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## Internal Migration Eye - IMigE

Vol 1 Issue 2

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### Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of Internal Migration Eye - IMigE - the newsletter of the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium. Migrating out of Poverty is a DFID-funded consortium of six research institutes based in Africa, Asia and Europe working together to conduct research on the links between migration and poverty. Our research aims to deepen the understanding of migration within and between developing countries in order to better equip migrants, organisations supporting them, and policy makers, with evidence to inform their efforts to reduce poverty.

This quarter's 'New Research' section updates you on our findings on the themes of urbanisation in Africa and migrant domestic workers in Asia. Deborah Potts asks whether the large scale movement of populations into towns in Africa is as widespread as believed; we then focus on Ghana where the Centre for Migration Studies team investigate whether such movement really does lead people out of poverty or into a deeper or different form of poverty. Priya Deshingkar examines the literature on domestic workers to find out to what extent it answers our question of whether migration for domestic work reduces poverty; and the Asia Research Institute's policy briefs summarise and highlight the policy implications of their project on Indonesian migrant domestic workers in Singapore.

If you have any comments about this edition, or about the newsletter in general, please contact Angela Haynes, Migrating out of Poverty's Research Uptake Manager at [angela.haynes@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:angela.haynes@sussex.ac.uk).

### New Migrating out of Poverty Research

**WP 9** Rural-Urban and Urban-Rural Migration Flows as Indicators of Economic Opportunity in Sub-Saharan Africa: What do the data tell us? by Deborah Potts

In line with her previous work, Deborah Potts argues that in sub-Saharan Africa misleading assumptions have been made about the scale and direction of migration flows between rural and urban areas and the speed of rapid urbanisation across the region. These can divert attention from the economic realities in individual countries and from the increasing differentiation between them. Using census data

KNOMAD internal migration conference  
Global Development Network parallel session  
CMS media training workshop

## A Good Read

Research beyond the categories: The importance of policy irrelevant research into forced migration  
Climate-related migration in rural Bangladesh  
The unfree labour category and unfree labour estimates: A continuum within low-end labour relations?

## New Blogs

Kuda Vanyoro considers the [options open to the losers in the City of Gold's \(Johannesburg\) competitive labour market](#);  
Paul Clewett asks [who needs to change to address poverty?](#)  
Grace Baey thinks about [migration research and public engagement](#)

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## About Us

[Migrating out of Poverty](#) is a seven-year research programme consortium (RPC) funded by DFID. It focuses on the relationship between regional migration, internal migration and poverty and is located in five regions across Africa and Asia.

Our research aims to deepen the understanding of migration within and between developing countries in order to better equip migrants, organisations supporting them, and policy makers, with evidence to inform their efforts to reduce poverty.

and other sources, the author argues that the rate at which urbanisation levels have increased in many large mainland sub-Saharan Africa countries where the majority of the population lives, has significantly reduced, although some continue to urbanise very rapidly. She also aims to show that sub-Saharan Africa is not the world's fastest urbanising region as UN Habitat data demonstrates that many Asian countries are urbanising faster. This paper, an output of the Migrating out of Poverty [Urbanisation and rural-urban migration in Africa conference](#), discusses the reasons for the prevalence of misconceptions about sub-Saharan Africa urbanisation and reflects upon the need to study in greater depth the ways in which the region's current natural-resource based GDP growth feeds through into urbanisation and migration flows.

[Download Working Paper 9](#)

### **WP 13** [Can rural-urban migration into slums reduce poverty? Evidence from Ghana](#) by **Mariama Awumbila, George Owusu, Joseph Kofi Teye**

Responses by policy makers to Ghana's increasing levels of urban poverty, have tended to focus on the negative aspects of rural-urban migration, provided little support for the migrants and attempted to curb the flows. This study examines the livelihoods of poor migrants living and working in two informal settlements in Accra: Nima and Old Fadama, in order to explore the relationship between rural-urban migration and poverty reduction. The findings suggest that, despite living in a harsh environment with little social protection, the majority of the migrants believes that their overall well-being has been enhanced by migrating to Accra. They build houses and create jobs in order to survive. They also contribute to poverty reduction and human capital development back home through remittances and investments. Thus the authors find that urban slums are not just sites of misery, but places where migrants optimistically make the most of their capabilities in an attempt to move out of poverty. They argue for a more nuanced understanding of the connections between the migration of the poor to urban areas and the impacts of this on their long term prospects of exiting poverty.

[Download Working Paper 13](#)

### **WP15** [Does Migration for Domestic Work Reduce Poverty? A Review of the Literature and an Agenda for Research](#) by **Priya Deshingkar and Benjamin Zeitlyn with Bridget Holtom**

This review of the published academic literature on internal and regional migration for domestic work in Africa and Asia shows a dearth of studies on internal migration for domestic work in South Asia, and on both internal and regional migration for domestic work in East and West Africa. The existing literature is heavily dominated by papers on the transnational migration of domestic workers from South East and East Asia. They tend to examine in detail the shortcomings of the legal framework for regulating working conditions and recruitment practices resulting in little protection for migrant workers against exploitation. This review highlights the lack of attention paid to the impacts of migration for domestic work on poverty levels within families in source areas. This is a significant gap in the literature given that migration is usually a household decision in which one member migrates to access more remunerative employment and remit money home. The working paper offers a number of suggestions for improving the evidence base on this important migration stream.

[Download Working Paper 15](#)

## Partners

Refugee & Migratory  
Movements Research  
Unit (RMMRU) at Dhaka  
University, Bangladesh

Centre for Migration Studies  
(CMS) at the University of  
Ghana

African Migration and  
Development Policy  
Centre (AMADPOC) in Nairobi,  
Kenya

The Asia Research  
Institute (ARI) at the National  
University of Singapore

The African Centre for  
Migration and Society (ACMS)  
at the University of  
Witswatersrand, South Africa

The School of Global Studies,  
University of Sussex, UK

## New Policy Briefs

### Ensuring Decent Work in Singapore's Domestic Work Industry

Foreign domestic workers play an increasingly significant role in plugging existing gaps in the areas of housework, childcare, and eldercare amongst many industrialised economies in East and Southeast Asia. This dependency is particularly acute in Singapore where one in five households employs a live-in domestic worker. Despite this growing trend, the industry remains largely unregulated as domestic work is still perceived as informal work within the private sphere of the household, and is hence excluded from key labour rights and protections. This briefing presents the main findings from the Asia Research Institute's research project that examines the costs and benefits of migration amongst Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore, whilst proposing recommendations for enhancing the existing regulatory framework concerning employment and hiring practices in the domestic work industry.



### Ensuring Decent Work in Singapore's Domestic Work Industry

No.1 December 2013

Policy Briefing

#### Summary

It is widely acknowledged that foreign domestic workers play an increasingly significant role in plugging social reproductive gaps in the areas of housework, childcare, and eldercare amongst many industrialised economies in East and Southeast Asia. This dependency is particularly acute in Singapore where one in five households employs a live-in domestic worker. Despite this growing trend, the industry remains largely unregulated where domestic work is still perceived as informal work within the private sphere of the household, and hence excluded from key labour rights and protections. This briefing presents main findings from a research study that examines the costs and benefits of migration amongst Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore, whilst proposing recommendations for enhancing the existing regulatory framework concerning employment and hiring practices in the domestic work industry.

#### Migrant Domestic Work: An Overview

With an estimated 209,600 migrant women employed as live-in domestic workers in one out of five households, foreign domestic workers (or FDWs) play an increasingly significant role in Singapore's social reproductive sphere by providing essential services in the areas of housework, childcare, and eldercare (The Straits Times, May 12, 2013). As noted in a recent news forum letter, employing a domestic worker seemed "no longer a luxury in Singapore [...] but rather, a matter of necessity rather than choice" (Yahool News, April 15, 2013). At the same time, migrant domestic work offers an important livelihood strategy for upward

reduce the costs of migration and improve working conditions for FDWs, ensuring compliance remains a continual challenge.

In this briefing, we draw from a mixed-methods research project that examines the costs and benefits of migration amongst Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore to highlight key issues and challenges in the industry, whilst making recommendations for enhancing the existing policy framework concerning employment and hiring practices for FDWs. Fieldwork for the study was conducted between November 2012 and February 2013, which consisted of a quantitative bilingual survey (n=200) and qualitative in-depth interviews (n=30) amongst FDWs from

[Download 'Ensuring decent work in Singapore's domestic work industry'](#)

### The costs and benefits of domestic work as a livelihood strategy

Domestic work remains one of the key occupations for many female migrants in Southeast Asia. As a low-skilled, low-wage job with often inadequate legal protection, domestic work is an occupation that has the potential to leave those employed in within it open to exploitation, abuse and discrimination. In response to the general vulnerability of domestic workers, the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention (no. 189) makes recommendations to protect them. This policy brief stems from the Asia Research Institute's working paper on Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore (Platt *et al.* 2013) and examines the costs and benefits of domestic work, particularly as a livelihood strategy. The migration regime in Southeast Asia facilitates women's migration from their countries of origin to industrialized economies. The costs incurred include debts and fees, prolonged displacement from family members as well as a lack of transparency in recruitment processes. However, women's migration also facilitates productive and livelihood-enhancing uses of remittances, including contributing to children's education, investing in land, housing, health and enterprise.

**Summary**

Domestic work remains one of the key occupations for many female migrants in Southeast Asia. As a low-skilled, low-wage job with often inadequate legal protection, domestic work is an occupation that has the potential to leave women employed in this industry open to exploitation, abuse and discrimination. In response to the general vulnerability of domestic workers, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) put forward a series of recommendations to protect these workers in the Domestic Workers Convention (no. 189) in 2011. This policy brief stems from our working paper on Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore (Platt *et al.* 2013) and examines the costs and benefits of domestic work, particularly as a livelihood strategy. The migration regime in Southeast Asia facilitates women's migration from their source countries to industrialized economies. The costs of migration include debts and fees, prolonged displacement from family members as well as a lack of transparency in recruitment processes. However, women's migration also facilitated productive and livelihood-enhancing uses of remittances, including contributing to children's education, investing in land, housing, health and enterprise.

**Domestic Work Migration in the Southeast Asian Context**

It is estimated that there are some 53 million adult domestic workers worldwide, with women (83 percent) comprising the overwhelming majority (ILO 2013). In the Asia-Pacific region, there are around 21.5 million domestic workers. In major destination areas of Asia such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, the rapid expansion of middleclass and ageing households due to rising levels of education and affluence has produced a growing (and highly gendered) demand for paid domestic work and other low-wage care services. Consequently, domestic work has become

This convention highlighted the need to provide domestic workers with basic protections afforded to other workers. Adopted in 2011, it has been ratified by 14 member states (countries of labour origin), including the Philippines, a major source of domestic workers in the Southeast Asian region.

For many Indonesian domestic workers, migration is seen as an important livelihood strategy for poverty alleviation and upward social mobility. In response to the global demand for waged domestic labour, the Indonesian government has increasingly promoted overseas labour migration as a development strategy to tackle issues of poverty, domestic unemployment

[Download 'The costs and benefits of domestic work as a livelihood strategy'](#)

These policy briefs are part of the Asia Research Institute's project, [Financing Migration, Generating Remittances, and the Building of Livelihood Strategies: A Case Study of Indonesian Migrant Women as Domestic Workers in Singapore](#)

## Other Activities

In addition to conducting research, partners in the Migrating out of Poverty Consortium present their work to policy makers at conferences and workshops, organise academic debates and train partners from the media, civil society and the policy world on migration and poverty issues.

RMMRU, in conjunction with the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), organised an [international conference on Internal Migration and Urbanization](#) in Dhaka, Bangladesh 30 April - 1 May 2014. [View the workshop pictures.](#)

CMS, AMADPOC and University of Sussex researchers jointly organised a parallel session, '[Internal migration dynamics in Africa and Asia](#)' at the Global Development Network conference which took place in Accra, Ghana 18-20 June 2014.

CMS organised a [training workshop for media professionals](#) in Accra, Ghana 2-4 September 2014.

RMMRU disseminated [the findings of its research on labour attaches](#) in a [workshop](#) on 9 September 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

## A Good Read

[Research Beyond the Categories: The Importance of Policy Irrelevant Research into Forced Migration](#) by Oliver Bakewell 2008 *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21:4:432-453

This article argues that the search for policy relevance has encouraged

researchers to take the categories, concepts and priorities of policy makers and practitioners as their initial frame of reference for identifying their areas of study and formulating research questions. This privileges the worldview of the policy makers in constructing the research, constraining the questions asked, the objects of study and the methodologies and analysis adopted. In particular, it leaves large groups of forced migrants invisible in both research and policy. The article explores how these limitations affect the research process, and concludes with a call for more oblique approaches to research, which recognize the 'normality' within their situation rather than privileging their position as forced migrants as the primary explanatory factor. Such studies may help to bridge the gap between refugee studies and broader social scientific theories of social transformation and human mobility.

[Download the paper](#)

**Climate-related migration in rural Bangladesh: A behavioural model** by Maxmillan Martin, Motasim Billah, Tasneem Siddiqui, Chowdhury Abrar, Richard Black and Dominic Kniveton 2014 *Population and Environment* 36:1:85-110

This paper, based on a qualitative study of three geographically distinct areas of Bangladesh, looks at the behavioural aspects of migration decision-making in Bangladesh in the context of changes in its economy, and, increasingly, exposure to the impacts of climate variability and change. The authors find that villagers in areas particularly affected by increasing climatic stresses and shocks are diversifying their traditional livelihood strategies by migrating. Environmental factors, including climatic stresses and shocks, often make such shifts even more necessary. The authors argue that migration is a socially acceptable behaviour that occurs in the context of perceived environmental change and climate variability. Migration decisions are mediated by a set of 'behavioural factors' that assesses the efficacy of different responses to opportunities and challenges, their socio-cultural acceptance and the ability to respond successfully.

[Download the paper](#)

**The Unfree Labour Category and Unfree Labour Estimates: A Continuum within Low-End Labour Relations?** by Jens Lerche Lerche, 2011 *Working Paper 10, Manchester Papers in Political Economy*

The article argues against the singling out of unfree labour as something wholly unique and entirely separate and different from other labour relations. Existing dichotomous approaches to free–unfree labour hinder a proper understanding of these labour relations, both theoretically and empirically. It argues that the way in which both mainstream and Marxist approaches conceptualise and operationalise unfree/forced labour is problematic and proposes replacing the unfree–free dichotomy with a continuum of unfreedoms. Such unfreedoms should be understood as one among many 'un-decent' forms and aspects of labour relations. All of these can be understood as outcomes of the class struggle from above, which in today's world is part and parcel of neo-liberalism. The discussion is informed by examples primarily from India and China.

[Download the paper](#)



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