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The Governance of South–South Migration: Same or Different?

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Introduction: Defining “the South” in South–South Migration

The Global South is a contested concept, whose definition is relatively vague (see also Crawley and Teye, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, this volume). The expression has partially replaced terms that used to be commonplace, such as the Third World, and developing or underdeveloped countries, which implied both a supposed hierarchy among countries and value judgements (Mawdsley, 2012, 267). In social science literature, some academics have tried to define Global South in purely geographic terms (Bakewell et al., 2009, 2), although it is clear that even for them, the North and the South would not be neatly divided by the equatorial line (Anderson, 2014, 783). Others have defined Global South in economic terms, based on development indexes: either the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) index—widely used by governments and several international institutions, including the World Bank—or the Human Development Index, compiled by UNDP (Bakewell et al., 2009, 2). In this definition, countries in the higher echelons of the rankings (high-income or upper-middle income) are considered Global North, and countries in the lower echelons (low-income and lower-middle income) are classified as Global South. This seems to be a pragmatic and clear-cut solution to the complex issue of definition.

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When discussing South–South migration in this article, however, I will use a more critical and nuanced definition of Global South, one that has become more prominent in the recent humanities and social science literature, and which incorporates anthropological, cultural and historical considerations—including links to the experience of “enslavement, mapping, claiming, conquest and colonisation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Tafira, 2018, 127). In reality, this definition makes the boundary between North and South comparatively blurrier, to the extent that the term Global South becomes “productively ambiguous” (Anderson, 2014, 783). Mignolo compellingly explains that the expression “is not a geographic location; rather it is a metaphor that indicates regions of the world at the receiving end of globalization and suffering its consequences” (Mignolo, 2011, 184). As the North–South distinction transcends equatorial divisions and development indexes, it can be useful to think of it as a distinction between “periphery”—or the many Souths of the world—and the “metropole”, as the centre of power (Connell, 2007, 213).¹

Grasping the complexities inherent in defining the Global South is crucial to research and policy analysis on migration, since southern countries are nowadays origin, transit, destination and return countries for migrants and refugees. Furthermore, evidence suggests that in most continents, South–South migration is greater than South–North migration, and that the growth of the former has outpaced that of the latter (IOM, 2022, 1).

In this chapter, I first try to discern some specificities of South–South migration, before highlighting the limitations of the previous characterisation and nuancing it to take account of the complexity of human mobility in a context characterised by inequalities at the global level, as well as between southern countries and within them. Using examples from labour migration, forced displacement and mixed flows in the Global South, I then consider the implications of these characteristics of migration between the countries of the Global South for policy and programmatic responses—particularly those that can contribute to an effective governance of migration and the protection of the rights of migrants and refugees in the South. Throughout the chapter, I use a broad definition of migration, encompassing the breadth of human mobility. Wherever relevant, I refer specifically to labour migration, forced displacement or mixed flows.

¹ From this perspective, one may conceivably find pockets of South in urban and rural areas of North America or Western Europe which have suffered from long-standing political and infrastructural neglect.

What is Different? Discerning Specificities in South–South Migration

According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 37% of international migration occurs along South–South corridors, and only 35% from South to North (IOM, 2022, 1). Forced displacement too occurs mostly within the Global South (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019, 239): it is a myth that northern countries bear the burden of refugee influxes. So what, if anything, distinguishes these growing South–South migration flows?

To start with, different dynamics can be observed in how migrants reach their countries of destination: the prevalence of porous borders that permit border crossings by land, without transiting through a formal checkpoint, results in comparatively more prevalent irregular migration status. Migrants in irregular status are particularly vulnerable to rights violations and less likely to report abuse out of fear that any involvement with authorities may result in their arrest, detention and deportation.

Specific dynamics can also be observed in the integration of migrants in their host countries. A great deal of the literature on the Global North has focused on the sociological and cultural aspects of integration, contrasting national models such as France's assimilationism and the UK's multiculturalism, and more recently giving way to interculturalism (Rodríguez-García, 2010, 260; Zapata-Barrero, 2015, viii) or the superdiversity of many global cities (Vertovec, 2007, 1028). On the other hand, in southern countries, one of the most pressing concerns seems to be economic, or at least socio-economic, integration. This may be due to a variety of reasons, including the possible cultural and/or linguistic proximity between the countries of origin and destination; a shared history and skills compatibility (Khan & Hossain, 2017, 17). However, the characteristics of southern economies—and specifically their labour markets—play a role too.

Understanding labour markets is crucial to understanding human mobility because labour migration represents the large majority of international migration flows. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s latest available estimates on migrant workers, in 2019 there were 169 million migrant workers world-wide, constituting approximately 4.9% of the global workforce, and over 62% of the estimated 272 international migrants (ILO, 2021a, 11). Additionally, out of those who leave their countries for reasons unrelated to work—including refugees and other forcibly displaced people—the overwhelming majority still end up looking for employment or other forms of livelihood in their destination country, thereby turning into workers, who have an impact on labour markets.

Most labour markets in the Global South are characterised by high degrees of informality (Hammer & Ness, 2021, 2; ILO, 2018, 13): the informality rates among the general population reach 88% in India, 70% in Peru and 96% in Senegal (ILOSTAT, 2022). Large informal economies are both enticing and perilous for migrant workers. The attraction lies in the job opportunities for those with no access to a regular status, as well as those who, even in a regular situation, find no better livelihood option than to take up informal employment under conditions that most national workers are unwilling to accept. The peril arises out of the gaps in occupational safety and health, social protection and working conditions associated with informal employment (ILO, 2017, 69), which is largely out of the reach of labour inspection and affords workers little or no transparency about their rights. These protection gaps became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when migrants in the South were among the first to lose their jobs, but usually the last to access testing and treatment (African Union, 2020, 6), as well as any social protection measures (Carella et al., 2021, 13).

Irregular status and labour informality are different issues, which are intertwined in a mutually reinforcing relationship. Informality may contribute to irregularity insofar as vast informal economies attract those migrant workers who find no legal channels to migrate; and conversely, irregular status leads to further informality as migrants in an irregular situation have no access to formal jobs.

Even when they obtain a work visa and a formal job, many migrants in the Global South do not fully enjoy their right to work and rights at work. The recruitment process (both transnational and in-country) is insidious and can result in abuses and violations, from the charging of fees and related costs (which should be borne by the employer) to human trafficking and forced labour in the most extreme cases. Indeed, the forced labour prevalence among adult migrant workers is over three times that of national workers (ILO et al., 2022, 36). At their workplace, migrants' occupational safety and health are not always guaranteed, especially in the "3D jobs"—the *Ds* standing for dirty, dangerous and/or difficult (Koser, 2010, 306). Their working environments (private homes, crop fields, construction sites, sweatshops, meatpacking plants, fishing boats, etc.) and living conditions are such that many migrant workers have extremely limited access to justice and remedies if they suffer abuses or rights violations (Hamada, 2017, 157).

Temporariness is another feature of much South–South migration in regions such as Asia (Khan & Hossain, 2017, 16). Short-term, temporary and seasonal labour migration are linked to the economic activities that most

migrant workers engage in: occupations that have traditionally been categorised as *low-skilled* and *medium-skilled*, but should more accurately be referred to as *low-wage*. This trend contrasts sharply with the global race for talent that can be observed in South–North labour migration, whereby northern destination countries select the best and brightest professionals from the Global South, opening legal migration channels for them, and often leaving the countries of origin to deal with the consequences of brain drain (Raghuram, 2009, 27). The temporary nature of migration also means that integration prospects are curtailed, as there is no path to permanent residency or nationality acquisition in the host country (ILO, 2022, 36).

Not So Different, After All? Global Inequalities and Diversity Within South–South Migration

Push–pull theories and functionalist migration models with all their limitations (De Haas, 2014, 4) posit that migration occurs as a result of economic and demographic inequalities between countries: those in the Global North tend to attract migrants due to higher development vis-à-vis those in the South. The latter, often experiencing pressures on their labour markets as they cannot offer gainful work opportunities to all jobseekers, are relieved to let their nationals seek opportunities elsewhere.

Contemporary South–South migration can also be considered a by-product of the distinct impacts of globalisation on different parts of the Global South. Some have defined Asia as a South–South migration hub (Hossain et al., 2017, 1), with Asia's newly industrialised economies having become countries of destination requiring more and less skilled labour; and countries of origin such as Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines eager to provide it. Africa, the Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean also experience, to different degrees, increasing rates of intra-regional human mobility in the forms of labour migration, forced displacement and mixed flows.

While trying to outline some common features that distinguish South–South migration from South–North migration can be useful, it is also crucial to acknowledge that the exercise is a broad-brush characterisation. There is as much diversity and complexity in South–South migration as there is in humanity. Thus, for each trend outlined in the previous section, it is possible to also identify a counterexample to remind us that trends are not mathematical rules.

While northern countries do handpick high-skilled migrant workers for high-pay occupations, many of them also host migrant workers in low-pay sectors; some of these are in informal jobs, and some may be on their territory irregularly. Even under conditions of regularity and formality, some forms of mobility towards northern countries present important challenges to the protection of migrant workers, as they do in the South: many regulated temporary labour migration schemes have roots that can be traced back to colonial indentured labour (ILO, 2022, 1).

By the same token, the diversity of South–South migration also encompasses high-skilled professionals. One clear illustration among many is Venezuelan mixed-flow migration to Latin American and Caribbean countries: in several destination countries, the level of tertiary education attainment among the Venezuelan migrant population is higher than in the host population (ILO & UNDP, 2021, 24). According to one study, approximately 20,000 Venezuelan medical doctors were living in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru in 2020 (ILO, 2021b, 20). However, in contrast to most medical and healthcare workers migrating to the Global North (such as Indian doctors or Filipino nurses in the UK), most Venezuelans did not reach their countries of destination in Latin America on a work visa. In fact, many of them had to work in sectors unrelated to their training and qualifications upon arrival. In 2020, 40% of the surveyed healthcare professionals who were exercising their profession had been permitted to do so only as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a surge in need for medics and paramedics, and led governments to loosen administrative requirements for the recognition of foreign qualifications. Furthermore, although they were employed in high-skilled occupations, most of them were not paid accordingly (ILO, 2021b, 46).

Another illustration of the diversity within South–South migration is that highly regulated labour migration, based on visas and transnational recruitment, can coexist in the Global South alongside the previously described vast informal economies and widespread irregular migration. The migration of South and South-East Asian workers to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and to destinations such as Hong Kong and Singapore are examples of highly regulated South–South migration corridors, where the level of logistics, formality and bureaucracy involved is reminiscent of South–North labour migration as experienced, for instance, by Jamaican agricultural workers going to Canada or Indian engineers migrating to the USA.

One final consideration, which applies to both South–South migration and other migration flows, but with arguably greater impact on the former, is linked to the multi-level governance of migration and the role of local

authorities. Although the right to leave any country, including one's own (emigration) and to return to one's own country are universal human rights, entering another country is not a right (Higgins, 2009, 444). The determination of immigration policy, defined as the conditions for non-nationals to enter and reside in the State's territory, is a highly centralised prerogative of each state, considered to touch the very core of state sovereignty. Subnational and local authorities generally have no or little say in it. Nonetheless, cities, regions and other local authorities do play a pivotal role in designing and implementing crucial aspects of migration policy: first and foremost, those related to the reception and integration of migrants and refugees.

The role of cities in the governance of migration has been progressively acknowledged internationally through a number of initiatives: among them, the Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration and Development; the Mayors Migration Council and the UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative. Local policies for migrant integration have been widely documented (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017, 241). While local authorities contribute to the governance of migration everywhere, the difference they can make in certain southern settings is critical, due to the higher prevalence of both labour informality and irregular status among migrants. In contexts where migrants can cross borders and reach their destination without producing formal documentation, it is particularly beneficial for a local authority to foster access to livelihoods and self-sufficiency regardless of migration status, thereby limiting the fiscal burden on public finances. These pay-offs at the local level may determine a *de facto* right to work for migrants at that level, even when it does not exist *de jure* at the national level (Betts & Sterck, 2022, 525).

Policy and Programmatic Responses to South–South Migration

The complexity of South–South migration, intertwined with inequalities between and within countries—in both the North and the South—has wide-ranging policy and programmatic implications. Since the governance of migration occurs at several levels—local, national, regional and international—the remainder of this chapter sheds light on some policy and programmatic implications by looking at the interplay between these dimensions.

The SDGs and Development Policy

Starting with the global level, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by the international community in 2015, plays a role in shaping policy and programmatic responses to South–South migration. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 are universal: they apply to all countries, not only developing ones, so they should be equally relevant to the Global North and the Global South. This is a major shift from the previous paradigm (the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs), in which the responsibility for progress towards the achievement of the goals was placed on developing countries, in a top-down approach that set double standards of dubious effectiveness in terms of developmental impact in a globalised world.

Another important distinction from the previous development framework is that migration features expressly in the SDGs, while it had been absent from the MDGs. Crucially, an explicit reference to migration is made in Goal 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. Specifically, SDG Target 8.8 sets out to “Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment”. This is a crucial issue since most international migration is labour migration: over 62% of the estimated 272 international migrants (ILO, 2021a, 11). A substantial proportion of this international labour migration occurs within the Global South—approximately half of it, if we consider the Arab states, including the GCC countries, to be part of the Global South (ILO, 2021a, 32)—where the incidence of irregular migration status and labour informality tends to be higher, and dangerous forms of work with little protection are more widespread.

Another Sustainable Development Goal that specifically refers to migration is SDG 10: “Reduce inequality within and among countries”. In particular, Target 10.7 aims to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. It is worth zooming into one of the indicators established to measure the achievement of this target, namely indicator 10.7.1 on “Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of monthly income earned in country of destination” (ILO, 2020, 3). Measuring how much it costs for a migrant worker to obtain employment in another country matters because labour intermediation—the process by which a jobseeker is matched with a job opportunity—should come at no cost to the worker or

job seeker, regardless of whether it is carried out by a public employment service or a private recruitment agency.²

To understand how exorbitant recruitment costs can be for migrants along South–South migration corridors, it is worth considering that a Pakistani worker seeking employment in Saudi Arabia can be charged the equivalent of 10.6 months' country of destination earnings in recruitment fees and related costs; while a Bangladeshi worker migrating to Kuwait can be charged the equivalent of nine months' earnings.³ The effect of these charges can be devastating. Many migrant workers need to take out loans and become heavily indebted before starting their jobs overseas. Once they have arrived at destination, they start working knowing that, for several months, their income will have to go towards repaying debt. Those who end up victims of abuse or violations of their rights at work will be less likely to report their employer, look for an alternative one, or seek justice and redress, since the burden of debt will make them want to keep their source of income at all costs, and regardless of the conditions to be withstood. In this context, the achievement of migration-related SDG targets, such as 8.8, can clearly make a big difference in the lives of migrant workers in the Global South.

Protection of Migrants' Rights

Globally and nationally, certain legal instruments set standards to protect the rights of migrants, refugees and other people on the move in the Global South. Many southern countries have ratified the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol as well as at least one of the three international, legally binding treaties for the protection of migrant workers: ILO C97 Migration for Employment (Revised) Convention (1949), ILO C143 Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (1975) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990). Most have also endorsed the non-binding UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

² The requirement that no worker should pay for a job, and its corollary that no recruiter should charge fees to workers, is enshrined in the ILO Principles and Guidelines on Fair Recruitment and also appears in the Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity (the "Dhaka Principles"), developed by the Institute for Human Rights & Business (IHRB) and endorsed in 2012 by the Confederation of International Recruitment Agencies (now the World Employment Confederation—WEC) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). For further information, see https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/fair-recruitment/WCMS_536755.

³ For further details on these, as well as additional examples, please see the KNOMAD-ILO Migration and Recruitment Costs Surveys at <https://www.knomad.org/data/recruitment-costs> (accessed on 10 September 2022).

(2018). Beyond instruments that are specific to human mobility, a broader framework for the protection of migrant workers' (including refugees') rights can be found in human rights instruments. Because of migrants' and refugees' high participation in labour markets, International Labour Standards (ILS) can be particularly useful.

At the bilateral level, bilateral labour agreements (BLAs) can be negotiated between countries of origin and destination. These are complementary to international standards; they should draw and be based on the latter but have the advantage of being adapted to a specific bilateral context. Practical Guidance on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements was published in 2022 by the UN Migration Network.⁴ A model agreement is annexed to ILO R86 Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised). As well as having a clear focus on rights, agreements should ideally include provisions on access to, and portability of, social security for migrant workers; if they do not, separate bilateral or multilateral social security agreements are also useful programmatic responses. For South–South migration flows—at least those of the formal kind—BLAs constitute practical and useful governance tools. For example, they make a difference in the lives of Panamanian migrant workers from the indigenous people Ngäbe Buglé, who every year, during coffee harvest season, engage in temporary agricultural work in Costa Rica; or migrant workers from Nicaragua who cross into northern Costa Rica to work in the pineapple fields.

South–South Cooperation on Migration

South–South cooperation has been shaped to a great extent by emerging economies such as the BRICS (Brazil, India, China and South Africa) and it can take a variety of forms. While a plethora of literature exists on South–South cooperation in the broad field of development studies, less attention has been given to South–South cooperation in the specific fields of migration and displacement (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2019, 240). This cooperation has nevertheless occurred in a variety of forms.

One example of migration-related South–South cooperation is the project on the protection of the rights of migrant workers in Latin America and the Caribbean funded by Brazil's Development Cooperation agency from 2015 to 2017. The project was implemented by the ILO, which provided technical assistance as well as programmatic support, and the participating

⁴ The Guidance on Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements can be downloaded at: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS_837529/lang-en/index.htm.

countries were Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago. Government representatives and other stakeholders from these countries participated in dialogue and exchange on their respective experiences, and contributed to the development of a series of studies and guidance tools based on lessons learned and targeted to their specific needs.⁵ The fact that some of these tools are still being used today indicates that South–South cooperation can be a useful programmatic instrument for the governance of South–South migration: participating countries felt that the lessons learned on how to foster the socioeconomic integration of migrants and refugees in a context of high informality and high prevalence of irregular status resonated with their own experience, making the guidance particularly valuable.

Of course, the risk of co-opting by the more powerful party exists in any South–South cooperation exercise. In this case, the more powerful party (and potential co-opter) was Brazil, which was not only a participant, but also the donor of the project. Countries in the Global North have used development cooperation as a form of soft power for a long time, leading some to refer to development aid provided by the North as a new form of colonialism (Ziai, 2015, 33). Does it make a difference that, in this case, the development initiative was funded and led by a southern country, and its implementation supported by a United Nations entity?

This is a complex and controversial question. However, in this South–South cooperation project, Brazil imposed only administrative and financial constraints—which were handled by ILO as implementing agency—while the policy and programmatic priorities were set jointly by participating countries, which shared ownership over the South–South cooperation exercise. Regarding the ILO, it is a member of the UN system, with virtually universal membership (member states are from both the North and the South), which in this case was acting with southern funding. It could therefore be argued that this exercise was a true example of South–South cooperation that fostered dialogue on policy and programmatic responses to migration between the countries of the Global South.

Regional Consultative Processes

Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) have flourished world-wide since the 1990s as mechanisms to improve the governance of migration through regional-level dialogue among countries. The first RCP was established in the

⁵ A summary of the project and the guidance tools are available online at: https://www.ilo.org/brazilia/programas-projetos/WCMS_365740/lang--pt/index.htm.

Global North (the Budapest Process, est. 1991), and the two that followed involved both northern and southern countries: 1996 saw the establishment of the Inter-governmental Asia–Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants and the Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) in Central and North America (Hansen, 2010, 61, 69, 73). The former included Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia (a French territory), as well as China and several other southern countries throughout Asia and the Pacific. The latter has Canada and the United States among its member countries, as well as Mexico, all Central American countries and the Dominican Republic; with this membership, the RCM covers both South–South and South–North migration.

Several factors affect whether an RCP can be considered an example of South–South cooperation on migration governance. First, of course, the participation of northern countries in the RCP. Second, the possibility that the *de facto* leadership in setting the RCP's agenda may be exerted not by any member state but by the RCP technical secretariat, which is usually held by an international organisation (Hansen, 2010, 38). In these cases, considerations around co-opting would apply, similar to those addressed in the previous subsection.

An example of South–South cooperation in regional-level response to South–South migration is the Ministerial Consultation on Overseas Employment and Contractual Labour for Countries of Origin in Asia—now known as Colombo Process—established in 2003 at the initiative of the Sri Lankan Government. Sri Lanka, as a country of origin of migrant workers, was interested in exchanging information and improving coordination with other migrant-sending countries in the region, with a view to improving its negotiating position *vis-à-vis* destination countries and strengthening the protection of its nationals abroad. The Colombo Process currently has twelve member states: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Interestingly, the countries that received migrant workers from the Colombo Process member states quickly became interested in the initiative and requested to attend Colombo Process meetings as observers. Some were invited to do so for the first time in 2005. At this meeting, the Colombo Process member states formally decided to engage in dialogue with countries of destination, both in Asia and in Europe. This decision crystallised in the 2008 Abu Dhabi Dialogue, which saw Malaysia, Singapore, the GCC countries and Yemen (as receiving countries) meet with the Colombo Process member states (sending countries). Both groups have continued to meet,

retaining the “Abu Dhabi Dialogue” denomination, and held their sixth ministerial meeting in late 2021.⁶

The Colombo Process can be considered an at least partially successful example of South–South cooperation in the governance of South–South migration. In contrast to other RCPs, it was not piloted by countries in the Global North or by international organisations. Nevertheless, its activity has been intermittent, as evidenced by the absence of ministerial meetings between 2011 and 2016 (these are supposed to be held every two years, per Colombo Process Operating Modalities) (IOM, 2011, 5). These shortcomings could be attributed to leadership gaps from southern countries, but possibly also to a determination not to let northern parties or international organisations take the lead.

The Abu Dhabi Dialogue could arguably be considered another example of South–South cooperation in the governance of South–South migration. In line with the arguments advanced in the first section of this chapter, some may not agree that all its member states are southern states, since the GCC countries are high-income economies. However others—myself included—would argue that they are part of the Global South due to a variety of reasons (Ferabolli, 2021, 16), including, but not limited to, their development models, and a shared history with other southern countries, involving colonialism, empire and subordination.

Even so, inequalities within the Global South can be such that the power relations arising between countries of origin and countries of destination of migrant workers lead to co-opting dynamics that are quite similar to those experienced in the North. One illustration may be found in the agenda items at Abu Dhabi Dialogue meetings: recruitment and skills—priorities for the countries of destination—feature prominently, but protection issues (including abuse and exploitation of migrant workers, the consequences of the *kafala* system, etc.) not as much. Indeed, one could plausibly argue that the countries of destination’s request to attend meetings of the Colombo Process as observers, and the subsequent creation of the Abu Dhabi dialogue, were *metropolitan* attempts at co-opting a *peripheral* initiative for the governance of South–South migration.

⁶ For further information on the Colombo Process, see <https://www.colomboprocess.org/about-the-colombo-process/background> and on the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, see <http://abudhabidialogue.org.ae/timeline> (accessed on 09 October 2022). For details on the January 2008 meeting, see 24/01/2008 press release ‘Abu Dhabi Dialogue on Contractual Labour for Cooperation between Countries of Origin and Destination in Asia’ https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/news/WCMS_090660/lang-en/index.htm.

Regional Integration Mechanisms

RCPs do not “operate in a vacuum” (Hansen, 2010, 13). Regional economic communities (RECs) and regional integration mechanisms often provide the institutional framework to implement recommendations issued by the RCP. In certain regions, the local RECs are themselves drivers of migration policies that innovate and go beyond international standards—especially when a free movement regime is a component of the regional integration. In the Global North, one good example is the European Union, where intra-regional migration or mobility is virtually unrestricted, not just for the purpose of employment, but based on the principle of EU citizenship.

In the Global South, some regional blocs have also introduced free movement regimes. In the case of South America’s MERCOSUR, the regime is quite extensive, insofar as it applies to any national of a member or associate state, who can enter the territory of another such state and request a residence permit valid for up to two years—subject to minimum administrative requirements in addition to proof of nationality—for any purpose, not just employment. In the Caribbean, CARICOM—self-described as “the oldest surviving integration movement in the developing world”⁷—has provisions for the free movement of workers and job seekers. In Africa, the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, Right of Residence and Establishment has successfully accomplished visa-free travel within the region and has made some progress towards residence and establishment (Garba & Yeboah, 2022, 24).

In forced displacement contexts, some regions in the Global South have pioneered the development of regional protection frameworks, such as the 1969 Refugee Convention of the Organisation of African Unity, now African Union and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration in Latin America. Although these frameworks have enjoyed varying degrees of success in their implementation over time and across their respective regions (Hammoud-Gallego & Freier, 2022, 455, 469), southern countries have also demonstrated creativity in developing alternative, ad-hoc responses to mixed flows, as many Latin American countries have done with regularisation programmes for Venezuelans (R4V, 2022, 19).

⁷ See the CARICOM website: <https://caricom.org/our-community/who-we-are/#:~:text=CARICOM%20is%20the%20oldest%20surviving,%2C%20in%20culture%2C%20in%20security.>

Southern Cities and the Local Governance of Migration

Finally, at the local level, some southern cities have been at the forefront of policy and programmatic responses to South–South migration. Most have done so by applying the principle of non-discrimination to their offer of public services (mainstreaming migration as a variable into their programmes) while also creating some services specifically targeting migrants and refugees. São Paulo, the largest city in Brazil, created in 2013 a Migrant Policies Coordination Unit (CPMig by its Portuguese acronym) within the Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship. Its role is to oversee the implementation of the Municipal Policy for the Immigrant Population, which has been followed as an example by several other municipalities, in Brazil and beyond (Sampaio & Baraldi, 2019, 27). One key principle on which the policy rests is the acknowledgement of migrants' contribution to the enrichment of the city. The Coordination Unit manages a Migrants' Reference and Assistance Centre (staffed by migrant workers) and promotes, among others, access to decent work, to justice, to the banking system and regularisation for migrants.

In Mexico City, the local Labour Secretariat has mainstreamed human mobility as a key variable in most of its programmes for labour inclusion and social protection, with the objective of making them accessible to all its citizens, including Mexican migrants (returnees, internally displaced and domestic migrants) as well as refugees and migrants arriving from abroad (STyFE & ILO, 2018, 28).

As shown in this section, the set of southern responses to South–South migration encompasses a plethora of diverse policy and programmatic orientations that are not only innovative, but also as sophisticated as those devised and implemented in the North.

Conclusion

So, is South–South migration so different that the policy and programmatic responses required by it differ from those adopted in South–North migration? The answer will probably depend on whether the respondent is from the North or the South.

It is often unclear whether a certain policy or programmatic response is truly southern or has been co-opted by a non-southern actor to such an extent that the latter sets the agenda. In the case of the Colombo Process, at least at the time of the Process's establishment and at several other points in its

history, the objectives, priorities and tone were set by southern countries, and the resulting policy and programmatic focus was a truly *southern* response to South–South migration; as such, fundamental southern concerns such as the protection of migrant workers' rights featured prominently.

In a fully southern policy and programmatic orientation, not only the Colombo Process but also the Abu Dhabi Dialogue would have a clear focus on rights, and prioritise issues such as decent work, access to justice, minimum standards for bilateral labour agreements, etc. However, *realpolitik* and the different economic clouts of sending and receiving countries (*periphery* and *metropole* respectively) mean that policy and programmatic agendas can be easily co-opted, either by decisively northern actors (European and North American countries), or by arguably southern players (e.g. Asian destination countries, such as the GCC states), or even by hybrid stakeholders (international organisations).

Since each South–South migration corridor is unique, it is wise not to promote a one-size-fits-all approach when looking for effective policy and programmatic approaches to migration governance. However, based on past and current experiences, certain practices are worth recommending, since their application entails minimum risk and can improve outcomes for migrants and southern countries.

At the *national level*, framing migration as a human rights issue rather than a security problem, and presenting it as such, helps host communities see what they have in common with migrants as opposed to what sets them apart. This helps protect migrants. Ensuring coherence among policies that directly affect migrants as well as host communities (immigration policy, employment policy, education and training policy) is crucial to facilitating the integration of migrants in the Global South and maximising their contributions to the host economies, thereby also alleviating the fiscal burden on the host state (OECD & ILO, 2018, 33). At the same time, when devising key national policies, such as social protection, health, education, it is paramount to consider a country's complex migration profile (i.e. incoming migration, outgoing migration or nationals abroad, transit migration, return migration), both at present and in future scenarios, since a country's migration profile can change suddenly. Finally, ensuring coordination between different levels of migration governance—the national level, which usually sets immigration and other overarching laws, and the *local level*, where integration happens—maximises the impact of public spending on the policies and programmes devised for migrants and host communities alike.

At the *regional level*, coordinating with neighbouring countries can be an effective way of ensuring migrants' protection and context-specific policy

responses to South–South migration. This is particularly important between countries and within regions with substantial migration flows. This coordination can materialise in different modalities: multilaterally, within the contexts of RECs and/or RCPs on migration; or bilaterally, through the negotiation and implementation of bilateral agreements. Bilateral labour agreements are often the best tailor-made policy and programmatic response to South–South labour migration flows. For the BLAs to work effectively, it is crucial that they are developed ensuring inter-institutional coordination (ministries of foreign affairs, labour, interior—all need to have a say) and in broad consultation with other key stakeholders, including employers’ organisations, trade unions and relevant civil society actors.

At the *global level*, striving for the achievement of the SDGs, especially targets 8.8 on the protection of labour rights of all workers, including migrant workers, and 10.7 on orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility, is a sound first step towards ensuring adequate policy responses to South–South migration. The ratification and application of International Labour Standards and other relevant human rights instruments also help ensure sound governance and rights protection, including where the migration-specific treaties have not been ratified.

Policy coordination and coherence at different levels of governance are crucial in South–South migration and other forms of migration alike. However, the challenging contexts that characterise many southern destination countries (vast informal economies, lack of social and labour protection, etc.) and the particular vulnerability of many migrants along South–South migration corridors (higher prevalence of irregular status, obstacles in access to justice, no long-term prospects, etc.) make bespoke programmatic and policy responses to South–South migration particularly urgent.

The inequalities and diversity between the countries of the Global South render each southern context is unique. Yet the wealth of existing, successful southern responses to South–South migration suggests that it pays to examine what has worked elsewhere and consider how it can be adapted. In the foreseeable future, South–South migration will continue to require innovative responses, and to constitute a migration governance laboratory that both the South and the North will observe and learn from.

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