

Freedom and movement: how mobility can foster human development



The world distribution of opportunities is extremely unequal. This inequality is a key driver of human movement and thus implies that movement has a huge potential for improving human development. Yet movement is not a pure expression of choice—people often move under constraints that can be severe, while the gains they reap from moving are very unequally distributed. Our vision of development as promoting people’s freedom to lead the lives they choose recognizes mobility as an essential component of that freedom. However, movement involves trade-offs for both movers and stayers, and the understanding and analysis of those trade-offs is key to formulating appropriate policies.

Freedom and movement: how mobility can foster human development

Every year, more than 5 million people cross international borders to go and live in a developed country.¹ The number of people who move to a developing nation or within their country is much greater, although precise estimates are hard to come by.² Even larger numbers of people in both destination and source places are affected by the movement of others through flows of money, knowledge and ideas.

For people who move, the journey almost always entails sacrifices and uncertainty. The possible costs range from the emotional cost of separation from families and friends to high monetary fees. The risks can include the physical dangers of working in dangerous occupations. In some cases, such as those of illegal border crossings, movers face a risk of death. Nevertheless, millions of people are willing to incur these costs or risks in order to improve their living standards and those of their families.

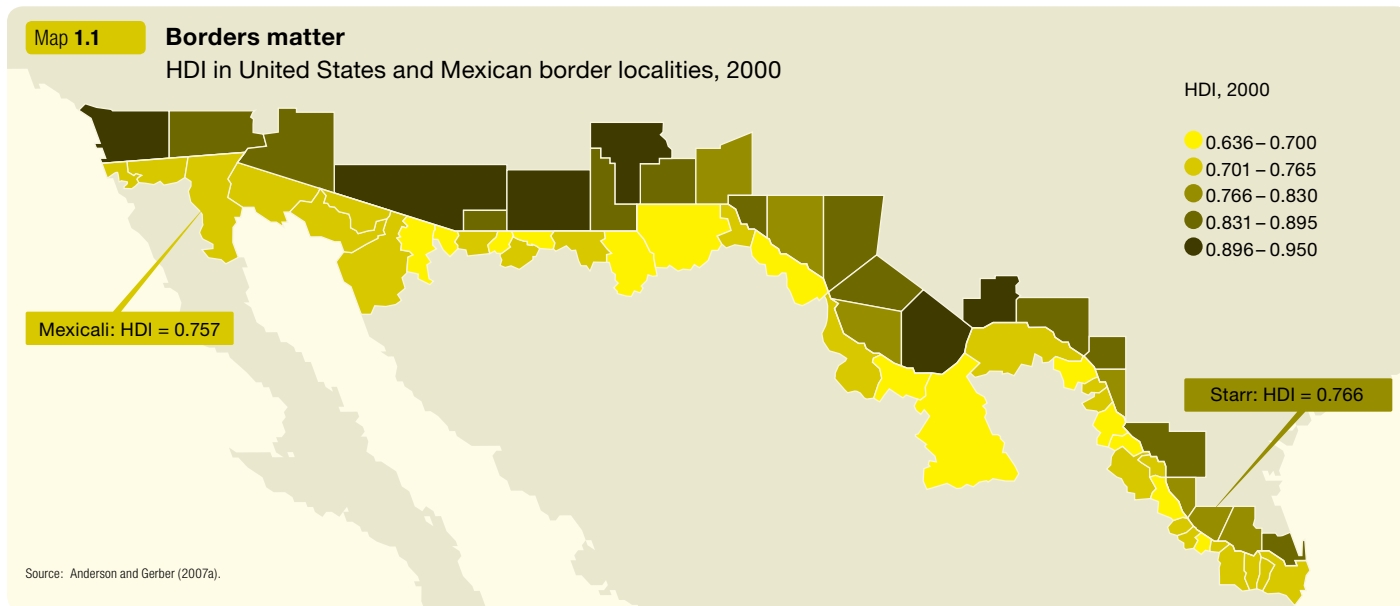
A person's opportunities to lead a long and healthy life, to have access to education, health care and material goods, to enjoy political freedoms and to be protected from violence are all strongly influenced by where they live. Someone born in Thailand can expect to live seven more years, to have almost three times as many years of education, and to spend and save eight times as much as someone born in neighbouring Myanmar.³ These differences in opportunity create immense pressures to move.

1.1 Mobility matters

Witness for example the way in which human development outcomes are distributed near national boundaries. Map 1.1 compares human development on either side of the United States–Mexico border. For this illustration, we use the Human Development Index (HDI)—a summary measure of development used throughout this report to rank and compare countries. A pattern that jumps out is the strong correlation between the side of the border that a place is on

and its HDI. The lowest HDI in a United States border county (Starr County, Texas) is above even the highest on the Mexican side (Mexicali Municipality, Baja California).⁴ This pattern suggests that moving across national borders can greatly expand the opportunities available for improved well-being. Alternatively, consider the direction of human movements when restrictions on mobility are lifted. Between 1984 and 1995, the People's Republic of China progressively liberalized its strict regime of internal restrictions, allowing people to move from one region to another. Massive flows followed, largely towards regions with higher levels of human development. In this case the patterns again suggest that opportunities for improved well-being were a key driving factor (map 1.2).⁵

These spatial impressions are supported by more rigorous research that has estimated the effect of changing one's residence on well-being. These comparisons are inherently difficult because people who move tend to have different characteristics and circumstances from those who do not move (box 1.1). Recent academic studies that carefully disentangle these complex relations have nonetheless confirmed very large gains from moving across international borders. For example, individuals with only moderate levels of formal education who move from a typical developing country to the United States can reap an annual income gain of approximately US\$10,000—roughly double the average level of per capita income in a developing country.⁶ Background research commissioned for this report found that



a family who migrates from Nicaragua to Costa Rica increases the probability that their child will be enrolled in primary school by 22 percent.⁷

These disparities do not explain all movement. An important part of movement occurs in response to armed conflict. Some people emigrate to avoid political repression by authoritarian states. Moving can provide opportunities for people to escape the traditional roles that they were expected to fulfil in their society of origin. Young people often move in search of education and broader horizons, intending to return home eventually. As we discuss in more detail in the next section, there are multiple drivers of, and constraints on, movement that account for vastly different motives and experiences among movers. Nevertheless, opportunity and aspiration are frequently recurring themes.

Movement does not always lead to better human development outcomes. A point that we emphasize throughout this report is that vast inequalities characterize not only the freedom to move but also the distribution of gains from movement. When the poorest migrate, they often do so under conditions of vulnerability that reflect their limited resources and choices. The prior information they have may be limited or misleading. Abuse of migrant female domestic workers occurs in many cities and countries around the world, from Washington and London to Singapore and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Recent research in the Arab states found that the abusive and

exploitative working conditions sometimes associated with domestic work and the lack of redress mechanisms can trap migrant women in a vicious circle of poverty and HIV vulnerability.⁸ The same study found that many countries test migrants for HIV and deport those found to carry the virus; few source countries have re-integration programs for migrants who are forced to return as a result of their HIV status.⁹

Movement across national borders is only part of the story. Movement within national borders is actually larger in magnitude and has enormous potential to enhance human development. This is partly because relocating to another country is costly. Moving abroad not only involves substantial monetary costs for fees and travel (which tend to be regressive—see chapter 3), but may also mean living in a very different culture and leaving behind your network of friends and relations, which can impose a heavy if unquantifiable psychological burden. The lifting of what were often severe barriers to internal movement in a number of countries (including but not limited to China) has benefited many of the world's poorest people—an impact on human development that would be missed if we were to adopt an exclusive focus on international migration.

The potential of enhanced national and international mobility to increase human well-being leads us to expect that it should be a major focus of attention among development policy makers

and researchers. This is not the case. The academic literature dealing with the effects of migration is dwarfed by research on the consequences of international trade and macroeconomic policies, to name just two examples.¹⁰ While the international community boasts an established institutional architecture for governing trade and financial relations among countries, the governance of mobility has been well characterized as a non-regime (with the important exception of refugees).¹¹ This report is part of ongoing efforts to redress this imbalance. Building on the recent work of organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR), and on discussions in such arenas as the Global Forum on Migration and Development, we argue that migration deserves greater attention from governments, international organizations and civil society.¹² This is not only because of the large potential gains to the world as a whole from enhanced movement, but also because of the substantial risks faced by many who move—risks that could be at least partly offset by better policies.

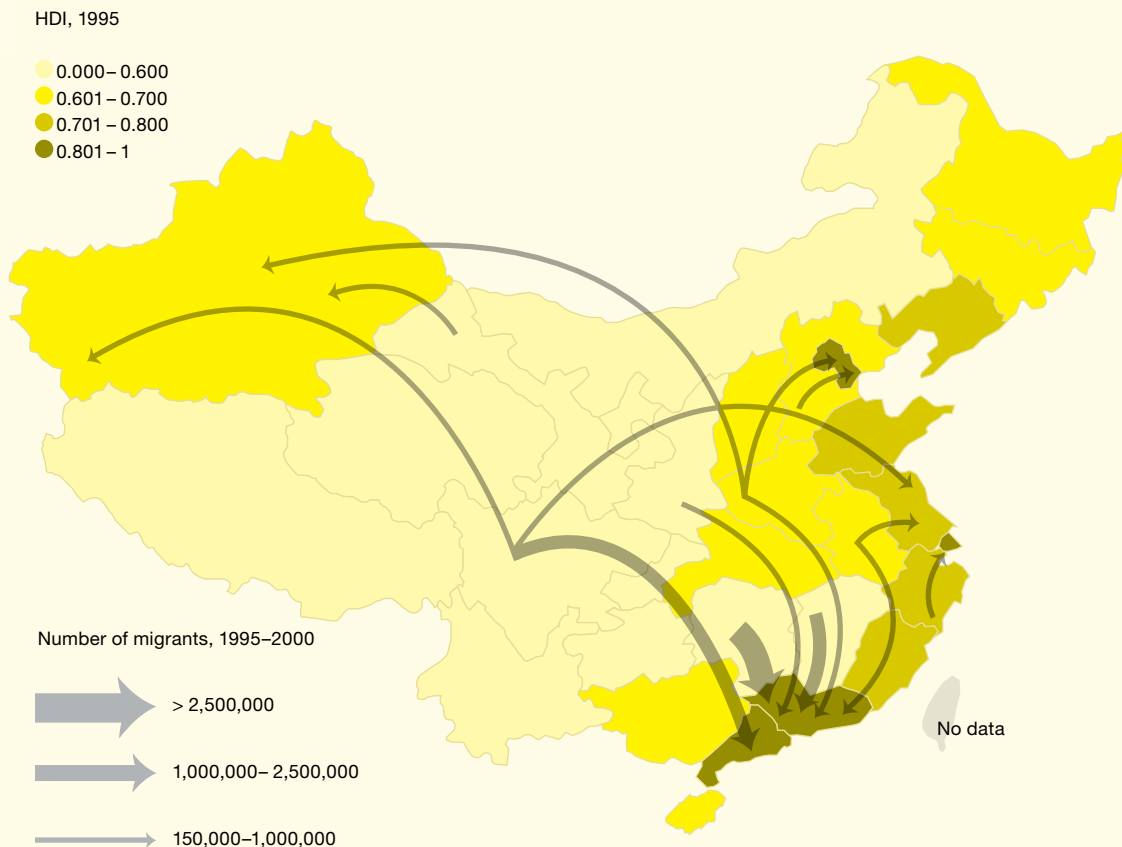
1.2 Choice and context: understanding why people move

There is huge variation in the circumstances surrounding human movement. Thousands of Chin have emigrated to Malaysia in recent years to escape persecution by Myanmar's security forces,

Map 1.2

Migrants are moving to places with greater opportunities

Human development and inter-provincial migration flows in China, 1995–2000



Source: UNDP (2008a) and He (2004).

Box 1.1 Estimating the impact of movement

Key methodological considerations affect the measurement of both returns to individuals and effects on places reported in the extensive literature on migration. Obtaining a precise measure of impacts requires a comparison between the well-being of someone who migrates and their well-being had they stayed in their original place. The latter is an unknown counterfactual and may not be adequately proxied by the status of non-migrants. Those who move internationally tend to be better educated and to have higher levels of initial income than those who do not, and so can be expected to be better off than those who stay behind. There is evidence that this phenomenon—known technically as migrant selectivity—is also present in internal migration (see chapter 2). Comparisons of groups with similar observable characteristics (gender, education, experience, etc.) can be more accurate but still omit potentially important characteristics, such as attitudes towards risk.

There are a host of other methodological problems. Difficulties in identifying causality plague estimates of the impact of remittances on household consumption. Understanding how migration affects labour markets in the destination place is also problematic. Most studies have tried to look at the impact on wages at the regional level

or on particular skill groups. These may still be subject to selection bias associated with individual choices of location. A key issue, discussed in chapter 4, is whether the migrants' skills substitute for or complement those of local people; determining this requires accurate measures of these skills.

One increasingly popular approach seeks to exploit quasi- or manufactured randomization to estimate impacts. For example, New Zealand's Pacific Access Category allocated a set of visas randomly, allowing the impact of migration to be assessed by comparing lottery winners with unsuccessful applicants.

There is also an important temporal dimension. Migration has high upfront costs and the gains may take time to accrue. For example, returns in the labour market tend to improve significantly over time as country-specific skills are learned and recognized. A migrant's decision to return is an additional complication, affecting the period over which impacts should be measured.

Finally, as we discuss in more detail in the next chapter, migration analysis faces major data constraints. Even in the case of rich countries, comparisons are often difficult to make for very basic reasons, such as differences in the definition of migrants.

Source: Clemens, Montenegro and Pritchett (2008), McKenzie, Gibson and Stillman (2006).

but live under constant fear of detection by civilian paramilitary groups.¹³ More than 3,000 people are believed to have drowned between 1997 and 2005 in the Straits of Gibraltar while trying to enter Europe illegally on makeshift boats.¹⁴ These experiences contrast with those of hundreds of poor Tongans who have won a lottery to settle in New Zealand, or of the hundreds of thousands of Poles who moved to better paid jobs in the United Kingdom under the free mobility regime of the European Union introduced in 2004.

Our report deals with various types of movement, including internal and international, temporary and permanent, and conflict-induced. The usefulness of casting a broad net over all of these cases might be questioned. Are we not talking about disparate phenomena, with widely different causes and inherently dissimilar outcomes? Wouldn't our purpose be better served if we limited our focus to one type of migration and studied in detail its causes, consequences and implications?

We don't think so. While broad types of human movement do vary significantly in their drivers and outcomes, this is also true of more specific cases within each type. International labour

migration, to take one example, covers cases ranging from Tajik workers in the Russian Federation construction industry, impelled to migrate by harsh economic conditions in a country where most people live on less than US\$2 a day, to highly coveted East Asian computer engineers recruited by the likes of Motorola and Microsoft.

Conventional approaches to migration tend to suffer from compartmentalization. Distinctions are commonly drawn between migrants according to whether their movement is classed as forced or voluntary, internal or international, temporary or permanent, or economic or non-economic. Categories originally designated to establish legal distinctions for the purpose of governing entry and treatment can end up playing a dominant role in conceptual and policy thinking. Over the past decade, scholars and policy makers have begun to question these distinctions, and there is growing recognition that their proliferation obscures rather than illuminates the processes underlying the decision to move, with potentially harmful effects on policy-making.¹⁵

In nearly all instances of human movement we can see the interaction of two basic forces, which vary in the degree of their influence. On

the one hand we have individuals, families and sometimes communities, who decide to move of their own free will in order to radically alter their circumstances. Indeed, even when people are impelled to move by very adverse conditions, the choices they make almost always play a vital role. Research among Angolan refugees settling in northwest Zambia, for example, has shown that many were motivated by the same aspirations that impel those who are commonly classified as economic migrants.¹⁶ Similarly, Afghans fleeing conflict go to Pakistan or Iran via the same routes and trading networks established decades ago for the purposes of seasonal labour migration.¹⁷

On the other hand, choices are rarely, if ever, unconstrained. This is evident for those who move to escape political persecution or economic deprivation, but it is also vital for understanding decisions where there is less compulsion. Major factors relating to the structure of the economy and of society, which are context-specific but also change over time, frame decisions to move as well as to stay. This dynamic interaction between individual decisions and the socio-economic context in which they are taken—sometimes labelled in sociological parlance the ‘agency–structure interaction’—is vital for understanding what shapes human behaviour. The evolution over time of key structural factors is dealt with in chapter 2.

Consider the case of the tens of thousands of Indonesian immigrants who enter Malaysia every year. These flows are driven largely by the wide income differentials between these countries. But the scale of movement has also grown steadily since the 1980s, whereas the income gap between the two countries has alternately widened and narrowed over the same period.¹⁸ Broader socio-economic processes have clearly played a part. Malaysian industrialization in the 1970s and 1980s generated a massive movement of Malays from the countryside to the cities, creating acute labour scarcity in the agricultural sector at a time when the commercialization of farming and rapid population growth were producing a surplus of agricultural labour in Indonesia. The fact that most Indonesians are of similar ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds to Malays doubtless facilitated the flows.¹⁹

Recognition of the role of structural factors in determining human movement has had a deep impact on migration studies. While early attempts

to conceptualize migration flows focused on differences in living standards, in recent years there has been growing understanding that these differences only partly explain movement patterns.²⁰ In particular, if movement responds only to income differentials, it is hard to explain why many successful migrants choose to return to their country of origin after several years abroad. Furthermore, if migration were purely determined by wage differences, then we would expect to see large movements from poor to rich countries and very little movement among rich countries—but neither of these patterns holds in practice (chapter 2).

These observed patterns led to several strands of research. Some scholars recognized that a focus on the individual distracts from what is typically a family decision and indeed strategy (as when some family members move while others stay at home).²¹ The need to go beyond the assumption of perfectly competitive markets also became increasingly evident. In particular, credit markets in developing countries are highly imperfect, while household livelihoods often depend on such volatile sectors as agriculture. Sending a family member elsewhere allows the family to diversify against the risk of bad outcomes at home.²² Other researchers emphasized how structural characteristics and long-run trends in both origin and destination places—often labelled ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors—shape the context in which movement occurs. Movement, for example, can result from growing concentration in the ownership of assets such as land, making it difficult for people to subsist through their traditional modes of production.²³ It was also recognized that the opportunities available to migrants are constrained by barriers to entry, as we discuss in chapters 2 and 3, and by the way in which labour markets function, as shown by the considerable evidence that both international and internal migrants are channelled into lower-status and worse-paid occupations.

Most importantly, theories that emphasize purely economic factors fail to capture the broader social framework in which decisions are taken. For example, young men among the lower caste Kolas in the Central Gujarat region of India commonly seek factory jobs outside their village in order to break away from subordinate caste relations. This occurs despite the fact that factory wages are not higher, and in some cases are

Theories that emphasize purely economic factors fail to capture the broader social framework in which decisions to migrate are taken

lower, than what they would earn as agricultural day labourers at home.²⁴ Escaping traditional hierarchies can be an important factor motivating migration (chapter 3).

Moreover, the relationship between movement and economics is far from unidirectional. Large-scale movements of people can have profound economic consequences for origin and destination places, as we will discuss in detail in chapter 4. Even the way in which we think about basic economic concepts is affected by the movement of people, as can be illustrated by the issues raised for the measurement of per capita incomes and economic growth (box 1.2).

1.3 Development, freedom and human mobility

Our attempt to understand the implications of human movement for human development begins with an idea that is central to the approach of this report. This is the concept of human

development as the expansion of people's freedoms to live their lives as they choose. This concept—inspired by the path-breaking work of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and the leadership of Mahbub ul Haq and also known as the 'capabilities approach' because of its emphasis on freedom to achieve vital 'beings and doings'—has been at the core of our thinking since the first Human Development Report in 1990, and is as relevant as ever to the design of effective policies to combat poverty and deprivation.²⁵ The capabilities approach has proved powerful in reshaping thinking about topics as diverse as gender, human security and climate change.

Using the expansion of human freedoms and capabilities as a lens has significant implications for how we think about human movement. This is because, even before we start asking whether the freedom to move has significant effects on incomes, education or health, for example, we recognize that movement is one of the basic actions

Box 1.2 How movement matters to the measurement of progress

Attempts to measure the level of development of a country rely on various indicators designed to capture the average level of well-being. While a traditional approach uses per capita income as a proxy for economic development, this report has promoted a more comprehensive measure: the Human Development Index (HDI). However, both of these approaches are based on the idea of evaluating the well-being of those who reside in a given territory.

As researchers at the Center for Global Development and Harvard University have recently pointed out, these approaches to measuring development prioritize geographical location over people in the evaluation of a society's progress. Thus, if a Fijian moves to New Zealand and her living standards improve as a result, traditional measures of development will not count that improvement as an increase in the development of Fiji. Rather, that person's well-being will now be counted in the calculation of New Zealand's indicator.

In background research carried out for this report, we dealt with this problem by proposing an alternative measure of human development. We refer to this as the *human development of peoples* (as opposed to the human development of countries), as it captures the level of human development of all people born in a particular country. For instance, instead of measuring the average level of human development of people who live in the Philippines, we measure the average level of human development of all individuals who were born in

the Philippines, regardless of where they now live. This new measure has a significant impact on our understanding of human well-being. In 13 of the 100 nations for which we can calculate this measure, the HDI of their people is at least 10 percent higher than the HDI of their country; for an additional nine populations, the difference is between 5 and 10 percent. For 11 of the 90 populations for which we could calculate trends over time, the change in HDI during the 1990–2000 period differed by more than 5 percentage points from the average change for their country. For example, the HDI of Ugandans went up by nearly three times as much as the HDI of Uganda.

Throughout the rest of this report, we will continue to adopt the conventional approach for reasons of analytical tractability and comparability with the existing literature. We also view these two measures as complements rather than substitutes: one captures the living standards of people living in a particular place, the other of people born in a particular place. For example, when we analyse human development as a cause of human movement, as we do throughout most of this report, then the country measure will be more appropriate because it will serve as an indicator of how living standards differ across places. For the purposes of evaluating the success of different policies and institutions in generating well-being for the members of a society, however, there is a strong case for adopting the new measure.

Source: Ortega (2009) and Clemens and Pritchett (2008).

that individuals can choose to take in order to realize their life plans. In other words, the ability to move is a dimension of freedom that is part of development—with intrinsic as well as potential instrumental value.

The notion that the ability to change one's place of residence is a fundamental component of human freedom has been traced back to classical philosophy in several intellectual traditions. Confucius wrote that “good government obtains when those who are near are made happy, and those who are far off are attracted to come,”²⁶ while Socrates argued that “anyone who does not like us and the city, and who wants to emigrate to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, retaining his property.”²⁷ In 1215, England's Magna Carta guaranteed the freedom “to go out of our Kingdom, and to return safely and securely, by land or water.” More recently, American philosopher Martha Nussbaum argued that mobility is one of a set of basic human functional capabilities that can be used to assess the effective freedom that individuals have to carry out their life plans.²⁸

Yet world history is replete with the experiences of societies that severely limited human development by restricting movement. Both feudalism and slavery were predicated on the physical restriction of movement. Several repressive regimes in the 20th century relied on the control of internal movement, including the Pass Laws of South African *apartheid* and the *propiska* system of internal passports in Soviet Russia. The subsequent demise of such restrictions contributed to dramatic expansions in the freedoms enjoyed by these countries' peoples.

Our report seeks to capture and examine the full set of conditions that affect whether individuals, families or communities decide to stay or to move. These conditions include people's resources or entitlements as well as the way in which different constraints—including those associated with policies, markets, security, culture and values—determine whether movement is an option for them. People's ability to choose the place they call home is a dimension of human freedom that we refer to as *human mobility*. Box 1.3 defines this and other basic terms used in this report.

The distinction between freedoms and actions is central to the capabilities approach. By referring to the capability to decide where to

live as well as the act of movement itself, we recognize the importance of the conditions under which people are, or are not, able to choose their place of residence. Much conventional analysis of migration centres on studying the effect of movement on well-being. Our concern, however, is not only with movement in itself but also with the freedom that people have to decide whether to move. Mobility is a freedom—movement is the exercise of that freedom.²⁹

We understand human mobility as a positive and not only a negative freedom. In other words, the absence of formal restrictions on the movement of people across or within borders does not in itself make people free to move if

Box 1.3 Basic terms used in this report

Human Development Index (HDI) A composite index measuring average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living.

Developed/developing We call countries that have achieved an HDI of 0.9 or higher developed, and those that have not developing.

Low/medium/high/very high HD A classification of countries based on the value of the HDI according to the most recent data. The ranges are 0–0.499 for low HDI, 0.500–0.799 for medium HDI, 0.800–0.899 for high HDI and greater than 0.900 for very high HDI.

Internal migration Human movement within the borders of a country, usually measured across regional, district or municipal boundaries.

International migration Human movement across international borders, resulting in a change of country of residence.

Migrant An individual who has changed her place of residence either by crossing an international border or by moving within her country of origin to another region, district or municipality. An emigrant is a migrant viewed from the perspective of the origin country, while an immigrant is a migrant viewed from the perspective of the destination country. While sometimes the term ‘migrant’ (as opposed to ‘immigrant’) has been reserved for temporary migration, we do not adopt such a distinction in this report.

Human mobility The ability of individuals, families or groups of people to choose their place of residence.

Human movement The act of changing one's place of residence.

they lack the economic resources, security and networks necessary to enjoy a decent life in their new home, or if informal constraints such as discrimination significantly impede the prospects of moving successfully.

Let us illustrate the implications of this approach with a couple of examples. In the case of human trafficking, movement comes together with brutal and degrading types of exploitation. By definition, trafficking is an instance of movement in which freedoms become restricted by means of force, deception and/or coercion. Commonly, a trafficked individual is not free to choose to abort the trip, to seek alternative employment once she gets to her destination, or to return home. A trafficked person is physically moving, but doing so as a result of a restriction on her ability to decide where to live. From a capabilities perspective, she is less, not more, mobile.

Alternatively, consider the case of someone who has to move because of the threat of political persecution or because of degraded environmental conditions. In these cases external circumstances have made it more difficult,

perhaps impossible, for her to remain at home. These circumstances restrict the scope of her choices, reducing her freedom to choose where to live. The induced movement may very well coincide with a further deterioration in her living conditions, but this does not mean that the movement is the cause of that deterioration. In fact, if she were not able to move, the outcome would probably be much worse.

If it is tempting to view the distinction between mobility and movement as somewhat academic, we should take this opportunity to emphasize that freedom to choose where to live emerged as an important theme in research to find out what poor people think about migration (box 1.4). In the end, their views matter more than those of the experts, since it is they who must take the difficult decision as to whether or not to risk a move.

1.4 What we bring to the table

Putting people and their freedom at the centre of development has implications for the study of human movement. In the first place, it requires

Box 1.4 How do the poor view migration?

In recent years there has been growing interest in the use of qualitative methods to understand how people living in poverty view their situation, as indicated by the landmark World Bank study *Voices of the Poor*, published in 2000. In preparing the current report we commissioned research to investigate relevant findings of Participatory Poverty Assessments—large-scale studies that combine qualitative and quantitative research methods to study poverty from the point of view of the poor. What emerged is that moving is commonly described by the poor as both a *necessity*—part of a coping strategy for families experiencing extreme hardship—and an *opportunity*—a means of expanding a household's livelihoods and ability to accumulate assets.

In Niger, two thirds of respondents indicated that in order to cope with lack of food, clothing or income they had left their homes and looked for livelihoods elsewhere. Some households reported members leaving in search of paid work, particularly to reduce pressures on dwindling food supplies in times of scarcity. In the villages of Ban Na Pieng and Ban Kaew Pad, Thailand, participants described migration as one of the ways in which a family's socio-economic status could be enhanced. For these communities, remittances from abroad enabled those left behind to invest in commercial fishing and thus expand the family's standing and influence.

Seasonal internal migration was the most common type of migration discussed in focus groups with the poor. When international migration was discussed, it was described as something for the better off. For instance, participants in the Jamaica study said that the better off, unlike the poor, have influential contacts that help them acquire the necessary visas to travel and work abroad. Similarly, in Montserrat participants described how the more educated and financially better off were able to leave the country after the 1995 volcano eruption, while the less well off stayed on despite the devastation.

Participatory Poverty Assessments give us a good picture of how poor people see movement but may be uninformative about how others have managed to move out of poverty, as these assessments are by design limited to people who are still poor. A more recent study of 15 countries carried out by the World Bank examines pathways out of poverty. In these studies, the ability to move evolved as a common theme in conversations about freedom. In Morocco, young women expressed frustration with traditional restrictions that limit women's ability to travel without a male escort or search for employment outside the home. Men described the ability to migrate as both a freedom and a responsibility, because with the freedom to move comes the responsibility to remit.

Source: Azcona (2009), Narayan, Pritchett, and Kapoor (2009), World Bank (2000), World Bank (2003), and ActionAid International (2004).

us to understand what makes people less or more mobile. This means considering why people choose to move and what constraints encourage them or deter them from making that choice. In chapter 2, we look at both choices and constraints by studying the macro patterns of human movement over space and time. We find that these patterns are broadly consistent with the idea that people move to enhance their opportunities, but that their movement is strongly constrained by policies—both in their place of origin and at their destinations—and by the resources at their disposal. Since different people face different constraints, the end result is a process characterized by significant inequalities in opportunities to move and returns from movement.

We explore how these inequalities interact with policies in chapter 3. While, as we have emphasized in this introductory chapter, there is considerable intrinsic value to mobility, its instrumental value for furthering other dimensions of human development can also be of enormous significance. But while people can and do expand other freedoms by moving, the extent to which they are able to do so depends greatly on the conditions under which they move. In chapter 3 we look at the outcomes of migration in different dimensions of human development, including incomes and livelihoods, health, education and empowerment. We also review the cases in which people experience deteriorations in their well-being during movement—when this is induced by trafficking or conflict, for example—and argue that these cases can often be traced back to constraints on the freedom of individuals to choose where they live.

A key point that emerges in chapter 3 is that human movement can be associated with trade-offs—people may gain in some and lose in other dimensions of freedom. Millions of Asian and Middle Eastern workers in the GCC states accept severe limitations on their rights as a condition for permission to work. They earn higher pay than at home, but cannot be with their families, obtain permanent residence or change employers. Many cannot even leave, as their passports are confiscated on entry. For many people around the world the decision to move involves leaving their children behind. In India, seasonal workers are in practice excluded from voting in elections when these are scheduled during the peak period of

internal movements.³⁰ People living and working with irregular status are often denied a whole host of basic entitlements and services and lead their lives in constant fear of arrest and deportation. Understanding the effects of movement requires the systematic analysis of these multiple dimensions of human development in order to gain a better sense of the nature and extent of these trade-offs, as well as the associated policy implications.

More complex trade-offs occur when movers have an effect on the well-being of non-movers. Indeed, the perception that migration generates losses for those in destination countries has been the source of numerous debates among policy makers and academics. Chapter 4 focuses on these debates. The evidence we present strongly suggests that fears about the negative effects of movement on stayers (both at source and destination) are frequently overstated. However, sometimes these concerns are real and this has significant implications for the design of policy.

If movement is constrained by policies and resources, yet enhanced mobility can significantly increase the well-being of movers while often also having positive effects on stayers, what should policy towards human movement look like? In chapter 5, we argue that it should look very different from what we see today. In particular, it should be redesigned to open up more opportunities for movement among low-skilled workers and to improve the treatment of movers at their destinations.

We do not advocate wholesale liberalization of international mobility. This is because we recognize that people at destination places have a right to shape their societies, and that borders are one way in which people delimit the sphere of their obligations to those whom they see as members of their community. But we also believe that people relate to each other in myriad ways and that their moral obligations can operate at different levels. This is primarily because individuals don't belong to just one society or group. Rather than being uniquely or solely defined by their religion, race, ethnicity or gender, individuals commonly see themselves through the multiple prisms of a set of identities. As Amartya Sen has powerfully put it, "A Hutu labourer from Kigali... is not only a Hutu, but also a Kigalian, a Rwandan, an African, a labourer and a human being."³¹

While there is considerable intrinsic value to mobility, its instrumental value for furthering other dimensions of human development can also be of enormous significance

We see mobility as vital to human development and movement as a natural expression of people's desire to choose how and where to lead their lives

The responsibilities of distributive justice are overlapping and naturally intersect national boundaries; as such, there is no contradiction between the idea that societies may design institutions with the primary purpose of generating just outcomes among their members, and the idea that the members of that same society will share an obligation to create a just world with and for their fellow humans outside that society. There are many ways in which these obligations are articulated: the creation of charities and foundations, the provision of development aid, assistance in building national institutions, and the reform of international institutions so as to make them more responsive to the needs of poor countries are just some of them. However, our analysis, which informs the recommendations in chapter 5, suggests that reducing restrictions on the entry of people—in particular of low-skilled workers and their families—into better-off developed and developing countries is one relatively effective way of discharging these obligations.

Our report's policy recommendations are not only based on our view of how the world should be. We recognize that the formulation of policies towards human movement must contend with what can at times look like formidable political opposition to greater openness. However, having considered issues of political feasibility, we argue that a properly designed programme of liberalization—designed so as to respond to labour market needs in destination places while also addressing issues of equity and non-discrimination—could generate significant support among voters and interest groups.

Our analysis builds on the contributions to thinking about human development that have been made since the concept was introduced in the 1990 HDR. That report devoted a full chapter to urbanization and human development, reviewing the failed experiences of policies designed to reduce internal migration and concluding: “[A]s long as differences exist between rural and urban areas, people will move to try to take advantage of better schools and social services, higher income opportunities, cultural amenities, new modes of living, technological innovations and links to the world.”³² Like other HDRs, this one begins with the observation that

the distribution of opportunities in our world is highly unequal. We go on to argue that this fact has significant implications for understanding why and how people move and how we should reshape policies towards human movement. Our critique of existing policies towards migration is directed at the way in which they reinforce those inequalities. As noted in the 1997 HDR, it is precisely because “the principles of free global markets are applied selectively” that “the global market for unskilled labour is not as free as the market for industrial country exports or capital”.³³ Our emphasis on how migration enhances cultural diversity and enriches people's lives by moving skills, labour and ideas builds on the analysis of the 2004 HDR, which dealt with the role of cultural liberty in today's diverse world.³⁴

At the same time, the agenda of human development is evolving, so it is natural for the treatment of particular topics to change over time. This report strongly contests the view—held by some policy makers and at times echoed in past reports—that the movement of people should be seen as a problem requiring corrective action.³⁵ In contrast, we see mobility as vital to human development and movement as a natural expression of people's desire to choose how and where to lead their lives.

While the potential of increased mobility for increasing the well-being of millions of people around the world is the key theme of this report, it is important to stress at the outset that enhanced mobility is only one component of a strategy for improving human development. We do not argue that it should be the central one, nor are we arguing that it should be placed at the same level in the hierarchy of capabilities as, say, adequate nourishment or shelter. Neither do we believe mobility to be a replacement for national development strategies directed toward investing in people and creating conditions for people to flourish at home. Indeed, the potential of mobility to improve the well-being of disadvantaged groups is limited, because these groups are often least likely to move. Yet while human mobility is not a panacea, its largely positive effects both for movers and stayers suggest that it should be an important component of any strategy to generate sustained improvements in human development around the world.