

Editorial

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It has become something of a cliché to state that globalisation favours the movement of capital but not of people. While thousands of workers are indeed losing out in the ‘race to the bottom’ as companies span the globe in pursuit of lower costs and higher shareholder value, it is also clear that millions of people are on the move. This is nothing new in itself. Migration has been a phenomenon since recorded history. The continuing encounter between the Americas and the rest of the world, just to take one example, is characterised by migration, forced and voluntary, within borders, between countries, and across continents. The legacies of colonial rule remain all too tangible. In addition to the decimation of the indigenous population through disease, destruction, and dispossession, Latin America is home to some of the world’s most inequitable societies, in which fabulous wealth co-exists alongside widespread poverty. Within North America, native peoples were also forced from their ancestral lands, while some ten million Africans were ‘ripped from their homes and sent to the American colonies’ (Killingray 1973:44). At the same time, voluntary migration to the Americas has also guaranteed the survival of millions escaping persecution or intolerable hardship in their countries of origin. For such individuals, migration represents a belief in a better world, and asserts their right to be a part of it.

While the distinction still shapes public policy—and public opinion—the assumption that economic migration and political refuge are intrinsically different is not always tenable in practice. Intra-state conflicts are generally fuelled by the effective denial of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights to certain communities or social groups. For instance, subsistence farmers in El Salvador or Guatemala usually migrate to the coastal regions as seasonal labourers on large (often foreign-owned) coffee or sugar plantations. In the 1980s, this work dried up or it simply became too dangerous for people from the war zones to move around the country. For the many thousands of Central Americans who fled to Mexico or the USA, the question of whether they were economic migrants or refugees was somewhat academic: flight was their best hope of survival. The real question to be addressed is that of why most Central Americans live in such precarious conditions in the first place. Or take the case of human trafficking, today’s third largest criminal enterprise, after narcotics and arms. An estimated 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year, the vast majority of them women and girls subsequently coerced or forced into the sex industry. For the countries in which these abused and vulnerable human beings end up to treat them as ‘illegal’ immigrants would be a shamefully inadequate response to the consequences, and do nothing to address the causes, of contemporary forms of slavery.

Several contributions to this issue examine the issue of international migration. **David Ellerman** focuses on the impact of South–North migration on the sending countries, arguing that remittances seldom generate the anticipated development returns, while migrant workers

are often condemned to 'dirty, dangerous, and difficult' jobs in the North that offer no real hope of advancement. **Kim Van Eyck** underlines this with reference to a 13-country survey of the experiences of migrant healthcare workers both in the host country and in terms of the impacts on their families at home. She stresses the importance of making explicit the gendered and social costs in calculating the assumed benefits of South–North migration. Conversely, with a particular focus on Nicaragua, where remittances now represent the country's second largest single resource flow, **Allen Jennings** and **Matthew Clarke** argue that most of this income reaches poorer women in the rural areas. This directly benefits their households and also contributes to the wider economy. Despite its obvious downsides, migration remains a 'least worst' survival option for many poor people. **Dharam Ghai** offers a more optimistic agenda of ways in which a country's diaspora, which in the case of Kenya includes many highly educated and successful professionals, could share prosperity through a range of well-targeted contributions to various development goals in their country of origin.

Other contributors look at ways in which to engage with people who are systematically disadvantaged in their own countries, either because of ethnic identity, age, sex, or disability. **Robyn Eversole** and **Richard Routh** describe how a joint research project conducted by indigenous Australians and the police force forced both sides to confront their assumptions and fears in order to develop the necessary basis of trust for the collaboration to work. **Angela Hogg**, **Berlina Makwiza**, **Stella Mlanga**, **Robin Broadhead**, and **Loretta Brabin** give an account of sex education work for adolescent girls in Malawi, where again there was a need to find ways to overcome prejudices about what kind of knowledge was appropriate, and how best to avoid alienating the traditional authorities. Turning to North Bengal, **Wouter Schaap** and **Snehangshu Sekhar Nandi** underline the dangers of using often rapidly acquired PRA methods as a shortcut to understanding the complex power dynamics likely to undermine development initiatives intended to benefit very poor communities. **Sophie Plageron** looks at social exclusion in Bangladesh, with particular reference to people disabled by Hansen's disease (leprosy), arguing that the most effective approaches to preventing and managing the disease are those involving the very actors whose attitudes were been most exclusionary. Finally, **Christopher L. Pallas** describes the origins and impact of the World Bank's ongoing dialogue with representatives of the world's major religions. The capacity of religious faith to be both a source of cohesion and of bitter social division is well recognised; but the rise of fundamentalisms heightens the need to maintain a fluid dialogue both among different faith communities, and between them and the secular values that govern most development agencies.

Reference

Killingray, David (1973) *A Plague of Europeans: Westerners in Africa since the Fifteenth Century*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Education.