



# Challenges for the 21st Century

BY BRUNSON MCKINLEY, AMANDA KLEKOWSKI VON KOPPENFELS, AND FRANK LACZKO

*Voluntary or forced, international migration is a global phenomenon that requires international cooperation among nations.*

**M**igration is an integral part of the world we know today. The United States was, and still is, built on migration; without migration in the modern era there would be no European-Americans, African-Americans, or Asian-Americans. Colonial rule—also based on migration—fundamentally altered the make-up of many African, Asian, and Caribbean states.

In the small Caribbean republic of Trinidad and Tobago, nearly half the population is descended from migrants originally from India, while the other half originated in Africa. There are some Chinese and European residents as well. South America received immigrants not only from

Europe, but was also host to large numbers of Japanese migrants; as of 1972, nearly 800,000 people of Japanese descent lived in Latin America. Peru's former president Alberto Fujimori is the descendent of Japanese migrants, while in Israel, many Knesset members come from Russia, the United States, or other Middle Eastern states. Migra-

tion today has no less of an influence on states, societies, and cultures than it did in the past.

While the history of humankind is in large part a history of migration, the latest count by the International Organization for Migration shows migration is at an all-time high. Some 150 million legal migrants have been docu-

mented, while many others are not counted as international migrants because they live and work in another country illegally, whether on a permanent or temporary basis.<sup>1</sup>

Migration once classically meant a new start in the New World, but this pattern has shifted since World War II. Traditional emigration countries have themselves become destination points for migrants, while historic destination countries receive migrants from different countries than before. The United States, today still the preferred destination for the majority of the world's migrants, was the goal for European immigrants in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but today Latin American and Asian immigrants outnumber Europeans by a large margin. In 1960, 75 percent of all foreign-born residents of the

United States were born in Europe and 15 percent in Latin America and Asia. In 1990, 30 years later, just 23 percent were born in Europe, but 70 percent were born in Latin America and Asia. Europe is also experiencing a rise in the numbers of migrants, and emigration from Asia and Latin America is on the rise. Despite the popularity of the United States as a destination for migrants, many of the world's migrants remain within their region. Within sub-Saharan Africa, for example, many migrants move to South Africa. Singapore and Malaysia are destination points for migrants from the Philippines and Indonesia, while India attracts migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan.

### **The New Migrant**

Just a few decades ago, migrants typically sought a new start in the destination country and permanent resident status. In recent years, however, the nature of migration has changed. Today, people migrate in search of temporary, seasonal work. Some are victims of trafficking; others are trying to escape the aftereffects of natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes and floods. Migrants may be highly skilled or unskilled, and they may be documented or undocumented.

In fact, irregular, or undocumented, migration is increasing. Migrants may overstay a legally acquired tourist or other visa. They may slip across the border undetected, or they may illegally acquire or falsify a visa or passport. While statistics on undocumented migration are difficult to find, some 3 million unauthorized migrants are estimated to live in Western Europe, and 5 million in the United States.

Of these 5 million in the United States, about 40 percent overstayed their visas and 60 percent entered without inspection. An estimated 275,000 enter the United States each year, and between 300,000 and 500,000 enter Western Europe.

Undocumented migrants often take on low-paid work few native workers are willing to do: back-breaking harvesting, domestic work,

glowing promises of well-paid employment, be exploited in sweatshops or as prostitutes. Estimates of such exploitation are varied; one U.S. government report estimates the numbers of women and children trafficked worldwide for the purpose of sexual exploitation alone at between 700,000 and 2 million per year.<sup>2</sup> Those even more unlucky may never even reach their promised

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and other jobs in the service industry, and industrial jobs. These migrants send most of this money home to their families or villages. These remittances can make up a substantial portion of some poor countries' gross domestic product. These migrants often return to the receiving country on a regular basis to take up the same difficult labor.

Despite the positive aspects of migration, including a rise in migrants' standard of living and their contribution in countries with labor shortages in certain sectors, there are serious and increasing problems. Deteriorating social, political, and economic conditions in sending countries create pressures that force people to leave. At the same time, receiving countries are becoming less willing to accept migrants. The subsequent rise in irregular migration is widely viewed as a threat to the stability and sovereignty of states.

The growing exploitation of irregular migrants is also of increasing concern. Some migrants have placed their trust in smugglers or traffickers to assist them in crossing the border and may, despite

land, as deaths in transit occur on a far too regular basis.

### **Status of Migrants**

Migrants can generally be divided into two broad categories: voluntary and forced migrants. Voluntary migrants include those who move abroad to work, join a family member, study, or satisfy other personal reasons. Forced migrants, on the other hand, are those who leave to escape war or persecution—whether ethnically based or otherwise—or to flee natural catastrophes and other events that place their lives in danger.

Refugees have a special status under international law. A refugee is defined by the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as

a person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to

avail himself of the protection of that country.

The 1999 *World Refugee Survey* estimated that there were 13.5 million refugees at the beginning of 1999, down from 17 million at the beginning of the 1990s.

Sometimes, the distinction between forced migration and volun-

she flee, she has, in fact, been trafficked.

Labor migration is the most common type of voluntary migration and covers a wide range of employment; it can be short-term or long-term, authorized or unauthorized. The so-called Bracero program, which ran from the 1940s to 1960s, brought Mexican workers to the

cial full-scale immigration programs; Germany's population today is some 10 percent non-citizen while Switzerland's is 19 percent. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Middle East have perhaps the highest percentage of foreign workers in all of Asia; an estimated 68 percent of the labor force there in 1990 were foreign.<sup>3</sup> Approximately one-third of the population of Saudi Arabia is foreign<sup>4</sup> and, as of 1996, around one-quarter of the work force were non-citizens.<sup>5</sup> In Africa, there are no hard data on non-citizen population, but conservative figures estimate that 4 percent of South Africa's population is foreign.

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tary migration is not altogether clear. For instance, in a post-conflict situation, jobs may not be available. Was the migrant who migrated in search of a job forced to do so or did he or she choose to do so?

### Forced or Voluntary

**T**he alarming growth in trafficking and smuggling is equally difficult to categorize as either forced or voluntary migration. Smuggling generally refers to an assisted, unauthorized crossing of an international border. The "coyotes" in Mexico who guide migrants across the Mexican-U.S. border are smugglers, as are the Chinese "snakeheads," who transport Chinese, primarily from Fujian Province, to the United States, Australia, and Europe.

Trafficking, on the other hand, typically involves deception, fraud, force, or violence, and often the crossing of a border, whether legally or illegally. When a young woman is recruited for a dancing job, for example, but the dancing job is, in reality, a prostitution job, and her passport is taken away and she is kept under constant supervision lest

United States legally for short-term agricultural work. From the 1950s to the 1970s, European governments faced with a shortage of labor established bilateral agreements with various countries, arranging for workers to come for periods of several years. At the same time, in the Middle East, oil-rich countries negotiated for workers to come from East and Southeast Asia, while South Africa brought workers in from Mozambique and Lesotho to work in the mines. Other employment was either seasonal or short-term, as migrants helped out with the harvest or in a time of high industrial output. These short-term jobs were in all sectors, depending upon where there was the greatest shortage of labor. The majority of these government-sponsored programs ended with the 1973 oil crisis, but many of the labor migrants remained, some bringing their families to join them.

With the addition of family reunification policies in the mid-1970s, still one of the main legal means of entry into many countries today, the short-term labor migration programs turned into unoffi-

### Skilled or Unskilled

**E**migration today is made up of both highly skilled and unskilled labor. Many countries have regulations that allow the issuance of a work permit only if the worker's salary is above a certain amount, thus ensuring that only highly skilled workers may work without restrictions. Recently, Europe encouraged the recruitment of highly skilled workers; Germany's so-called Green Card initiative, for example, aims to hire Eastern European and Indian computer programmers. Other short-term labor programs, such as those for seasonal workers and for construction workers, are being discussed and initiated, but even as the discussions are taking place, many more migrants are crossing borders without documents, to take up unauthorized work, much of which, without such migrants, would remain unfinished.

In Los Angeles, so-called day labor is widespread; early in the mornings, groups of Mexican men, both authorized and unauthorized, can be seen on certain street corners, waiting for potential employers to

drive by, asking for four or five men to work for the day, typically doing hard physical labor for which the going wage is about US\$7 per hour. There are four community-run centers where nongovernmental organizations negotiate wages and allocate work by lottery, although many more men—an estimated 20,000 daily—stand on street corners and in parking lots awaiting their employers for the day.<sup>6</sup>

### **Ethnic Migration**

**T**he end of the Cold War sparked a resurgence in nationally and ethnically influenced waves of both forced and voluntary migration. In the Soviet Union alone, migration has played a significant role in the last 10 years. The last census of the Soviet Union, taken in 1989, showed that ethnic Russians made up just 50 percent of the country's 285 million population. Since then, Russians have migrated to Russia from newly independent states such as those in Central Asia,<sup>7</sup> while other minorities have fled to their countries of ethnic origin. For instance, Armenians in Azerbaijan fled to Armenia, while Azeris in Armenia fled to Azerbaijan.

While many states, including Kazakhstan, Moldova, and the Baltic states, have achieved independence and national self-awareness without conflict, many more regions or states such as Georgia, Chechnya, Kosovo, and East Timor have not, whether because of civil war between factions or ethnic groups or the unwillingness of the central government to let a province go.

Germans, Finns, Jews, and Greeks have left the former Soviet Union for Germany, Finland, Israel, and Greece, continuing the process of homogenization in many of the former Soviet republics. During the

Cold War, other ethnic groups were unable to return home. At the end of the Cold War, when many of the civil conflicts ended, these displaced persons were able to return home.

### **Feminization of Migration**

**I**n both voluntary and forced migration, another trend has emerged, namely the feminization of migration. Whereas

cultural, or other service-sector work, where most men find employment, domestic work cannot be easily monitored for cases of abuse.

### **Smuggling and Trafficking**

**A** growing trend in migration that has recently received increased attention is the smuggling and trafficking of migrants. The

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men once tended to migrate in search of work, and women either migrated as accompanying family members or remained in the home countries to care for children, today many more women are migrants in their own right. This development is not necessarily positive, since poverty and lack of opportunities are often the driving forces behind a woman's choice to migrate. Some 48 percent of the 150 million migrants worldwide are women, but in certain regions, women represent a far higher proportion of migrants. While the lowest proportion of female migrants is found in the Middle East, a full 60 percent of migrants from Sri Lanka are women, working primarily in domestic service.

The feminization of migration reflects the growing involvement of women in all spheres of today's world, but women are often susceptible to greater exploitation and abuse than men, and are often sexually abused or intimidated into accepting poor work conditions. Domestic work is particularly difficult to regulate. Unlike industrial, agri-

main purpose of migrant smuggling may be to facilitate the illegal entry of the migrant into another country. When a migrant chooses a smuggler as the means of traveling to his new country, he may already have a job on offer or have access to a network—in New York's Chinatown, for example, or in the oil industry of the Middle East for South Asians—that would provide employment.

In many cases, however, smuggled migrants are exposed to exploitation either during transit to the destination country or upon arrival. Sometimes this can even result in the deaths of migrants due to the negligence of the smuggler, as in the case of 58 Chinese migrants who suffocated in the back of a truck at Dover, England, in June 2000. It is estimated that at least 1,574 migrants have died in smuggling incidents in Europe alone since 1993.<sup>8</sup>

While trafficking generally involves crossing a border, internal trafficking, such as occurs within Thailand, is also quite common. Posing as employees in fake travel bureaus or employment offices, traf-

fickers offer travel to a desired country, such as one of the Western European nations or the United States, assistance with visas, and a job—all for a modest fee, which can supposedly be paid back at leisure from one's earnings in the destination country. In contrast to smuggling, where people are generally left on their own, when trafficked migrants arrive, they soon lose their passports or are told that the promised job no longer exists. However, the migrants must still pay the travel fees. Women are often forced into prostitution to repay these debts while men and some women are forced into sweatshop labor. Little of the promised wages ever materialize, as "costs" are manufactured. These migrants may have initially chosen to voluntarily follow what they saw as a golden opportunity, but this op-

portunity ended in disaster.

The International Organization for Migration helps such migrants return home and, in some cases, is able to offer reintegration assistance.

### Internal Migration

Other migrants do not even cross international borders, but migrate toward cities in their own countries. As agriculture has become more efficient and less labor-intensive in recent years, those previously employed in agriculture migrate to the cities in search of employment. Increasingly, these migrants do not find regular jobs, but are employed in marginal sectors, if at all. They often live in slums on the outskirts of the cities, in areas with poor or no infrastructure.

Outside Manila, the Philip-

pines—a city of 13 million—at least 160 people died in such a shanty town in July 2000 when a hectare of a rain-soaked garbage dump collapsed on their homes. About 100,000 people live there, selling what they can scavenge from the garbage dump.

Rural-urban migration is an increasingly serious issue, not only for the migrants themselves, but also for the environment, which suffers from such concentrated habitation.

Internally displaced persons are another sort of internal migrant. Their numbers increased dramatically in the 1990s, and they are now estimated to outnumber refugees—persons outside their home countries—by as much as two to one. Forced to leave their homes by natural catastrophe or internal fighting, approximately 17 million internally

## IOM HELPS MIGRANTS RETURN HOME

**R**eintegration is a key component of successful returns. In the past five years, the International Organization for Migration has assisted over 700,000 migrants in returning to more than 100 countries of origin. IOM is encouraged to note that the number of states calling upon IOM assisted-return services is steadily increasing, as is the variety of programs and program components, whether predeparture—information, counseling, and medical assistance—actual transportation, or assistance upon return.

It is often assumed that facilitating the return of a displaced population inherently enables the migrants to return to normalcy in the place of origin. In fact, ensuring a rapid and sustainable reintegration of returnees and displaced populations is key to the success of any concerted effort at population stabilization and to the transition from complex emergencies and mass population outflows back to peace and lasting economic growth. In this context, a number of complementary activities have emerged as useful elements in an integrated approach to addressing mass population outflows created by complex emergency situations. Returning people to their country of origin—and effectively reinte-

grating them in the cultural, political, and economic milieu—paves the way for reconciliation and reconstruction.

■ **Community development.** IOM plays an important role in return and reintegration programs by providing services that are beneficial to more than the returnees alone. By developing communities' overall resources, it is possible to alleviate potential disparities between those who stayed and those who return, particularly in the case of minority returns. Community development has proven useful as a way to increase the capacity of a community or state to receive returnees and to convince higher numbers of migrants to return. In its programs, IOM has provided a wide range of housing support, trying to respond to different situations in which returnees can find themselves. For example, IOM may help them return to their own houses in the country of origin, or reconstruct a migrant's own house, or arrange for them to live with friends or relatives, or provide rental subsidies or state owned housing.

■ **Economic opportunities.** A sustainable reintegration will also depend on economic opportunities: employment possibilities and a stable physical environment together with

displaced persons were tallied in the 1999 *World Refugee Survey*, which cautions that this number may be an underestimate. An estimated 4 million are internally displaced in Sudan alone, while Angola and Colombia each have as much as 1.5 million, and Iraq, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Turkey have 1 million each.

### Global Trend

In recent years, a new trend in migration has emerged. The phenomenon of transnationalism reflects a new flexibility in labor and community patterns. In the past, people would leave their homeland for good, essentially cutting ties with their families and creating a new life in the new country of destination. Increasingly, however, migrants do not cut

all ties with their home countries but maintain a relationship with both their countries of origin and their new host countries. This transnationalism is reflected in migration patterns.

Migrants from North Africa and Turkey live in Europe but have continued ties to their homes. They go “home” on vacation, invest money in the country of origin, and even remain involved in politics. The same patterns persist for Mexican, Caribbean, and Central American migrants in the United States and for Mozambicans and migrants from Lesotho in South Africa. These migrants maintain regular personal, financial, and political ties to their home countries.

These trends in transnationalism are made easier thanks to technological advances such as email, sat-

ellite television, affordable telephone rates, and low-cost transportation, which make it easier for migrants to remain in contact with family and friends, as well as remain aware of events in the home country.

Financially, migrants often send a significant amount of money, or remittances, back home. Many migrants were able to come to the United States or other receiving countries only through the help of family and friends, whom the migrants later repay. In addition, they send extra sums of money back to the family.

For countries which are large-scale sending countries, these remittances can make up a substantial portion of the gross domestic product. In 1977, remittances represented just 3.2 percent of the gross domestic product of the Dominican

the active promotion of social reintegration. The prospect of having a job upon return can make the decision to return easier, as well as facilitate the individual's reentry into the framework of a country's reconstruction efforts. IOM recognizes that the reconciliation of qualified nationals in their country of origin strongly depends on the reconstruction and development of a country and the presence of qualified human resources. Assistance for the return of qualified nationals aims to engage returnees actively in the reconstruction, economic development, and development process of their native country.

■ **Economic revitalization.** IOM implemented projects designed to revitalize the economy and generate employment in both Bosnia and Kosovo, selecting locations that have received large numbers of returnees. Targeted sectors have included health, education, public infrastructure, public administration, and housing. Specifically, in order to assist in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged healthcare systems, IOM has on numerous occasions helped place diverse international medical and surgical teams in hospitals and clinics in those areas of return and reintegration

where local facilities lacked suitable personnel and equipment. These international teams provide direct medical care and training to local health professionals on health management and health administration. These intensive training programs can be complemented by education programs on prevention of infectious diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, as well as by providing psychosocial post-traumatic support to individuals, families, and communities in need.

■ **Training.** Through training or retraining—in the host country prior to return or in the country of origin upon return—programs are designed to prepare or help returnees in their professional and social reintegration. Training activities can cover a wide range of activities. These might include language training to returnees' children, vocational training to returnees, and support of formal schooling.

■ **Demobilized combatants and dependents.** IOM has considerable experience in designing and implementing reintegration programs for former combatants through the establishment of information, counseling, and referral services that identify the needs of former combatants and match these with available reintegration opportunities. ■ *BM/AKK/FL*

Republic, but this had increased to 13.2 percent by 1988. This figure is almost certainly an underestimate, since in 1986, Dominicans abroad sent home more than three times the aid offered by international organizations and foreign governments.<sup>9</sup> In Lesotho, remittances, primarily sent by miners working in South Africa, amounted to 34 percent of the gross national product, a figure which, due to massive layoffs in South Africa, dropped to 24 percent by 1998. The International Monetary Fund has estimated that Mexico, the country in the world with the most migrants abroad, receives about US\$6 billion each year in remittances from Mexican migrants abroad.<sup>10</sup> The Philippines, which is second only to Mexico in number of migrants abroad, benefitted from US\$7 billion in remittances in 1999.<sup>11</sup>

Politically, many migrants are linked both to their home countries and to their host countries. In New York City alone, migrants from the Dominican Republic number at least 300,000, although the City Planning Department estimates the population at 500,000.<sup>12</sup> It is estimated that between 5 and 10 percent of all Dominicans now live abroad.

Dominicans who have not yet become United States citizens, as well as those who have naturalized, are eligible to vote by absentee ballot in Dominican elections. Logically, then, at the last presidential election, the campaign was also conducted in New York City. Various public figures, both in the Dominican Republic and in New York, have encouraged Dominicans living in New York City to naturalize to retain welfare benefits and to get involved in New York politics. The case of Dominicans in New York is transnationalism par excellence.

### Global Web

Today, it is estimated that there are more migrants in the world than ever before. International migration has played a crucial role in shaping the world we know; centuries of international migration have left their mark upon nearly every part of the globe. International migration has become a global phenomenon involving a wide range of sending, destination, and transit countries and a diverse group of migrants. The highly skilled worker from Australia working in Singapore, the woman from Nigeria trafficked to Italy, and the agricultural worker from Mexico working illegally in the United States are all examples of international migrants.

International migration is a complex issue because it can, among other outcomes, have an influence on relations between states. By definition, international migration involves the movement of people between two or more countries. Most of the countries of the world are now part of a global migration network where the migration policies of one state are likely to have an impact on other states. Given the global scale of international migration, its management requires increased cooperation among states.

It is only through international multilateral cooperation that the benefits of international migration can best be harnessed for the international community while providing the maximum benefit for the migrants themselves, and avoiding irregular migration and exploitation of migrants. ■

*Brunson McKinley is the director general of the International Organization for Migration in Geneva, Switzerland; Amanda Klekowski von Koppenfels is research officer at the*

*Research and Publications Division at IOM; and Frank Laczko is the chief of the Research and Publications Division.*

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