

# Introduction

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*Transcript of the SSRC-DFID-UNDP Seminar  
on Migration and Development:  
Reflecting on 30 Years of Policy in China.*

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## Transcript – Introduction

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### **Jennifer Holdaway (SSRC):**

First of all, welcome to this seminar. I understand that it is very difficult to find time to attend another meeting, especially at the end of the year, when everyone is very busy. So thank you very much indeed for coming.

Recently, the British Department for International Development (DFID) has organized a series of meetings to review China's experience of reform over the past 30 years and explore what we can learn from China's experience and what the implications are for other countries. Different meetings have different topics. Today's seminar will focus on the relationship between population migration and development. As someone who has been working on migration issues at the Social Science Research Council for several years now, I am very pleased that DFID has selected this topic as the focus of one of the sessions.

I'd like to thank Arjan de Haan for asking us to organize this seminar, and I'd also like to express my thanks to UNDP for collaborating with us and hosting the meeting here.

Before we start, I'd like to explain a little about the background to the meeting and our goals today. First of all we will consider how much we actually understand about the relationship between population migration and development. And in this context I think it's important for us to consider not only the relatively short-term, direct impacts, but also the longer-term, and more indirect effects, and to consider which groups of people have benefited from migration and which perhaps, relatively speaking, may have experienced negative effects.

Secondly, if it is the case, and many people think it is, that the relationship between migration and development in China has been relatively positive in comparison with the experience of other countries, why is that? Is it the result of the policies adopted by the government or is it due to other factors, such as historical background, or the role of fundamental social, economic and political structures? And, if certain specific policies have played a role, which of them have been relatively successful and which have been less effective?

Finally, what are the implications of the relationship between migration and development in China for other countries? What aspects of this experience are specific to China and which might serve as useful reference for policy in other countries? I hope we can bear these three questions in mind as we continue our discussion.

I'd like to say just a few things about the organization of the meeting. Today three distinguished scholars will introduce their latest research results and thoughts about the questions at hand. Then, we will have about an hour and 30 minutes for free discussion.

We have a lot of people in the room today who have different experience and perspectives on these issues, so I am sure we will have a very interesting debate. Since most of the participants are either Chinese or foreigners who speak Chinese, we decided to conduct the meeting in Chinese. This way the discussion will be more natural and lively.

That's all I'll say for now. Arjan, would you like to say a few words?

**Arjan de Haan: (DFID)**

(In English) Thank you very much, Jennifer. Thanks very much to Jennifer and SSRC for organizing this and to UNDP for hosting this. And welcome to everybody. As much as you can welcome people to somebody else's house, you are very welcome. Two sentences on why DFID is doing this and then I'll pass it on to Hou Xinan.

DFID of course, as most of you know, has been here for a number of years and over time the way that DFID and the UK has looked at our programs in China has changed. Over time we've been paying more attention to finding out what the lessons are from China's development experience for the rest of the world. That's of course important in the sense that China is becoming very rapidly a very important international player. But there is also I feel, as somebody who knew very little about China before coming here, for the international community an enormous amount to learn from China, and those lessons are not easily learned, because of particular historical circumstances, because of language, of course, So one of the things we have done, like UNDP and others, is to try to help to find out what the lessons are from China.

Now one of the ways we did this here was through a seminar series, with a number of different organizations, we picked a number of topics out of the broad theme of China's thirty years of development, as a means to find out

what lessons there are of interest for the international community. One of the activities in that, which was organized mostly by Sarah (Cook), was a panel during the Development Studies Association meeting in the UK. And I think one of the most useful things that came out of that was that the Development Studies Association in the UK, or a group of people within that, decided that there should be a group that would focus on China and what the lessons from China are. So I think that this has been successful in the sense that a growing number of people are looking at China, as we need to know more from China, and there are lessons to learn. And of course we hope that the lesson learning will be mutual.

And so that's how we looked at this and then of course in discussion with Jennifer (Holdaway), it was very clear that looking at a theme and a discussion on migration would be an essential component of that because you cannot think of understanding the thirty years of success in China without considering the enormous transformation in terms of people moving from rural to urban areas, And of course at this stage there is an additional dimension to it because hundreds of millions of people are in fact moving back again because of the economic crisis. That of course is not part of the reason why this was organized, but I think it gives an additional reason for doing this.

So I look forward to hearing from the three very distinguished speakers and the participants in the discussion. Again, thank you very much and I look forward to a great discussion.

### **Hou Xin'an (UNDP)**

First of all, I am very pleased to organize this seminar together with SSRC and DFID and to see people from various departments, and particularly senior specialists, participating in this workshop. We are very concerned with this issue, especially in terms of society's response toward migrant workers. Recently, we have started a number of projects with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and the Development Research Council (DRC). And also in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, we hope to do some work on the community level, so social security, employment and public services - we think these issues are a good entry point to get at the problem of the social integration of migrants.

I think today's discussion is very timely, particularly because of the recent financial crisis, It's not just a question of abstract economics, but a direct shock to the real system, particularly in terms of employment. The financial crisis has hit hardest in the export-oriented enterprises in the Guangdong and Zhejiang areas where migrant workers are densely concentrated, and

this group of people is the most vulnerable group because they have no safety net of any kind. As a result the outbreak of the financial crisis has exposed some problems in our existing system. That is why I think today's workshop is very timely, to have you experts discuss these issues. Also, I think we have a lot of work to do in the next stage.

I think it is particularly interesting that we should discuss these issues at the end of the year, and consider how are people going to get through this New Year period? I know quite a lot of professors, like Bai Nansheng, will follow migrant workers as they go back to spend the New Year in their hometowns and see what happens after they go back, how they will manage to get through this New Year. This is a very serious problem. So I hope we may have a very thorough discussion and we are happy to provide everyone with a platform for this discussion. Thank you everyone.