

**The Impact of the Global Economic Slowdown on Poverty and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific
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Paper outline

**Internal migration and poverty reduction in Vietnam:
A policy assessment in the crisis**

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Migration – the movement of substantial bodies of people from one location to another in search of improved opportunities – has always been a feature of human behaviour and policy concern. The purpose of this paper is to prompt discussion and inform development policy debates with an improved understanding of migration. The current literature and policy discourse pay too little attention to the contribution of internal migration to economic growth and poverty reduction. Indeed development policies tend to ignore migration or have the implicit or explicit aim to reduce migration. Examining Vietnamese policy for internal migration, especially rural-to-urban migration, the paper focuses on voluntary or economic migration. It argues that migration is an increasingly significant factor in the economic development of Vietnam and in the livelihood strategies of many poor people. Migration allows people to widen their access to resources. Through timely and appropriate intervention, migration can be turned into a major development enhancing process.

Although it would be difficult to differentiate between correlation and causation, particularly in view of the paucity of data on migration flows, the weight of evidence suggests migration is a driver of growth and can infiltrate to the heart of issues around poverty and human development. It should therefore be a crucial area of concern for policy makers. The present paper raises a number of interesting points directly relevant to the government's poverty reduction. These points and policy dilemmas are summarized below:

- The first point to make is that current policy dialogues should not ignore migration and its positive role in poverty alleviation. Migration is a critical dimension of development and there is a need to integrate migration issues and awareness into poverty alleviation programmes. There is a critical need to focus on policy around internal migration as far greater numbers of people

move internally. Greater efforts on the part of governments should be made to ensure that poverty reduction strategy include migration and the needs of migrants, particular the poor who often suffer ill health and other problems associated with low incomes and vulnerability.

- Secondly, migration is a missing link in current development policies. The economic role that migration plays in local and national development and how this can be further directed to poverty reduction needs to be recognized. At the same time, there is a need to understand migration-poverty issues better - an understanding that may be context-specific and gender-bound. The critical concern is how to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of migration for migrants and their families. It is not just how the migrants themselves may benefit from voluntary migration but how the whole process of migration can promote development and reduce poverty.
- A third point is that although remittances from international migration represent a significant financial flow in many countries, the scale of internal remittances is undefined. There appeared to be a lack of survey data on the internal migrant remittances and their use, an area that requires further research. Due to this reason, data on remittances should be collected and desegregated on the varied economic contributions of migrants. Regional initiatives to exchange research findings on migration, development and poverty alleviation (like this conference) should be encouraged and supported.
- Last but not least, within the context of the financial crisis and the economic slowdown, migration will continue to increase due to the deepened disparities of development and economic recession. To support family members in the crisis and difficult conditions, migrants have tried to remit more. It is necessary to understand the consequences of global financial crisis and economic recession on migration. Neither poverty nor migratory patterns are static but change over time that is important for policy development. To improve policy effectiveness, it would be necessary to better understand the capabilities and coping strategies of poor people, including migrants, in the crisis time.