

# Editorial Introduction — Migration and (In)Equality in the Global South

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Published PDF deposited in Coventry University's Repository

**Original citation:**

Crawley, H, Garba, F & Nyamnjoh, F 2022, 'Editorial Introduction — Migration and (In)Equality in the Global South', Zanj: The Journal of Critical Global South Studies, vol. 5, no. 1/2. <https://doi.org/10.13169/zanjglobsoutstud.5.1.0001>

DOI 10.13169/zanjglobsoutstud.5.1.0001

ISSN 2515-2149

Publisher: London: Pluto Journals

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# Migration and (In)Equality in the Global South: Intersections, Contestations and Possibilities

Editorial Introduction

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*Abstract:* This Special Issue draws on the work of migration scholars, artists, and activists from across the Global South collaborating through the South-South Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) Hub to explore the intersections, contestations, and possibilities associated with migration in the Global South.<sup>1</sup> Our aim is to contribute a better understanding of the structural inequalities – poverty, gender inequalities, and racism – that drive migration and limit its potential to contribute to personal, societal, and global development.

## Introduction

Migration is often in the headlines. From media images of individuals and families crossing the Mediterranean and English Channel in search of opportunities for work, education, and protection, to the arrival and brutalisation of Haitians on the US-Mexico border, barely a day goes by when the “problem” of migration is not in the news. Whilst a significant proportion of international migration takes place between the countries of the Global South, the views, interests, and policy imperatives of the Global North dominate the story of migration. This story often focuses on issues of security and border controls, ignoring the complex factors that drive people to move in different parts of the world. It largely ignores the structural inequalities with which migration is often associated and which take us a long way towards understanding contemporary patterns of international migration and their interconnected consequences at the individual, household, community, national, and global scales.

Although migration has the potential to reduce inequalities by providing opportunities for work and education, not everyone has access to these benefits. Inequalities determine who is and is not able to migrate, where people move to and the rights and the resources that they are able to access. Increased barriers to migration, irregular and precarious journeys, poor labour conditions, and a lack of rights for migrants and their families can exacerbate existing inequalities and create new ones. Meanwhile disjointed and top-down policy and legal frameworks dehumanise migrants by focusing on economic outcomes to the neglect of human experiences and well-being. If we want migration to work for everyone, we need to better understand and ultimately address the structural inequalities – poverty, gender inequalities, and racism — that drive migration and limit its potential to contribute to personal, societal, and global development.

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<sup>1</sup> This work is funded by the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), Grant Reference: ES/S007415/1.

## About MIDEQ

The South-South Migration for Development and Equality Hub – otherwise known as MIDEQ<sup>2</sup> – unpacks the complex and multi-dimensional relationships between migration and inequality in the context of the Global South. MIDEQ aims to transform current and future understanding of these relationships by decentring the production of knowledge about migration and its consequences away from the Global North towards those countries where significant international migration takes place. Drawing on the experience and expertise of our partners across 12 countries, MIDEQ builds an evidence-based understanding of the relationships between migration, inequality, and development. Our overarching vision is to disrupt dominant assumptions about the reasons why people move and the consequences of migration, deepening knowledge and understanding of the relationships between South-South migration, inequality, and development. We do this by building interdisciplinary migration research capacity in the Global South that can challenge dominant narratives on migration and improve the lives of migrants, their families, and the communities of which they are a part.

Our research takes place across six migration “corridors” that link migrants’ countries of origin and destination: Burkina Faso — Côte d’Ivoire; China — Ghana; Egypt — Jordan; Ethiopia — South Africa; Haiti — Brazil; and Nepal — Malaysia. The term “corridor” is used as a framing device and metaphor to understand the movement of people, goods, money, knowledge, and skills, as well as social and cultural ideas and relationships between two places, defined as countries of origin and destination, with multi-layered sociocultural, economic, political and historical dynamics that transcend national borders. We recognise that corridors can imply a singular movement or relationship between two places, when in fact all countries have multiple corridors linking them to many other countries in different ways. We also recognise that corridors between countries do not have an obvious “beginning” or “end.” Internal migration, for example within China, may feed into international migration, or people may migrate to multiple countries in succession before returning to their country of origin, such as the migration of Haitians from Brazil to Chile and subsequently to the US.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, the focus on corridors reflects a subtle but important conceptual, discursive, and methodological shift that allows us to unsettle prevailing assumptions about migration.<sup>4</sup> It represents a deliberate counter to the tendency of much migration research to focus in on processes and outcomes in individual countries rather than the dynamic relationships within and between them. It allows us to place complexity and flexibility at the core of our theoretical, methodological, and operational approach. It enables MIDEQ’s researchers to analytically compare experiences, processes, and outcomes; drill down into complex, sometimes contradictory and even counter-intuitive relationships; better understand the developmental “ripple-effects” of South-South

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<sup>2</sup> Officially known as the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) South-South Migration, Inequality and Development Hub, MIDEQ began work in February 2019 with a team of around 100 researchers and support staff in the UK and 12 countries in the Global South. More at [www.mideq.org](http://www.mideq.org).

<sup>3</sup> Cela and Marcelin 2021.

<sup>4</sup> See also Aydemir and Rotas 2015.

migration in both countries of origin and destination; and develop theoretical and empirical understandings of the relationship between migration, inequality, and development that are more widely applicable. Our focus on corridors offers the opportunity for a fundamentally new approach to the intractable global challenge of migration, mired as it is in simplistic and out-dated terms of push-pull factors. Furthermore, it invites the development of new, related metaphors that allow for a deeper understanding of how different configurations of migration shape and are shaped by inequality at every level.

## **The Relationships Between Migration and Inequality**

There is growing political and policy interest in the impact of inequality on development. Inequality is not only intrinsically unfair, it also makes the achievement of human potential more difficult by hindering economic progress, weakening democratic life, threatening social cohesion, and potentially creating conflict.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly evident when we adopt a multi-dimensional definition of well-being, one that goes beyond material aspects of life to include relational and subjective aspects.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of tackling inequality for development is reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 10, which aims to reduce both vertical inequalities among individuals or households (usually related to income) and horizontal inequalities between groups, typically socially or culturally defined (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, religion). Nevertheless, there is evidence that inequalities are actually increasing. Despite overall improvements in economic growth, income inequality has increased in nearly all world regions in recent decades, albeit at different rates.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, horizontal inequalities, which are typically more difficult to measure, especially comparatively over time and space, remain extremely persistent and resistant to change.<sup>8</sup> As many of the articles in this Special Issue show, these inequalities are often intersectional.

Alongside growing concerns about the developmental implications of inequality, there has been a parallel increase in interest in the relationship between migration and development. Recent decades have seen significant shifts in the scale, diversity, and direction of international migration flows for work, education, family reunion, and/or protection, with migration increasingly recognised as not only an economic process but also one with significant, social, political, and technological dimensions.<sup>9</sup> Migration has wide-ranging implications for development, most notably through its potential to reduce poverty and income inequalities by opening up opportunities for decent work, and through disrupting inequalities associated with unequal social structures, including those based on gender and age. Migration can contribute to positive development outcomes. For example, migrants and their families may benefit from increased income, skills, and capacities, allowing them to spend more on basic needs, access education and health services, make investments, and reduce inequalities. Development agencies and policy makers in the Global North have devoted

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<sup>5</sup> Stewart 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Pickett and Wilkinson 2009.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP 2013, World Equality Lab 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Stewart 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Czaika and de Haas 2014.

significant resources to understanding migration’s potential and implementing policies to reduce the associated costs (e.g., for remittance transfers) whilst at the same time, paradoxically, limiting certain kinds of migration.

The potential for migration to reduce inequality and contribute to development is neither straightforward nor inevitable. As noted above, migration is a highly visible reflection of global inequalities whether in terms of wages, labour market opportunities, or lifestyles,<sup>10</sup> and it can both create new inequalities and exacerbate existing ones.<sup>11</sup> Not everyone has equal access to the benefits of migration. Migration often reflects and reinforces existing spatial, structural, and social inequalities including those related to gender, age, and income. Inequalities can also result from increased barriers to migration, irregular and precarious migration, poor labour conditions, and a lack of rights for migrants and their families. Indeed, overall income inequalities in countries of origin can be expected to increase with international migration. This is because the poorest of the poor seldom have the means to migrate across international borders. As our work in the Ethiopia – South Africa corridor is showing, the absolute poor increasingly feel less and less equal, both vertically and horizontally.

This context provides the strategic rationale for MIDEQ’s work. Despite growing interest in both inequality and migration, there is a lack of understanding about the relationships between the two. Recent research has focused largely on the relationship between migration and poverty, or engages with inequality only indirectly, for example through studies of integration.<sup>12</sup> There are a number of reasons for this gap. Firstly, it is difficult to reach any robust overarching conclusions about migration’s impact on inequality at a global or even a regional level because of the variations in types of migration flows and the varied contexts in which migration occurs.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, there are complex inter-relationships between vertical and horizontal inequalities which make it difficult to measure changes in inequality associated with migration, especially where these interact with policies that increase the costs and risks associated with migration. Finally, there is a tendency to focus on macro-economic outcomes, or micro-outcomes for individual migrants and their families, rather than the distribution of these outcomes, making it difficult to understand how inequalities of various kinds are created, reproduced, or eroded by different forms of migration.<sup>14</sup>

## Decentering Knowledge Production

MIDEQ’s work directly addresses these knowledge gaps with the aim of ensuring that policy makers, programme specialists, and donors have the understanding and evidence they need to harness the development potential of migration for individuals, households, communities, and the countries of the Global South. We see migration as an integral part of the development process (as indeed it has been historically in the Global North) rather than indicative of a lack of development.

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<sup>10</sup> Black et al. 2006 and Faist 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Stewart 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Bastia 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Black et al. 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Black et al. 2006 and Bastia 2013.

Much migration scholarship has been dominated by a “paradigm of absence,”<sup>15</sup> focussing on what the Global South (and its people) lack in relation to an idealised (but deeply flawed) colonial cultural and educational model. This approach stigmatises migration and those that move in ways that simply reinforce rather than challenge dominant (anti-) migration narratives. MIDEQ intervenes at the level of knowledge production by grounding the contexts and outlooks of diverse parts of the Global South.

Whilst MIDEQ focuses on the movement of people, ideas, goods, and many other things that move across the Global South, the Hub is working in a context where the majority of valorised knowledge about migration and mobility is produced either in the Global North or by Northern-based scholars, think tanks, multilateral bodies, or policy makers. In the case of Africa, the result is that the numerous works produced across disciplines— from history (e.g., Ibadan School of Historiography) to African Studies (e.g., Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana Law, Makerere University)— do not form part of the literature or archive of migration studies. What would the study of migration look like if works on the movement of people, placemaking, and shifting identity formation emanating from the aforementioned African institutions were to be taken seriously? Important and path-breaking conceptual and theoretical works on the making of political communities that span North Africa and parts of the Arab world seldom inform thinking in the field of African migration and the contemporary making of societies.<sup>16</sup> Such a prior rich body of conceptual and theoretical work would greatly enrich the oeuvre of migration studies.<sup>17</sup> By assembling a set of empirically informed works that grapple conceptually with the relationship between migration and inequality from diverse Southern locations, this Special Issue ensures both local relevance and trans-local comparative work that takes the South (in its varied specificities) as a serious analytical category. The empirical and conceptual discussions of inequality surface the local dimensions and trans-local meanings, emergence, and implications of inequality. This is an important step towards a core MIDEQ objective: the amplification of Southern debates, questions, and research agendas that have global relevance for knowledge production. If the charge of extroversion in knowledge production – from the terms of collaboration to research framing to what questions are posed and by whom – is one that migration scholarship also bears, then this Special Issue represents a moderate contribution to rooting knowledge production in questions that are locally derived, as a prelude to an open, equitable, and truly global migration and mobility studies.

## **The Impacts of COVID-19**

When MIDEQ began in February 2019 we had no idea that our research and the questions it seeks to address would be fundamentally transformed by a global pandemic. COVID-19 has turned the dynamics of international migration on their head. Over the course of the last eighteen months, the movement of people around the world has changed significantly. Movement almost completely

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<sup>15</sup> Souza a Silva 2021.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Usman 2012.

<sup>17</sup> There have been some important attempts to conceptualize and theorize African migration drawing on the works of Southern scholars. See, for example, Bakewell and Gunvor 2013.

stopped at first before gradually resuming for those with the additional resources and paperwork needed to travel (i.e., proof of immunisation and testing). COVID-19 is not the “great equaliser” that some have claimed but rather an amplifier of existing inequalities, including those associated with migration.<sup>18</sup> As previously noted by one of the authors, “[b]ubbly in generosity as it seems, COVID-19, just like neoliberalism, thrives on hierarchies and their interconnections, globally and locally. It follows, celebrates and is encouraged by the same orifices of cosmopolitan fertility, melting pots and triumphs.”<sup>19</sup> The pandemic has severely disrupted access to the opportunities associated with migration, undermining the potential developmental benefits and creating new challenges for efforts aimed at securing improved outcomes for migrants and their families.

Firstly, the toxic combination of poverty, an inability to access basic services, and a lack of rights makes it impossible for many migrants to protect themselves – or be protected. Whilst governments around the world were imploring populations to self-isolate and physically distance themselves from others to contain the spread of the virus, this was simply not an option for those whose lives and livelihoods were already precarious.

Secondly, whilst some migrants were able to leverage our economic, social, and political privileges to return home as the pandemic took hold, this was simply not an option for the vast majority. Most of the world’s 272 million international migrants continue to live outside their countries of origin, many unable to work due to restrictions on movement and limited economic opportunities.<sup>20</sup> There was no “furloughing” for these workers or for the millions of other poor people whose livelihoods were already precarious. And there are signs of a significant downturn in global remittances, with ripple effects for communities across the Global South including Haiti,<sup>21</sup> Ethiopia,<sup>22</sup> and Bangladesh.<sup>23</sup>

Thirdly, some governments have dipped into their migration control toolbox to demonstrate the robustness of their response to it. South Africa, for example, has used the pandemic to further marginalise and stigmatise migrants and exclude them from state support.<sup>24</sup> As our partners at OECD have pointed out, fear-exploiting rhetoric around the pandemic could provide the political space to push through structural anti-migration policies that would be detrimental to the rights and health of migrants and undermine the potential developmental impacts of migration.<sup>25</sup> The impacts of COVID-19 on both migrants and migration narratives are explored by several of the contributors to this Special Issue.

## About this Special Issue

The first two years of MIDEQ saw many conversations, individually and collectively, about the

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<sup>18</sup> Crawley 2020.

<sup>19</sup> Nyamnjoh 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Piper and Foley 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Cela and Marcelin 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Feyissa, Gebresenbet and Zeleke 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Bhuiyan 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Garba and Willie 2020.

<sup>25</sup> OECD 2020.

structural inequalities – associated with race, gender, age, nationality, and language – that shape migration experiences and outcomes in the places where we are working. Many of these discussions and associated outputs have explored the complex intersections between social, local and global inequalities, their historical and contemporary drivers and manifestations, and their implications for those who move, for those who do not, and for the communities of which they are a part. We have also started to explore the ways in which migration might be able to reduce inequalities – as well as the danger that it may serve to increase them, especially under current conditions.

This Special Issue gathers up some of these ideas and insights about the intersections, contestations, and possibilities of migration in the context of the Global South. It brings together the different perspectives, approaches, and experiences that characterise the MIDEQ Hub, offering the possibility of new understandings and insights. As with all Zanj publications, this Special Issue “centre[s] positionalities and politics that make a new world in the imagine of the subaltern, the excluded, the Others that are conjured by concepts of the Global South in the current Western order of knowledge, its hegemonic political economies and successive empires.”<sup>26</sup> All of the contributors (with one exception) are scholars based in, or originating from, the Global South, many of whom are in the early stages of their academic careers.

The opening piece by Tawona Sitholé and Heaven Crawley includes contributions from Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Malaysia, Zimbabwe, and Scotland. It explores the language of migration and the ways in which words used to talk and write about people who move are imbued with a wide range of meanings and contextual nuances. The piece arose from a conversation between MIDEQ colleagues in the early stages of thinking and writing for the Special Issue, during which it became clear that whilst we were all seemingly talking about the same thing, in fact we were not. For each of us the language of migration reflects our own experiences of, and engagement with, the concept of “migration,” what it means to “migrate,” and who is viewed, understood, or represented as “a migrant.” These understandings, individual and collective, are formed through our personal experiences and those of our family and friends; through our engagement with the “scholarly literature” on migration from a range of disciplinary perspectives; and through our work and play as writers, artists, linguists, as advocates and campaigners, and as doers as well as thinkers and writers. They are formed at the intersection of our complex and interwoven identities. In many contexts “migration” has a very different meaning – or no meaning at all. Even within the same countries, different people use the term “migrant,” “traveller,” or “foreigner” to mean many different things, both positive and negative. The significance of this, and the potential implications for the work, is both exciting and challenging. When we write for a particular journal or audience, we often default to the dominant ways of representing migration linguistically without stopping to consider whether these meanings are the same for others. This piece is the product of that original conversation and the subsequent engagements between the contributors, woven together in ways intended to provide a meaningful starting point for better understanding the multiple meanings and significances of “migration” in the articles that follow.

This opening article is followed by two pieces of prose which challenge the language of migration and the dominance of “experts” often located in the Global North or approaching migration from dominant disciplinary perspectives. The flow of people matters is a collaborative

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.plutojournals.com/zanj/>.



exposition by Chinese academic Jixia Liu and Zimbabwean poet Tawona Sitholé. Their poem reclaims the word “flow,” often used in derogatory ways by media and politicians in the Global North to describe the movement of people from the Global South, along with other fluvial terms such as “flood” and “swamp.” The piece that follows, from Tawona Sitholé, draws our attention to the ways in which dominant knowledge and understandings are often driven by “experts” who have the power to diagnose “the problem” and propose “solutions.” In his *detembo* (poetic offering), Tawona represents expertise as a dis-ease, playing on the connotation of expertise as a pathological condition. In so doing, he ripples the calm waters of acceptability, suggesting that what seems universal is in fact often just dominant way of knowing.

We then turn to a series of articles that draw upon the findings of research undertaken by MIDEQ’s partners in the Global South to challenge these dominant ways of knowing. We begin in Ethiopia, where Dereje Feyissa unpacks emerging forms of migration-related inequality in the context of migration from the country’s southern region of Hadiya to South Africa. In recent years, South Africa has become the major destination for Ethiopian migrants despite the journey being particularly perilous. Some of the migrants are well established, reflected in growing remittances sent to support family and investments made in small and large-scale businesses. Others send collective remittance to support churches and local and national development projects. This article draws attention to two aspects of this migration that are often neglected. Firstly, it is clear there is unequal access to the possibilities for migration from Ethiopia to South Africa, leading to new forms of inequality between migrant and non-migrant families in the Hadiya region. This can be seen in income inequalities, differential access to social services, competitive edge at the marriage marketplace, and new forms of social status, all favouring migrants and their families at the expense of non-migrant families. Secondly, the author challenges the idea, dominant in much migration research in the Global North, that economic factors primarily shape decisions to move. Whilst Hadiya historically had a Muslim background, contemporary Hadiya society is predominantly evangelical Christian with a spirituality of migration, pioneered by a Canadian Pastor who visited Hosanna in 2001 with a prophetic message that provided a divine script for Hadiya’s migration to South Africa. Local church leaders have elaborated on this transnational prophecy, and *atseliyalehu* (my migration plan is blessed) is one of the ways in which aspiring migrants finalise their decision to move.

Writing from South Africa, Yordanos Seifu and Laura Freeman explore the journeys of those leaving Ethiopia and travel along this corridor. Drawing on research undertaken at three different periods of time (2014, 2018, and 2021), the authors note that migration is becoming increasingly irregular as border controls and migration regulations increase. As a result, the journeys that migrants take include multiple transit countries, largely controlled by migration intermediaries or “smugglers” as they are commonly known. The profile of individuals on the move has changed in terms of migrants’ age, ethnicity, place of origin, and gender; youth from rural areas have joined the migration trail, and, increasingly, women are migrating for marriage in South Africa. At the same time, the nature of the smuggling process has changed, resulting in increasingly dangerous journeys and growing inequalities between those that are able to migrate legally and those who have no choice other than to make use of smugglers.

The theme of growing inequality and marginalization for Ethiopian migrants travelling to South Africa, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, is picked up in the article by Azwi

Netshikulwe, Henrietta Nyamnjoh and Faisal Garba, who examine the inequalities experienced by Ethiopian migrants in South Africa. Drawing on the concept of everyday life and field visits to different townships and cities in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces, they show that Ethiopian migrants in South Africa are increasingly occupying the informal trading space in the townships and poorest parts of the country, and these migrants face multiple layers of precarity. In particular, inequalities associated with race and nationality often intersect with gender-based inequalities. However, this is not just a story of victimhood. Ethiopian migrants find ways to navigate and negotiate structural and social marginalities to gain a sense of belonging in a social structure that excludes them, integrate into communities that can be hostile, and manage their livelihoods and businesses under disabling state policy.

Our focus then shifts from South to West Africa, with two very different articles exploring the relationship between migration and inequalities associated with the movement of people between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. The Burkina Faso – Côte d'Ivoire migration corridor is an almost century-old exchange originating in French colonial policy to develop the Burkinabè territory as a labour reservoir. Six decades after independence, Côte d'Ivoire is the main destination for migrants from Burkina Faso and, likewise, Burkinabè are the largest migrant group in Côte d'Ivoire, with labour migration as the primary focus of the exchange. The first article, by Tebkiet Alexandra Tapsoba, examines the implications of this migration for those living in Burkina Faso (migrant households, returnees, and children) through a descriptive analysis of the results of a quantitative survey undertaken with 3,841 households. It is clear that income inequalities are a strong driver of the decision to migrate but also that this migration can widen the gap between migrant and non-migrant households, for example through remittances. The results show that the presence of an emigrant in the household, the receipt of remittances from the latter, and the network of acquaintances are factors influencing household income levels, children's education, and household livelihoods.

At the other end of the corridor, Kando Amédée Soumahoro and Sylvestre Tchan Bi examine inequalities in access to land and resilience strategies among Burkinabe migrants living in the north of Côte d'Ivoire, specifically in the department of Korhogo. Their research shows that despite an apparent social cohesion between Burkinabe Peulh herders and Senufo farmers, inequalities persist in access to land capital. This makes it possible to identify the poverty of living conditions and existence among Burkinabè migrants in certain rural localities in the north. In particular, the authors suggest that the religious institution embodied by the poro, the capital of autochthony and the system of inheritance in the Senufo culture, underlies the creation of inequalities between Peulh herders and indigenous farmers in access to land. This article, like others in this Special Issue, brings to the fore non-economic factors including culture and religion that not only inform the decision to migrate but play a role in shaping migration outcomes.

The gendered dynamics of migration decisions, flows, and outcomes in the Global South are explored further by Anita Ghimire, Priyasha Shrestha, and Indu Dhungana whose article examines the impacts of COVID-19 on returnees, aspiring migrants, and the wives of migrants in the context of Nepal. With over 55% of households having labour migrants and over 25% of Nepal's GDP attributable to remittances, it is clear migration plays an important role in both the economic development of Nepal and the overall wellbeing of the Nepali households. Based on their fieldwork in three areas — Jhapa in the eastern part of the country, Saptari in the middle,

and Bardiya in the west — the authors explore the experiences of women in migrant households in the context of COVID-19, which disrupted migration to Malaysia and other countries and in turn hindered household income and livelihood strategies. The authors argue that employment programmes brought forward by the government should take advantage of the current high interest amongst the returnees and their spouses to work in Nepal, as a way of retaining the human resources of the country. The experiences of wives in migrant households during the COVID-19 pandemic is examined further by Karan Kunwar and Indu Dhungana who outline the impacts of the pandemic and associated changes in migration patterns on women’s psychological and livelihood opportunities. This focus is in contrast to the tendency of migration studies to focus only on the experiences of migrants themselves. The authors discuss the aspirations of returnee workers and their life and experience in Malaysia during the pandemic, including tackling administrative hustle in Malaysia and Nepal during their return, concluding that problems facing migrant workers have ripple effects for their families in the country of origin.

Gendered and racialized inequalities facing migrants in the Global South are the focus of the article by Heila Sha and Mohammad Rashed Alam Bhuiyan which examines the ways in which these are reproduced by commercial recruitment intermediaries. Although the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development explicitly links the goal of reducing inequality between and within countries with the encouragement of orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration, there has been little discussion on how migration processes, especially those which occur through commercialised recruitment intermediaries, and may in fact enhance rather than reduce socio-economic inequalities. Migrants from the Global South, especially in Asia, are often recruited by intermediaries into low paid, temporary, and precarious jobs such as domestic service and hospitality work, agricultural, construction, manufacturing, or mining. Moreover, intermediaries often charge fees for recruitment that inhibit migrants’ ability to maximise their earnings and remit monies home. The authors illustrate their argument with examples from a content analysis of recent articles published in the Bangladesh media highlighting the experiences of Bangladeshi women migrating to the Gulf States to undertake domestic work.

The final three articles in this Special Issue explore the ways in which culture and the creative arts provide not only a means of communication between migrants – and the wider world – about the experiences of migration, but also a way of representing symbolically as well as in material terms what the consequences of that migration might be. In their article exploring migration, memory, and longing in Haitian songs, Toni Cela, Orliche Fortin, Kethia Charles, Dabouze Estinvil, Pierre Rigaud Dubuisson, and Louis Herns Marcelin explore music as a prominent cultural form bound up in identity that constructs an imagined community of Haitians within and beyond its geographic borders. Noting that three million Haitians — more than a quarter of the population — are estimated to be living abroad and Haiti’s over-reliance on remittances and other forms of exchange for its survival, the authors argue that the nation has been shaped as much by those living within its borders as those living abroad. Through the folk, konpa, and rap music genres, they examine how songs of migration evoke (and suspend) memory, express longing, and hope for (re)connection between migrants and those left behind. These songs exemplify cultural identity, authenticity, and innovation as they recount the perseverance, pain, and suffering of migrants and their families remaining in the country. They suggest solidarity but also signal antagonisms between those living abroad and those who remain in the homeland. The authors conclude that what is

at stake in migration is not just the survival of Haitian families but also the revival of a faltering nation.

The role of the arts and creative processes in both telling the story of migration and building solidarity around the migration experience is continued by Naa Densua Tordzro who explores the history and meaning of Asaasa cloth. Asaasa cloth originated from Ghana and is made up of different fabrics, mostly cut-offs, patched together to form a new style. The author argues the stitching together of fabrics to create a bigger piece of cloth or a quilt is a metaphor for connectedness in life which emerges from poverty as a result of the various inequalities people face as they move from one country to the other in the Global South. Asassa cloth is used to tease out this idea of connectedness and the ways in which Asaasa both captures migration experiences and enables them to be communicated.

The Special Issue concludes with an article by Gameli Tordzro, which reflects on the documentary film *Music Across Borders* and draws on understandings from oral traditions of the Aŋlo-Ewe language,<sup>27</sup> storytelling, and music to discuss ways of making meaning of the everydayness of life in migration in the Global South. The process of storying on screen opens up the possibility of creating a new, different, and shared understanding of the ways in which people navigate their private and social spaces, including the physical virtual and technological spaces they inhabit with others on the move. In so doing, the author sheds light on artistic research as a point of synthesis for multidisciplinary research in contexts of South-South migration.

This Special Issue is the first collective output from academics, artists, and activists affiliated with the MIDEQ Hub, and it is fitting that the contributions are so rich in empirical material and wide ranging in disciplinary approach. Taken in the round, these contributions are indicative of the diverse and innovative approaches emerging through our work and collaborations together. They illustrate both the richness of the migration experience and migrant contributions to economic, social, political, and cultural life, and the complex relationships between migration and inequality in the Global South, many of which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. And they help us to tell a new story of migration,<sup>28</sup> based on questions, concepts, and ideas generated by those living and working in the Global South.

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<sup>27</sup> Aŋlo-Ewe language is spoken from along the coastal region of West Africa and is part of the larger 'Gbe' language group stretching from the South-Eastern Ghana to Southwestern Nigeria.

<sup>28</sup> The *Story of Migration* animation, illustrated by Karrie Fransman, is based on a script written with MIDEQ's partners in 11 countries in the Global South and challenges many of the ideas that currently dominate media representations of migration. The animation can be viewed in seven languages at <https://www.mideq.org/en/resources-index-page/story-migration/>.

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