

PATTERNS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

This paper addresses the patterns of internal migration in developing countries and examines selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of migrants. To date, most existing research on internal migration is based on one single country or region. Cross-country studies of internal migration remain scanty, primarily due to the lack of internationally comparable sets of data. In addition, much of the existing research focuses on rural-urban migration, although increasing evidence has pointed to the importance of other migration streams, especially, rural-rural migration.

The unique feature of the present study is the use of Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) as sources of data to study internal migration. DHS are designed to study primarily fertility and health aspects of the population. But they must also include the information required to estimate residential transitions. Furthermore, DHS have been carried out in a significant number of developing countries, especially in Africa, where the data on internal migration are most limited. Thus, the strength of DHS data lies in their breadth, consistency and comparability across countries. They produce a comprehensive profile of the population (migrants and non-migrants), and of the migratory move itself. The present paper presents findings for 53 developing countries for which migration questions were asked in DHS, with the following regional distribution: 29 countries in Africa, 13 countries in Asia and 11 in Latin America.

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The analysis has three objectives: First, to identify the relative importance of the various migration streams (rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-urban, and urban-rural). The relative weight of flows to more specific urban areas, namely metropolitan areas, intermediate-size cities, and towns will also be investigated where appropriate and possible. Second, to examine selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of migrants involved in various migration flows. For example, does the sex composition differ among these flows? Do differences hold across countries? How do various types of migrants differ in their age structure? Building on previous work that has shown, mostly for developed countries, that urban in-migrants are younger than urban out-migrants, we extend analysis to developing countries and to all types of migration flows between urban and rural areas. Third, to discuss several hypotheses concerning the reasons for observed differentials in migration patterns and in the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of internal migrants.

Preliminary findings include the following:

- In most countries, the urban population, both male and female, is more likely to be made up of migrants than the rural population. There is no regional pattern to the differential. Among countries in all three developing regions, there is a wide range of percent migrant in their urban and rural population. For females, the percent migrant in urban areas ranges from a low of 5.8% in Armenia to a high of 61% in Malawi. The range for rural females is 4.9% in Comoros to 38.4% in Zimbabwe. Similar ranges are obtained for males. In urban areas, the percent migrant ranges from 3.4% in Armenia to 62.1% in Malawi, and the range of percent migrant in rural areas is 1.2% to 30.7%. Overall, we do not find males to have higher migration rates than females.

- With regard to the distribution of migration among the four migration flows (rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-urban, and urban-rural), however, rural-rural migration is the modal category for females in 25 (out of 53) countries, followed by urban-urban migration in 15 countries. For males, the most important migration flow is urban-urban in 13 (out of 25) countries, followed by rural-rural migration in 7 countries. In few countries did rural-urban migration (3 countries for females, 1 country for males) or urban-rural migration (2 countries for females, 3 countries for males) constitute the modal category. The distribution of migration among the four types of flows varies as much

among countries as does the incidence of migration itself. Overall, the relative weight of urban-urban flows appears to be highest in South America, particularly among females; rural-rural flows are more significant in Africa.

- The analysis confirms the universality of age selectivity for migration. Migration rates rise rapidly at younger ages to reach their peak at the young adult ages (20-24), then fall away with age, although there is considerable variation of levels between countries. There are also obvious differences for males and females. Migration rates reach their highest value at ages 20-24 old among females. In contrast, migration peaks are less extreme among males, and rates tend to reach a maximum at higher ages.

- Literacy remains an important issue in developing countries for many reasons, including health and economic development. The analysis of migrant-non-migrant differentials in literacy shows that when residence and age are controlled for (which are two important determinants of literacy), migrants tend to be more literate than non-migrants. However, DHS do not depict a uniform pattern with regard to literacy differentials by migrant status. While the former finding is true in many African and all Asian countries included in the study, migrants are less literate than non-migrants in most Latin American countries included in the study. The analysis focusing on occupational status reinforces this differential: migrants are more likely to have higher-status occupations than did nonmigrants (again controlled for current residence and age), at least in two of the three regions under study.

The analysis is currently being extended to a more detailed examination of migration patterns and characteristics along the urban hierarchy in terms of large cities, small cities, towns, and rural areas. It will be shown in that analysis to what extent migration flows tend to follow a step-wise pattern (e.g., from rural to town, or from town to small city), or if there is substantial migration directly from rural areas to cities.

The paper will conclude with a discussion of policy issues and interventions suggested by the findings regarding migration patterns between urban and rural areas, and the characteristics of

migrants.