

## 1.14. Migration of health workers

Maurizio Murru

### *Introduction*

Migration is as old as humanity. During the last decades it has increased in intensity, importance and complexity. It takes various shapes such as the quest for better living and working conditions, the escape from violence and persecution, and the smuggling and trafficking of human beings. The arrival in any country of an increasing number of foreigners intending to settle there causes mixed and contrasting reactions, often emotional and hostile. The encounter of different cultures, when mediated by a high and increasing number of people, raises problems whose management is difficult and, often, postponed. Irresistible and interconnected forces, demographic, political, economical, blow the waves of migration. They will keep doing so in spite of the cultural, psychological, political, legal, administrative and organizational problems encountered in the receiving countries. Various aspects of globalization contribute to increasing migration. Travelling is easier than in the past. Television images, reaching even far away villages of poor countries, increase awareness about the enormous differences in life conditions around the globe. They feed dreams of a better life. The mesmerizing environment of the rich world is often perceived as a sort of paradise on earth that everybody can enjoy just for the fact of being there. The relatively easy worldwide connections, by phone and e-mail, allow the formation of networks facilitating international movements of human beings. More often than not, their motives are suspicious. Nonetheless they are effective.

### *Income differences*

The enormous differences in income between rich and poor countries are a powerful incentive to migration. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 1975 the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of high-income countries was 41 times higher than that of low-income countries and eight times higher than that of middle-income countries. Today the GDP of high-income countries is 66 times higher than that of low-income countries and 14 times higher than that of middle-income countries<sup>1</sup>. Such disparities, which have dramatically increased in the last 30 years, keep growing and will keep being a strong incentive to international migration.

### *Demographic trends*

The different demographic trends in rich and poor countries also contribute to migration. In rich countries the population is ageing, fertility rates are low and often decreasing. In poor countries the population is young and fertility rates are high. The average fertility rate in Sub-Saharan Africa is 5.4, in Arab countries 3.8, in Latin America and in the Caribbean countries 2.5 and in Europe 1.4<sup>2</sup>. The population under 15 years of age is 18% of the total in rich countries and 31% in poor countries<sup>3</sup>. According to the World Bank, by 2025 rich countries will lose about 20 million workers. Within the same period, in poor countries, about one billion newcomers will enter the labour market. Without immigration it will be impossible for rich countries to maintain their level of life, their economic growth, their pension systems, the quantity and the quality of their services.

### *Democracy, good governance, respect of human rights*

The 1951 Convention on Refugees defines “Refugee” as any 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; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence [...], is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it*”<sup>4</sup>. In recent years, the process starting from seeking asylum up to obtaining the status of refugee (when successful) has become longer and more complicated. For several years the so-called “economic refugees”, those who leave their countries to escape poverty, have been distinguished from the “genuine refugees”, who, at least in theory, are protected by the 1951 Convention. As a matter of fact, many of the poorest countries are also characterized by political instability and are ruled by despotic regimes of dubious legitimacy. They are often countries with uncertain rule of law, corrupt and inefficient administration and frequent violations of human rights. Such regimes constrain their citizens in those that the World Bank defines “inequality traps”<sup>5</sup>. It is not surprising that an increasing number of individuals wish and try to escape from such “traps”.

### *The universality of intolerance*

Often, and with good reason, attention is drawn to the intolerance and to the harsh treatment encountered in rich countries by many migrants, regular and irregular. As true as this is, it may be worth mentioning that migrants are often faced by intolerance and harsh treatment in poor countries as well. In 1983 the Nigerian government expelled between 20,000 and 30,000 nationals of neighbouring countries (especially Ghana) overnight. The majority of them had lived and worked in Nigeria for decades. Many of them were forced to abandon their homes and were

robbed on their way to the border and at the border. In 2006 Tanzania (in the past often praised for her openness to foreigners), closed her borders and sent back thousands of Burundians trying to escape the violence and the instability in their country. The Tanzanian government called them “economic migrants”, a term often criticized in poor countries when used by governments of rich countries. For several years now, Ivory Coast has expelled and/or violated the rights of many long-time immigrants. They were lured into the country when the world market paid a high price for cacao (of which Ivory Coast was the major world producer up to 1990). They became a burden (or were perceived as such) when the cacao price plummeted. Again in 2006 the Niger government announced the expulsion of thousands of families of Arab descent who had settled in some northern areas of the country several decades ago. The list could continue, but the point is clear: human beings can display intolerance and cruelty everywhere and the life of migrants can be tough everywhere.

### *The numbers*

Due to its complexity, it is virtually impossible to quantify migration, in its various aspects, with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. Migration statistics are still approximations even though efforts are being made to improve them. According to available data, there were about 82 million migrants in 1970, 175 million in 2000 and 200 million in 2005<sup>2</sup>. This figure includes about 8.4 million refugees. About 49% of all migrants are women. The majority of migrants are concentrated in relatively few countries. The United States alone hosts about 35 million. About 70% of the increase in migrants in the last 20 years took place in only two countries: Germany and the USA<sup>3</sup>. The USA is the favourite destination of most migrants and laws favouring family reunification strongly contributed to the abovementioned increase. The increased number of migrants in Germany is essentially due to people coming from Eastern European countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Table 1

*Table 1.* Number of immigrants per Continent and their proportion of the total population.

<i>Continent</i>	<i>Number of immigrants</i>	<i>Immigrants as percentage of the total population</i>
Europe (including the Former Soviet Union)	56,100,000	7.7%
Asia	49,900,000	1.4%
North America (United States and Canada)	40,800,000	12.9%
Africa	16,300,000	2%
Latin America	5,900,000	1.1%
Australia	5,800,000	18.7%
Total		

Source: Global Commission on International Migration, 2005 (NB: Data refer to the year 2000).

shows the number of migrants per continent and the percentage that they make of the total population. Table 2 shows the same data for the 32 countries hosting at least one million migrants. In the USA, which has the highest number, migrants make up 12.4% of the total population. In the other countries this percentage ranges from 73.8% in the United Arab Emirates to 0.6% in India. In poor countries, like Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast, migrants are 9.7% and 14.6% of the total population respectively. In 1970 the number of countries where migrants reached 10% was 48; in 2000 it was 70<sup>6</sup>. The number of migrants would be higher if receiving countries had more liberal policies. In the majority of receiving countries, rich and poor, public opinion is, in its majority, hostile to migrants. According to recent polls, in the USA migration is seen as a threat second only to terrorism (and often connected to it); in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, more than 90% of the population is hostile to migrants<sup>7</sup>. France, the UK and other countries have introduced restrictions to the immigrations of non-specialized workers. On the contrary, there is a widespread tendency to ease the immigration rules for some categories of highly educated, specialized workers such as engineers, doctors, and nurses.

#### *People also migrate from rich countries*

The majority of migrants move from low-income to high-income countries. But people migrate, in increasing numbers, from rich countries as well. In 2004 150,000 German citizens left their country looking for a job abroad, the highest number since 1888<sup>8</sup>. About 200,000 UK citizens left their country in 2005<sup>9</sup>. The number of UK citizens permanently working abroad is about 5.5 million, or 9.2% of the total UK population<sup>10</sup>. This means that there are more UK migrants abroad than migrants in the UK (little more than four million, as reported in Table 2). As for the volume of migrant remittances, France comes fourth after China, India and Mexico<sup>3</sup>.

#### *Irregular migration*

So-called irregular migration is an even more complex phenomenon. Problems start from the very definition: “irregular”, “illegal” or “not documented” migration. The term “illegal” is widely used but conceptually flawed and tainted with negative connotations, more or less explicitly associated with criminality. An irregular migrant enters a country without the due authorization or stays after such authorization has expired. Many international organizations dealing with migration abandoned the term “illegal” long ago and adopted “irregular” instead. The European Union, however, in several documents, maintains this vexing terminology. Smuggling and trafficking of human beings are included within the framework of irregular migration. Even though the two phenomena are different, the terms are often used interchangeably. Human trafficking is the forced transfer of individuals

*Table 2. Number of immigrants per country and their proportion of the total population (only countries with at least one million immigrants are considered here)*

<i>N°</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of immigrants</i>	<i>Immigrants as percentage of the total population</i>
01	United States	34,998,000	12.4%
02	Russia	13,259,000	9.1%
03	Germany	7,349,000	9.0%
04	Ukraine	6,947,000	14%
05	France	6,277,000	10.6%
06	India	6,271,000	0.6%
07	Canada	5,826,000	18.9%
08	Saudi Arabia	5,255,000	25.8%
09	Australia	4,705,000	24.6%
10	Pakistan	4,243,000	3.0%
11	United Kingdom	4,029,000	6.8%
12	Kazakhstan	3,028,000	18.7%
13	Hong Kong (China)	2,701,000	39.4%
14	Ivory Coast	2,336,000	14.6%
15	Iran	2,321,000	3.3%
16	Israel	2,256,000	37.5%
17	Moldova	2,088,000	5.4%
18	Jordan	1,945,000	39.6%
19	United Arab Emirates	1,922,000	73.8%
20	Switzerland	1,801,000	25.1%
21	Italy	1,634,000	2.8%
22	Japan	1,620,000	1.3%
23	Holland	1,576,000	9.9%
24	Turkey	1,503,000	2.3%
25	Argentina	1,419,000	3.8%
26	Malaysia	1,392,000	6.3%
27	Singapore	1,352,000	33.6%
28	South Africa	1,303,000	3.0%
29	Belarus	1,284,000	12.6%
30	Burkina Faso	1,124,000	9.7%
31	Kuwait	1,108,000	57.9%
32	Venezuela	1,006,000	4.2%

Source: United Nations Population Division, quoted in Kapur et al. 2005 (modified) (NB: Data refer to the year 2000).

from one country to another through threats, coercion and with illegal aims such as forced prostitution and forced labour. It is, therefore, something that goes against the will of the victims and violates their basic rights. Human smuggling is the transfer of consenting individuals who want to move from one country and enter another one without having the authorization to do it and, to this end, seek the help of more or less structured clandestine organizations. This distinction was officially defined by the United Nations in two protocols in the year 2000<sup>11</sup>. It is, nevertheless, often ignored also because the two phenomena often overlap. According to data published by the USA Department of State, between 600,000 and 800,000 people every year are victim to human trafficking and about 12 million people are exploited in some form of forced labour<sup>12</sup>.

According to the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), every year, about 2,000 irregular migrants lose their lives<sup>2</sup>. These estimates are very likely to underestimate the reality.

### *How many irregular migrants are there?*

As expected, data on irregular migration are scarce, confused and unreliable. Their ranges point to their unreliability: the most recent estimates of irregular migrants worldwide vary from 3 to 30 million per year; those concerning Europe alone vary from 400,000 to 830,000 per year. As for irregular migrants already in receiving countries, India is estimated to have 20 million, Europe between 10 and 15 million, the USA 10 million and Russia between 3.5 and 5 million<sup>2</sup>.

It is important to remember that the majority of irregular migration does not take place between low- and high-income countries but within low-income countries. According to United Nations estimates, there are several million irregular immigrants in the countries of South East Asia and between three and five million in South Africa.

### *Perceptions and reality*

The importance of irregular migration is linked more to politics and perceptions than to sheer numbers. Its threat to state security is exaggerated and mainly based on emotional misinformation often exploited by politicians looking for cheap popularity. The main victims of irregular migration are the irregular immigrants themselves. They often live in precarious situations, deprived of the most basic services like health and education. The most disgusting aspect is that many irregular migrants are shamefully and hypocritically exploited by 'honest' citizens of receiving countries through underpaid work, blatant discrimination, exorbitant rents demanded for squalid rooms of a few square meters.

### *Migration and economy*

According to economists, the economic effects of migration are positive for the countries and for the individuals involved<sup>3,13</sup>. In receiving countries, migrants mitigate the lack of manpower in those sectors where it exists (for instance, the health sector in several rich countries). They are frequently employed in jobs refused by local people. They contribute to production and consumption and by so doing contribute to an increase in GDP. Their presence contributes to curb inflation by decreasing salary pressures on it. The latter is a positive macroeconomic effect, but can have negative aspects for those local workers employed in the same jobs as the immigrants. In their countries of origin, the departure of migrants decreases the unemployment rate, makes available additional financial resources (the migrants' remittances) and new ideas, knowledge and skills (when migrants go back). The main benefits of migration are felt by many of the migrants themselves and by their families. The history of mass migrations, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, from several European countries (Ireland, Italy, Norway and Sweden), confirms the above. That enormous migratory movement favoured the economic growth of the USA and of the countries of origin with all the mechanisms mentioned<sup>13</sup>.

Many economists think that, were the circulation of human beings liberalized in the same way as goods and capitals, the benefit for the world economy would be about 25 times higher<sup>3</sup>.

According to some World Bank projections, if high-income countries allowed a 3% increase in immigration, this would produce, from now to 2025, an annual gain of about US\$ 300 billion for poor countries and about US\$ 51 billion for rich countries<sup>3</sup>. These hypotheses are also contained in a recent book that stirred a lot of discussion among politicians and economists. The author, Philippe Legrain, an economics journalist who also worked for the World Trade Organization, echoes the abovementioned projections and maintains that migration is not an optional but a need for the survival of the world economy<sup>14</sup>.

These theories, however, have a weak spot: they are based on complex calculations but simple hypotheses. They ignore the complex and intertwined factors associated with migration: culture, religion, social and individual psychology, and international economic trends. When Poland and another nine countries entered the European Union in 2004, the UK absorbed about 500,000 migrants from those countries in a few months without serious problems. This may have proved unthinkable had those immigrants been black and Muslims instead of being white and Christian. And, in any case, even though economists pointed out how that influx benefited the British economy, promoting a considerable increase of GDP, Her Majesty's government, a few years later, imposed severe restrictions on the immigration from Bulgaria and Romania when they entered the European Union.

The fragility of the aforementioned economic theories lies mainly in the fact that they consider society as if it were a hard system, perfectly predictable in its reactions. On the contrary, all societies, being made of human beings, are soft and flexible systems, often unpredictable. They often defy logic. Or, better, they use a logic that often is not the same used by economists. It is, nevertheless, necessary that

politicians and citizens know those theories and ponder them. They point to a direction that, although complex, seems to be unavoidable.

### *Migration and development*

The impact of migration on poverty reduction and development has only been studied in recent years. Every year the Center for Global Development (CGD) publishes the Commitment to Development Index (CDI), a sort of league table ranking the world's richest countries, on the basis of a complex index suggesting their actual commitment to global development. The CDI is obtained by combining the performance of the rated countries in seven areas deemed important for global development: 1) official development aid; 2) trade policies; 3) direct investment in poor countries; 4) environmental protection policies; 5) contribution to international security (mainly a contribution to UN peace-keeping missions); 6) research and capacity transfer; and, last but not least, 7) migration policies<sup>15</sup>. Migration policies include not only the way countries welcome foreign workers, and protect and guarantee their rights, but also how friendly a country is towards foreign students.

### *Migrant remittances*

Migrant remittances to their countries of origin amounted to about US\$ 31 billion in 1990 and about US\$ 170 billion in 2005<sup>16</sup>. As with all the statistics concerning migration, this one is also an approximation. Significant amounts of money are transferred through informal channels. These amounts cannot be accurately quantified; they can only be guessed. According to World Bank estimates, the amount escaping official statistics could equal 50% or more of the official figure<sup>17</sup>. This would make remittances equal to about US\$ 250 billion per year. Official Development Aid (ODA) in 2005 was US\$ 106.5 billion<sup>18</sup>. For many poor countries migrant remittances exceed the amount received as ODA. It must be considered that remittances go directly to the migrants' families while a considerable proportion of ODA does not translate into direct benefits for the people of recipient countries. Between 30% and 45% of remittances follow a south-south circuit. This means that they are sent to families in poor countries by relatives who migrated to other poor countries. This is because of an often-ignored fact: about half of people migrating from poor countries go to other poor countries<sup>3</sup>. According to an article published online by *The Economist*, migrant remittances play a crucial role in sustaining the economies of many countries of the former Soviet Bloc. They represent about 10% of GDP in Albania, Armenia and Tajikistan and about 20% of the GDP of Bosnia and Moldova<sup>19</sup>. About 15% of the population of Ukraine and 20% of Kazakhstan's are migrants. Their remittances and their ideas when they go back are transforming their countries of origin<sup>19</sup>. The cost of money transfers through official channels (specialized agencies, banks) is still considerably high. In some cases it can reach 25% of the amount transferred<sup>2,3</sup>.

Migrant remittances, however, as much as they are a useful and important factor, are not a magic bullet. They are not a substitute for adequate national and international development policies. They need such policies to be used even more effectively.

### *Brain drain*

In the last two decades international barriers to the circulation of goods and capital have been substantially reduced. Barriers to the circulation of human beings have not been reduced with the same speed. On the contrary, the tendency towards migration, in many countries, seems set on a trend of more rigid and strict regulations. One exception, with significant consequences, concerns the so-called “focused migration”, that is the promotion by many rich countries of the immigration of individuals with high degrees of education in specific sectors. There are numerous measures intended to promote the so-called “brain drain”. It is estimated that about 10% of the university graduates of poor countries work in rich countries. This percentage goes up to 50% for the graduates in technical and scientific fields<sup>20</sup>. A lot has been, and is, written on this aspect. The traditionally more common view is that it deprives poor countries of their best human resources hindering their development. Furthermore, it is rightly underlined that the governments of poor countries paid for the education of these “selected migrants” but rich countries enjoy the results. It is a sort of subsidy from the poor to the rich. The situation is particularly serious in some countries, for instance Cape Verde, Gambia, Seychelles, and Somalia, with more than 50% of their graduates migrating, and up to a stunning 82.5% in Jamaica<sup>21</sup>. It is obvious that these countries are unduly deprived of useful, probably vital, resources. As always, however, the problem is more complex and one-sided judgements are not as correct as they seem. In many cases, the selected migrants come from countries where, for economic and political reasons (poor governance, nepotism, corruption, violence, ethnic, regional, religious discriminations) they could not have fully developed their potential. All too often, their potential and theoretical contribution to the development of their countries is mistaken for the contribution that would have been really possible. Various proposals are advanced to limit, if not to stop, the ‘stealing’ of the best brains from poor countries by rich ones. Such proposals range from forbidding the employment in rich countries of some categories of workers from poor countries (like doctors and nurses) to the delivery of short-term visas to qualified professionals so that they are somehow forced to go back to their countries. Apart from the practical problems in effectively applying such measures, their proponents seem to neglect the fact that they constitute an unjust limitation on the individual freedom of pursuing better conditions of life for themselves and for their families.

### *Brain drain is a symptom, not the disease*

It is right to formulate policies to compensate poor countries and motivate high-

ly educated migrants to go back. But this is another complex chapter. In the great majority of cases, brain drain is just one symptom of more serious diseases: poverty, inequality, and under-development. Decades of history suggest that development is mainly an endogenous process. From outside, in the best-case scenario, it can only be stimulated, facilitated, and strengthened. It has been proposed that rich countries invest in the education sectors of poor countries. Good reasoning: if we need to employ diplomas and degree holders from poor countries, let's contribute to their training. If the UK needs Ugandan nurses, the UK should invest in Ugandan nursing schools. Right. But this is far from being enough. Nobody enters a nursing school (or a faculty of medicine) without an adequate level of basic education. Therefore, it is necessary to invest in the entire education system of poor countries: from the primary cycle to the tertiary one. This is a very long-term investment. Its results will be seen after 15 or 20 years. Currently, the aid going to the education sector of poor countries is not significant. In 2002, the World Bank, the biggest donor in this sector, invested about US\$ 2 billion in education in countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. In that same year, those countries invested US \$ 250 billion in their dilapidated education systems<sup>22</sup>. For sure, more funds are needed. Even more needed, however, are solid, wide-ranging and long-term policies and strategies.

Other measures are suggested to counteract the brain drain. They include imposing taxes on remittances by the countries of origin (with the collaboration of the receiving countries); ensuring the transferability of pension benefits from the receiving countries to the countries of origin; granting dual nationality more easily (thus favouring a more free and frequent circulation with economic benefits for both receiving countries and countries of origin); stipulating bilateral or regional agreements providing, among other things, for increased aid from receiving countries to the countries of origin of highly specialized migrants.

### *Health systems and brain drain*

For several years now, the health systems of poor countries have been severely affected by brain drain. Many think that, in the framework of international migration, health systems deserve special attention<sup>23</sup>. The populations of rich countries are ageing and need more and more services that their health systems are often unable to provide due to lack of personnel. Human Resources for Health (HRH) are particularly scarce even in poor countries. Sub-Saharan Africa, with about 10% of the total world population, has a mere 2.8% of the total world health workforce and accounts for a tiny 1% of world health expenditure<sup>24</sup>. The UK suffers from a severe shortage of nurses and is one of the main destinations of migrant health workers from poor countries. In 2002 the number of foreign nurses registered in the UK (16,155) was higher than the number of nurses trained in the UK (14,358) and, between 1999 and 2002, the number of foreign nurses employed in the UK more than doubled, reaching 42,000<sup>25</sup> (there were 65,000 at the end of 2006<sup>24</sup>). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 23% of the medical

doctors who graduated in Sub-Saharan African countries work in OECD countries; the percentages range from a minimum of 3% in Cameroon to 16% in Uganda, 17% in Ethiopia, 19% in Angola, 29% in Ghana, up to a maximum of 37% in South Africa<sup>24</sup>. According to other sources<sup>26</sup>, the proportion of medical doctors who graduated in Sub-Saharan Africa and work abroad (mainly, but not only, in OECD countries) is 28%: from 1% in Guinea Bissau, to about 50% in several countries (Cape Verde, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and up to 70% in Angola. As for Mozambique, the proportion is estimated at about 75%, but this includes many individuals of Portuguese origin who left the country after independence<sup>26</sup>.

According to many, rich countries employing health workers trained in poor countries act unethically as they deprive poor people, especially in rural areas, of essential human resources. Although containing some truth, this position can be questioned. Health systems of poor countries are severely under-funded (they receive between 1% and 2% of what health systems in rich countries receive). Consequently, they are in real dire straits as they must endure dilapidated infrastructure, lacking, obsolete or faulty equipment, chronically scarce medicines, as well as low and irregularly paid salaries. In such conditions, it is difficult for health workers to make full use of their knowledge, skills and competence. Furthermore, if the migrant health workers remained in their countries, only a tiny fraction of them would work in rural areas. Many would work in urban areas, possibly in private clinics, serving the richest segments of the population. In Uganda, for instance, the poorest districts have about 26% of the health workers deemed necessary, while the richest ones have more than they need, reaching as much as 263% of what is deemed necessary<sup>27</sup>. A striking example of misdistribution of health personnel concerns doctors: of the 648 doctors working in government health units in 2003, 111, i.e. 17%, worked in Uganda's main hospital, Mulago, situated in the capital Kampala<sup>28</sup>. In 2004 President Yoweri Museveni stated the intention of his government to favour the migration to rich countries of highly educated Ugandans, especially health workers<sup>29</sup>. The reason given was that migrant remittances are a useful tool to fight poverty. According to the World Bank, in the last few years, the remittances of Ugandan migrants have reduced poverty in the country by about 11%<sup>3</sup>. In the Philippines, for several years, the government has been training health workers "for export": it encourages them to migrate, to send back remittances through official channels (with facilitations and favourable conditions) and to come back after several years. In 2004 the remittances of migrants ran into US\$ 8.5 billion, about 10% of the GDP of the Philippines<sup>24</sup>. In the same year, the Philippines received US\$ 462.8 million in ODA<sup>30</sup>. We are not arguing in favour of rich countries poaching health workers from poor ones, nor that it should be encouraged (especially when unscrupulous private recruiting firms are involved), we are simply suggesting that the reality is complex and should be examined in all its aspects.

*What measures can be taken to curb the flight of African health workers?*

Various measures have been suggested and tried so as to limit the migration of health workers to rich countries from poor countries, especially from African ones. They include bilateral agreements between countries of origin and of destination, the introduction of quotas, and different types of compensation by rich countries. We already mentioned that rich countries could fund the education sectors in poor countries. Some countries, like South Africa, started to train new cadres of para-medical personnel who were capable of carrying out many nursing tasks but less qualified than nurses; they are very useful within the country, but, because of their low academic level, are excluded from the international market. Rich countries have been urged to better plan and stimulate their own production of health personnel. However, this does not seem to have happened as yet. It is estimated that, in the next four years, the British health system will have a gap of 14,000 nurses, 1,200 family doctors and 1,100 hospital doctors. At the same time, it will have a surplus of 3,200 specialists and 16,200 laboratory technicians, physiotherapists and other similar professional cadres<sup>31</sup>.

In the last few years several codes of conduct have been formulated to try to regulate the employment in rich countries of health personnel coming from poor ones. They are addressed to national authorities, professional associations and recruiting agencies. Private recruiting agencies have multiplied in the last few years. In the USA, they receive between US\$ 5,000 and US\$ 10,000 for every nurse they “provide”. This is a business worth several million US dollars per year<sup>32</sup>. The existing codes of conduct are not binding for private recruiting agencies. This means that, more often than not, they are not respected. A telling example comes from the UK. In this country, a Code issued in 1999 forbids the National Health System (NHS) to employ health personnel coming from poor countries. This code was revised and made even more stringent in 2004<sup>33</sup>. The private sector, however, is allowed to employ health personnel coming from poor countries, and keeps doing so. Once they are in the system, these health workers can also be employed by the NHS<sup>34</sup>.

A measure often suggested to keep health personnel in their countries is paying higher salaries. Well, this seems obvious. Once again, however, reality is stubbornly more complex. An article published by “*Le Monde Diplomatique*” in December 2006, suggests this measure and, as a good example, quotes Uganda<sup>35</sup>. As a matter of fact, between the financial years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, the Government of Uganda raised the salaries of health workers by 51.7%<sup>36</sup>: certainly a sensible measure. However, among the consequences, there was a massive exodus of health workers to the Government health units from the Private Not For Profit (PNFP) ones, unable, for lack of funds, to raise their salaries in the same way. In Uganda, PNFP units are responsible for about 40% of health services delivered. If one looks at the consequences of this sensible measure on the health system as a whole, the conclusion cannot be positive, as the measure deprived a significant proportion of health units, mostly located in rural areas, of their nurses and doctors.

### *The heart of the matter*

Other measures, including greater chances for further education, incentives to work in rural areas, and better integration with served communities<sup>37</sup>, resemble more goodwill exercises, limited and fragmented, than true solutions. They all seem to neglect the heart of the matter. And the heart of the matter is that migration is not a phenomenon based on one single cause. It has its roots in numerous intertwined and complex causes. Therefore, when it leads to problems, these have to be analysed and faced in their entirety. Coming back to African health systems, it would be of only marginal benefit to keep health workers stuck in dilapidated health systems. It is necessary to strengthen such systems. Huge amounts of funds are needed, together with wide ranging and long-term policies and strategies. According to a recent study, about 77% of the families of newly graduated Zimbabwean doctors suggest they should try to emigrate<sup>24</sup>. This is not surprising when the Zimbabwe health system, like the rest of the country, is in a sorry state of collapse. Equally unsurprising is the fact that this country has the highest percentage of migrated nurses of all African countries: 34%<sup>24</sup>.

### *Positive effects of brain drain*

The positive effects of brain drain are often neglected. They go beyond remittances. There are more and more associations of migrants from the same country that, although acting abroad, have an economic, cultural and political impact in their home countries, promoting investments and circulating ideas and innovations<sup>7</sup>. Some of these associations send back home collective remittances for the construction of public infrastructure such as roads, schools, health units. This phenomenon is not yet significantly widespread but it is rapidly expanding<sup>24</sup>. In many international organizations, especially, but not only, in the UN System, many high-ranking officers come from poor countries. The lobbying in favour of their countries of origin is politically and practically important and it would deserve to be assessed. A positive medium-term effect is the return home, after several years, of highly educated migrants. They bring back new ideas, financial resources, contacts and networks potentially useful in various fields like tourism, transport and communications. Obviously, coming back must be voluntary and attractive. Countries like China, India, Ireland, Mexico and Taiwan have successfully introduced policies to favour the return of their highly educated migrants. Other countries, like Afghanistan, Rwanda and Sudan, tried to do the same, so far with more limited success.

### *Conclusion*

Migration is a phenomenon as complex as it is unstoppable. Managing it adequately will require hard work, commitment, research, reflection, understanding and, most of all, political courage. Global cultural transformations will be necessary.

And they will take place. They too are unstoppable, although, understandably, slow. The short sightedness of numerous politicians the world over, international terrorism, the so-called War on Terror, ignorance and narrow mindedness, the current global economic crisis, the actual and real problems posed by the integration of massive waves of immigrants, will make the next decades difficult. Long-term optimism is of little consolation today. In the short term (a short term longer than the life of many individuals) the world will go through difficult, sometimes, atrocious, processes. In the long term all this could (should) lead to a better world made of truly multicultural societies that are better integrated, open minded, tolerant, and able to live and prosper on the basis of common, shared values and interests.

### References

- <sup>1</sup> UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), Human Development Report 2005, *International Cooperation at a Crossroads, Aid, Trade and Security in an Unequal World*, New York 2005.
- <sup>2</sup> GCIM (Global Commission on International Migration), *Migration in an interconnected world: new directions for actions*, Geneva 2005.
- <sup>3</sup> World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration*, Washington 2006.
- <sup>4</sup> United Nations, *Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*, Geneva 1951, <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 2006, Equity and Development*, Washington 2005.
- <sup>6</sup> GCIM (Global Commission on International Migration), *Migration in an interconnected world: new directions for actions*, Geneva 2005
- <sup>7</sup> L. Pritchett, *Let their people come: breaking the gridlock on global labour mobility*, Center for Global Development, Washington 2006.
- <sup>8</sup> *Auf wiedersehen, Fatherland*, «The Economist», October 26, 2006.
- <sup>9</sup> *Over there*, «The Economist», December 13, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research), *British Abroad: Mapping the Scale and Nature of British Emigration*, London 2006.
- <sup>11</sup> United Nations, *Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, New York 2000. [http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_%20traff\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf)
- Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, New York 2000. [http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_smug\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_smug_eng.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> US Department of State, Office of the Under Secretary for Global Affairs, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Washington 2005.
- <sup>13</sup> IOM (International Organization of Migration), *World Migration Report 2005*, Geneva 2006.
- <sup>14</sup> P. Legrain, *Immigrants, your country needs them*, Little Brown Book Group, 2007.
- <sup>15</sup> CGD (Center for Global Development), *Ranking the rich: the 2005 Commitment to Development Index*, 2006, available at [www.cdev.org](http://www.cdev.org)
- <sup>16</sup> ILO (International Labour Office), *International Labour Migration and Development: the ILO perspective*, Geneva 2006
- <sup>17</sup> World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration*, Washington 2006
- <sup>18</sup> OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), *ODA Chart 2005*, 2006, available at [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)
- <sup>19</sup> *Migrant power*, «The Economist», January 16, 2007 (online edition).
- <sup>20</sup> B.L. Lowell, S.G. Gerova, *Diasporas and Economic Development: State of Knowledge*, Institute for the Study of International Migration, Georgetown University, Washington 2004.

- <sup>21</sup> D. Kapur, J. Mc Hale, *The Global Migration of Talent: what does it mean for developing countries?*, Center for Global Development, Washington 2005.
- <sup>22</sup> World Bank, *The Role and Effectiveness of Development Assistance, Lessons from World Bank Experience*, Washington 2002.
- <sup>23</sup> S. Bach, *International mobility of health professionals: brain drain or brain exchange?*, World Institute for Development Economic Research, United Nations University, Research Paper n. 2006/82.
- <sup>24</sup> WHO (World Health Organization), World Health Report 2006, *Working Together for Health*, Geneva 2006.
- <sup>25</sup> L. Aiken, J. Buchan, J. Sochalski et al., *Trends in international nurse migration*, «Health Affairs», vol. 23, n. 3, 2004, pp. 69-77.
- <sup>26</sup> M.A. Clemens, *Medical leave: a new data base of health professional emigration from Africa*, Center for Global Development, Washington DC, 2006.
- <sup>27</sup> Uganda MOH (Ministry of Health), *Health Sector Strategic Plan II, 2005-2006 / 2009-2010*, Kampala 2005.
- <sup>28</sup> Uganda MOH (Ministry of Health), *Human Resource Inventory*, Kampala 2004a.
- <sup>29</sup> Everd Maniple, *Export health workers? For Uganda an indecent proposal, until...*, «Health Policy and Development», vol. 2, n. 3, 2004, pp. 227-235.
- <sup>30</sup> UNDP (United Nation development Programme), *Human Development Report 2006, Beyond scarcity: power, poverty and the global water crisis*, New York 2006.
- <sup>31</sup> Andy McSmith, *Leaked report forecasts shortage of NHS nurses*, «The Independent», January 7<sup>th</sup> 2007.
- <sup>32</sup> B.L. Brush, J. Sochalski, A.M. Berger, *Imported care: Recruiting foreign nurses to US Health Care Facilities*, «Health Affairs», vol. 23, n. 3, 2004, pp. 78-87.
- <sup>33</sup> UK Department of Health, *Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health care Professionals*, London 2004.
- <sup>34</sup> L. Aiken, J. Buchan, J. Sochalski et al., *Trends in international nurse migration*, «Health Affairs», vol. 23, n. 3, 2004, pp. 69-77.
- <sup>35</sup> K. Blanchet, R. Keith, *L'Afrique cherche de retenir ses médecins*, «Le Monde Diplomatique», December 2006.
- <sup>36</sup> Uganda MOH (Ministry of Health), *Annual Health Sector Performance Report, FY 2005/06*, Kampala 2006.
- <sup>37</sup> PHR (Physicians for Human Rights), *Bold solutions to Africa's health workers shortage*, Boston 2006.