

Editorial: Introducing Remittances Review | Ibrahim Sirkeci ^â

Remittances Review is a new journal that offers a quality outlet for exchanges between academics, researchers, and policy makers. There are more journals dealing with migration than ever before, and most have similar mandates to publish research for researchers. There has been a proliferation of journals in migration studies in the last five to ten years. However, most have grown with similar mandates that replicate breadth and interests. *Remittances Review* is the first international academic peer reviewed journal dedicated to money transfers, migrant remittances and the challenges and issues related to these flows across borders. *Remittances Review* invites contributions that include new data, rigorous research, and thoughtful analysis. We expect quality contributions that advance theory and methods as well as drawing implications for policy and practice. Readers will benefit from cutting edge research conceptual innovations, and reviews and reports.

As a Population Geographer with a multidisciplinary background in Political Science and Public Administration, Marketing and Management, and Demography and Geography, I have always been fascinated with the interactions of remittances flows, counter flows, irregularities and interactions with crises and conflicts. Remittances research emerged in such a context during the global financial crisis of 2008-09, which resulted in a special issue for *Migration Letters* journal with Dilip Ratha of the World Bank and a comprehensive survey of impacts on remittance flows. With Jeffrey H. Cohen of Ohio State University and Dilip Ratha, part of this survey

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was published in a book titled *Migration and Remittances during the Global Financial Crisis and Beyond*¹ published by World Bank.

Migration has been in the headlines in 2015-16, which much of the discussion centering on fears about migrants and asylum seekers. Several reports and many commentaries weighed the benefits and costs of migration. I am convinced that migration is almost always a reaction to insecurities and discomforts that people face, so that costs are often higher benefits, but remittances increase the benefits and reduce the costs. World Bank data show that remittances to developing countries have exceeded overseas aid for the past two decades, and in some countries exceed foreign direct investment.

The 244 million international migrants were about 3.3 percent of the world's 7.3 billion people in 2015, up from 2.4 per cent in 1960. In light of improvements in technology and connectedness, this is a modest increase. The number of refugees rose much faster, from 1.5 million in 1960 to 10 million in the early 1980s and to almost 20 million today. Meanwhile, overall mobility and international travel have grown exponentially. Given the troubles in many parts of the world and continuing and deepening inequalities between and within countries, migration pressures are likely to increase.

These changes make migrant remittances more relevant to many more people. The total volume of remittances remained resilient during the global financial crisis (Sirkeci, Cohen, Ratha, 2012) and have continued to increase, albeit at a slower pace.² The cost of sending remittances declined in the last two decades. Regulations and governance at global, regional and national levels are key determinants to reduce costs and ensure security for both sending and receiving parties. We are inviting further analysis and scholarship on these issues to the pages of *Remittances Review*.

Social remittances and more broadly non-financial remittances are also important. These skills, ideas, opinions, styles and ways of living introduced by migrants to their countries and communities of origin can speed socio-economic and political transformations around the world, and *Remittances Review* will include the best scholarship on social remittances.

We introduce this inaugural issue of *Remittances Review* with papers that examine the social meaning of remittances in Tajikistan. Zotova

¹ Full text of the book can be downloaded from: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/10.1596/978-0-8213-8826-6>.

² See: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/trends-remittances-2016-new-normal-slow-growth> Accessed: 06/10/2016.



and Cohen investigate the growth and use of social remittances in Tajikistan, a country that sends migrants mostly to Russia. Using ethnographic evidence from rural communities in Tajikistan and from Tajik migrants settled in major Russian cities and in New York City, the authors explore the meaning of social remittances for local communities and the role they play in changing the social landscape of Tajikistan.

Chen and Jayaraman explain the remittances-growth nexus in Fiji, with particular reference to the role of financial sector. They argue that remittances help poor families and reduce poverty but are cautious about the long run effects, especially without further development of Fiji's financial sector.

Philip Martin reviews the relationship between migration and trade. Most economists assume that migration and trade are substitutes, and thus freer trade between countries with different wage levels should reduce voluntary migration. However, temporarily more migration, a migration hump, can emerge as free-trade agreements accelerate changes underway before new investment creates enough jobs to generate stay-at-home development despite remittances from migrants abroad.

Matt Bakker critically analyzes the "financial democracy" initiative, and highlights its shortcomings in the US-Mexico case. Bakker argues that despite the efforts by the Mexican and US governments and agencies to encourage migrants to use the initiative, most are not participating, prompting a search for explanations.

Ana Isabel Lopez Garcia examines the relationship between the voter turnout in local and presidential elections and remittances in Mexico. Her analysis shows that expanding the free healthcare system is linked to lower election turnout among Mexicans in areas where the PRI (the former hegemonic party) is strong. She argues that there is a link between state welfare, remittances and turnout, though only in party-based authoritarianism.

The last paper in this issue reviews Gallup's survey data on the likelihood that first- and second-generation migrants and the native-born send financial help in the form of money or goods to others inside or outside their respective country of residence. Pugliese, Ray and Esipova analyse data from 450,000 interviews in 157 countries in 2012, 2013 and 2014, including 26,000 first-n and more than 20,000 second-generation migrants. T

Remittances remain a key subject for those studying the relationship between migration and development, and we believe *Remittances Review* will make important contributions. On behalf of the editorial

team, I would like to invite researchers, scholars, policy makers, professionals and students to submit their work to the Journal. We aim to keep the early issues open access to increase the journal's impacts. Please submit your work at www.tplondon.com/rem.

I would also like to invite paper submissions for The Migration Conference 2017, w hosted by Harokopio University, Athens, Greece from 23rd to 26th August 2017. Remittances and development will be one of the key topics discussed by over 500 participants. Further information on the conference can be found at www.migrationcenter.org.

Finally, I would like to thank Philip Martin, Jeffrey Cohen, and Bharati Basu co-editors of this new journal. Their support, as well as the others who joined the editorial review board, enabled *Remittances Review* to launch a new journal taking a multidisciplinary approach to the flows of goods, money, and ideas over national borders. We expect additional scholars and practioners to join the editorial board, and remain open to innovative suggestions to improve *Remittances Review*. Please feel free to send suggestions and papers, and please register on the journal's website and recommend a subscription to your library.

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