The causes and effects of migration in developing countries

Presentation by Ms. Cecile Molinier, Director, UNDP Office in Geneva

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'Causes of migration'

- Migration takes place in the context of global imbalances and interconnectedness.

- Much of migration in the world is driven by the search for better opportunities in terms of employment, education, health, freedom. The majority of international migration is said to be for work.

- Opportunities continue to be unequally distributed across countries. Those differentials make for strong push and pull factors.

Borders matter

Map **1.1** **Borders matter**
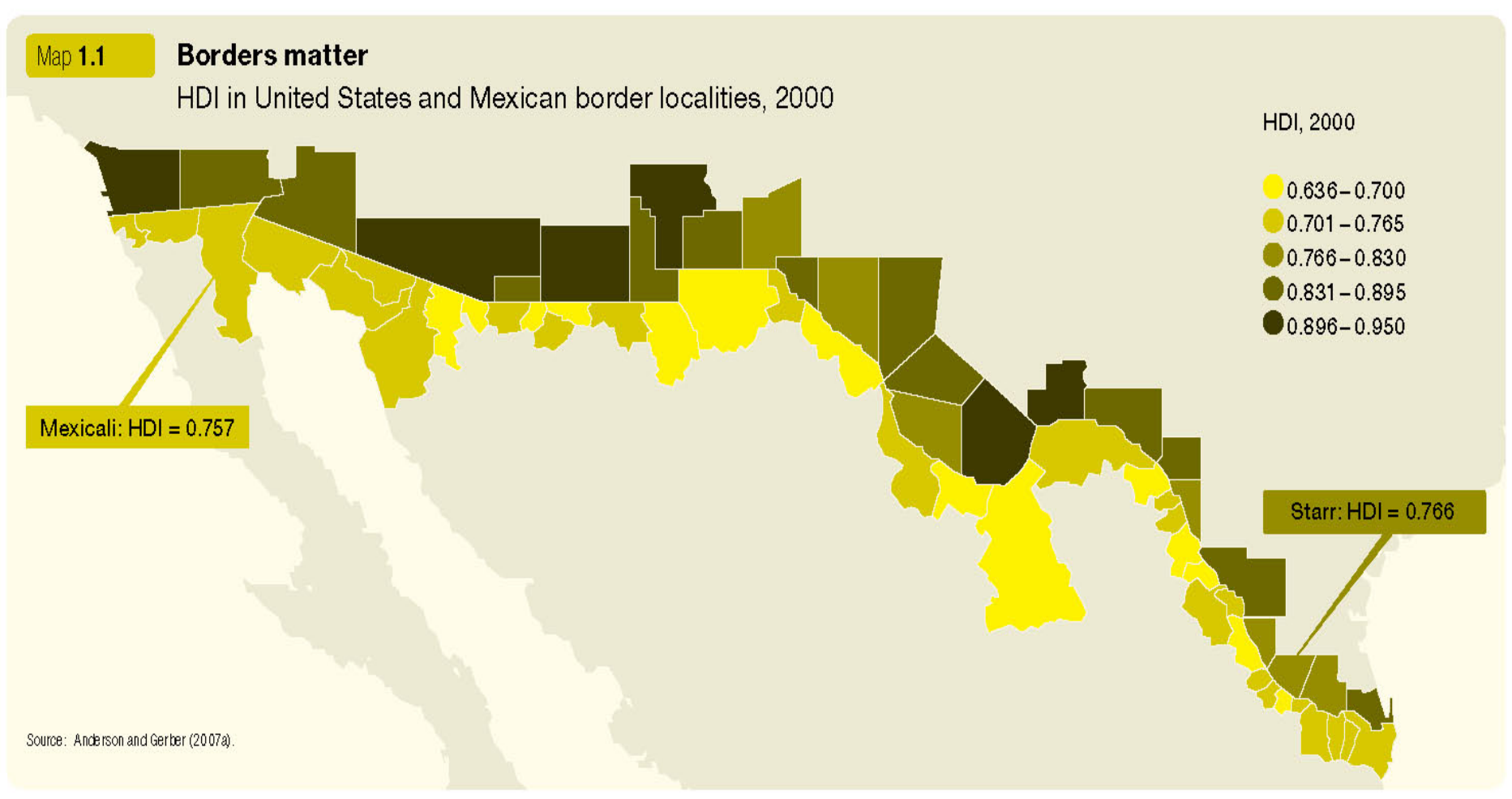HDI in United States and Mexican border localities, 2000

HDI, 2000
- 0.636 – 0.700
- 0.701 – 0.765
- 0.766 – 0.830
- 0.831 – 0.895
- 0.896 – 0.950

Mexicali: HDI = 0.757

Starr: HDI = 0.766

Source: Anderson and Gerber (2007a).

Moving towards opportunities

Map **1.2** **Migrants are moving to places with greater opportunities**
Human development and inter-provincial migration flows in China, 1995–2000

HDI, 1995

- 0.000 – 0.600
- 0.601 – 0.700
- 0.701 – 0.800
- 0.801 – 1

Number of migrants, 1995–2000

> 2,500,000

1,000,000 – 2,500,000

150,000 – 1,000,000

No data

Source: UNDP (2008a) and He (2004).

'Push factors'

- These can include, among other: lack of opportunities; high unemployment; poor working conditions; poverty; bad governance; lack of access to services, utilities, or natural resources; conflict; corruption; environmental degradation; stifling social norms and traditional hierarchies...

- Migration decisions are usually influenced by a range of factors and are not mono-causal.

- Networks play a big role in facilitating migration and can lead to 'chain-migration' and the development of a 'culture of migration'.

Looking beyond 'root causes'

- Will more development in countries of origin solve the migration "problem" for developed countries?

- Not immediately: Empirical evidence suggests that higher levels of economic and human development are associated with higher overall levels of migration.

- Migration, especially internationally, across continents, requires resources. It is generally not the poorest who migrate. If they do, they tend to move internally, or to neighboring countries.

- Migration (including rural-urban flows) needs to be understood as part of development processes – not as a problem to be solved through development.

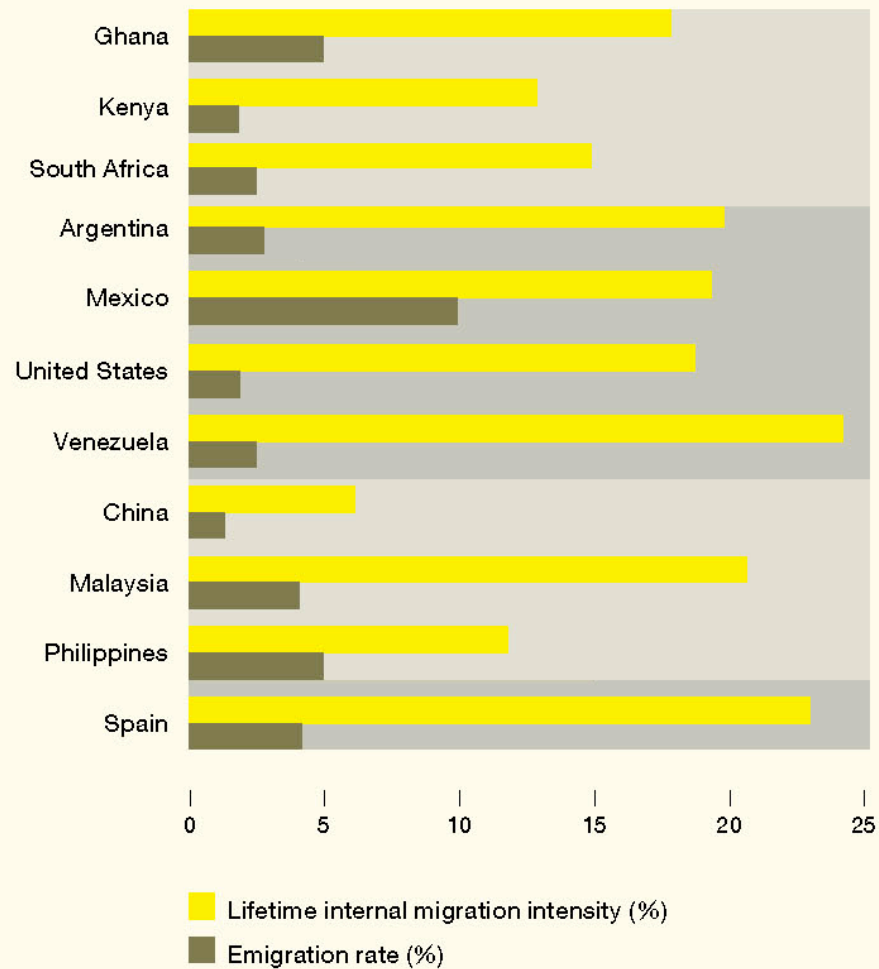# The effects of migration in developing countries

- A look at global migration patterns reveals that most of migration is internal and intra-regional. There are an estimated 740 million internal migrants vs. 214 million international migrants in the world.

- South-South migration is larger than South-North migration. It makes up for 45% of global movements.

- 80% of refugees in the world (8.5 million people) is hosted by developing countries.

- So developing countries are not just countries of origin, but also countries of transit and destination.

International vs. internal movers

Figure **2.1** **Many more people move within borders than across them**
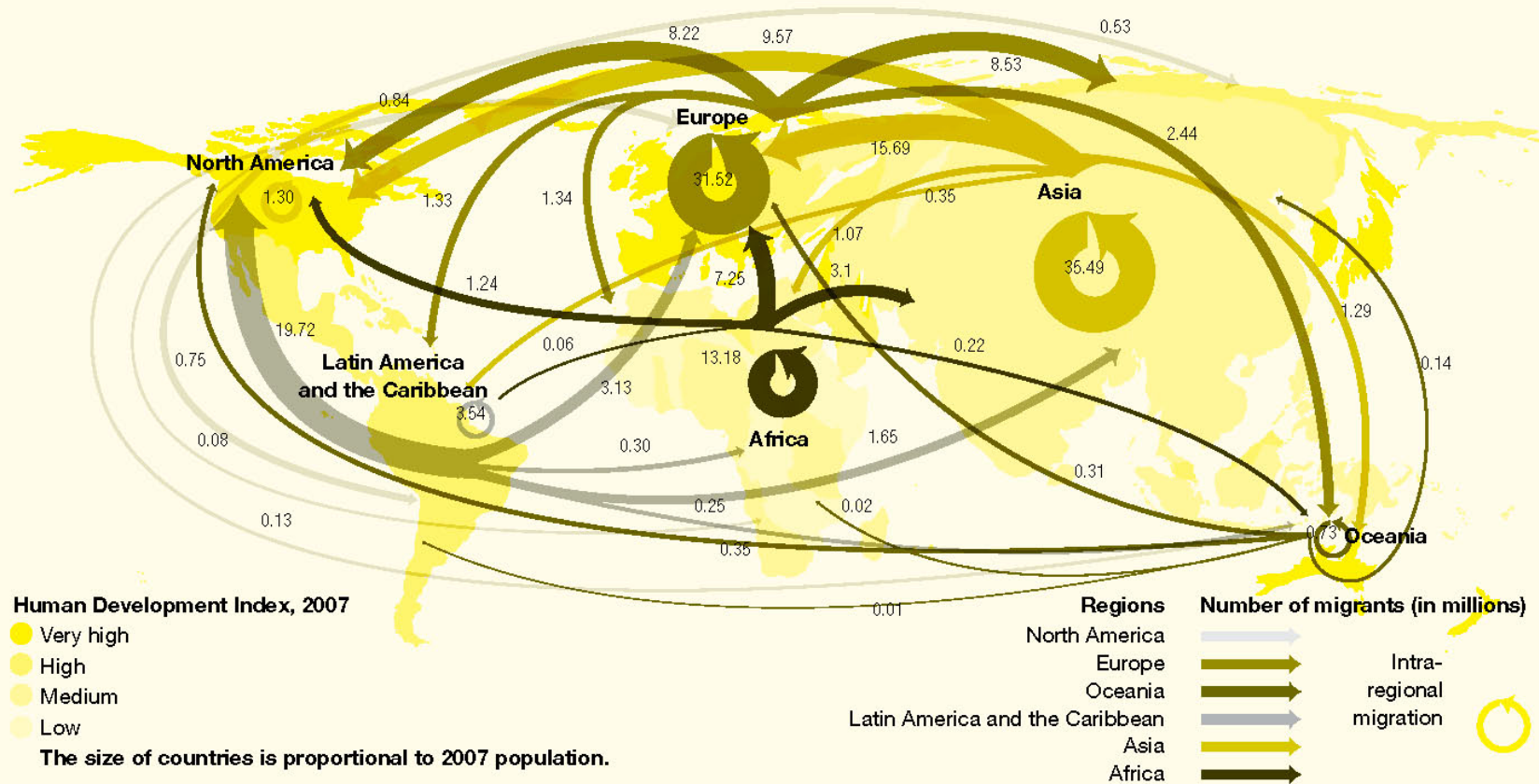Internal movement and emigration rates, 2000–2002

Lifetime internal migration intensity (%)
Emigration rate (%)

Movement within regions

Map **2.1** **Most movement occurs within regions**

Origin and destination of international migrants, circa 2000

The effects of migration in developing countries (cont'd)

- Migration effects:
  - can be positive or negative;
  - will be felt differently at different levels (local, regional, national);
  - will be different for in- and outflows or internal flows;
  - depend on various factors, including:
    - **Who moves? Under which conditions?**
    - **Where do they go and how do they fare?**
    - **Do they stay connected?**
    - **Are conditions in the place of origin conducive for harnessing migrants' contributions?**

Examples of negative effects

- "Brain Drain" in critical sectors, such as health and education;

- Pressure on vulnerable urban infrastructure;

- Abandonment of rural areas and economies;

- Children and families left behind;

- Remittance dependency.

Examples of positive effects

- Alleviation of pressure on the local labour market;

- Increase in skills and human capital;

- At the macro-level, remittances contribute to a country's GNI, foreign exchange reserves, and counter-act balance-of-payments deficits.

- At the micro-level, remittances support food security and allow investments in health and education, or increase resilience in the face of environmental degradation.

- Diaspora contributions and investments, including through temporary return, trade links, tourism, philanthropy...

What does this mean for a developed receiving country like CH?

- Implications for international cooperation: Ensure policy coherence between migration policies and other policy areas, including trade & development.

- Implications for domestic policies: Enable migrants to contribute to host and home countries.

- Switzerland has been a champion of enhanced international and bilateral policy dialogue on migration and development: Berne Initiative, Global Commission on International Migration, Global Forum on Migration and Development, Mobility Partnerships.

What does it mean for a global development network like UNDP?

- The 2009 Human Development Report "Overcoming barriers: human mobility and development" provides the foundation for UNDP engagement in the area of migration and development.

- One of the key recommendations of the HDR is to integrate migration into countries' national development strategies.

- UNDP is following up on this recommendation in collaboration with the Swiss Government, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Global Migration Group (GMG).

Focus on Mainstreaming Migration into Development Strategies

- One of the key priorities of the GFMD process, supported by Switzerland.
- UNDP's role:
  - involved in formulating guidance in the form of a GMG Handbook (2010);
  - currently managing an SDC-funded pilot project, implemented in 4 countries;
  - with IOM, leading a GMG working group on the topic;
  - Planning to support local authorities in this area through the EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative.

Outlook

- Enhancing capacities in developing countries is not enough as no country can manage migration alone. National policy choices have transnational implications.

- The next UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in 2013 is an opportunity to advance collaborative approaches to migration and development, as promoted by the GFMD.

- Migration is no panacea for development; but it is here to stay. With the right policy choices in place, it can enhance rather than undermine human development.

Thank you