

Key findings and their policy implications

(from "Migration, Scientific Diasporas and Development: Impact of Skilled Return Migration on Development in India"; Final Research Report; prepared by CODEV-EPFL, IDSK,JNU, ILO; April 2013, p. 35-36)

- Knowledge transfer was considered to be the most important of the four development engagement channels i.e., physical return, financial transfers, knowledge transfer, and social impact. In case of the diaspora, physical return was widely perceived as a necessary condition for the transfer of knowledge.
- Indian students and researchers in Europe link their development aspirations to their return plans and believe that Indian society can benefit from their scientific networks and expertise but the results of the Indian data show that returnees face a number of obstacles within the local system once they are back in India. Some of the obstacles that we identified in this study include the local work culture, a resistance to change, the lengthy bureaucratic process, and a lack of suitable infrastructure. Such obstacles have implications for employers as well as for policy makers.
- Migrants' mobility plans are determined by both personal and structural conditions. Available opportunities and perceptions of the environments in both the home and the host countries determine migration decisions, including the possible return to the home country. The return intentions of skilled Indians and those actually doing so may increase if there is a belief that India can provide an enabling economic environment with adequate career and future prospects.
- Indians abroad find it difficult to involve themselves in institutional networks as the outreach of these networks is often limited to selected groups and there is a dearth of participatory and inclusive approaches. Diaspora institutions should avoid creating insider groups. Policies should also encourage bottom-up initiatives. In addition, the government of India does not have a policy to engage with, and support skilled returnees to organise themselves in networks. Thus, the necessary supportive initiatives should be put in place.
- A large part of return migration seems to be primarily driven by the employers as most of the returnees in the present study had gone abroad on short-term projects/assignments where return was an inherent part of their work contract. Migration policy should therefore take note of this particular kind of short term specific migration projects to capitalize on their development effects for India.
- One of the important factors that induced return was family; a significant number of returnees came back to reunite with their families and found themselves professionally 'frustrated'. The average length of migrants' stays abroad has been declining over time and this is resulting in individual migration rather than family migration. Bearing in mind that this is an outcome of the temporisation of migration, immigration policies that are geared towards retaining talent should consciously promote measures that facilitate family migration rather than individual migration.
- The majority of returnees (as well as non-migrants) preferred to locate themselves in the selected cities in India because these cities offered superior educational and research opportunities and provided a better cosmopolitan environment commensurable with the cities of the developed destination countries. Accordingly, in the present study, return has been found to be induced by the pull of emerging employment opportunities in those cities. Enhancing employment opportunities along with improved infrastructure in smaller cities and towns in India should therefore be a policy priority to channel return migration for a balanced regional development.
- A large part of the remittances was spent on routine family related needs, leaving little for long-term investments. The spending patterns of returnees and non-migrants were found to be similar, as both groups preferred to spend on housing and consumer durables.
- Minority groups show a greater commitment to the development of the home country, and this was also the case of women, religious minorities as well as scheduled castes. In order to promote human resource development among the disadvantaged communities in India, European countries should aim at designing policies that give preferential treatment to candidates from these communities; for example by targeting scholarship programmes, admission policies at universities and educational institutes and by adopting equal opportunity policies suited to Indian social realities. This implies that knowledge transfer by these people would directly affect development among most needy communities as they are intimately connected to the disadvantaged social groups of India. In this way, it can promote balanced development in India.

- A majority of diaspora and returnees were found to have little knowledge of the various initiatives undertaken by the Indian government to engage with its diaspora. The government of India may wish to improve its communication about its policies for the diaspora community.