Highlights

A review of Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) evaluations identifies that the performance of World Bank interventions operating in contexts of migration can be enhanced by paying attention to four interconnected themes that arise consistently: (i) targeting of appropriate groups, locations, and time periods; (ii) the ongoing development of client, World Bank, and private sector capacity; (iii) the availability of granular analysis; and (iv) coordination based on comparative advantage.

These themes apply across a range of interventions in, for example, fragile and conflict-affected situations, social protection, rural development, urban development, and food emergencies. The extent to which integration of these themes takes place in the design and implementation of projects can affect the outcomes achieved. This note describes the process and portfolio of IEG work reviewed and outlines themes that emerge across these evaluations.

Scope of Migration Considered

It is important to establish the parameters for the term migration to best assess and advise on opportunities for strengthening economic and social benefits. To prepare this note, we incorporated evaluations that referred to several types of migration categories: international migration, internal migration, forced displacement (internally displaced persons, refugees), and seasonal migration. The review reflects trends from evaluations that have relevance across the different types of migration.

Process to Identify Lessons

To identify lessons, IEG undertook an experimental process that combined human and machine-led sampling, analysis and synthesis techniques. The sample of evaluations was selected through machine-led text search, web searches, and purposive selection of evaluations by IEG staff. Initially, these methods identified 123 Project Performance Assessment Reports...
(PPARs) and 3 major evaluations from the past 10 years that touch on migration topics. A machine-learning algorithm processed the PPARs and found 38 potential themes. A human review of the data set narrowed these to 10 initial themes linked to migration. To separate PPARs with more substantive content on migration, these were ranked by the amount of migration-related content, and those containing three or more sentences linked to migration were selected for further review.

Based on the ranking, we selected a final sample of 3 major evaluations and 15 PPARs for in-depth qualitative review (see table 1). The portfolio of evaluations all assessed the performance of projects or a portfolio of interventions within a context of high migration, whether sending or receiving. The benefit of examining projects that operate in the context of migration, rather than just targeting migration, is that lessons and inferences can be drawn to a wider range of projects and assist in identifying how they might adapt to migration. Following two rounds of qualitative review and internal consultation, four themes emerged across multiple evaluations as important factors in project performance in contexts of migration. (The qualitative review technique was informed by the meta-ethnography approach for synthesizing qualitative studies.)

Themes

The elaborated themes provide lessons for how interventions should address migration. For each of the themes, we identified positive aspects and shortfalls in practices in the evaluations.

Performance Improves by Targeting Specific Subgroups, Locations, and Time Horizons

The targeting of interventions in contexts of migration needs to consider all groups and spaces affected by migration or displacement on both a short-term and long-term time horizons. As noted, in the management comments to the forced displacement evaluation, experience shows that it takes considerable effort to tailor conventional sectoral approaches to target specific vulnerabilities and requires experimentation, learning, enhanced monitoring, and regular revisions to adapt to changing circumstances (World Bank 2019c). Three points illustrate pertinent experience in targeting groups, spaces and time horizons.

- Evaluations highlighted that, in contexts of migration, interventions should target differentiated groups based on categories such as migrants and nonmigrants, gender, ethnicity, and rural and urban spaces. For example, the Social Safety Net evaluation in Colombia identified that further efforts were needed to target interventions that “glue” displaced and local communities together to improve project performance (World Bank 2018).
Second, economic geographies need consideration in targeting migration, as discussed in the 2009 World Development Report (World Bank 2009). For instance, IEG’s case studies from the rural nonfarm economy evaluation found that the World Bank often lacked a spatially orientated approach to the rural economy and needed to incorporate understanding of migration and remittance patterns in rural development interventions (World Bank 2017). Further, IEG’s urban resilience evaluation highlights that identifying the spatial dimensions of migration helps identify risks and opportunities (World Bank 2019a). In urban settings, migrants often face risks as they reside in precarious areas, are unaware of the history of the space (for example, flooding), and lack access to supportive networks during emergencies. The evaluation found that identifying the space occupied by migrant populations helped extend critical water supply and sanitation services. For example, projects in Angola and Mozambique were found to be extending services to low-income and fast-growing peri-urban areas that primarily house internal migrants.

Targeting also has a time dimension. Separate evaluations in Azerbaijan, the Central African Republic, Haiti, and Lebanon reinforced that interventions often target either emergency or long-term responses and that the failure to link the two can entrench poor economic outcomes (World Bank 2018a, 2018c, 2019c, and 2019d).

Ongoing Capacity Development Is Needed to Address Migration

Interventions should work with existing capacity in the World Bank, government, and private sector to support the development of their capability to manage migration effectively. Often, evaluations found that it was insufficient to focus on only one of these parties; capacity needed to be built simultaneously.

In evaluations, dialogue and working with existing systems were identified as important processes in developing government capacity to manage a migration. A precursor to developing capacity is awareness of a gap. The forced displacement and El Salvador evaluations identified the critical role of dialogue in developing the political will to address migration linked issues (World Bank 2019b). In El Salvador drawing on the awareness generated through policy dialogue, the World Bank worked with the government to strengthen their policies and systems to provide social protection to the urban poor in the wake of the 2008–09 financial crisis that reduced remittances. The capacities to implement social protection programming have subsequently remained in place until the time of the evaluation in 2019. Similarly, the World Bank was successful at stimulating dialogue on the targeting of social assistance in Djibouti by deploying institutional development
funds (World Bank 2012b). An especially pertinent capacity noted in the evaluations is the government’s ability to engage marginalized groups. In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the government’s faltering commitment to the inclusion of ethnic minorities and recent migrants was not addressed by the World Bank through dialogue or other project mechanisms, which reduced the project’s effectiveness (World Bank 2018f).

IEG also noted that the World Bank needs to ensure that Country Management Units can effectively operationalize the World Bank Group’s development approach to migration by ensuring they have the required expertise and incentives to engage governments in sensitive dialogue; push for contextualized, medium-term programming for refugees and host communities; and invest in time-intensive coordination processes. Where Country Management Unit capacity was absent, the potential for capacity development was curtailed. An evaluation on Burkina Faso determined that the absence of a country manager and technical analysis reduced the extent of dialogue, affecting the implementation of responses to various crises, including an influx of refugees (World Bank 2018b).

Evaluations anticipated that the private sector can develop solutions to promote the self-reliance and resilience of the displaced and host communities. Evaluations in Burkina Faso and Georgia identify the relevance of private sector development in creating new economic opportunities that can help mitigate the effects of crises (World Bank 2018b and 2018e). Similarly, the rural nonfarm evaluation found that interventions can overemphasize delivering basic rural services to prevent rural to urban migration rather than identifying meaningful opportunities to stimulate rural economic growth (World Bank 2017). Although cases of successful private sector development linked to migration are quite thin in the evaluations, the forced displacement evaluation identified work in Lebanon where the Bank Group provided analytical work for the government and helped identify market opportunities and business models, adapt instruments, address weaknesses in the policy and regulatory frameworks, and provide information to create business opportunities (World Bank 2019c).

Granular Analysis Serves as a Basis for a Coherent Response

Granular analysis of migration helps identify how interventions can interact with push and pull factors and disentangle the results on different populations. In IEG’s work, the importance of diagnostic and monitoring and evaluation evidence was often noted. The forced displacement evaluation highlights the importance of the World Bank having conducted analytical work that describes migration factors linked to constraints to economic opportunities, self-reliance, and resilience for both the forcibly displaced and their host communities (World Bank 2019c).
This analytical work on migration has supported dialogue and projects in becoming context specific. In contrast, incomplete analytical work in Burkina Faso meant that the World Bank did not identify the correct reforms to undertake during the Sahelian Food Crisis and subsequent inflows of refugees (World Bank 2018b).

The importance of conducting spatially integrated analysis was emphasized in evaluations in Colombia and the rural nonfarm economy evaluation. The evaluation of productive partnerships in Colombia highlighted how the project had not sufficiently analyzed poor infrastructure and weak extension services that limit the earning potential of beneficiaries that included displaced populations (World Bank 2015). The rural nonfarm evaluation highlighted the that the application of Living Standards Measurement Study-Integrated Surveys on Agriculture had helped identify the mobility and the spatial dimensions of development within the rural-to-urban continuum but noted that these are only used in a limited number of World Bank projects (World Bank 2017). An example of successful spatial migration planning was identified in the urban resilience evaluation related to work in China’s secondary cities, wherein urban regeneration projects plan and service an increasing number of migrant workers (World Bank 2019a). For example, about 38 percent of the beneficiaries of the World Bank Ningbo Sustainable Urbanization Project are migrant workers, and the Chongqing Small Towns Water Environment Management Project will benefit 330,000 migrants that are expected to arrive in the project area in the next 10 to 15 years.

In the projects evaluated by IEG, the monitoring and evaluation instruments were often insufficient in gathering focused data collection on migrant populations. In Colombia’s Peace and Development project, shortcomings with monitoring systems were eased by undertaking evaluations that measured socioeconomic impacts and changes in relationship patterns, attitudes, and victimization levels through a survey and a set of experimental games and social dilemmas (World Bank 2018d). In IEG evaluations, although large refugee and displaced populations were noted in Djibouti, Burundi and the Central African Republic no evidence was available that detailed the differential effects of the projects on migratory groups.

Not gathering and using data can reduce the effectiveness of projects. For example, in Niger just 2.5 percent of all projects analyzed in the evaluation targeted pastoral activities, despite indigenous transhumant pastoralists making up nearly 18.3 percent of the Nigerien population (World Bank forthcoming). In more conservative parts of Niger, the IEG evaluation found that women—especially married Hausa women—were excluded from the cash-for-work activities because of cultural norms, an issue not detected by the project monitoring and evaluation system.
The World Bank’s Support to Coordination Works Well When Based on Comparative Advantage

When working in contexts of high migration the World Bank can play a role in ensuring coordination of activities take place based on comparative advantage of different agencies, which is especially important in fragile contexts. By helping to lead or convene coordination, the World Bank can map the activities of humanitarian and other development agencies to identify respective areas and sectors of comparative advantage as well as helping to customize the types of partnerships and coordination mechanisms to local contexts and partners’ mandates. In Haiti during post earthquake reconstruction efforts the World Bank, for example, played a constructive role as the coordinating donor for the urban sector, drawing on their previous work in disaster risk reduction (World Bank 2019c). This helped instill a recovery and reconstruction approach, supplanting the previous poorly coordinated humanitarian response that focused on temporary shelter. The evaluation on Burkina Faso found that the World Bank has not taken on a coordination role. As a result, many donors identified weakness that could have otherwise been resolved, including duplication of reforms in the energy sector of ongoing operations (World Bank 2018b). Similarly, lessons from the Central African Republic evaluation suggest that aid could have been better coordinated through a World Bank–led multidonor strategy and funding tool designed to support the recovery while bridging the humanitarian relief / development divide (World Bank 2018c).

Evidence Gaps

Though the current IEG portfolio provides a rich analysis four gaps emerge in our evidence regarding the following:

- Youth migration—Youth are only covered in very limited ways across IEG evaluations.
- The interplay among different types of migration—We have limited evidence on how internal, displaced, and international migration interact with each other.
- The effects of guest worker programs—Although we can point to the effects of losing remittances in home countries, we have not evaluated the extent to which this drives migration or about conditions or connections to receiving countries.
- Climate change—Climate change will continue to influence migration decisions, the evaluations surveyed here do not provide analysis on the interaction between climate change and migration.
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References


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