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Global Trends in South–South Migration

Kerilyn Schewel and Alix Debray

Introduction

Migration is a feature of every society. Most people migrate internally, or within countries, but a smaller share moves internationally, or across country borders. Scholarship and public discourse tend to focus on international movements from the Global South to the Global North, yet as this chapter will show, over one-third of all international migration in 2020 was between countries of the Global South—a greater share than South–North migration (UN DESA, 2020). Countries in the Global South host at least 40% of all international migrants, and over 85% of refugees and asylum seekers.

Contrary to prevalent and somewhat alarmist narratives that migration is reaching unprecedented and unmanageable scales, global levels of international migration have remained surprisingly stable. Absolute volumes of international migration have increased significantly, but so too has the global

K. Schewel (✉)
Duke Center for International Development, Sanford School of Public Policy, Durham, NC, USA
e-mail: kerilyn.schewel@duke.edu

A. Debray
UNU-CRIS, Bruges, Belgium

Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

A. Debray
e-mail: adebray@cris.unu.edu

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population. According to the most recent UN Population Division estimates, international migrants constituted just 3.6% of the 7.8 billion people living on this planet in 2020—a percentage that is only one point higher than the 2.6% registered in 1960 (UN DESA, 2020). In the Global South, the share of the population who are international migrants is even smaller than the global average: 2.9% in 2020 (UN DESA, 2020).

Despite the surprising stability of the global rate of international migration, clearly much in the world has changed over this period of accelerated globalisation. In 1960, the top three destination countries of international migrants were the US, India, and Pakistan. In 2020, they were the US, Germany, and Saudi Arabia. India and Pakistan have fallen to 14th and 19th, respectively, while new European and Middle Eastern countries have moved into the top ten. The most important changes in international migration appear to be directional (see Czaika & de Haas, 2014). Global population movements track deeper geopolitical and economic changes, as people move to seize new opportunities, to respond to shifting labour markets and new inequalities, and to flee new conflicts in our global age.

This chapter presents a broad-brush overview of recent trends in South–South migration, using origin and destination international migrant stock data from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). After providing more detail about the UN DESA dataset, the chapter has three main sections. The first compares volumes and gender composition of South–South migration with other types of migration (South–North, North–North, and North–South) between 1990 and 2020. The second section presents the top twenty South–South migration corridors, followed by brief regional overviews. The final section considers patterns specific to refugees and internationally displaced peoples in the Global South.

Migration Data in the Global South

To review trends in South–South migration, we faced two important decisions. First, what countries constitute the Global South? As previous chapters have explored, the categories of Global South and Global North are somewhat arbitrary and increasingly contested. No universally agreed upon list of qualifying countries exists. Definitions based on geography, income-level, or human development indicators fail to capture the remarkably diverse political, socioeconomic, and cultural realities that constitute the Global South, and treating the Global South as one entity obscures rising inequalities within it. Our primary aim in this chapter is to analyse migration trends

in regions that are traditionally under-represented in migration studies—without necessarily limiting the term to a country's level of economic or human development. For our review of global trends, we used the list of 138 "Countries in the Global South" provided by the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) to establish the baseline for the categories of "South" and "North" (see Fig. 8.1).

The second key decision concerned what migration data to use. There are two main types of migration data. Stock data refers to the number of people living in a destination country who were born or have citizenship elsewhere at a specific point in time. Flow data captures how many migrants are moving between two countries over a given period. Stock data tends to be more available and reliable than migrant flow data, but stock data tends to undercount population mobility. Flow data is more coveted by migration researchers, but only 45 countries report migration flow data to the United Nations, and of these, only Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan are from the Global South (UN DESA, 2015). It is even more difficult to track irregular migration, smuggling, and displacement. Data on these forms of migration tend to rely on more creative data collection strategies (e.g., cell phone, social media, court documents, or tracking data collected at strategic transit locations) rather than standard statistical or administrative sources (e.g., census, household survey, visa, or border data).
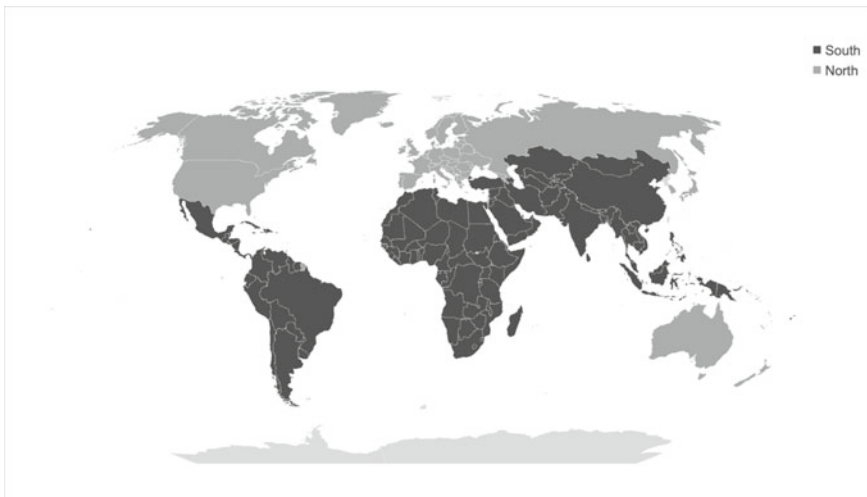

Fig. 8.1 Global South and Global North country categorisation from the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) (*Source* Map template powered by Bing © Australian Bureau of Statistics, GeoNames, Microsoft, Navinfo, OpenStreetMap, TomTom)

To map global trends and identify key South–South migration corridors, we use origin and destination international migrant stock data from UN DESA, which may be further explored by interested readers using the online Migration Data Portal run by the International Organization of Migration.[1] UN DESA provides global estimates of international migrant stocks based on national statistics on country of birth, and where data on the foreign-born were not collected in national censuses, based on country of citizenship (UN DESA, 2020a). This dataset allows us to explore differences by gender and over time (between 1990 and 2020). It also includes refugee and asylum seeker figures within the dataset, reflecting a definition of international migrants as people who change their country of residence, regardless of their reason for moving.

The UN DESA dataset is the most geographically comprehensive dataset available on international migration, including estimates of migrant stock data for 232 countries/areas. However, the dataset also has important limitations. First, stock data likely underestimates actual migration flows. Second, the dataset is built upon population census data, which can be inaccurate and unreliable in many countries where national statistical bureaus have not received sufficient investment or support. Since the 2010 round of censuses, for example, 43% of Central and Southern Asian countries and 16% in Sub-Saharan African countries do not have at least one data source on international migrant stocks (UN DESA, 2020b). Third, countries may use different criteria to identify international migrants, based on different minimum duration of stay in the country, complicating cross-country comparisons. Finally, this dataset does not attempt to measure migration flows or irregular migration. For these reasons, it is likely that the number of people moving across borders—particularly in the Global South—is higher than the estimates of international migrants based on population census data presented here.

Global Overview

South–South migration has been and remains a significant share of global population movements. Figure 8.2 shows the evolution of international migrant stocks in millions of people in 1990, 2005, and 2020. South–South migration was the predominant form of international migration in 1990, surpassed by South–North migration in 2005 and is now slightly greater than South–North migration in 2020. North–North and South–South migration show surprisingly comparable volumes of international migration in 1990
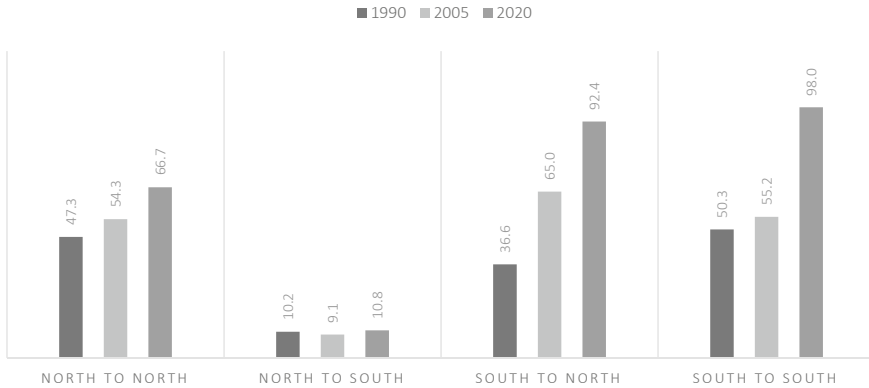
■1990 ■2005 ■2020

Fig. 8.2 Evolution of international migrant stocks, in millions of people (*Source* Own calculation by using UN DESA, 2020)

and 2005, before a significant rise in South–South migration in 2020. North–South migration has remained relatively small as a share of global population movements, hovering around 10 million people between 1990 and 2020. Figure 8.2 suggests that international migration within the Global South appears to be on the rise, at least in terms of absolute numbers.

Describing migration trends in terms of absolute numbers or percentages of a population gives two very different impressions. For example, the total stock of international migrants in Africa increased from 15.7 million in 1990 to 25.4 million in 2020. However, the percentage of the total population in Africa that were migrants declined from 2.5% in 1990 to 1.9% in 2020 (UN DESA, 2020). Thus, although absolute numbers of migrants rose significantly, overall population growth increased more quickly. This demographic context is important to keep in mind as young populations grow across many countries in the Global South, while many countries in the Global North face population ageing and decline.

Figure 8.3 shows international migration trends from the Global South by gender, distinguishing between South–South migration and South–North migration. Male and female migration is roughly equal (50% split) across time periods in the South–North corridor, with a slight increase in the number of females relative to males in 2020. South–South migration shows greater gender differences. As a share of total movements within the Global South, male migration increased from 55% in 1990 to 58% in 2020. Although the gender composition of migration flows varies significantly across countries and corridors, big picture trends suggest that women constitute a declining percentage of South–South migration since 1990.
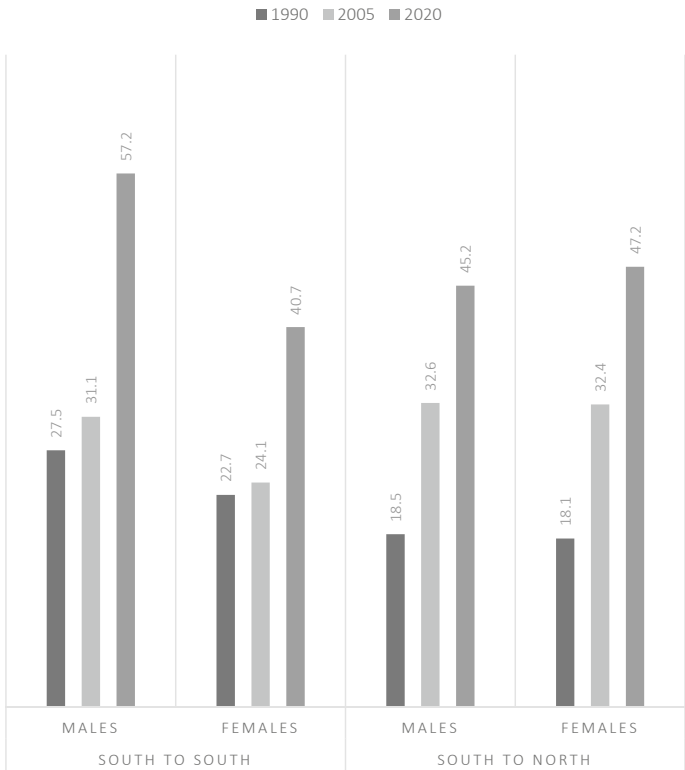
■1990 ■2005 ■2020

Fig. 8.3 Evolution of international migrant stock by gender, in millions of people (*Source* Own calculation by using UN DESA, 2020)

Regional and Sub-regional Trends

This section reviews international migration trends for different regions and sub-regions of the Global South. Figure 8.4 shows the countries included in each region/sub-region: Central America, South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa (excluding Egypt), the Middle East (including Egypt), Central Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia, China, and Small Island States (including the Caribbean and smaller islands in Oceania).

Table 8.1 shows the top twenty migration corridors across the Global South. Migration from South Asia to the Middle East is the largest migration corridor, and it has grown substantially in recent decades. The number of international migrants of South Asian origin in the Middle East grew from 8.4 million in 1990 to 21.5 million in 2020. The top five migration corridors that follow are all intra-regional corridors, with some of the largest movements taking place between countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East,
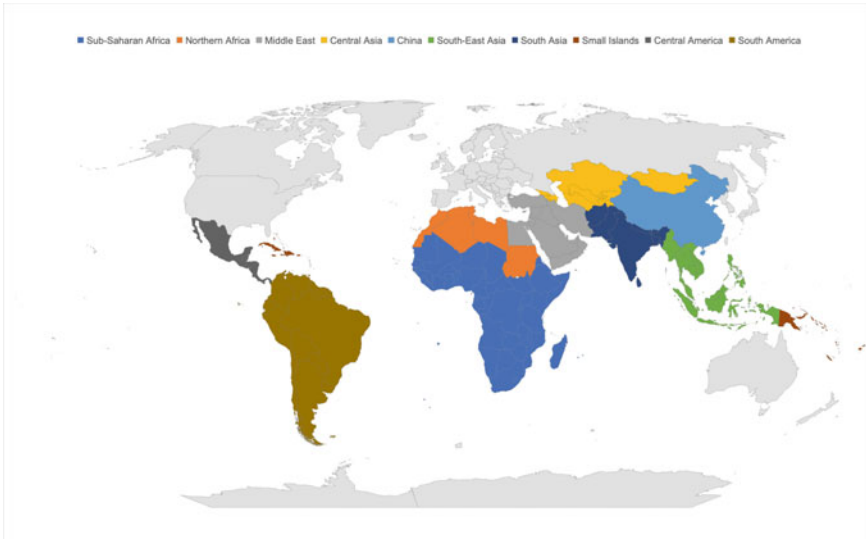
Fig. 8.4 Geographic groupings used for regional analyses (*Source* Map template powered by Bing © Australian Bureau of Statistics, GeoNames, Microsoft, Navinfo, OpenStreetMap, TomTom)

South America, South Asia, and South-East Asia, in that order. Table 8.1 also shows significant movements between regions neighbouring each other: from China to South-East Asia, for example, or between South and South-East Asia.

Intra-regional migration is the dominant trend for most of the Global South, but Fig. 8.5 illustrates important differences in the relative share of intra-regional versus extra-regional destinations by sub-region. Some sub-regions like Central America, Northern Africa, and Central Asia show low levels of intra-regional migration and high levels of extra-regional migration—a relatively stable trend since 1990. It is no coincidence that these areas border wealthy regions of the Global North: North America, Europe, and Russia, respectively.

Other areas of the Global South show greater diversity in the evolution of intra-regional versus extra-regional migration. Some regions have seen a relative rise in intra-regional movement. The Middle East, for example, had comparable levels of intra-regional and extra-regional migration in 1990 and 2005, before a large increase in intra-regional migration in 2020. This jump reflects, in part, the arrival of over six million Syrians in Middle Eastern countries over this period. South America had greater extra-regional movements to destinations outside the continent in 2005, but in 2020, sees a notable rise in intra-regional migration.

Table 8.1 Top 20 regional corridors in the Global South

#	Migration corridors in the Global South		International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
	Origin sub-region	Destination sub-region	1990	2005	2020
1	South Asia	Middle East	8,430,184	9,908,618	21,543,951
2	Sub-Saharan Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	11,491,413	11,723,891	17,808,594
3	Middle East	Middle East	4,707,666	7,067,549	16,930,232
4	South America	South America	2,077,128	2,894,144	8,557,503
5	South Asia	South Asia	13,805,470	9,404,692	8,218,312
6	South-East Asia	South-East Asia	1,652,270	5,072,632	7,641,267
7	South-East Asia	Middle East	1,347,646	1,951,598	4,303,417
8	China	South-East Asia	2,485,449	2,885,850	3,425,709
9	South Asia	South-East Asia	217,470	803,747	1,771,538
10	South-East Asia	South Asia	659,702	692,752	1,520,414
11	Sub-Saharan Africa	Northern Africa	1,372,517	599,161	1,489,388
12	Northern Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	248,780	799,347	1,172,533
13	Northern Africa	Middle East	544,892	668,883	1,125,149
14	Central Asia	Central Asia	1,397,406	1,261,496	956,318
15	Small Islands	Small Islands	493,506	672,976	934,299
16	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East	214,251	336,788	774,124
17	Central America	Central America	1,195,652	503,647	743,476
18	South-East Asia	China	304,298	440,523	635,568
19	Middle East	Northern Africa	312,014	487,831	633,657
20	Small Islands	South America	66,386	72,844	424,637

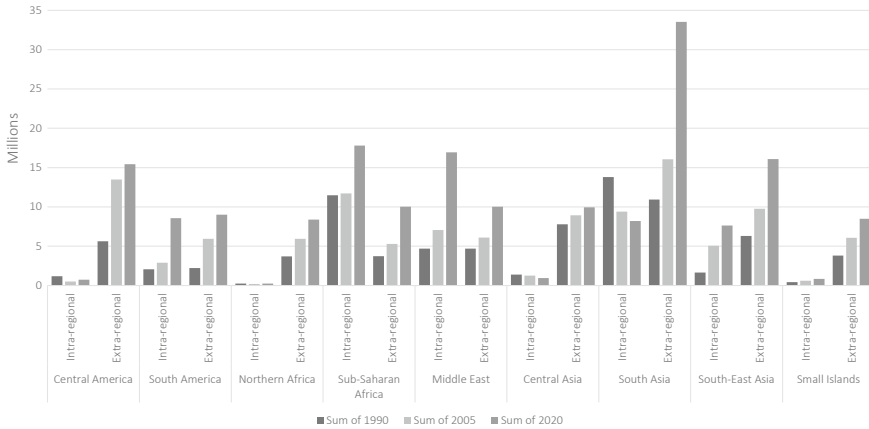*Source* Own calculation using UN DESA (2020)

Fig. 8.5 Evolution of intra- and extra-regional migration per sub-region, in millions of people (*Source* Own calculation by using UN DESA, 2020)

Other sub-regions show the opposite trend. South Asia shows a clear decline in intra-regional migration and a sharp rise in extra-regional movements, increasingly directed towards Middle Eastern countries. South-East Asia has had higher levels of extra-regional migration since 1990, but the gap between extra- and intra-regional migration grew larger in 2020. Sub-Saharan Africa, which has the largest volumes of intra-regional mobility in the Global South, saw a jump in both intra-regional and extra-regional migration between 2005 and 2020. The following sections explore these regional dynamics in greater detail, including information on the top ten origin and destination countries for each sub-region.

The Middle East

The rise of the Middle East as a major global migration hub has been one of the more important trends over the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are two of the top 10 global destination countries, hosting 13.5 million and 8.7 million immigrants, respectively (MPI, 2023). When analysing immigrants as a percentage of the total population, and excluding small island or city states, the top destination societies are almost all in the Middle East. In the UAE, for example, immigrants made up 88.1% of the total population in 2020. Other notable countries with majority immigrant populations in 2020 include Qatar (77.3%), Kuwait (72.8%), and Bahrain (55.0%) (MPI, 2023).

The labour demand for immigrant workers in the Gulf States rose after the discovery of vast reservoirs of oil in the mid-twentieth century, and the 1973 oil shock that significantly increased the price of oil. This generated new financial resources to undertake major development projects and greater demand for foreign workers to carry out the work. While there were only some two million migrant workers in the Gulf region in 1975, some 68% of whom were from other Arab countries (Thiollet, 2011), the scale of migration increased dramatically over the following decades. As Table 8.2 shows, most migrant workers now come from South Asia, particularly countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Migration from India grew from just under 2 million in 1990 to 9.6 million in 2020. There were 3.4 million migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh, respectively, in 2020. Migration from other countries in the Middle East remains significant (36%), followed by migration from Europe and North America, Northern Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Migration from Northern Africa doubled from 544,892 in 1990 to over 1.1 million in 2020, and migration from Sub-Saharan Africa more than tripled from 214,251 in 1990 to 774,124 in 2020. However, this misses significant irregular movements. Irregular migration from Ethiopia to the Middle East, for example, has been estimated to be at least double the number of formal figures (Demissie, 2018).

Different world regions show important gender differences in migration to the Middle East. South Asian and South-East Asian countries see the greatest and growing gender divergence since the 1990s. The number of South and South-East Asian women living in the Middle East roughly doubled from 3.6 million in 1990 to 7.3 million in 2020, responding to the increasing demand for domestic workers, nurses, and service staff. The number of male migrants from South and South-East Asia has historically been higher, responding to labour demand for construction workers, drivers, mechanics, or other professional positions. Mirroring global trends in South–South migration, male migration from South and South-East Asia accelerated at a faster pace than female migration, tripling from 6.2 million in 1990 to 18.6 million in 2020.

Other world regions show smaller gender differences in migration to the Middle East. Europe, North America, South America, and China are distinctive for having more female migrants in the Middle East than male migrants. There were 34,576 South American women in the Middle East in 2020, compared to 29,234 men, and 19,163 Chinese women compared to 9149 Chinese men.

Migrants leaving Middle Eastern countries are most often found in other Middle Eastern countries (62% of the 27.2 million international migrants). 32% are in Europe and North America. Top destination regions in the

Table 8.2 Top 10 countries of origin and destination to/from the middle east

Middle East	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020
Origin of immigrants in the Middle East			
India	1,975,728	3,741,866	9,599,189
Syrian Arab Republic	442,253	553,442	6,874,146
State of Palestine	1,587,057	2,952,323	3,585,723
Bangladesh	869,805	1,440,960	3,462,617
Pakistan	921,081	1,465,954	3,430,202
Afghanistan	4,161,055	2,611,285	3,327,155
Egypt	1,013,052	1,329,893	2,892,044
Indonesia	840,520	1,116,538	2,312,797
Philippines	406,073	691,436	1,695,969
Yemen	430,032	560,791	1,176,308
Destination of migrants from the Middle East			
Jordan	1,111,847	2,133,048	3,320,209
Germany	1,658,152	1,637,174	3,081,546
Saudi Arabia	1,139,748	1,432,174	2,956,307
Lebanon	507,755	713,223	1,694,805
United States of America	677,567	1,113,774	1,659,457
United Arab Emirates	290,782	594,462	1,544,303
Syrian Arab Republic	248,532	780,766	799,360
Kuwait	232,103	236,573	641,953
Canada	171,917	366,338	617,982
Libya	232,821	415,550	545,200

Source UN DESA (2020)

Global South are Northern Africa and South and South-East Asia, though contributions to overall migration are small, at 2.3% and 0.5%, respectively.

Central Asia

Migration from Central Asian countries is primarily towards countries that were historically part of the Soviet Union, notably the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Russia and Ukraine are also top origin countries for migration to Central Asia, suggesting these migration systems constitute more reciprocal than one-way flows (Table 8.3). The over 6 million Central Asians living in Russia are fundamental to the Russian economy, working in agriculture, construction, sanitation, transportation, and other service sectors. This movement is also central to economic development in Central Asia. Remittances from Russia to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, for example, accounted for 31%

and 27% of GDP, respectively, in 2020 (UN, 2022). Migration to countries within Central Asia is also significant, particularly to Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.

Beyond the former Soviet states and Europe, migration to and from South Korea is another notable migration dynamic. There are some 300,000 ethnic Koreans living in Central Asian countries, particularly Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, many of whom identify as "Koryo-saram". Migration from Korea to the Russian Far East occurred as early as the 1860s and reached up to 200,000 by the late 1930s. During the Pacific War, suspicions arose that Koreans were spies for Japan, and Stalin deported all Koreans living in the Far East to Central Asian countries (Lee, 2012). Over this same period, new cohorts of migrants arrived from Korea, fleeing the forced labour imposed by ruling Japanese there. These historical movements shape present day trends.

Table 8.3 Top 10 countries of origin and destination to/from Central Asia

Central Asia	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020
Origin of immigrants in Central Asia			
Russian Federation	4,827,672	3,672,762	3,852,550
Ukraine	698,546	483,316	531,981
Uzbekistan	313,900	328,289	398,019
Armenia	242,326	207,593	179,557
Azerbaijan	557,925	459,675	168,014
Belarus	162,368	106,536	113,339
Georgia	86,408	97,901	94,028
Dem. People's Republic of Korea	20,894	53,664	67,390
Turkey	27,114	45,668	54,421
Kazakhstan	128,198	65,782	52,710
Destination of migrants from Central Asia			
Russian Federation	6,415,013	6,599,176	6,712,940
Germany	21,117	808,920	1,385,026
Ukraine	759,545	746,617	726,710
Kazakhstan	190,092	287,206	385,323
United States of America	81,416	145,863	277,895
Azerbaijan	306,703	257,446	214,599
Greece	93,459	123,578	136,908
Belarus	149,559	131,987	127,119
Armenia	468,862	409,298	119,061
Turkmenistan	165,850	117,815	103,116

Source UN DESA (2020)

The Republic of Korea remains one of the top ten origin countries of immigrants in Central Asia, though current numbers are far smaller than historical movements.

Labour migration from Central Asia to the Republic of Korea is also emerging as a relatively new migration dynamic. In 2007, facing a declining fertility rate and labour shortages, the Korean government enacted immigration reforms to attract more labour migrants, which included issuing work visas for ethnic Koreans from the former USSR. Between 2007 and 2017, 12,885 ethnic Koreans from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan moved to Korea, working mostly in low-skilled occupations (Lakupbaeva, 2019). Though absolute numbers of migrants remain relatively small, the financial remittances they send home are significant. Kazakhstan's National Bank notes that Kazakh citizens working in South Korea sent home 104.8 million USD in 2018 in comparison to 1.7 million USD in 2012. The same trend has been observed in Uzbekistan, where the largest number of Central Asia's ethnic Koreans reside. In 2018, Uzbek migrant workers in Korea sent home 108.3 million USD, in comparison to 49 million in 2016 (Lakupbaeva, 2019). As Russia wages a war against Ukraine, straining the security and economic benefits of migration between these countries and Central Asia, new migration destinations like Korea may play an increasingly important role in the migration and development trajectory of Central Asian countries in the coming years.

South and South-East Asia

Migration within and from countries in South Asia and South-East Asia are some of the largest population movements in the world. This region is also home to the world's most populous countries, like India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Table 8.4 shows that the largest population movements into countries in South Asia come from other countries in the same region—Bangladesh, India, and Afghanistan. The same is true for South-East Asia, where intra-regional migrants tend to come from countries like Myanmar, Indonesia, Malaysia, Lao, and Cambodia. The largest movements into South-East Asia, however, are from China.

Although intra-regional migration in South Asia and South-East Asia remains high and continues to grow, migration to destinations further afield, most notably the Middle East as well as countries in North America and Europe, is increasing more quickly. In 2020, major destinations from South Asia include the Middle East (Saudi Arabia and the UAE in particular), the US, India, and Pakistan. India and Pakistan were the top two destinations

Table 8.4 Top 10 countries of origin and destination to/from South Asia and South-East Asia

South Asia	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined			South-East Asia	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020	Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020
of Origin				*of Origin*			
Bangladesh	4,377,309	3,319,816	2,529,809	China	2,485,449	2,885,850	3,425,709
India	3,262,078	2,614,679	2,130,244	Myanmar	235,518	1,325,023	2,214,204
Afghanistan	3,389,132	1,182,065	1,614,449	Indonesia	378,209	1,099,501	1,566,667
Myanmar	315,171	195,247	966,906	Malaysia	252,910	882,359	1,206,651
Pakistan	1,932,018	1,168,095	938,459	Lao People's Dem. Republic	170,494	545,996	949,225
Nepal	528,220	790,645	773,129	Cambodia	104,579	381,431	712,910
China	181,183	264,458	290,796	Nepal	30,814	152,072	615,603
Malaysia	104,896	206,388	214,252	Bangladesh	36,271	260,155	508,614
Sri Lanka	286,991	209,833	192,777	India	104,825	259,070	378,208
Indonesia	73,015	125,254	151,920	Philippines	201,171	231,479	310,058
of Destination				*of Destination*			
Saudi Arabia	2,487,058	3,272,541	6,777,653	United States of America	2,120,448	3,688,276	4,667,507
United Arab Emirates	819,653	2,141,020	5,719,387	Thailand	491,071	2,102,361	3,492,856
India	7,123,422	5,420,461	4,266,695	Saudi Arabia	964,087	1,266,999	2,621,922
United States of America	608,437	1,893,515	3,764,181	Malaysia	441,262	1,251,012	1,942,904
Pakistan	6,194,110	3,165,408	3,195,896	Singapore	246,003	994,038	1,413,482
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3,990,232	2,394,581	2,723,176	Bangladesh	526,804	570,055	1,409,376
Oman	252,266	546,840	1,972,289	Australia	494,166	692,368	1,184,028
Kuwait	671,008	846,443	1,938,424	Canada	536,369	823,355	1,172,165
United Kingdom	771,593	1,250,683	1,831,708	United Arab Emirates	108,933	329,121	896,397
Qatar	41,403	357,364	1,608,807	Japan	72,740	312,853	738,927

Source UN DESA (2020)

of South Asian migrants in 1990 by a large margin but have experienced a notable decline in registered immigrant populations in the decades since. This decline is due in part to a decline in refugee movements. For example, following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, migration from Afghanistan reached 3.3 million in 1990, the majority of whom were hosted in Pakistan. By 2020, the number of immigrants from Afghanistan had declined to 1.6 million.

The top destinations from South-East Asia are the US, followed by Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Bangladesh. The rise of Thailand as a major destination country is one of the newer trends—from less than half a million in 1990 to 3.5 million in 2020.

There are significant country-level differences in the nature and drivers of movement across these large regional groupings. Myanmar, for example, experienced a notable rise in the number of people migrating internationally to neighbouring countries in South and South-East Asia. There were just over one half million migrants from Myanmar in South and South-East Asian countries in 1990, and this grew to over 3 million by 2020. Today Myanmar is second only to China in 2020 for the number of migrants it sends to other countries in the region. There was a notable rise in refugee movements from Myanmar, particularly from the Rohingya population, an ethnic minority that has been denied citizenship and faces persecution and violence in Myanmar. About one million Rohingya refugees now live in the largest refugee camp in the world in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. However, a larger number of migrants from Myanmar are categorised as labour migrants. According to the latest Myanmar Population Census of 2014, more than two million Myanmar citizens were abroad, over 70% of whom were working in Thailand (ILO, 2022). A smaller number were working in Malaysia, China, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and the Gulf countries. Many migrant workers from Myanmar use licensed overseas employment agencies to migrate, but due to the costs, time, and uncertainties that it will result in better conditions, a greater share may migrate irregularly (ILO, 2022).

China

A major economic force in East Asia, China has experienced remarkable development gains in recent decades. Over the last forty years, China contributed close to three-quarters of the global reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty. At China's current national poverty line, the number of poor fell by 770 million over this period (World Bank, 2022). Between 1990 and 2020, China's urban population grew from 26.4% of the

total population to 61.4%. The number of Chinese living abroad more than doubled from 4.2 million in 1990 to 10.4 million in 2020.

Most international movement from China is to countries or territories within the region. In 2020, top destinations include Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Singapore (Table 8.5). International migration to the US is also notably high, as is Chinese migration to Canada and Australia. Migration to South America has grown significantly, more than doubling between 2005 and 2020 (from 53,884 to 114,604) yet remains relatively small compared to other regional destinations.

There is growing international interest in migration between China and African countries (see also Teye et al., this volume). Formal figures of migration between these regions remain low, with UN DESA data capturing just 33,998 Chinese migrants on the African continent in 2020 and providing no data on Africans in China. However, surveys, qualitative research, and

Table 8.5 Top 10 countries of origin and destination to/from China

China	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020
Origin of immigrants in China			
Viet Nam	285,788	300,897	303,095
China, Hong Kong SAR	622	68,509	209,555
Republic of Korea	37,449	85,449	144,831
Brazil	3057	33,986	57,602
Philippines	7118	33,428	56,657
Indonesia	5386	18,179	30,811
United States of America	4288	12,251	20,762
China, Macao SAR	3099	9755	18,918
Thailand	1477	6950	11,779
Peru	557	6168	10,455
Destination of migrants from China			
China, Hong Kong SAR	1,659,157	2,070,537	2,408,447
United States of America	773,939	1,607,654	2,184,110
Republic of Korea	19,827	243,217	803,011
Japan	150,383	648,120	775,893
Canada	168,079	508,994	699,190
Australia	97,526	227,561	653,232
Singapore	150,447	299,651	426,434
China, Macao SAR	172,346	236,962	300,567
Italy	32,172	137,633	233,338
United Kingdom	23,384	146,994	208,229

Source UN DESA (2020)

on-the-ground observations suggest this migration corridor is far larger than these formal figures suggest (Bodomo, 2012).

Chinese migrants are moving to African countries to work in trade, infrastructure development, mining, commerce, and agriculture. Data from the China–Africa Research Initiative estimates there were 103,983 Chinese workers in Africa in 2020, down from a peak of 263,659 in 2015, mostly working in construction. These estimates do not include informal migrants such as traders and shopkeepers. In 2020, the top five destinations of Chinese workers—accounting for 46% of all Chinese workers in Africa—were Algeria, Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola (CARI, 2022). More focused case studies suggest even higher numbers of Chinese immigrants than the CARI data. Botchwey et al. (2019), for example, suggest there were approximately 50,000 Chinese migrants in the informal gold mining sector in Ghana between 2008 and 2013. Because small-scale gold mining is restricted by law to Ghanaian citizens, most Chinese miners do not have legal status and are often missed in population statistics.

Africans are also migrating to China in growing numbers to pursue opportunities for higher education, trade, or tourism (see Bodomo, 2012; Cissé, 2013; Haugen, 2012). Most African traders arrive in China on short-term visas, to buy goods that they resell in African countries. Some settle in China, but they tend to stay on renewable one-year visas, and thus may not be counted in formal statistics as permanent migrants. Many other African students, traders, or workers are unable to renew their short-term visas and can become trapped in a precarious position of informality.

Africa

Despite growing interest in migration from Africa to new destinations like China, migration from African countries is still overwhelmingly directed towards other African countries (see also Setrana & Yaro, this volume). Taking Africa as a whole, the top ten origin countries and nine out of the top ten destination countries are all other African countries. Some of these movements are driven by conflict and humanitarian crises—as seen in the large growth in international migration from South Sudan (Table 8.6). As of 2020, refugees and asylum seekers comprised a striking one third of all international migration within Sub-Saharan Africa (UN DESA, 2020a). However, this should not overshadow the more significant, yet arguably more mundane

forms of mobility related to demographic transitions, higher levels of education and infrastructure, economic growth and the changing aspirations of Africa's younger generations (see Flahaux & de Haas, 2016).

Sub-Saharan Africa experiences the largest intra-regional movements in the Global South, and the second highest in the world after Europe. 63% of the 28.3 million migrants from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa moved to other countries within Sub-Saharan Africa, top destinations including Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, and Uganda. An additional 5.3% moved to countries in Northern Africa. Migration outside the continent is primarily directed towards Europe (18.1%), followed by North America (8.7%), the Middle East, and less than 2% in Australia and New Zealand, South and East Asia, South or Central America.

Migration from Northern Africa is smaller (8.7 million in 2020) and unlike migration from Sub-Saharan Africa, is predominantly directed towards Europe and North America (70.3% of total migration in 2020). This has been a relatively stable trend since 1990, and France has remained the top destination country of all African migration over this period (Table 8.6). Other regional destinations from North Africa include Sub-Saharan Africa (13.5%) and the Middle East (13.0%).

Comparisons across time suggest that migration from Africa is diversifying beyond intra-regional patterns of emigration. In 1990, for example, 83% of migration from Sub-Saharan Africa was to other African countries; this declined to 68.2% in 2020. Migration to Europe and North America captured a growing share of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, from 13.8% in 1990 to 26.9% in 2020.

Nevertheless, recent surveys of migrants within Africa—many of whom would not be captured in UN DESA data—find that migration remains overwhelmingly intra-regional. One study collecting migration flow data at key transit hubs in West and Central Africa found that only 10% of migrants from this region intend to travel to Europe (Allie et al., 2021). Further, despite widespread international attention on violent conflict as a driver of movement in this region, three-quarters (74%) report economic reasons for moving, such as searching for jobs or engaging in seasonal work-related migration. One quarter (25%) cite family-related factors, such as following family and friends, and only 3.5% of migrants say they are moving because they fear for their safety (Allie et al., 2021).

Table 8.6 Top 10 countries of origin and destination to/from Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined			North Africa	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020	Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020
of Origin				*of Origin*			
South Sudan	504,409	217,693	1,648,384	South Sudan	4753	1441	869,489
Burkina Faso	1,014,852	1,331,642	1,565,304	State of Palestine	188,859	257,762	337,162
Democratic Rep. of the Congo	324,530	934,138	1,500,845	Eritrea	65,813	198,172	226,461
Mali	593,691	818,724	1,164,370	Western Sahara	167,905	131,163	162,952
Sudan	229,704	229,704	1,107,440	Somalia	4,843	93,968	123,128
Somalia	731,909	590,237	1,033,232	Chad	197,035	81,639	103,983
Côte d'Ivoire	315,601	601,380	922,034	Iraq	5968	62,738	83,058
Zimbabwe	163,266	348,083	912,266	Ethiopia	943,913	109,217	72,125
Central African Republic	19,263	94,192	767,662	Syrian Arab Republic	20,338	26,800	57,125
Nigeria	267,662	313,024	673,280	France	29,973	24,717	53,400
of Destination				*of Destination*			
Côte d'Ivoire	1,789,579	2,196,031	2,483,381	France	1,781,618	2,535,850	3,166,741
United States of America	242,409	902,970	2,031,637	Spain	145,547	573,161	853,009
South Africa	748,376	939,136	1,839,023	Italy	251,766	487,772	620,033
Uganda	394,598	244,461	1,646,637	South Sudan	0	0	587,824
United Kingdom	430,541	907,259	1,434,404	Saudi Arabia	178,769	232,539	481,215
Sudan	1,341,832	478,568	1,324,964	Chad	10,625	248,464	374,098
Nigeria	299,556	870,507	1,177,115	United States of America	32,731	103,906	345,448
France	514,393	777,573	1,116,709	Belgium	339,682	202,676	271,701
Ethiopia	1,072,032	395,359	1,017,711	Israel	236,046	245,812	242,387
Kenya	195,916	635,707	971,029	Germany	109,796	135,738	216,988

Source UN DESA (2020)

Latin America

Like Africa, Latin America shows important sub-regional differences. Migration from Central America is primarily extra-regional, oriented towards North America, while migration from South America is equally intra-regional and extra-regional (Fig. 8.5). In 2020, there were 14.8 million Central Americans living in the US compared to 3.5 million South Americans. Over the last decade, migration from Central America to the US was primarily from Mexico and Northern Central American countries, but in recent years, those trends have changed. In 2022, there were more Nicaraguans, Cubans, and Venezuelans arriving at the US–Mexico border than migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Ruiz Soto, 2022). The migration systems that have long facilitated migration from Mexico and Central America to the US are extending southward, responding both to political, economic, and environmental insecurity in these origin countries and significant labour demand for immigrant workers in the US.

Unlike migration from Central American countries, intra-regional migration within South America has increased significantly between 2005 and 2020. This is due in part to the large increase in the number of Venezuelans fleeing their failing state, but the increase in intra-regional migration is not only due to displacement. Over the last decades, several regional integration mechanisms helped facilitate intra-regional mobility. The Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) encouraged regular, cross-border migration in South America by facilitating entry, migratory procedures, and access to documentation and social rights for migrants (IOM, 2021). Argentina remains the top destination country in the region (Table 8.7).

Migration into South America from outside the continent is diversifying in terms of origin countries, particularly migration from Africa and Asia. Asian immigration is long-standing, particularly from the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, while new movements are observed from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Arab Syrian Republic, among others (IOM, 2022). In recent years, the African population has also increased, and the main African nationalities in the region are Angolan, Moroccan, and South African. There are small but noteworthy movements from countries in the Horn of Africa, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Egypt, among others (IOM, 2020).

Table 8.7 Top 10 countries of origin and destination to/from Latin America

Central America Top 10 countries	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined			South America Top 10 countries	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
	1990	2005	2020		1990	2005	2020
of Origin				*of Origin*			
United States of America	232,303	556,383	861,487	Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	44,861	57,713	4,103,204
Nicaragua	257,223	296,929	395,784	Colombia	606,648	790,935	1,329,616
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	3569	12,124	218,960	Paraguay	282,471	493,113	749,084
Colombia	24,583	50,617	99,665	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	178,252	351,466	635,043
Guatemala	99,965	61,822	93,792	Peru	72,234	281,108	534,230
Honduras	38,647	43,406	89,064	Argentina	168,593	222,994	306,242
El Salvador	730,358	45,532	79,963	Spain	455,556	269,622	301,077
Mexico	16,078	23,825	36,619	Haiti	12,050	16,468	293,827
China	13,294	19,854	36,523	Chile	288,080	248,398	292,722
Spain	31,682	25,808	34,749	Italy	498,803	290,362	280,286
of Destination				*of Destination*			
United States of America	5,425,992	13,103,628	14,758,303	United States of America	1,028,173	2,332,368	3,450,637
Costa Rica	170,970	285,726	393,034	Spain	149,497	1,473,717	2,232,483
Spain	15,873	60,070	235,745	Argentina	821,329	1,227,314	1,890,644
Canada	66,015	137,120	185,379	Colombia	54,829	59,711	1,822,273

(continued)

Table 8.7 (continued)

Central America	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined			South America	International migrant stock at mid-year, both sexes combined		
Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020	Top 10 countries	1990	2005	2020
Mexico	407,679	52,878	113,516	Chile	59,457	190,961	1,218,287
Guatemala	252,094	42,028	60,342	Peru	27,115	37,275	1,060,437
Belize	25,130	34,220	50,564	Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	659,209	787,727	1,041,640
Panama	13,339	19,398	38,610	Ecuador	54,221	116,474	629,845
Italy	5558	20,751	36,290	Italy	99,552	330,054	544,875
El Salvador	32,718	26,789	32,303	Brazil	123,074	158,215	467,897

Source UN DESA (2020)

Small Island Nations

The majority of international migrants from small island states are found in wealthy countries of the Global North, but the second most common destination are other small island states. Of the 9 million international migrants from the Caribbean, for example, most reside in North America (74.9%), followed by other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (14.7%), most of these going to other Caribbean islands, followed by countries in Europe (10%), and of these, predominantly Southern European countries. There are fewer residents of Caribbean origin in Africa (13,714) and Oceania (11,687).

There were over half a million migrants from islands in Oceania in 2020, including Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Most move regionally to Australia and New Zealand (56.6%), followed by North America (27.8%), and then to other islands in Oceania (12.3%). Of the 313,069 international immigrants living on these Oceanic islands, most come from European countries (23.7%), predominantly Western European countries, followed by South-East Asian countries (21.0%), North America (8.7%), and then Australia and New Zealand (6.8%).

Small island nations face unique socioeconomic and environmental vulnerabilities related to their remote geography, small land mass, and reliance on tourism and ocean-based natural resources. In recent decades, the adverse and disproportionate consequences of climate change on small island states are of growing international concern. Small islands have been devastated by sudden-onset events like hurricanes, tropical storms, and cyclones, leading to immediate population displacements often accompanied by high rates of return. Small islands also face slow-onset events such as sea level rise or ocean acidification, which threaten to undermine local livelihoods and the long-term capability to stay in place.

Research is just beginning to tease out the implications of sudden- and slow-onset climate change on migration patterns from small island nations. For example, one study of population movements within and from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017 analysed data generated by mobile phones, social media, air travel records, and census data between July 2017 and 2018 (Acosta et al., 2020). They find overall population loss from Puerto Rico, but the magnitude differs by data source: 4% according to Census data and up to 17% according to social media data. Rural areas lost a greater share of their population, and movements within Puerto Rico were primarily from rural to urban municipalities.

Quantifying the effects of slow-onset climate change on migration patterns has proved more challenging. Gradual climate and environmental changes—like changes in sea level rise, temperature, or precipitation patterns—have more indirect and non-linear effects on migration trends. Environmental changes are mediated by the political, economic, technological, social, and cultural context. Even in small island settings, initial research suggests that slow-onset climate change does not have a stronger effect than other demographic or developmental drivers of migration (see, for example, Speelman et al. [2021] on the Maldives).

International Displacement in the Global South

Asylum seeking and refugee movements are a relatively small portion of global international migration (roughly 10%). However, the demands and burdens associated with displaced populations are overwhelmingly carried by countries within the Global South. Refugee movements—like other forms of population mobility—are most often intra-regional movements. In fact, 69% of refugees and other people in need of international protection live in countries neighbouring their countries of origin. Twenty-two per cent of refugees and other internationally displaced peoples are hosted in countries categorised by the United Nations as the 'least developed countries' (UNHCR, 2022)—countries including Bangladesh, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen. For comparison, just 17% are hosted by high-income countries in the Global North.

Although communication and transportation costs around the world are diminishing, which one might expect might facilitate greater South–North movements of refugee populations, wealthy countries across the Global North are developing increasingly sophisticated techniques of "remote control" to bar asylum seekers from spaces where they can ask for sanctuary (Fitzgerald, 2019).[2] International norms of collective responsibility and *non-refoulement* are eroding, and the result is that potential South–North refugee movements become forcibly South–South.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there are three durable solutions to international displacement: voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement to another country. However, according to UNHCR's most recent statistics, less than 1% of refugees are resettled each year (just 39,266 in 2021) and less than 1% of refugees are repatriated to their home countries (just 49,795 in 2021). "Over half of the refugees for whom

UNHCR is responsible", one report states, "find themselves trapped in protracted situations, where they have lived for years or even decades on end" (UNHCR, 2011). In this context, local integration can be a formal strategy of host country governments, or an informal strategy pursued by refugees trying to build a new life for themselves and their families. Most will fail to achieve full citizenship; over the past decade, only 1.1 million refugees were naturalised in their country of asylum. Some of the best examples we have of creative strategies for local integration come from countries in the Global South, like the United Republic of Tanzania and Sierra Leone (UNHCR, 2011).

These dynamics mean that countries of the Global South are shouldering responsibility for refugees and asylum seekers without sufficient international support to realise durable solutions for displaced populations. When Germany accepted one million refugees, mostly from Syria, in 2015 and 2016, the country was praised (and criticised by anti-immigrant groups) for its relative generosity. Yet, the scale of refugees resettled relative to Germany's population of over 80 million pales in comparison to other refugee-receiving nations in the Global South. Lebanon, for example, hosts some 1.5 million Syrian refugees and 13,715 refugees of other nationalities in a country with a population of just 6.8 million people. Lebanon hosts the largest number of refugees per capita and per square mile in the world.

Conclusion

South–South migration constitutes a significant share of humanity's international population movements—larger in volume than South–North migration in 2020. Most international migrants leaving the Global South move to countries within their home region, particularly in areas like Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South America. Exceptions to this trend are regions of the Global South that neighbour wealthier countries of the Global North, like Central America, North Africa, Central Asia, or small island states in Oceania and the Caribbean. In these places, extra-regional, South–North migration is more common than intra-regional, South–South migration.

This chapter finds important shifts in the relative share of intra- and extra-regional movements across the Global South since the 1990s. In regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and South-East Asia, which are home to some of the largest intra-regional movements in the world, there has been a notable rise in extra-regional migration as more international migrants travel

further distances. In fact, migration from South Asia to the Middle East is now the largest South–South migration corridor in the world.

The implications of these trends for migration governance are two-fold. Because most migrants in the Global South move regionally, there is a need to strengthen regional cooperation on migration governance. Many countries across the Global South are striving to do so within the framework of regional economic communities, like the Economic Community of West African States or the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) in South America. However, the rise in extra-regional movements requires complementary international frameworks. This is the aspiration of the Global Compact on Migration, the first UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration in all its dimensions—though its objectives and recommendations remain non-binding.

While the big picture trends presented in this chapter are clear, more specific country-level data should be taken with a dose of scepticism. This brief overview uses some of the best global and cross-nationally comparable dataset we have on international migrant stocks. However, as our introduction highlighted, capturing international migration flows and trends remains exceedingly difficult. The formal figures we present here likely underestimate the true extent of migration occurring within the Global South, and some important trends—like migration between Africa and China—are simply not reflected in the UN DESA dataset.

Improved understanding of South–South migration requires greater investment in census data collection, which requires funding and capacity-building in the statistical bureaus of many countries across the Global South—a responsibility that should be shouldered by the international community interested in reliable data on migration, not only national governments. We also need more detailed case studies and surveys of migration corridors, to better understand the nature, volume, composition, and reasons for migration within and between countries and sub-regions of the Global South. The following chapters address this need by presenting exploring South–South migration trends and experiences within and between Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Notes

1. https://www.migrationdataportal.org/.
2. For example, at the time of writing, Australia diverts asylum seekers to an offshore processing center on the island of Nauru. The US under the Trump administration forcibly returned asylum seekers to Mexico—a policy that

continued with Venezuelan asylum seekers under President Biden. Frontex, an agency of the European Union tasked with managing its borders, has been accused of "pushbacks" or returning migrants and asylum seekers to their point of departure.

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