Session 601

Multi-Country Surveys on International Migration: An Assessment of Selection Biases in Destination Countries

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Short Abtract

Studies on international migration are hampered by specific methodological issues that are unknown in other fields of demographic research. The most salient is that international migration is, by nature, a phenomenon that involves several countries. As a result, to study seriously the causes and consequences of international migration, a multi-country design is an option recommended by several specialists. This requirement, joined to an objective of representativeness, raise tremendous sampling issues. A possible method to select migrants at destination is to use contacts collected in origin countries. This method is used, for instance, in the Mexican Migration Project. This paper, using the data of the MAFE project (Migration between Africa and Europe), is an attempt to assess the selection biases of migrants' samples that use snow-balling techniques starting from the country of origin.

Background and objective

International migration has become a major concern for multilateral agencies as well as for origin and destination countries. Still, surveys on the causes and consequences of international migration remain rare, especially in some parts of the world such as sub-Saharan Africa. Actually, studies on international migration are hampered by specific methodological issues that are unknown in other fields of demographic research. The most salient is that international migration is, by nature, a phenomenon that involves several countries (at least origin and destination countries and, in some contexts, transit countries in addition). As a result, to study seriously the causes and consequences of international migration, a multi-country design is an option recommended by several specialists (Massey 1994; Bilsborrow 1997). Basically, to analyse the causes of migration, it is necessary to compare those who migrated with those who did not, and thus it is necessary to collect data both in destination countries (on migrants) and in origin countries (on non-migrants and return migrants). The same basic remark also applies to the study of the consequences of migration. These requirements, joined to an objective of representativeness, raise tremendous sampling issues.

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To obtain a representative sample of non-migrants and return migrants in origin countries is not a big issue. But building a representative sample of migrants of a given origin in destination countries is a real challenge. Appropriate sampling frames are rarely available and, in any case, they usually do not include undocumented migrants. McKenzie analysed how snowball and intercept point surveys can approach the census-based method in terms of giving information on the characteristics of migrants, the level of remittances received, and the incidence of return migration (McKenzie and Mistiaen 2007). Groenewold and Bilsborrow have also presented several interesting experiences undertaken within the Push-Pull project and have shown the practical difficulties to built representative samples at destination. In this project, the samples at origin and destination were independent: there was no link between the individuals surveyed in the various countries. The Mexican Migration Project took another option by selecting migrants at destination (the U.S.) through contacts collected in Mexican households from selected communities (snow-balling technique). Although the MMP sample cannot, by nature, be representative nor of the Mexican population at origin neither of the Mexican population living in the US, results from the MMP appear to be similar to those obtained through other nationally representative sources (Massey 2000). But according to our knowledge, no assessment was made of the selection biases of the US sample.

All in all, analyses on the selection biases of migrants' samples at destination are quite rare and the assessment of selection biases of samples built through contacts collected in origin countries remains to be done. The objective of our paper is to address this methodological issue through the analyses of the MAFE project samples.

Data and Method

The MAFE project (Migration between Africa and Europe)[1] aims at filling the gap, largely admitted, in data availability on African international migration (Lucas, 2006; Hatton, 2004). The design of the MAFE survey builds on the experience both of the "Mexican Migration

[1] The Migration between Africa and Europe (MAFE-Senegal) survey is a project coordinated by INED (France), in association with the Institut de Population, Développement et Santé de la Reproduction of the University of Dakar (IPDSR, Senegal). It also involves the Pompeu Fabra university (UPF, Spain) and the Forum Internazionale ed Europero di Ricerche sull' imigrazione (FIERI, Italy). The survey was conducted with the support of the Agence nationale de la rercherche (ANR, France), the Ile de France Region, the Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD, France), the Centre population et développement (CEPED, France) and the FSP programme entitled 'International Migrations, territorial reorganizations and development of the countries of the South. The MAFE-Senegal project is now being enlarged to Ghanaian and Congolese Migrations.

Project" (MMP) and of biographic surveys conducted in Europe and in Africa (GRAB 1999; Poirier et al. 2001; Schoumaker 2006). The MAFE project consists in a multi-country survey that collects data both at origin (among non-migrants and return migrants) and at destination (among migrants). A first round of surveys was made on Senegalese migration in 2008. Similar surveys will be done in 2009-2010 on Congolese and Ghanaian migration. For cost reason, the sample in Senegal is limited to the region of Dakar that accounts for a quarter of the national population. 1,500 individuals were randomly selected, including 200 return migrants and 200 migrants' spouses. In addition, 600 migrants were interviewed in the main Senegalese destinations in Europe (Spain, Italy, and France).

Samples at destination were completed through the quota method using various sources to identify the migrants. In all countries, the first source to identify migrants was a set of contacts collected among Senegalese households at origin. The rest of the migrants were identified through various techniques according to the country. In Spain, the *Padron*, a national file that aggregates municipal registers was used. This unique source seemed especially suited since it includes documented as well as undocumented migrants. In Italy, in absence of an appropriate sampling frame, the complementary migrants were recruited in focal points frequented by sub-Saharan and through snow-balling. The same techniques were applied in France, where contacts were also collected through migrants associations.

The MAFE project includes two types of questionnaires. A household questionnaire was used in Senegal: it contains information on all the current members of the household, but also a detailed information on relatives who lived abroad at the time of the survey (head's children, spouse of a HH current member, head's other parents with whom he or she has frequent contacts). In addition, an individual biographic questionnaire was used in all countries to collect life histories of migrants, non-migrants and return migrants.

As previously mentioned, our analyses will focus on selection biases of migrants identified through contacts obtained in households surveyed in Senegal. A first descriptive part will examine the differences of migrants' characteristics according to the source of selection. A second part will model migrants' selection through binary logistic regression at two steps. Using the data from the household questionnaire, we will firstly study the determinants that explain that a household gives the contact of a migrant in Europe. A second model will identify the factors that explain that a migrant is actually found and surveyed in Europe when a contact was firstly obtained. Various variables will be introduced in the models:

- characteristics of the migrant himself: age, gender, education, current occupation and elements on his/her migration experience (country or residence, documented or not, types of contact with the household);
- characteristics of the household : size, number of migrants abroad, socio-economic level (welfare indicator built with information on housing characteristics);
- characteristics of the respondent in Senegal: age, gender, education, current occupation, relationship with the migrant.

The analyses will thus allow tackling the influence of individual characteristics as well as contextual variables at the household and national levels (influence of the migrant country of residence) on the probability, for the survey team, to obtain a contact and, at the end, to include a migrant in the sample at destination.

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