

Policy Influence Through Research On Migration, Poverty And Development

*Does evidence actually influence policy?,
what can be done to improve the record?*

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Research Themes

- Drivers – interaction of macro, meso and micro
- Impacts- why positive for some groups and locations and not others; long term impacts; impacts of policy
- Policy –policy toolkits; policy analysis; policy debates
- Data-update and extend GMOD; MiNS; internal migration and remittance matrices; gender disaggregated data

Cross cutting themes

- Capacity building
- Gender mainstreaming
- Communication

Focus on internal and cross border migration

Policy and Evidence

Huge gap between policy and evidence

- Plenty of research to show that migration can have both positive and negative outcomes
- Numerous case studies across the Sahel, semi-arid regions of Asia of migration as a diversification and risk management strategy
- Recent research from booming Asian economies shows migration for accessing better opportunities leading to an improvement in standards of living and economy wide impacts
- But almost total blindness to this at the policy level especially with regards to rural-urban migration

Dominant discourse

- Migration is a symptom of development failure
- People are pushed out of rural areas by environmental shocks and stresses, conflict and economic crises
- They move to urban slums and burden urban services.
- They worsen disease, crime, unemployment and urban poverty
- There is a need to control migration
- Rural development and employment creation will control migration (eg back to the land policy in Tanzania, NREGA in India)
- View held all across Africa (Adebusoye 2006) and Asia (Anh 2003)

Reasons for lack of uptake - 1

- Political
 - Continuing negative discourse justifies lack of action to improve working and living conditions of migrants
 - secures funding for powerful rural development lobby
 - receiving areas want cheap labour but do not want to recognise migrant rights
- With the exception of China
 - RU migration now factored in to urban development plans
 - Rural poverty analyses recognise role of internal migrant remittances (see Dewen Wang, Cai Fang and CASS work)
 - Decent work programme reflects positive view of migration

Reasons for lack of uptake - 2

- Tendency among donors and policy makers to accept evidence generated through experimental or quasi-experimental method
 - Randomised Control Trials – “Gold Standard” in rigour and scientific validity
 - With counter-factuals i.e. a control group to establish with and without scenarios
 - Meta analysis – statistical method for combining findings from independent studies
 - Positivistic corroboration – “proof”
- Others are relegated to category of “anecdotal” or opinions

Clear messages from DFID

- Increased appetite for quantitative data
 - Esp through randomised control trials
 - Data quality must be high and evidence must be graded
- Greater interest in research findings that can be used
- Need to demonstrate uptake – research into use
- Value for Money
- Impact

How do we assess data quality?

- Commonly cited criteria for evaluating systems to rate the strength of bodies of evidence include (West, King, & Carey, 2002)
 - Quality: methodological rigour -the extent to which bias was minimized.
 - Quantity: the number of studies and sample size, statistical power to detect meaningful effects
 - Consistency: for any given topic, the extent to which similar findings are reported using similar and different study designs

Grading the evidence

Maryland Scientific methods (Sherman et al 1997) developed for review of crime prevention interventions but regarded as widely applicable

- Level 1. Correlation between factors and outcome at a single point in time.
- Level 2. Temporal sequence between factors and outcome clearly observed.
- Level 3. A comparison between two or more comparable units of analysis, one with and one without the programme.
- Level 4. Comparison between multiple units with and without the programme, controlling for other factors.
- Level 5. Random assignment and analysis of comparable units to program and comparison groups.

The Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods

A. Research Designs

	Before-After	Control	Multiple Units	Randomization
Methods Score				
Level 1	0	0	X	0
Level 2	X	0	0*	0
Level 3	X	X	0	0
Level 4	X	X	X	0
Level 5	X	X	X	X

But...

- Experimental approaches suit subjects with measurable outputs – can answer *who, what, how many* questions. Eg number of people migrating
- We can certainly apply these principles when we vet data for including in our databases on migration.
- But such approaches cannot be used to understand how and why questions – eg *how* social and gender relations shape migration or *why* some migrants are socially excluded
- Neither to unravelling the policy process
- Case study approaches may be more appropriate (Yin 2003).
- Wide array of methods – indepth and time consuming ethnographic research, relatively quick PRA methods and even desk research

Challenges

- Often asked question – how can you generalise on the basis of one or two case studies? Just because migration had positive impact in Punjab does not mean that it will be the same in the Sahel
- There is a need to synthesise different findings
- Need to remember that case studies are generalisable to theory and not populations (Yin 2003:10); a case study is not a sample and the findings should be used to expand theory

Different methods of synthesis(Noblit and Hare 1988).

- Meta-ethnography
 - Translation of concepts across studies and developing an overarching framework
 - Refutational synthesis to explain contradictions
 - Lines of argument – building up a picture of the whole by piecing different studies together

What we can achieve with meta synthesis

- Data – large data sets do not capture poor people's migration. Case studies can be synthesised to produce numbers which challenge received wisdom
- Impacts – plenty of research but need to synthesise to provide a clear picture of where positive and where negative
- Drivers – synthesise findings to show how different factors combine at different levels
- Analysis of national programmes – NAPAs, DWCPs to compare and contrast positions on migration and offer recommendations on how these could be improved

Examples of subquestions for meta ethnographies/synthesis

- Impact of internal and cross border migration on sending economies, the national economy and host areas
- Irregular migration impacts
- Impacts of policies related to rural and urban development, agriculture, industry and social protection on migration

Achieving recognition and impact

- Likely to be accepted if source is respected
- Rigorous blind peer reviewing process
- But harder for others
- Working with other actors and being mindful of demand for evidence in policy process
 - E.g. current policy processes in Bangladesh and Ghana
 - Other processes such as the implementation of NREGA in India
- Endorsement of findings by influential players such as UN organisations or donors

Limits to our influence – contribution rather than attribution

