

B: Migration and Refugees

Canada's "International Migration Strategy"

Over the past several years, through a careful process of seminars and public consultations as well as responses to the challenge of multilateral meetings, Canada has gradually formulated on paper, though not yet in any one place, a broader "International Migration Strategy" than we previously had, extending beyond refugee and asylum issues, even though these latter remain the most contentious and difficult. It would be desirable to update the Strategy and publish it all in a single document, relating its analysis to the proposed population and development document.

This section describes the three main elements of the Strategy, in quotations' and paraphrases scattered across various official statements. Comments and suggestions by the author follow each element.

(i) Strategy: Prevention of involuntary migration, by long-term approaches to root causes, that is by preventing situations that cause migration by those who would rather stay but are "forced by war, internal conflict, environmental disaster, human rights abuses, and so forth, or perceive themselves as being forced to move because of the impossibility of economic survival where they are" (a version of the ICPD's "option to remain in one's own country" discussed in Part II, page 38). There is a need to "explore links between migration flows and policies on development assistance, population growth, trade and investment, human rights and good governance, environmental degradation, and civil and international conflict"; however increases in aid are "not a panacea," resources are limited, and research is needed to see about "carefully targeted aid strategies." There is talk too of other "targeted strategies that are aimed at enhancing human security, including the enhancement of human rights and good governance." Sending and receiving countries have a "mutual responsibility" to address factors in forced or irregular migration. Better information is needed on the linkages between push and pull.

Comment: These are excellent formulations of the situation, but while Canada constantly brings up the "root causes" approach as outlined above, it does not actually do much about it, at any rate in a migration context. There is a need for a more systematic look at these "root causes" in their implications for Canada, based interdepartmentally and on focussed academic research. The "Metropolis" study in CIC deals with one aspect indirectly (integration of migrants in cities in receiving countries), although it might be desirable also to look at cities in sending countries, which receive migrants from the countryside and become jumping-off points for emigration. As of now, only developed countries are partners in the enterprise. Many other topics need equal attention; most of them are already listed in the extracts quoted above.