. The Ramphal Centre in London, named in honour of Sir Shridath Ramphal, is delighted that six other distinguished personalities are working with Mr Patterson on this project, and hopes that its final report will have a wide international resonance.<sup>1</sup> This report, to be built on three interim reports, will appear next year prior to the Commonwealth summit in Perth, Australia.

The Commission is an independent exercise, but acknowledges with gratitude the cooperation and financial support of the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation, and important inputs from Laura Chappell and colleagues at the Institute for Public Policy Research, London<sup>2</sup>, from Bela Hovy of the United National Population Division who prepared the statistical appendix attached to this report, and from Professor Robin Cohen and colleagues at the Department for International Development, Oxford University.<sup>3</sup>

The Commission is mindful of the sensitivities surrounding migration and of the opportunities for Commonwealth leadership in terms of poverty reduction and development. It was encouraged in its task by the Heads of Government communiqué from Port of Spain in 2009 who acknowledged ( para 34 ):

“That migration has historically contributed to the development and flourishing the human prospect. They expressed concern about protection gaps in countries of origin, transit and destination, and called for the strengthening of existing global mechanisms to effectively address the protection of migrants. In this context, they also affirmed the importance of enhanced cooperation among states, and other relevant actors, in managing mixed migratory flows and addressing protection needs.”

The full terms of reference for the Commission, adopted after a consultation at Warwick University in October 2009, are set out in another appendix.

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<sup>1</sup> The Commissioners are: Mr P J Patterson ( Chairman ) from Jamaica; Mr George Vassiliou former President of Cyprus; Mr Farooq Sobhan, former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh; Mr Will Day, Chairman of the Sustainable Development Commission, United Kingdom; Ms Jill Iliffe, Executive Director, Commonwealth Nurses Federation; Professor John Oucho, from Kenya; and Professor Brenda Yeoh, from Singapore.

<sup>2</sup> Drafts of this paper were prepared by Laura Chappell and colleagues in the migration project at the IPPR.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Cohen arranged a series of research presentations to Commissioners on 14 May 2010.

### **Why international migration matters**

Few need persuading that international migration is important. First, it can have significant impacts on the **development** of migrants' countries of origin, many of which are **positive**:

- Migration allows migrants to improve their lives – often dramatically. The recent UN Human Development Report showed, for example, that the average migrant moving from a developing country to the United States sees their annual income increase by a striking 10,000USD as a result. The prospect of these benefits can encourage people to invest in training and skill development, which can increase a country's stock of human capital.
- Remittances – the money migrants send back to their countries of origin - can significantly improve the lives of people left behind, by alleviating poverty, increasing savings and promoting home ownership, for example. These impacts are well illustrated by a World Bank study of the Pacific which found that the incomes of the poorest households increased by 600% if they received remittances. Remittances can also play an important macroeconomic role, for example by providing a vital source of foreign exchange.
- Diasporas – communities of people from a country of origin who live abroad – can interact positively with their place of origin in many ways, for example by boosting trade between their countries of origin and settlement, by getting involved in politics at “home”, or by promoting peace and democracy.
- When migrants return they can also boost development, for example by bringing capital to invest in new businesses at home, by bringing improved skills and knowledge, or by introducing new ideas and ways of doing things. In a world where migration is more and more often temporary, the impact of return migration is important. The exchanges of values, skills and knowledge through diasporas and return migration are sometimes described as ‘social remittances’.

However, migration can also have **negative** impacts on development in countries of origin:

- In some places the ‘brain drain’ of skilled people (such as nurses, teachers or scientists) may damage development by depriving public services or key industries of the expensively trained human capital they need. Countries including Barbados, Gambia, Mauritius and Mozambique are experiencing high levels of skilled out-migration, and may have such concerns (see annexe on migration trends in the Commonwealth by Bela Hovy).
- Diasporas can engage negatively as well as positively with their home countries, for example if sections of the diaspora are supportive of particular groups in conflicts.
- While on the whole migration seems to improve migrants' lives, some migrants may be worse off as a result of moving. Trafficked people are more likely to fall into this category, as are irregular migrants, as both groups are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

The management of migration to maximize benefits (and minimize costs) for development in countries of origin is therefore a key task facing Commonwealth governments. This task needs to be shared by governments in countries of origin and countries of destination.

Second, migration plays a vital role in the economies of countries of destination. Evidence suggests that immigrants often fill labour market and skills gaps and promote innovation and entrepreneurialism, increasing **economic growth**. This role has only become more important as countries struggle to ensure

the **recovery** after the worst global recession since the great depression. The flexibility provided by migration has been a key factor in helping recovery in old Commonwealth countries, such as the United Kingdom, which have been badly affected by the downturn.

Third, migration matters for **security**. Some potential migrants may pose threats to citizens' security and governments strive to deliver border security to keep those people out. Moreover, illegal and undocumented migration can reduce governments' ability to regulate the economy and to manage public finances and public services, even when individual illegal migrants cause no harm (as is often the case), or even create benefits for the country they have moved to. This may be particularly true at a local level. Determining who crosses its borders is a defining function of a state, and most citizens legitimately expect their government to manage who lives and works amongst them.

Last, it is becoming increasingly clear that **climate change** will affect migration patterns. Though estimates vary, some research has suggested that the numbers who may need to cross borders could be dramatic -- Christian Aid has suggested that if projected temperature rises are not averted one billion people may be forced to move by 2050. Climate-related forced migration will affect the Commonwealth in particular, due to the high proportion of member states which are small island nations. The prospect of climate changes make it all the more important that governments come together to address migration, and sooner rather than later.

### ***Migration policy and governance***

Policy changes affect migration. For example, immigration regimes in destination countries can enable and encourage migrants to maintain their links with home (e.g. through dual citizenship) and thus increase remittances, positive diaspora engagement and return migration.

If governments get the policy framework right, migration can improve lives of people all around the world, including those of migrants themselves, the countries migrants move to and the places they have left behind. But if they get it wrong, the potential gains will be lost, and migrants, their places of origin and the communities they move to may suffer the possible negative consequences of migration. Xenophobia can become a threat to individuals, and to democracy.

So is migration currently enough of a priority for governments? Politicians talk about it, the media in many Commonwealth countries cover it extensively, and it is often debated by the public. But despite all this "heat", there is relatively little "light". The Commission sees three shortcomings:

1. Policymakers still do not have a clear understanding of precisely what 'good' migration would look like. There is a need for more research and analysis of migration and its impacts, particularly in the promotion of development.
2. There is only a weak understanding of how policy can be used to bolster migration's positive effects and reduce its negative ones. Little is known for example about how best to promote return migration, how to encourage positive diaspora interactions, or how to balance border security concerns with the need to attract migrants needed by a receiving country's economy. Without this understanding it is difficult to design policy interventions which can actually deliver the "win-win" outcomes which migration can offer.

3. There is a lack of political will to look beyond immediate short term impacts and factor in migration's wider effects. Thus far, policymakers have tended to focus on the aspects of migration which are of most immediate concern. Policymakers in destination countries have focused on migration's domestic economic impacts, and on delivering border security, rather than on migration's effects on countries of origin or the future impact of climate change. Policymakers have rather shied away from working internationally on migration policy.

The Commission accordingly hopes to shed further light in each of these areas, concentrating in particular on the second, examining and promoting viable policy options to increase migration's benefits and reduce its costs.

### ***A role for the Commonwealth***

While migration involves both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries, and member states have both immigrants and emigrants simultaneously, the Commonwealth provides an ideal forum for leadership and policy.

First, ***the Commonwealth has, in significant ways, been constructed through migration***. The character of many Commonwealth societies has been irrevocably shaped by migration from other Commonwealth countries; and many of the links between Commonwealth members – such as mutual understanding and practices, and use of the English language -- have been built through migration.

Today's migration patterns are still Commonwealth-related. Commonwealth countries are over-represented as countries of origin for immigrants to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Migration from other Commonwealth countries is significant in the Caribbean and South Africa. While Commonwealth countries include just less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world's population, in each of the "old Commonwealth" countries 1/3<sup>rd</sup> or more (and sometimes up to 2/3rds) of all immigrants come from within the Commonwealth, despite the ending of most preferential Commonwealth migration schemes. Migration, including intra-Commonwealth migration, matters to all Commonwealth member states.

Second, migration is ***already a Commonwealth policy priority***, as indicated by the 2009 summit communiqué.

Third, ***other major international institutions and groupings are not yet placing significant emphasis on the issue***. The United Nations, for example, held a High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development in 2006, but since then the issue has received less attention. No follow-up is scheduled until 2013. Outside the UN system, a new country-led multilateral forum has been convened, the Global Forum on Migration and Development; this discusses research findings and shares policy lessons informally. However, the Forum operates largely through annual meetings, meaning that it has a limited ability to undertake ongoing research and policy development. The Ramphal Commission on Migration and Development, bringing its recommendations to Commonwealth Heads of Government, has the capacity to influence governments directly.

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<sup>4</sup> These countries have been examined as they are the only Commonwealth countries for which there is comprehensive data available on immigrants' place of origin.

Fourth, the ***structure of the Commonwealth itself promotes the kind of cooperation which progress requires***. Developed and developing countries come together as equal partners, which is essential for discussions of migration and development. The range of institutions the Commonwealth incorporates, including the states themselves, summits and Ministerial meetings, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth family of associations and NGOs, comprise a diverse range of actors through which research and policy innovations can be ***considered and implemented***. And the approach taken by the Commonwealth, with its focus on consensus and common action, and on “forward-looking and innovative initiatives and partnerships”<sup>5</sup> provides an excellent context. Cooperative, longer-term approaches to migration can be explored, which are still sensitive to domestic constraints within member states.

Fifth, ***there are already a range of successful initiatives within the Commonwealth to build on***. Individual Commonwealth countries have been pioneers of thoughtful migration policies. Bangladesh, for example, has taken some innovative steps to try to maximize the development potential of remittances. And New Zealand, Australia and Pacific Island countries have together built partnerships and designed seasonal migration programmes which aim to meet the economic needs of Australian and New Zealand farmers, while boosting development in the Pacific. Jamaicans have for some years worked in the lumber industry of British Columbia.

#### ***The Ramphal Commission on Migration and Development***

The Ramphal Commission on Migration and Development will ***provide policy options to maximize the benefits of migration*** for all Commonwealth countries and ***will showcase best practice***. It will emphasise ***practical policy solutions*** which can benefit destination and origin countries, as well as help to protect migrants themselves. Important work already done by the Commonwealth, such as the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol, and a similar agreement covering health workers, indicates what is possible. The Commission will suggest how the apparatus of the Commonwealth, and its member states, can deliver more development potential from today’s international migration.

The Commission’s special concern is with ***migration and development***, while taking into account the other impacts that migration can have. This is appropriate given the salience of development for the Commonwealth, the huge potential of migration, and the contribution to development of Sir Shridath Ramphal, when he was Secretary-General ( 1975-1990 ), from whom the Commission takes its name. The Commission will seek to build on existing evidence and other initiatives in the field of migration and development. The attached Terms of Reference give fuller details of the planned focus.

Commissioners aim to transform the way migration is viewed and treated within the Commonwealth and, ultimately, to improve the lives of people across the 54 Commonwealth countries and beyond. But we cannot do this alone. We need the support and cooperation of the wider Commonwealth family. We argue that it is time for the Commonwealth to take the lead on migration, in the interests of development. Please join us to make this happen.

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<sup>5</sup> As emphasised in the Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation on Commonwealth Values and Principles.