



*Human development puts people at the centre of development. It is about realizing human potential, increasing choice and expanding the scope for people to lead the lives they value. Since 1990, the annual Human Development Reports have made significant innovations, analytical contributions and major policy recommendations across a range of global challenges including gender equity, human rights, cultural liberty, water scarcity and climate change.*

*Human mobility, both within and beyond borders, has become an increasingly prominent theme in domestic and international debates and is the topic of the 2009 Human Development Report (HDR2009). Our starting point is that the large inequalities in the global distribution of opportunities are a major driver for movement of people. The main message is that mobility has the potential to enhance human development - among movers, those who stay and destination communities. In practice, however, processes and outcomes can be adverse to movers, and there is an important role for better policies and institutions at the national, regional and international levels.*

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Visit our website

[hdr.undp.org](http://hdr.undp.org)

Human Development Report Office  
304 E 45th Street, 12th Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
United States

Tel: (212) 906-3661

Fax: (212) 906-5161

Email

[hdro@undp.org](mailto:hdro@undp.org)

# Human Development Report 2009

**Overcoming barriers:**  
Human mobility and development



## ● Freedom and movement

Mobility is a basic element of freedom. It can bring large gains in capabilities for individual migrants and their families, source communities and countries, and destination places. Human movement is a vital component of expanding people's freedoms and opportunities (in terms of work, education, political rights, safety and health care). However, individuals often face considerable obstacles that are often severely constrained by structural factors which shape the choices available to them.

## ● Impacts of Mobility on Human Development: What happens and why?

There is nothing fixed in the relationship between migration and development. Mobility has divergent impacts on the lives of people –those who move, their families, communities and the places of destination –depending on what drives people to move and the broader context in which movement occurs. Yet the evidence clearly shows that there are potentially large gains to human development from reducing barriers to movement and from improved policies towards movers. These would benefit all groups affected by migration. *Overcoming Barriers* sets out a package of reforms that can generate major payoffs for human development.

## ● Policies and Institutions to Enhance Human Development Outcomes

A bold vision is needed to realize and enhance these gains, a vision that recognizes the underlying challenges and constraints. The underlying drivers of mobility, including unequal opportunities between and within countries and rapid demographic change, are expected to persist and even intensify over the coming decades. In the short term, the fallout from the global recession looms very large. Reforms will be particularly difficult in the context of the crisis, but the most important challenge is precisely to find ways to avoid setbacks to human development and, as importantly, to enable a sustainable recovery. Our proposal is primarily oriented towards this, the related challenges of enhancing and broadening the benefits, and the reduction of the risks and costs associated with movement.

Advancing on this agenda will require strong and enlightened leadership, and sustained efforts to move debates and policy discussions forward. The Human Development Report 2009 aims to underpin these effects by taking the global discourse about migration and development beyond the rhetorical level, articulating the linkages and providing guidance on effective policies. The nature, design, political feasibility and timing of reforms depend on a realistic appraisal of economic and social conditions - recognizing public opinion and political constraints - at local and national levels.

