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Migration Policies for Development

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Abstract

There is substantial interest in development policies related to international migration from developing countries. In the last decade, there has been a wave of rigorous empirical studies (many of which are randomized controlled trials) quantifying the impacts of such policies. This article examines evidence on the impacts of policies in five areas: 1) migration facilitation, 2) migrant education, 3) reducing remittance transaction fees, 4) enhancing migrant control over remittance uses, and 5) improving working conditions of migrants. In each of these areas, there is evidence that at least some interventions have positive impacts, but a number of open questions remain. Future research in these and other areas has high promise to provide important and policy-relevant findings.

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Introduction

International migration is a large and growing phenomenon on our planet. In 2015, 244 million people were living outside their country of birth, a substantial increase from 153 million in 1990 (UN Population Division, 2015). Labor migration to the developed world leads to large income gains (Clemens et al., 2016), which makes possible substantial benefits for migrants and those remaining behind in origin countries to whom migrants are connected. Much, but not all, of the gains to those left behind are due to the remittances that migrants send to their home countries. These migrant remittances to developing countries amounted to $432 billion in 2015, a number that far exceeded official development assistance (World Bank 2016).[1]

There is substantial evidence that international out-migration, and the remittances that subsequently flow back to origin areas, bring substantial benefits at the household level in developing countries. For example, a wide range of studies have documented that households that send migrants overseas or receive remittances from migrants (or both) have higher consumption levels, lower poverty rates, higher investments in child human capital, lower child labor, and more investment in household enterprises. In addition, migrants insure recipient households by sending more remittances to origin areas in bad times. Most evidence is

[1] These remittances have become an important focus of development policy over the last two decades. See Pew Hispanic Center (2002), Terry and Wilson (2005), World Bank (2006), and World Bank (2007) for examples of policy oriented reports.

correlational, but some natural experiments confirm impacts are causal.[2] Policies stimulating remittances could therefore have positive impacts on a variety of development outcomes.

The substantial policy interest in these areas stands in stark contrast to the relatively small amount of reliable evidence on the effectiveness of economic development policies related to migration and remittances. In this article, I will discuss a selection of migration policies for which we have reasonably good empirical evidence, much (but not all) from studies that involve randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of migration-related development interventions and programs. These policies fall into five areas: 1) migration facilitation, 2) migrant education, 3) reducing remittance transaction fees, 4) enhancing migrant control over remittance uses, and 5) improving working conditions of migrants.

The migration policy areas that are the focus of this article are clearly just a subset of all migration policies that are currently being undertaken or considered worldwide. Examples of policies that I have not chosen to discuss include return migration and migrant re-integration programs, policies related to communal remittances and home-town associations, and programs aimed at reducing abuse and protecting migrant human rights. These types of policies are potentially important as well, but we have relatively limited evidence to date on their effectiveness.

Migration facilitation

International migration offers individuals from developing countries opportunities to multiply their income-earning prospects. Clemens et al (2016) compare the earnings of immigrants in the U.S. with earnings of observationally comparable individuals in dozens of developing countries. They document that typical immigrant earnings in the U.S. are several times their earnings in their home countries. For example, for a 35-year-old male urban worker with 9 years of education acquired in home country, the ratio of U.S. to home-country wages is 2.6 for Mexicans, 4.2 for Filipinos, 5.6 for Jordanians, 7.9 for Indians, 14.2 for Haitians, and 16.3 for Nigerians. These income gains are far larger than those generated by any other development policy intervention known to social science.

The existence of such large wage premia between developed and developing countries means that the highest-potential development policy related to migration would be simply to facilitate or allow more migration from developing to developed countries. Policies that developing country governments have taken to facilitate international migration can be placed in two categories: bilateral and unilateral. Bilateral policies involve cooperation between governments of origin and destination countries, such as in the context of formal agreements to allow labor migration. The Philippines has taken the lead on this type of policy, signing dozens of bilateral migration agreements with destination countries over the last few decades. Given the importance of legal barriers to migration, it seems likely that such agreements have allowed more migration from the Philippines to destination countries. However, there is relatively little research that can quantify how much migration would have happened in the absence of such signed agreements, and hence we have little evidence on the causal effect of bilateral migration policies.

[2] Studies include Ambler et al. 2015; Cox-Edwards and Ureta 2003; Adams 2004; Yang and Martinez 2005; Yang 2006; Woodruff and Zenteno 2007; Yang and Choi 2007; Yang 2008a; Yang 2008b; Adams and Cuecuecha 2010; Theoharides 2013.

An important exception is Gibson and McKenzie (2014), a study of bilateral migration policies negotiated between New Zealand and several Pacific Island nations (including Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu). These policies allow seasonal migration to New Zealand through what is known as the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) program. The study examines the impacts of this program on households in Tonga and Vanuatu, finding that individuals participating in the program lack almost any other opportunity to migrate internationally, so that the program generates new migration. This migration results in large increases in income and consumption for the participating households. Using a matched difference-in-difference strategy to identify program impacts, the authors argue that the program's newness and limited number of migrant slots available enables them to find a reasonable comparison group for households who were selected to participate in the program.

Developing country governments can also implement unilateral policies to influence migration, which do not require governments in destination countries to explicitly cooperate. Prominent examples are policies in which countries actually seek to *inhibit* migration. For example, some countries prohibit women from migrating, such as Gabon, Libya, and Saudi Arabia, while others require citizens to get government permission to travel abroad (such as Cuba, Iran, and North Korea). McKenzie (2007) studies such restrictions and finds that they lead to 5-6 percent less migrants per capita than countries with similar income, population, and governance levels which do not have such restrictions. Relatedly, countries can impose high passport fees and cumbersome procedures for obtaining a passport; McKenzie (2007) also finds that higher passport costs are associated with lower migration.

Governments can also implement unilateral policies for facilitating migration. Beam et al (2016) conducted a large-scale randomized experiment in Sorsogon, Philippines on the impact of unilaterally facilitating international labor migration. Households assigned to treatment groups received one or more of several migration-facilitating interventions. The interventions targeted a number of reasons people might not migrate: 1) information barriers (information about job search, migrating abroad, financing migration, and passport processing); 2) frictions in job search (assistance in enrolling in an online job-finding website to lower search costs and facilitate matching between recruiters and workers); and 3) documentation barriers (assistance and a full subsidy for passport application). As it turns out, the study finds no evidence that any of the individual or combined interventions increased international migration. The study can be interpreted to show either that the treatments examined did not meaningfully reduce the barriers targeted, or the barriers targeted are not key constraints to international labor migration in this context (or both).

A separate and related study was carried out by Beam (2016). The study randomly assigned participants to a control group or one of a set of treatment groups in Sorsogon, Philippines. The treatments offered information on wages and qualifications for typical overseas jobs, or an incentive to attend a "job fair" (where job-seekers could connect in person with placement agencies for overseas work positions). The information treatments did improve knowledge about overseas wages and job qualifications, but no treatments increased search activity for overseas jobs. This study also suggests limits to the effectiveness of unilateral migration facilitation policies.

In sum, these existing studies provide strong and positive evidence of the development impacts of bilateral temporary labor migration programs, such as the Regional Seasonal Employer (RSE) program between New Zealand and several South Pacific nations. They also provide evidence that unilateral programs discouraging migration can have large negative effects. There is less evidence that unilateral programs encouraging migration can have an impact, but future research is necessary to establish whether programs to unilaterally reduce migration barriers in migrant-origin locations might have positive effects in other contexts.

Migrant education

Many governments and non-government organizations (NGOs) provide migrants with some type of education, training, or orientation. Such efforts can occur prior to migrant departure, or after migrants have already departed for their international destinations. Many programs also provide education of some sort to the families in origin countries who have been left behind by migrants.

Programs targeted at migrants pre-departure may have a number of aims, such as easing the travel process itself, providing work-related technical skills, preventing human trafficking and abuse, and teaching financial literacy. A number of governments of migrant origin countries have implemented official pre-departure orientations. A widely-known example is the Philippine government's Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS), which is required for migrants departing for overseas. The PDOS curriculum includes topics such as preventing abuse of workers; labor rights; laws, culture, and customs in destination countries; health and safety; financial literacy; and travel procedures. On behalf of governments and NGOs, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) runs a wide variety of pre-departure training program; they have trained 352,000 migrants over the decade 2001-2010 (International Organization for Migration 2011).

Barsbai et al (2016) report on the results of a randomized controlled trial evaluating the impact of pre-departure training on migrant adjustment and assimilation in their destination country. Their focus is on permanent immigrants, in particular Filipinos newly issued permanent immigrant "green cards" and about to depart for the U.S. Study participants were recruited from a database of individuals about to depart with new green cards to the U.S. A randomly-selected subset of these individuals were assigned to a treatment group that received an "enhanced" pre-departure orientation seminar, an additional one-day session that covered additional topics relevant for adjusting to life in the U.S.: pre-departure procedures, settlement, building a support network, employment, finances, and maintaining ties to the Philippines. The remaining study participants constituted the control group, and received only the basic one-day PDOS. Based on phone surveys roughly six months after emigration, those in the treatment group (who received the enhanced PDOS) reported fewer travel-related problems, and faster settlement in the U.S. (being more likely to have a Social Security card, health insurance, a bank account, or a driver's license). While there was no effect on employment, the treatment group did express some plans for further education and efforts to gain certification in certain occupations (e.g., nursing, accountancy). Further surveys are currently underway to establish longer-term impacts of the enhanced PDOS.

Another very commonly-seen type of program aims to improve the financial literacy of migrants and their families left behind in the origin country. A motivation for such programs is that migrant-origin households are often faced with challenges managing remittances sent home by migrants, which are often very large in magnitude compared with pre-migration household incomes.

Doi et al. (2014) provide important evidence on the impact of financial education for migrant workers and their families. The study evaluates a randomized controlled trial among Indonesian women about to depart for overseas work as domestic servants (maids), as well as their families. Study participants were randomly assigned to a control group that received no training or to one of three treatment groups in which financial literacy training was provided prior to the migrant's departure for overseas. These treatment groups trained either: 1) the migrant alone, 2) a family member alone, or 3) both the migrant and a family member. Topics covered in the training included financial planning and management, savings, debt management, sending and receiving remittances, and migrant insurance. The study found that training both the migrant and family led to increases in savings in the origin household, while the other two treatments (training migrant only or training family only) did not have a similar impact on savings. Thus a key finding from the study is the possible positive complementarity from training both migrants and family members left behind.

Financial education is also commonly provided to migrants who are already overseas. Seshan and Yang (2014) studied a program for married male migrant workers in Doha, Qatar who were from Kerala, India and whose wives remained behind. Migrants in the study were randomly assigned to either a control or treatment group. The treatment group was invited to attend a one-time motivational session on personal financial management that stressed the importance of savings and of making joint financial decisions with spouses remaining behind in India. The treatment led both migrants and their wives to be more likely make joint financial decisions with their spouses. Among migrants with lower savings prior to treatment the treatment led to higher total household savings and higher remittances.

Gibson et al. (2014) studied another example of a financial education program for migrants. They implemented a randomized controlled trial of a financial literacy intervention among migrants (from Tonga, East Asia, and Sri Lanka) in Australia and New Zealand that aimed at improving remittance decision-making, specifically helping migrants locate and use lower-cost money transmission services. The study found that a treatment group (that was invited to a financial education session on remittance sending) did have greater financial knowledge about remittance methods, but there were no effects on remittance frequency or total amounts of remittances sent. This lack of an effect of the treatment is interpreted by the authors as due to barriers to the use of alternative remittance methods.

Overall, these findings suggest the potential for positive impacts of programs facilitating migrant settlement in their destination countries, and for programs that aim to improve financial decision-making by migrants and their families left behind in home countries. At the same time, these studies also sound a note of caution that migrant education programs may have little impact under some circumstances, such as when other barriers to good financial decision-making exist.

Reducing remittance transaction fees

Motivated by the positive development impacts of remittances, a widespread policy goal is to reduce barriers to remittance flows. In 2009, the G8 Heads of State Summit agreed to reduce the average cost of sending remittances from 10% to 5% in five years (the "5X5 objective") via policies such as improved information, transparency, and promotion of competition among remittance service providers (G8, 2009).

A number of web-based services aim to facilitate comparison of remittance transaction fees across remittance companies, potentially leading migrants to send more remittances, and to reductions in fees due to enhanced competition. For example, the website Remittance Prices Worldwide (http://remittanceprices.worldbank.org) is run by the World Bank, and provides remittance fee prices across 365 country corridors covering 48 major remittance sending countries and 105 receiving countries.

In this context, it is important to establish the causal impact of lower remittance prices on remittances. Two recent randomized controlled trials offer insights on how migrants are likely to react to reductions in remittance costs. Aycinena et al. (2010) and Ambler et al. (2014) report on two randomized studies that partnered with money transfer operators to offer discounts on remittance transaction fees to migrants from Central America (El Salvador and Guatemala) in metro Washington D.C. Both studies find that reductions in remittance fees (ranging from \$1-\$5 off a base of a fixed fee of \$8 or \$9 per transaction) have substantial effects. In both studies, the discounts lead migrants to increase the frequency of remittances (more remittances are sent per month). Somewhat surprisingly, migrants do not change the typical amount sent per remittance; this leads, therefore, to substantial increases in the dollar value of remittances sent. The upshot is that the increase in the dollar value of remittances sent is an order of magnitude larger than the remittance fees saved. Analysis of the time-pattern of results as well as responses in post-treatment surveys help confirm that the effects represent a true increase in total remittances, rather than shifting of remittances from other (non-discounted) remittance companies, migrants taking advantage of the discount by sending remittances on behalf of other migrants, or intertemporal shifting of future remittances towards the present to take advantage of the temporary discount.

The very large response of remittance dollar amounts to relatively discounts that generate relatively small absolute savings is difficult to explain in a purely rational model of remittance decision-making. The findings are likely to reflect behavioral biases of some sort. For example, discounts could serve as reminders to remit for migrants who do not always have remittances at "top of mind" and who therefore may occasionally forget or unintentionally delay their remittance transactions. The model of limited attention presented by Karlan et al (2016) in the context of savings reminders may apply to remittances as well. Another possibility is that the remitter responses to discounts reflect reference dependence and status quo bias, as in Tversky and Kahneman (1991), Masatlioglu and Ok (2005), and Masatlioglu and Ok (2014). The idea is that remittance recipients in the home country have reference dependent preferences regarding their expected level of remittances, which evolve slowly as remittance levels change. At the same time, migrants may be at least partially naïve about the extent to which recipients' preferences exhibit such reference dependency. With this characterization of preferences, migrants might respond to the remittance fee discounts by sending more remittance transactions during the discount period, intending to intertemporally substitute for later (post-discount) remittances. But once migrants increase their remittance frequency during the discount period, recipients in the home country raise their reference point for remittance receipts (now expecting higher total amounts per time period). Migrants therefore do not immediately return to their previous level of remittances, but only do so in a gradual fashion.

On the policy front, this evidence suggests that reforms that reduce migrant remittance fees can have larger impacts on remittance flows than might have been expected. Such reforms include increases in competition in money transmission markets or improvements in information for migrants on the relative costs of different money transmission services.

Enhancing migrant control over remittance uses

A key barrier to maximizing the development potential of remittances is that migrants who are sending these funds have limited ability to monitor or control how they are used by recipients. Migrants are often found to have stronger preferences that remittances be used for purposes that may have general development benefits in the long run, such as investment (in physical or human capital) or savings (Ashraf et al 2015). But recipients may not completely share such preferences, and may use remittances for purposes with fewer development benefits (such as immediate consumption.) The key problem is asymmetry of information within the transnational household: migrants can only imperfectly monitor how remittances are used. With incomplete ability to monitor and control the use of remittances, migrants may choose to keep their earnings overseas and to remit less.[3]

A number of recent studies have documented positive impacts on different types of household investments (and, possibly, remittances) in response to migrants gaining an ability to better control or monitor how remittances are used. One key area where migrants seek greater control is over the amount saved (rather than consumed immediately) by remittance recipients in the home country. A randomized controlled trial among migrants from El Salvador by Ashraf et al (2015) tested ways to stimulate savings in El Salvador. To reveal whether migrants sought to control how much was saved by family members in the home country, the treatments varied in the degree to which migrants could monitor and control family members' savings at a bank in El Salvador. Migrants were much more likely to open savings accounts at the partner bank in El Salvador, and accumulated more savings at the partner bank, if they were assigned to the treatment condition offering the greatest degree of monitoring and control. Strikingly, the impact on savings of offering an account only in the name of someone else in El Salvador was much smaller in magnitude and not statistically significantly different from zero. This result reveals that the frequently-made policy recommendation to foster savings in migrants' home countries by encouraging migrants to remit directly into savings accounts of remittance recipients would be much less effective, compared to interventions that also improved and encouraged migrant monitoring and control over home-country savings.

Relatedly, Chin et al (2011) sought to shed light on the impact of facilitating migrant access to savings accounts in the *host* country (in this case, the U.S.), rather than in the origin country. The study randomized Mexican migrants in Texas into either a control group or a treatment group that was given assistance in obtaining a *matricula consular* identity card from the Mexican Consulate, which could be used as identification for opening a bank account in the U.S. Migrants in the treatment group were more likely to open U.S. savings accounts, accumulated more savings in the U.S., and remitted less to Mexico.

It is also widely noted that migrants have strong preferences that their remittances fund educational investments in their home countries. Two new studies have documented the impacts

[3] There is empirical evidence that individuals often prefer to control the uses to which gifted resources are put, and will often make larger gifts or transfers when they are able to do so. For example, Batista et al (2015) find in a lab-in-the-field experiment in urban Mozambique that subjects share more (with the closest person outside their immediate household) when they are able to control the use of the gifted funds by providing physical goods instead of cash. Eckel et al (forthcoming) find a similar result in the context of charitable giving in the U.S. Relatedly, Ambler (2014) found that remittance recipients (of U.S.-based migrants from El Salvador) changed how they used a remittance when they were told how migrants would like funds to be spent. Remittance recipients apparently have imperfect information on migrants' preferences, and are willing to modify their expenditures in the direction of migrants' preferences, even absent monitoring by the migrants.

of interventions aimed at helping migrants channel their remittances towards education in their home country. Ambler et al (2015) implemented a randomized controlled trial to test migrant demand for and the impact of a mechanism that allowed migrants to channel remittances towards educational expenditures for a student of their choice in the home country. Salvadoran migrants in D.C. were offered a new remittance product, named “EduRemesa”, that allowed migrants to target remittances towards the education of a specific student they selected in El Salvador. The EduRemesa did not actually control use of the funds for education, but sponsored students were told that the funds were intended to support their education. Three treatment groups differed in the level of subsidy provided for the EduRemesa. The study found no demand at all (exactly zero take-up) for EduRemesa among migrants in the “no match” treatment group, a small amount of take-up (7%) in the 1:1 match treatment, and 19% take-up in the 3:1 match treatment. The 3:1 match treatment led to statistically significant increases in total educational expenditures on the target student, a reduction in that student’s labor supply, and an increase in the likelihood the target student attended private school. This study therefore finds no evidence that migrants have an unsubsidized or “pure” demand for control over the use of remittances for educational purposes. But migrants do appear interested in channeling remittances toward educational expenditures of specific students when given matching funds to do so, and when this occurs there are positive impacts on beneficiary students.

In a related study, De Arcangelis et al (2015) partnered with a Philippine bank (Bank of the Philippine Islands) with branches in Rome to design and pilot-test a new remittance product, called EduPay. This product allowed migrants overseas to channel tuition payments for particular students directly to those students’ educational institutions in the Philippines, avoiding the need to send tuition payments via family members or others in the Philippines who might not be completely trusted to make such payments reliably. Proof of concept was demonstrated by successfully implementing a total of 178 EduPay payments for 55 students in the Philippines. A lab-in-the-field experiment indicated that migrants are willing to remit more to beneficiaries in the Philippines when their transfers can be “labeled” as intended for educational expenses. The impact of allowing labeling was to increase transfers by 15.3%. On top of this “labeling”, the impact of actually channeling funds to educational institutions is relatively modest (only a 2.2% increase on top of the labeling). These results indicate that a remittance product that simply allowed senders to attach a label to remittances as intended for education could have nearly as much impact on remittance sending as a product that actually channeled payments to schools. Note that this result is inconsistent with the finding of Ambler et al (2015) that Salvadoran migrants have zero demand for the unsubsidized EduRemesa educational remittance product. The inconsistency in results across these studies mean that it is important to investigate the relative impacts of education-labeled vs. education-channeled remittance products in follow-up work, to ascertain whether the experimental responses found by De Arcangelis et al (2015) hold up in a real-world setting.

In sum, a number of studies have revealed that migrants seek to control and monitor how their remittances are used. Interventions facilitating migrant control and monitoring of savings in the home country as well as in migrant destination countries have had positive impacts on savings. On the savings front, a policy lesson is that if an objective is to raise savings levels in the origin country, interventions should give priority to savings services that offer migrants some ability to monitor or control savings. If the policy aim includes raising savings by migrants in the host country, then facilitating access to host-country savings facilities can help achieve this objective.

When it comes to control over educational expenditures of remittance recipients, the evidence is slightly mixed. Migrants from El Salvador appear to require a subsidy or matching funds to channel funds towards education in the home country, but once induced to do so the funds are not diverted to other purposes and do raise educational expenditures in remittance-recipient households. Migrants from the Philippines show evidence of being willing to send more remittances when their funds can be labeled for educational uses. Further research in field settings is certainly called for to test and verify these results.

Improving working conditions of migrants

Migrant workers may face substantial barriers to improving their conditions of work. In particular, information constraints could undermine the economic benefits from international migration by decreasing their incomes or their ability to obtain better work conditions. Migrants may have limited information on job vacancies, partly due to limited local social networks, which increases their job-search costs. In addition, lack of knowledge about legal rights and regulations regarding changing employers can further restrict labor mobility and create monopsony power for employers.[4] Such factors could reduce migrant reservation wages, restrict their choice of employment, reduce workers' bargaining power relative to current employers, and make it difficult to leave jobs with poor employment conditions.

An important example of a migrant labor market reform was implemented in the United Arab Emirates, giving migrant workers the right to change employers after their contract ended without having to receive a letter of no objection from their previous employer. This reform was studied by Naidu et al. (forthcoming). Empirically, they exploited variation in the end date of worker contracts around the reform: some workers' contracts ended before the reform, so they were not as free to change employers, while others' contracts ended after the reform, allowing them to benefit from greater job mobility. They find that workers whose contract ended post-reform enjoyed differential increases in earnings (roughly 10 percent increase), compared to workers whose contracts ended before the reform. The right to be able to change employers and move from one job to another clearly benefited incumbent migrant workers. At the same time, however, the authors also found that the reform worked to the detriment of potential migrants to the UAE: firms reduced their demand for new migrants, and offered lower wages to new migrants that they did hire.

Those seeking to improve work conditions of migrants often advocate for them to be paid higher wages. A specific policy approach is to seek to establish legal minimum wages for migrants. McKenzie et al. (2014) examine the impact of raising the minimum wage in Hong Kong for domestic workers (maids) from the Philippines. In a difference-in-differences analysis, they find that a doubling of the minimum wage for maids did result in higher wages for such workers, but it also resulted in a substantial (more than 50 percent) reduction in the individuals able to migrate to Hong Kong for jobs as maids. This reduction presumably stemmed from reduced demand for maids once their minimum wages were set at a higher level. The McKenzie et al (2014) and Naidu et al (forthcoming) studies thus have a common theme: policies aimed at

[4] Legal restrictions that tie migrants to their employers or make it difficult to change employers are commonplace, particularly in countries with larger migrant workforces (Ruhs, 2013). This is clearly a separate issue from imperfect information about migrant workers' legal rights to change jobs.

improving the conditions of migrant workers do seem to benefit incumbent workers or workers who do get to migrate, but come at the cost of reducing demand for migrant workers, so that fewer migrants are able to secure migrant work under the improved conditions.

Another approach to improving migrant working conditions is simply to directly provide migrants with information regarding labor rights as well as information that can facilitate job search. Shrestha and Yang (2016) examined the impact of an informational intervention among Filipino migrant workers (working as domestic servants or maids) in Singapore. The study reports on the results of a randomized controlled trial in which migrants were randomly assigned to receive information aimed at facilitating worker mobility. Migrants assigned to the treatment group received information on Singaporean labor laws about changing employers, as well as information on current job vacancies for domestic work and information on a free online job portal where they could get more up-to-date information on job openings in Singapore. The treatment led to substantial improvements in worker knowledge about their legal rights to change employers, as well as to an improvement in an index of employment conditions. The treatment effects on knowledge and work conditions are concentrated among workers who, prior to treatment, had poor knowledge about their legal rights related to job mobility. This finding is suggestive that improvements in knowledge were the channel through which the treatment effects operated. Positive impacts on work conditions were also larger in magnitude among "vulnerable" migrants (those who reported at baseline to have poor work conditions). This vulnerable sub-population also became more likely to find a new employer as a result of treatment.

Migrant labor and legal rights is likely to be an important area for future empirical research aimed at measuring impacts. The existing two studies suggest that improving labor rights for migrants may improve conditions for existing workers, while harming the prospects of others who have yet to migrate. Simple informational interventions on legal rights and job search have the potential to have substantial impacts as well, and future work should analyze the effects of legal rights and job search information separately, to compare their relative effects.

Conclusion

There is substantial interest among governments, multilateral institutions, and non-government organizations in development policies related to international migration from developing countries. In the last decade, there has been a wave of rigorous empirical studies (many of which use the randomized controlled trial methodology) that quantify the impacts of a number of such policies. This article has examined evidence on the impacts of policies in five areas: 1) migration facilitation, 2) migrant education, 3) reducing remittance transaction fees, 4) enhancing migrant control over remittance uses, and 5) improving working conditions of migrants.

There is strong evidence that there are positive impacts from bilateral temporary worker programs, education aimed at facilitating settlement of permanent migrants, some types of financial education programs for temporary migrant workers, financial innovations to enhancing migrant ability to direct remittances to specific uses (such as savings and education), and programs improving migrant information on legal rights and job openings. The studies discussed in this article are far from the last work in these research areas; numerous questions remain open and ripe for future research. For example, under what circumstances might unilateral facilitation programs lead to greater and more beneficial international migration flows? Can any approaches to improving the legal rights of migrants benefit incumbent migrants without dampening demand among employers for new migrants? To what extent can migrants direct remittances to specific uses without actually controlling expenditures, perhaps instead simply suggesting or labeling remittances for specific uses?

This article has limited its focus to some selected migration policy areas where a good number of rigorous empirical studies have been conducted. Other major areas of migration policy, such as policies related to return migration and re-integration, have been the subject of a more limited number of careful empirical studies.[5] In addition, there is little hard empirical evidence on the impact of programs to tap migrant diasporas for charitable contributions or public goods provision in their home communities.[6] Relatedly, there is a great need for more evidence on the impact of policies to foster so-called "communal remittances" and other activities of home-town associations.[7] Future research in these and other areas has high promise to provide important and policy-relevant findings.

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[5] For example, Del Carpio et al (2016) exploits a natural experiment to examine the impact of Malaysia's "Returning Expert Program" to encourage high-skilled migrants to return.
[6] Barsbai et al (2015), on the determinants of charitable donations by Filipino migrants, is an important initial contribution along these lines.
[7] An important exception is Chauvet et al (2015), who use a difference in difference approach to quantify the positive impact of Malian home-town associations on public goods provision in home areas.

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