

International Conference on
Population and Development in Asia: Critical Issues for a Sustainable Future
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Panel on

Skilled Diaspora and Development

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Overview

Diasporas have been defined as transnational groups of immigrant population living abroad but maintaining economic, political, social and emotional ties with their homeland and with other diasporic communities of the same origin. There is increasing appreciation that skilled and knowledge diasporas can play a potentially valuable role in enhancing development in developing countries from which they originally out-migrated. The papers address this issue with reference to ongoing theoretical debates of transforming “brain drain” into “brain gain”, and the role skilled diasporas play or could play in it through “brain circulation”, leading to physical or virtual networking.

The Asian skilled diasporas are seen to have come to the forefront at the turn of the century, when the so called new economy boosted the global demand for talents to very high levels, thus causing great concerns in developing economies, threatening a shortage of skilled workers. Following the examples of diaspora networks that gained momentum in Latin America in the early 1990s, and subsequently of those in Southern Africa in the middle of the decade, the Asian diaspora is examined as an option that could mitigate the effects of talent outflows in the sending countries in the new century.

This panel would have papers relating these propositions to the broad theme of the conference viz., population and development, particularly focusing on experiences of skilled diasporas from China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and in Japan, in interrelated and comparative perspectives. At the same time, it would call for putting these empirical materials to question the role that skilled diasporas could play in homeland development – a new research area requiring new tools, methodology and concepts to explore further the theoretical as well as empirical issues.