

Migration Graduate Student Project II

Project Summary

The aim of the project, “Poverty, Inequalities and Migration”, is to contribute to the literature on Migration and Development by offering a comparative perspective on migrant’s decisions and the impact of migration on poverty and poverty alleviation. To this end, **three** qualified students will be selected to enroll in the MA program of Migration and Refugee Studies at the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CRMS) at The American University in Cairo (AUC). Each student will work and research on a specific MENA country.

Introduction

Poverty impacts the desire and the ability to migrate. Poverty and income inequalities are among the driving forces behind the desire to migrate, but they also constrain the ability to migrate. This project will examine the extent and ways in which poverty and income inequalities create and constrain migration opportunities. Focusing on two labor-sending countries in the MENA region, the project will evaluate the impact of poverty and inequality on the decision to migrate, the migratory routes are chosen, and how one reaps the potential benefits of migration. As such, the project aims to investigate the role of migration in eradicating or perpetuating inequalities.

Problem Statement

Most studies on the relationship between Migration, Poverty and Development have been carried out in countries outside the MENA region. The few studies which have been conducted within the MENA region focus on the Maghreb countries and mostly look at the role of remittances. With regard to Egypt, a major sending country, there are few reports that tackle the issue and no rigorous academic work is to be found. There is a need to contribute to the literature on Poverty, Development and Migration through offering insight from the MENA region.

Background

CMRS was established in 2000 as a program on refugees’ issues. It was only in 2008 that its scope was extended to include migration issues. Due to the continuous displacement in the region, the research agenda remained refugee-focused. There is a need to respond to labor migration issues in the region and this project will offer the needed opportunity. This year CMRS became a partner in a global research hub. The Hub is funded through UKRI’s Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and will see CMRS join forces with universities and organizations from across the world to explore how the movement of people in the Global South is affecting inequality and development in less developed regions. Among the work packages included in the Hub is one on poverty, inequality, and migration, which will bring together universities researching the topic and institutions like the OECD. In addition, a standardized survey on migration related issues will be carried out in the framework of the Hub covering all of the countries involved. The Hub and its resources, including the results of the survey, will be invaluable to the implementation of this project.

Significance

This project will study and analyze the relationship between poverty and migration. The project will adopt a comparative approach where the behavior of migrants will be assessed in two sending MENA countries. In this way, the project will respond to the current gap concerning migration and development in the MENA region.

Project Description

This project aims to examine how poverty and inequalities create and constrain migration opportunities and migration outcomes. The project will focus on two countries of the MENA region: a Maghreb country and Egypt. The focus on a Maghreb country (either Morocco or Tunisia) will enable the project to review the already existing literature on the subject to identify trends and issues. The focus on Egypt will enable the project to make use of the findings of the survey that will be carried out in the framework of the Hub mentioned above. The project will adopt the livelihoods approach to understanding the relationship between migration and poverty and explore the effects of poverty on people's decision and ability to migrate. Livelihoods include the capabilities, assets (both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living. Livelihood strategies also represent a strategic choice using a combination of activities by households and their individual members to maintain and improve their quality of life. Migration is one of these strategies according to this approach (De Haas, 2010). How does poverty impact the ability of the household to choose migration as a strategy? Would the availability of migration as a strategy for some households perpetuate the inequality that already exists between households and communities? How would poverty impact sub-migratory decisions like where to migrate? Which routes are the best to take? These and other questions would be answered by this project. The methodology of the project will be based on a desk review of existing literature, in-depth interviews with migrants and non-migrants in the two countries, and analysis of the survey in Egypt.

The three selected students will be advised to enroll in particular elective courses that relate to the subject of the project. Following the completion of the five core courses and the three elective courses that are needed for the MA in Migration Studies, the students will be mentored throughout the data collection process for the project and the writing of the final thesis. The duration of the research project will be 12 months, with 9 months for conducting the research and 3 months for the completion of a thesis document for each student.

The Advancement of Scientific Knowledge and Broader Impact

The project would contribute to filling the existing gap in the literature that is currently country-specific and would offer recommendations that can contribute to harnessing benefits of migration. The project will also contribute to building the capacity of young researchers and train them to contribute to the field of Migration Studies, in particular, and Social Studies, in general.

Biographical Sketches

Ibrahim Awad is a political scientist and political economist. At present, he is a professor of practice of global affairs and the director of CMRS. He has worked for the League of Arab States, the United Nations and the International Labor Organization, holding positions such as secretary of the commission, UN-ESCWA; director, ILO Sub-Regional Office for North Africa; and director, ILO International Migration Program.

Gerda Heck is an Assistant professor of Sociology and Migration. Her academic work and research focuses on migration and border regimes, urban studies, transnational migration, migrant networks and self-organizing, religion and new concepts of citizenship. She has conducted research in Germany, Brazil, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Morocco, Turkey and the USA.

Leveraging Resources

CMRS engagement in the UKRI GCRF South-South Migration, Inequality and Development Hub will provide an invaluable resource opportunity to students of the TLG program. In terms of academic resources, the Hub researchers and scholars can be regularly consulted. In terms of

financial resources, the Hub's travel fund can contribute to students' participation in the events organized in the framework of the Hub. In addition to the Hub, students will also benefit from CMRS resources in terms of its strong connection with the migrant and refugee communities, as well as the organizations working in the field both in Egypt and beyond.

Deliverables

Deliverables include three master theses deposited at the Digital Archive and Research (DAR) Repository of the American University in Cairo, publically accessible. In addition, the results of the research project will be disseminated through recognized venues in the field, such as international conferences, journals, and/ or the CMRS series 'Cairo Studies on Migration and Refugees'.

Professional Development and Mentoring Plan

The Co-PIs will be committed to the close mentoring of the three graduate students through theses research supervision, in order to have them develop the required skills for successfully carrying out the research, in addition to mentoring, support and guidance for results dissemination at local and international venues of relevance. In addition, a workshop will be organized during the thesis writing process in which the students will participate to review issues related to the literature review, data collection, and application of the theories studied.

References

Gerda Heck, Firat Genc and Sabine Hess. 2017. The Multilayered Migration Regime in Turkey: Contested Regionalization, Deceleration and Legal Precarization; *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, Volume 32, Issue 4

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