International Symposium on Sustainable Development Human Migration

Indiana University—Kelley School of Business—Friday, January 20, 2017
An official synopsis of the day written by Natalie L. Maier

Objective: Provide attendees with numerous viewpoints on the current state of human migration, in addition to addressing its challenges within the lens of sustainable development.

The day started with an introduction from University of Illinois Sociology Professor Dr. Cynthia Buckley. She outlined the history of human migration and how it has been studied, and briefly analyzed the impact that climate change will have on traditional migration patterns. According to Dr. Buckley, climate change impacts both sending and receiving countries as a majority of the world's population lives in coastal areas. She concluded by describing three major topics that need to be considered: categorization of migrants, time, and sustainability. She also asked panelists to consider migration context as well as migration behavior in the day's discussions.

First Panel Discussion- What Causes People to Move

Indiana University School of Public Health Assistant Professor Dr. James Farmer moderated the first panel discussion. Farmer noted that this topic resonates with the majority of people due to migration in their own families.

Timothy Waters- Professor of Law and Val Nolan Faculty Fellow, Indiana University's Mauer School of Law: Waters spoke about migration as a "crisis of systems," which he described as normal and not actually a crisis. Migration may cause externalities, but we should not be surprised at the existence of migrants due to the inequality between nation states. He argues place matters when it comes to examining migration, and a state's ability to function can have a significant impact on their borders. For example, illegal migrants pass comparatively easily through Libya where the normal functions of state have largely ceased to exist, but the number of illegal entries into Hungary have decreased since the state enacted a stricter border barrier policy. Waters concluded that migration is a result of the inequality within our system of nation states and that this system will continue to govern until a significant and previously unimagined change occurs.

Frances Trix- Emeritus Professor, Indiana University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Culture: Trix began by describing the mass migrations from Europe before the 19th century, and said that they tended to be religious minorities. The first use of the term "refugee" referred to the expulsion of the Protestant Huguenots from France in the late seventeenth century, but despite the word's long history, most people do not self-identify as "refugees." She then drew focus to a case study of Muslims from the Central Balkans in the early 20th century. Trix concluded it was state terrorism which forced their migration, not the wars, due to anti-Muslim policies and the arrests of Turkish-speaking leaders. Many of these migrants and their descendants continue to mourn what they view as their homeland in the Balkans and continue to identify themselves as European.

Sherizaan Minwalla- Practioner in Residence, International Human Rights Law Clinic at American University's Washington College of Law: Minwalla focused her presentation on the experiences of women and girls in Iraq, where she lived and worked for almost 10 years. She talked about gender-

based persecution as a motivator for migration, the continuing risks women and girls face once they leave, and the difficulties they have trying to get legal protections. Minwalla told the story of Leila, an Iraqi woman who was denied help from the UN in Turkey because they did not find her story about fleeing a forced marriage "credible" after learning she had self-earned financial savings. She pointed out gender-based persecution is not defined as a reason for refugee status by the Geneva Convention but perhaps should be given its prevalence as a motivator and to allow the present legal structure to better address the needs of refugees.

Questions for the Panel:

When asked about the consequences of larger gender imbalances, Minwalla mentioned women often become widows because men are killed in war. A consequence of this is that women, when it is not considered acceptable for them to be the head of a household, find it challenging to access the distribution of human aid. She added that if women or girls have living male relatives to protect them, they are much less likely to face abuse from others. Trix drew from her experience in Germany which allowed her to see how Yazidi women are given access to mental health treatments. The challenges of keeping refugee families together was also addressed by both Minwalla and Trix.

When a member of the audience asked about ways to "tweak" the current migration system to make it more effective, Waters responded that it is a tragic problem and reexamining borders may provide some assistance. He referred to people crossing dangerous Mediterranean waters who often drown due to poorly constructed boats. Smugglers assume international humanitarian agencies will rescue the migrants and take them to Europe, thereby saving the smugglers money. However, preventing the migrants from leaving shore in the first place would be a more certain way to prevent them from risking danger. Trix added that upcoming elections in Europe will matter, specifically citing the re-election of Angela Merkel in Germany, as it could lead to a significant shift in the continent's policy towards migration and support for humanitarian agencies. In contrast, Minwalla stressed the importance of solutions within the "sending" countries, saying that most migrants would prefer a solution that allows them to stay in their home country.

Second Panel Discussion- Impact of Migration

Indiana University Department of Geography Assistant Professor Dr. Ishan Ashutosh moderated the second panel discussion. Ashutosh mentioned that although people usually focus on economic impacts from migration, the impacts on the migrants themselves should also be considered.

Malika Bahovadinova- Human Rights Center Tajikistan, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: Bahovadinova focused her presentation on labor migration from Tajikistan to the Russian Federation, and how the GDP of Tajikistan has become highly reliant on migration. In the case of Tajikistan, there is an idea that labor migration needs to be organized by states in order to function effectively. She discussed the ways in which both the sending and receiving governments have constructed a humanitarian narrative to promote the act of labor migration to their respective people. For example, the Russian government promotes the "backwardness" of other countries and tells its citizens that inviting workers from those countries is doing a kindness. The government of Tajikistan promotes labor migration as an ideal way to further develop the Tajik economy through investment of wages and development back home. In truth, Bahovadinova found little evidence to support either the efficacy of state organized migration nor the constructed humanitarian narratives. The migration model employed tends to encourage the inequality and exploitation of Tajik migrants. Bahovadinova also talked about the regulations that migrants need to follow in order to work in Russia. For example,

migrants need to pay for special training, official health checks, and the equivalent of $70 USD a month to the Russian government while working in-country, even though none of this money goes to support social programs to help the workers themselves. Bahovadinova concluded that the system currently being used between Tajikistan and Russia is not a sustainable model and does not contribute towards the development of Tajikistan's economy.

Georgina Ramsay- Visiting Scholar at Indiana University from the University of Newcastle: Ramsay's presentation focused on her work with refugee resettlement in Australia and Uganda, which offered a multi-sided look at the realities of asylum status since she both researched and lived with the refugees. She outlined the differences between Australia's and Uganda's refugee programs, but ultimately decided neither presented a sustainable model. Uganda's program, which is highly praised, allows refugees to move into the cities and find work, but does not provide them with any humanitarian aid if they make this choice. Uganda espouses a "self-reliance and subsistence" strategy, where refugees are not supposed to rely on human aid. Australia's model, while sound in theory, is often hindered by cultural misunderstanding, lack of trust, and public perceptions of refugees. Ramsay concluded by outlining the difficulties many refugees have with both of these models, especially if they have no experience farming, or struggle with assimilating to the language and culture of the "receiving" country.

Elaisa Vahnie- Founder of the Burmese American Community Institute (BACI)- Vahnie began his presentation by sharing information about Burma's demographics, history, and why millions of Burmese citizens have left the country. While many Burmese spend years in camps and detention centers in neighboring countries, the ultimate goal for most is to move on to a tertiary country such as the United States or Australia. Speaking specifically about Burmese refugees in the United States, with a focus on refugees in the Indianapolis area, Vahnie recommended that "receiving" societies focus on helping people "learn to fish" through educational and job opportunities. Vahnie concluded by sharing information about the progress of Burmese refugees in the Indianapolis community. For example, in Indiana, there has been a significant increase in the number of Burmese Americans attending college since BACI and other community stakeholders have begun implementing educational and job opportunities like the ones he described.

Questions for the Panel:

One of the questions posed for the panel concerned how "receiving" countries help refugees with their mental health. Ramsay responded by saying many of these people have survived traumatic situations, such as sexual violence. In Australia, refugees have access to free mental health counseling, but there are conflicting cultural and societal norms associated with counseling. Vahnie agreed that this is a huge issue, and that more funding is needed to provide adequate services.

An attendee asked about the educational and linguistic supports that migrant communities have. Vahnie gave the example of the Perry Township school district which has worked hard to keep their Burmese students on track. Ramsay spoke how in Australia, migrants have access to 500 hours of English education, but still have challenges finding employment. Bahovadinova said that there are evening Russian classes available for migrant workers, but that they are afraid to attend them due to concerns of being detained. She said that migrant workers will often learn Russian at work or teach themselves with textbooks they purchase with their wages.

Day-in-Summary Conversation:

Dr. Buckley led the Day-in Summary conversation. She congratulated the morning's panels as an incredible opportunity to discuss migration in a variety of contexts from Africa to Indiana, and then opened the floor to questions from the audience.

What role do you think the private sector (particularly business) can play?
Trix responded by saying that since Germany has an aging population, migrations have led to an economic boom. Additionally, she said that companies put out advertisements now when looking for migrant workers. Vahnie said that companies in Indianapolis now call his organization and search for employees due to their hard work ethic. However, Buckley gave an example from the Russian Federation, where the lack of regulations harm migrant workers in the construction industry. All panelists agreed that businesses can best support human migration by making socially responsible decisions throughout their operations.

Are there any alternatives to the "Durable Solutions" set forth by the UN that we should consider?
Trix encouraged a solution to ultimately end the "camp" system for the refugees. She said people do not want to live in camps because they do not lead to self-reliance. Ramsay argued we need to look outside the "nation state" organization to find a better system, although Waters pointed out this would be a very difficult thing to do given today's societal structures. Additionally, Ramsay said people need to talk to refugees and see what they want and how they chose to live. Vahnie said the UN and international communities need to develop more long-term solutions to help refugees.

What can national governments or the local communities do to be more effective in their response to refugees?
Ramsay argued the most effective responses come from local communities, saying people are not their governments. In response to Ramsay's answer, Trix added the German people and city governments have been amazing but are not getting enough credit for their work. Merkel ordered each city in Germany to receive 1.5% of its total population in refugees, and Germans have been responding in thoughtful and creative ways to this edict, for example, turning old industrial buildings into shelters. Additionally, Trix also pointed to cities like Hamburg for successful experimental programs and organization models.

Questions and Themes for Further Discussion

Throughout the day, there were four main themes that were raised repeatedly by the panelists as avenues for further research and discussion:

1. *Who does migration and migration policy really work for?*

2. *The current classification system needs to be revisited since the nature of migration and refugee status has significantly changed since the classifications were created in the 1950s.*

3. *There have been many changes in migration trends over time and space that need to be explored.*

4. *Place matters. Place and nation states may be a human construct, but it is one with significant implications.*

Welcome to the Symposium on Sustainable Development:

Human Migration

January 20, 2017

Global & International Studies Building, Room 1106

We are very pleased that you are able to join us today. The Symposium on Sustainable Development brings together academics, professionals, government researchers, and other stakeholders across multiple disciplines and backgrounds to address how Human Migration can be addressed sustainably. There are many reasons why people migrate, both voluntarily and involuntarily, and every nation on this planet has been shaped by the movement of our populations. By the end of today, we hope that you will walk away with a holistic overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the globe as we seek to address human migration in a sustainable and supportive way. We encourage you to directly engage in the panel discussions and to pose your most penetrating questions to our panelists. We also hope you take time between sessions to meet one-on-one with our program participants. Most of all, we hope today's conversations leave you feeling edified and filled with a desire to keep these important conversations going. We greatly appreciate your active participation!

Symposium Agenda

8:00   **Check-in**
Please enjoy the complimentary coffee service at the <u>Check-in table by room 1060</u>. Don't forget to pick up a Survey!

8:45   **Welcome & Introduction**   Cynthia Buckley, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

9:00-10:30 **Panel Discussion:**   Timothy Waters, IU Maurer School of Law
"What Causes People to Move"   Frances Trix, IU Department of Anthropology
Sherizaan Minwalla, International Human Rights Law Clinic,
   American University
Moderator: James Farmer, IU School of Public Health

10:30   **Break**

10:45-12:15 **Panel Discussion:**   Elaisa Vahnie, Burmese American Community Institute
"Impact of Migration"   Georgina Ramsay, University of Newcastle
Malika Bahovadinaova, Human Rights Center Tajikistan
Moderator: Ishan Ashutosh, IU Department of Geography

12:15-1:15 **Lunch Break**
Interested attendees are encouraged to bring their own food and join the panelists for lunch in room 1060.

1:30-2:30 **Day-in-Summary Conversation**   *Moderator: Cynthia Buckley*