

MIGRANT Remittances

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EDITORIAL

From the Editors

This issue updates the trends in remittance flows worldwide by identifying their growth to regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean and from such places as Spain and Saudi Arabia. We look at how financial intermediaries continue to work toward greater consolidation. As we pointed out in the last issue, industry competition and technological innovation have been deepening, and this edition's news stories suggest that pattern is continuing. We also point out two other important issues: first, emerging trends in consumer practices and grassroots responses, and second, the intersections between remittances and social development issues such as education and health.

This is the last issue co-edited by Anna Lindley, who is taking a job as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at Oxford University, continuing her research and analysis on Somali remittances and the connections among migration, development, and conflict.

Manuel Orozco and Anna Lindley

To contact: remittances@dai.com

To subscribe: newsletter@dai.com

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Worldwide Trends in International Remittances

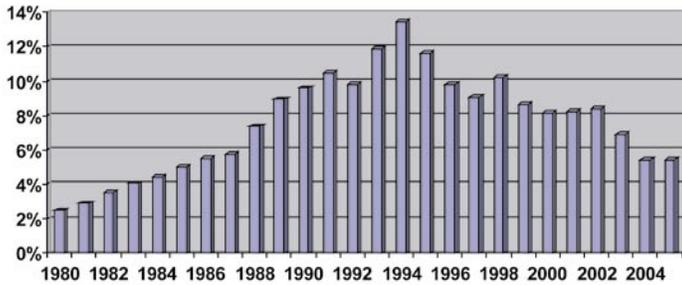
Highlights on International Flows

- **Outbound remittances from Spain total US\$8.25 billion.** According to Spain's Central Bank, migrant remittances increased by 35 percent in 2006, totaling \$8.255 billion, compared with an increase of only 10.14 percent from 2004 to 2005. In December 2006 alone, remittances reached \$857 million—the total amount that was sent in 1996. Most of these flows go to Latin America and the Caribbean and some North and West African countries, such as Morocco or Senegal.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean receive \$62 billion in remittances.** The Inter-American Development Bank reported that remittances grew 12.7 percent from 2005 to 2006. These flows reflected increases in most countries, including Ecuador, Honduras, and El Salvador.
- **Outbound remittances from Saudi Arabia decline as a share of GDP.** Although Saudi Arabia reduced the ratio of migrant remittances to gross domestic product (GDP) by 50 percent, flows still reached \$14 billion in 2006. This is a result of a government program to capture and invest income that would have otherwise been sent abroad as remittances. A report by the Arab Monetary Fund shows that while outbound transfers have not drastically declined, GDP has grown more steadily. Outbound transfers as a ratio to GDP were 5.4 percent in 2005, compared with 9.6 percent in 1990. Roughly 70 percent of transfers go to South Asia. Migrants comprise more than a quarter of Saudi Arabia's total population.

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Outbound Remittances from Saudi Arabia as a Ratio to GDP



Source: World Bank Development Indicators, 2006.

- **Remittances to Haiti top \$1.65 billion.** According to estimates from a survey funded by the Inter-American Development Bank's Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), Haiti received \$1.65 billion in remittances in 2006, representing more than one-third of Haiti's gross national product. The MIF also estimates that 1.5 million Haitians send money home. (See also Publications.)

Regulatory Issues Around the World

- **Foreign currency transfers to Zimbabwe are allowed.** The Governor of the Central Bank of Zimbabwe, Gideon Gono, introduced a new policy that will allow money transfer operators (MTOs) to dispense foreign hard currency to recipients. This is a reversal of Gono's 2004 policy, which stated that recipients of foreign currency transfers through MTOs could only obtain the equivalent in local currency. Gono said the decision was aimed at encouraging Zimbabweans abroad to use formal channels to remit money to relatives back home. (See also Country Profile.)
- **Computer system to track information on money transfers in and out of the United States is delayed.** A U.S. Treasury Department report stated that a computer system tracking information on inbound and outbound money transfers will not be ready by the end of this year, as anticipated. The program, which is designed to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing, will cost \$32.6 million and will require nearly three and a half years to build. This system will fill the void that currently exists in terms of governmental monitoring of money flows.
- **Hong Kong implements new anti-money-laundering and counter-terrorism financing rules.** Hong Kong is taking steps to comply with international standards for preventing money laundering and terrorist financing. MTOs in Hong Kong are now required to verify customer identity and track transactions higher than \$8,000. Customers must show their official Hong Kong ID cards and provide their addresses and phone numbers when remitting such large amounts.
- **Government of Pakistan creates a task force to ease money transfers.** Ministry of Finance officials predict that remittances in the formal financial system can be significantly increased if transactions from countries that currently do

not have Pakistani bank branches are made easier. Part of the mission of the task force is to identify ways to bring informal remittance recipients into the formal banking system.

- **MSB Compliance, Inc. initiates a website to help U.S. MTOs.** The website, www.moneyservicesbusiness.com, provides guidelines, news, advice, and fora to assist members with meeting their compliance obligations.

International Cooperation and New Projects

- **Matching funds program boosts efforts of Andean migrants in Italy to develop their home communities.** The first transnational program involving the Andean diaspora and Italy, Fondo Italo-Andino de Solidaridad 4 + 1 Juntos Por Los Andes, aims to maximize the impact of collective donations of migrants in Italy for use in community projects in the Andean region. For every €1 donated by any of 20 associations of Andean migrants in Italy, an additional €4 will be donated by public and private partners. The migrant associations have committed to contribute €25,000 to the project. The first round of the program will benefit four projects that seek to improve living conditions for children.
- **The U.S. Congress holds a hearing on remittances.** The Subcommittee on Domestic and International Monetary Policy, Trade, and Technology held a hearing on March 7 on *The Role of Remittances in Leveraging Sustainable Development in Latin America*. Members were particularly interested in the role of financial services in facilitating the contribution of remittances to sustainable development.
- **The Kenya diaspora explores ways to increase foreign direct investment flows to Kenya.** Delegates from across Europe, North America, and Africa met at the Kenya Diaspora Investment conference in London in December. The conference highlighted some of the challenges that the diaspora faces and how these challenges can be mitigated. According to a survey carried out by AfricaRecruit, many members of the Kenya diaspora remit both for subsistence and for business/investment purposes; it was estimated that as much as \$600 million may be remitted each year. Conference recommendations for encouraging diaspora investment include using information technology to facilitate investments using online banking, shopping, and dealing, and offering expatriates dual citizenship and voting rights. Presentations can be viewed online at <http://kenyans4kenya.com> ♦

Remittances and Financial Intermediation

- **Western Union lowers fees on ruble transfers.** The 50 percent cut in cost is an effort to remain competitive and even push out other competitors in the Commonwealth of In-

dependent States (CIS) remittances market. Western Union competes with more than 15 MTOs in CIS countries.

- **Fraud investigation is underway in Jamaica.** Employees at Grace Kennedy (a partner of Western Union) are being charged with the theft of nearly US\$450,000 through false reports on remittance pickups. This situation highlights the importance of appropriately identifying and protecting customers and of effective monitoring in both sending and receiving countries.
- **Performance in the U.S.-Mexico remittance corridor shows varying trends.** The Central Bank of Mexico has reported a recent decrease in remittance flows to Mexico related to ongoing immigration concerns in the United States. Similarly, Western Union reported a decline in transfers to Mexico in 2006 despite an increase at the international level. Western Union is attempting to improve its position in the Mexican market by increasing its agent network, beginning new ad campaigns, changing prices for certain areas, and investing \$1.2 million in the 4-for-1 community investment project. These growth issues were reported before the Arizona state court ruled in January that the state is not authorized to seize Western Union transfers from the United States to Mexico. On the other hand, MoneyGram reported a 21 percent growth in transactions to Mexico, even though the overall contribution of Mexican transactions to the company's total revenue had shrunk from 21 percent in 2005 to 11 percent in 2006. Much of the growth has been offset by an increase in the number of European agents and increased spending on marketing.
- **Banorte of Mexico acquires U.S. remittance transfer provider UniTeller.** UniTeller, which processed more than 1.1 million remittances totaling over \$370 million in 2005, was purchased for \$19 million. Coupled with Banorte's acquisition of a 70 percent stake in Texas-based INB Financial Corp. in November 2006, the UniTeller purchase significantly strengthens Banorte's penetration into the Hispanic market of remittance senders in the United States.
- **Microsoft Philippines and Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. launch new Wi-Fi technology to facilitate money transfers.** The service uses phones equipped with the Windows operating system to connect users to a Microsoft server in a wireless area. Customers can then manage funds in a bank account from their mobile phones. To use the service, workers abroad must open an account with RCBE TeleMoney; they can then transfer money from one account to another from their cellular phones.
- **Indonesia's Bank Mega and MoneyGram International forge alliance.** MoneyGram will enable Bank Mega customers to send and receive remittances. The service has already been introduced in 50 Bank Mega branch offices

in Indonesia, with plans for nationwide coverage by the end of 2007.

- **UNISStream signs a partnership with one of Uzbekistan's largest banks.** The agreement will enable Asaka State Joint-Stock Commercial Bank customers to access UNISStream money transfer services at all Asaka Bank branches. Uzbekistan is Central Asia's most populous country and represents one of the fastest-growing money transfer markets in the CIS.
- **Vodafone and Citigroup Corporate plan to launch a mobile-based international money transfer service.** Building on Vodafone's recent successful pilot of a mobile money transfer service with its Kenyan affiliate, Safaricom, this new service seeks to provide remittance senders and receivers around the world with a convenient, cost-effective, secure, transparent, and easy-to-use transfer method. The service will initially focus on Eastern European and Asian markets.
- **Mobile operators join forces with banks and MasterCard to allow people to send remittances through mobile phones.** In February the GSM Association, which represents many of the world's mobile carriers, launched a pilot program that could reduce the cost of sending small remittances by combining the extensive networks of mobile phone networks with financial services. Nineteen mobile operators active in more than 100 countries are partnering with banks at the local and regional levels, and linking to convey international transfers through a global MasterCard hub.
- **Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) transferred \$2.8 billion in overseas Filipino workers' remittances in 2006.** This was an increase of 30 percent over 2005. BPI hopes to grow 15 percent in transaction volume in 2007 in an estimated \$14 billion market. BPI is lining up programs to encourage more overseas Filipinos to invest in the country through savings accounts, mutual funds, or real estate. It also has a web-based facility for overseas workers to send money for tuition fees, to purchase property, and to obtain loans for housing and starting a business.
- **U.K. banks open up to Polish migrants.** There are signs that HSBC, Lloyds, and Barclays, among other banks, are beginning to target Polish and other migrants from the European Union Accession countries. Some allow migrants to open accounts with just a passport, whereas traditional accounts require two forms of identification. Some banks also recruit Polish staff and offer seminars in Polish on how to set up businesses and purchase homes in the United Kingdom.
- **Citigroup and Obopay Inc. partner on mobile banking.** Citigroup agreed to a pilot person-to-person mobile payment service with mobile-payment processor Obopay Inc. for new and existing cardholders. This service will allow

instant transfers via mobile phones into mobile payments accounts that also allow for account management, including viewing balances and payment histories and making payments.

- **ICICI Bank launches “Money2India” remittance card and Money to Home services.** Money2India is a service available to Indian remittance recipients at any Visa-affiliated ATM. ICICI maintains over 25 percent market share in the Indian remittance sector—the largest remittance-receiving market in the world. The Money to Home service will enable remittance transfers from any country to another. Money to Home is currently available in the United Kingdom and Canada and will soon expand to other regions.
- **Orlandi Valuta has teamed up with Transferunion to offer money transfer services in Ecuador.** Transferunion, acting as Orlandi Valuta’s agent, will enable consumers to receive money in more than 91 ACTIVA locations in 49 cities in Ecuador. (Activa is Transferunion’s payment network, based in supermarkets and other retail stores.) Furthermore, Ecuadorians in the United States can send funds to Ecuador from any Orlandi Valuta agent location nationwide.
- **New system opens in Nepal’s market: eXpress Money Transfer (eMT).** Laxmi Bank of Nepal launched its internet-based online remittance service to facilitate international and domestic money transfers. The eMT service is designed to formalize and streamline the money transfer market and reduce reliance on informal channels, a process known as “hundi.”
- **Card-based transfers are available to Brazil.** American Cash Exchange, Inc. and Banco Redimento have introduced Poni Card, a stored-value product that deposits money into an account in Brazil through use of a PIN provided by the purchaser of the Poni Card in the United States. Banco Redimento is the premier remittance payer through deposits to accounts in Brazil; it processed more than 800,000 remittances in 2006 and serves 300,000 Brazilians living abroad.

RESEARCH NOTE

The Impact of Migrant Remittances on Human Capital Accumulation in Latin America and the Caribbean

by Pablo Acosta, Andean Development Corporation-CAF

Migrant remittances have gained enormous importance as an income source in many Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries. In addition to examining other outcomes related to economic development (poverty, inequality, physical investment, entrepreneurship), researchers are

documenting the relationship between remittances and human capital accumulation (education, health) in recipient households.

The net impact of migration and remittances on human capital accumulation is a priori unclear. On one hand, migrant remittances can help overcome borrowing constraints that limit the physical and human capital investments of poor households. On the other hand, the migration of household members that precedes the receipt of remittances can have disruptive effects on family life, with potentially negative consequences on the educational attainment or health status of children. Moreover, to the extent that in destination countries most migrants tend to work in occupations requiring limited schooling, the return on investments in education may be lower for those who envisage international migration, which also could tend to reduce the schooling of children in migrants’ households. Similarly, migration can put pressure on wages in the home country, raising the opportunity cost of not working for older children. In any case, the direction of the relationship between remittances and human capital accumulation depends on the idiosyncratic characteristics of each country.

Among recent evidence on the impact of remittances on education in LAC, Hanson and Woodruff (2003) find that remittances are associated with higher educational attainment in rural Mexico, in particular among 10- to 15-year-old girls whose mothers have low educational levels. Lopez-Cordova (2005) shows that higher remittance flows reduce illiteracy rates in Mexican municipalities, although the impact on school attendance is mixed: the effect is positive only for 5-year-olds, insignificant among 6- to 14-year-olds, and negative for those aged 15 to 17. McKenzie and Rapoport (2006) stress that children aged 16 to 18 from Mexican households with migrants exhibit lower educational attainment levels. In the case of El Salvador, Cox Edwards and Ureta (2003) note that children from remittance-recipient households are less likely to drop out of school, which they attribute to the relaxation of budget constraints affecting poor recipient households. Acosta (2006) shows that this result is stronger for Salvadoran girls, suggesting gender differentials in the use of remittances.

Finally, and with a broader regional perspective, a recent study by Acosta, Fajnzylber, and Lopez (2007) indicates that while remittances tend to have positive effects on education in 11 LAC countries (Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru), this impact is often restricted to specific groups of the population. Specifically, the positive effect of remittances on education tends to be larger when parents’ schooling is low. For instance, the authors find a positive and significant remittance effect

on school attendance among rural girls in Mexico, Paraguay, and Peru whose mothers have at most three years of educational attainment, whereas for the remaining children the effect is estimated to be close to zero.

Few papers have addressed the impact of migration and remittances on child health, and the exceptions are mostly focused on infant mortality in Mexico. Kanaiaupuni and Donato (1999) and Lopez-Cordova (2005) analyze the effects of village migration and remittances on infant survival outcomes in Mexico and conclude that remittances reduce infant mortality. Further evidence on the impact of migration on other child health outcomes has been provided by Hildebrandt and McKenzie (2005), again for the Mexican case. Their results suggest not only that migrant households have lower rates of infant mortality and higher birth weights, but that migration also raises maternal health knowledge and the likelihood that the child was delivered by a doctor. On the other hand, preventive healthcare (breastfeeding, visits to doctors, and vaccinations) seems to be less likely for children from migrant households.

Another recent study finding a positive impact of migrant remittances on child health is Acosta, Fajnzylber, and Lopez (2007). The authors investigate the relationship between remittances and anthropometric indicators for young children (weight for age, height for age), which are considered to be important measures of the health dimension of human capital accumulation and are extensively cited in the health economics literature. It is a consensus in medicine that both weight and height measures are good indicators of health status, with consequences for both the short and long terms. For instance, lower weight is usually associated with malnutrition and higher mortality risk, while lower stature in childhood is strongly correlated with lower body size in adulthood and increased risk of cardiovascular and lung diseases. Acosta, Fajnzylber, and Lopez claim that those anthropometric indicators for young children from remittance-recipient households improve significantly in Guatemala and Nicaragua, in particular among the poor.

Empirical findings related to household behavioral outcomes affected by remittance flows certainly add to the discussion of the costs and benefits of out-migration from developing countries. Remittances can contribute to economic growth if they are channeled into productive investment, such as the acquisition of human capital (including health and education), as some of the evidence seems to indicate.

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ARTICLE

Getting a Fair Deal? Consumer Issues with Remittance Services

by Anna Lindley, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford

Why does it cost so much to send small amounts? How much of this money will actually arrive at the other end? What are my options? How can I be sure that the money will reach my mum safely? What can I do if things go wrong?

These are a few of the questions often asked by people sending money to family members overseas. While the issues encountered vary considerably across people's host and origin countries, there are common problems that arise frequently. This article explores some of the challenges for

COUNTRY PROFILE: ZIMBABWE

Population: 12,236,805. Approximately 80% unemployment, and 80% below the poverty line. One-quarter of the adult population has HIV/AIDS.

Migration history: After independence (1980–1984), approximately 50,000 to 60,000 whites left the country. In the 1980s, conflict in Matabeleland prompted forced migration. Since the 1990s, economic deterioration, severe drought, land reform, human rights violations, political violence, and persecution have prompted further emigration. In 2000, Robert Mugabe, who came to power in 1987, began a land reform program that crippled the commercial farming sector, which had traditionally employed 400,000, leading to an exodus of white farmers and an increased flow of Zimbabweans into South Africa and Botswana.

Estimated number of migrants overseas: 2–2.5 million in South Africa; 300,000–400,000 in Botswana, and approximately 500,000–1 million in the United Kingdom. Migrants also tend to go to Namibia and the United States (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006). Estimated number of internally displaced people: 569,685 (Bloch 2006).

Profile of average immigrant: Generally higher level of education than the non-migrant population. People who migrate to South Africa tend to be less skilled, having worked as builders, mechanics, electricians, and carpenters in Zimbabwe. People who migrate to the United Kingdom are often political exiles and generally more highly skilled, having worked as managers, teachers, nurses, health professionals, and accountants in Zimbabwe (Bloch 2006).

Estimated remittance flows: Estimates of remittance volumes to Zimbabwe are difficult to obtain. According to the German Development Service, \$1.3 billion was transferred in January–September 2004. Bloch (2006) estimates that 28% of households receive remittances.

Common money transfer methods: A highly informal money transfer system. A recent survey suggests that only one-third of migrants use formal mechanisms (including HomeLink, Western Union, and the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe) to send remittances home. Many send money with family and friends going to Zimbabwe, using the “black market,” or bring money with them when they visit Zimbabwe. Research suggests that many migrants also send in-kind remittances, mostly clothes and food; sometimes they pay taxi drivers to transport the goods from South Africa to their relatives (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006).

Use of remittances: Approximately 85% of remittance money is sent to support family, 4% to build homes, 3% to invest in a business, and 2% to support friends (Bloch 2006).

Trends among remittance recipients: 75% of households interviewed by Bracking and Sachikonye had received in-kind or monetary remittances in the past month (2006). In South Africa and Botswana, 50% of Zimbabwean migrants are likely to return to Zimbabwe every year, while 22% of migrants in the United Kingdom tend to return every year for Christmas. On the other hand, migrants in the United States go home less than once a year or never (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006).

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remitters around the world regarding remittance services and some of the host country-based initiatives that seek to tackle these problems.

The pricing of transfers has attracted much attention in recent years. People often complain of a lack of transparency in the pricing of transfers—that they are not able to obtain, on sending the money, a full breakdown of the cost of the transfer. While they know the transfer fee, the exchange rate may not be guaranteed and may change from the advertised rate. Or perhaps the exchange rate is guaranteed, but there may be a fee charged by the institution paying out the remittance to the recipient, particularly when the money is sent through a bank. Often, service

providers in the host country do not provide information on fees that may be charged by partners in the country of origin, leaving migrants uncertain as to how much money will actually reach their families. In addition, low-income migrants are often irked by what they see as the high cost of sending small amounts to help with family members’ living expenses.

Although there is a range of remittance services in many host countries, it is often difficult to compare them and work out which is the best for each individual. A remittance market study in the United Kingdom in 2005 found that information on money transfer products and costs can be confusing and is hardly ever available in an accessible

or easily comparable format—contrasting with the widespread use of transparent APRs (annual percentage rates) for loans. There have been similar findings in other markets as well. This problem may be compounded by the fact that some people who need to send money overseas, particularly people from poor backgrounds or rural areas, are initially not familiar with using financial services. There are also often linguistic and cultural barriers. These factors lead many people to continue using the same old method or a method recommended by a friend.

Even if able to adequately compare services, migrants are often not able to access all of the services available.

In some countries, requirements that service providers obtain particular kinds of proof of identification from customers can make it difficult for some migrants to send money. This is particularly a problem for people who have migrated irregularly, but it may also affect others: because of complex regulatory change around the world in recent years, remittance service providers are often not clear about what steps they must take to identify potential customers, and practices may vary considerably between providers and national contexts. In addition, while money transfer operators do tend to be widely accessible to migrants, immigrants' access to banking services is often more problematic, with high rates of "unbanked" among immigrant communities in many host countries. This situation can be linked to immigration status and eligibility for banking services, migrants' mistrust of banks, or banks' implicit or explicit discouragement of migrant or low-income customers in general. In many countries, banking and credit access also affects people's opportunities in various areas of daily life, including housing and employment; building up a financial record can help lead people into the economic mainstream.

These are just some of the issues encountered by migrants wanting to send money home. However, there are many changes underway in host countries and many initiatives that seek to tackle these problems.

People are campaigning to ensure wider access to banking and remittance services among low-income and immigrant groups. The issuing of identification cards by migrants' embassies and consuls in host countries has proved important in the United States; the Mexican Matrícula Consular is now accepted by many banks as identification for setting up a bank account. This type of card can allow irregular migrants to open bank accounts and access financial services. The effort is partially motivated by the massive commercial potential of the Hispanic market in the United States for banks, but it currently seems unlikely that other host countries will follow suit.

In the rest of the financial services sector, prepaid cards have become increasingly prominent. Migrants can store money on a debit card that they can use to withdraw funds from ATMs, pay for goods, or send funds to relatives. However, some community groups suggest that these new products should not be seen as a solution to financial exclusion. For example, according to Deyanira del Rio of the Neighborhood Economic Development Advocacy Project (NEDAP) in New York, "Our concern is that prepaid debit cards add to the menu of costly, inferior services often targeted to low-income and immigrant populations, and create another barrier to economic inclusion. Although proponents claim that the cards are vehicles for building credit, developing assets, and entering the 'banking mainstream,' few seem to provide opportunities that match this rhetoric." (See also Orozco, Jacob, and Tescher in Publications.)

Beyond promoting access to financial services, organizations are also working to spread "financial literacy" among low-income people, including migrants. For example, Oxfam Novib in the Netherlands and the NEDAP are among many organizations around the world working to empower migrants vis-à-vis financial service providers, making people aware of their options and rights. There are also initiatives directed more specifically at promoting migrants' awareness of issues related to remittance services and getting the best value. The Inter-American Dialogue, for instance, is developing a remittance literacy toolkit for migrants, focusing on helping people to assess services available from five perspectives: product type, cost, convenience, issues of added value (for example, reliability and security or being able to build a financial history), and business reputation. The idea is to make the toolkit accessible both through semi-formal instruction and in more open ways, such as through radio stations and information available at remittance agent outlets.

People are also working to promote transparency in remittance markets. Some countries are moving toward requiring service providers to offer certain pieces of information on request or to issue senders receipts detailing fees, exchange rates, and amounts to be paid in foreign currency. The "Fair Exchange" initiative in the United States is exploring how to encourage voluntary standards in the remittance industry, including minimum guarantees in terms of disclosure to customers, maximum exchange rate spread, delivery time guarantees, and so on.

Independent price comparison facilities have been initiated in many countries. For example, PROFECO (the Mexican Federal Attorney's Office for the Consumer) runs the website *Quien es quien en el envío de dinero* (Who's

Who in Sending Money – www.profeco.gob.mx/envio/envio.asp). It provides informational charts that are updated on a weekly basis with costs, exchange rates, time required to complete a transfer, and outlets in sending and receiving locations for money transfer service providers in nine major U.S. cities with large Mexican populations. SendMoneyHome, a project initiated by the U.K. Department for International Development, provides information via a website (www.sendmoneyhome.org) and leaflets for the Bangladeshi, Chinese, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Indian, Jamaican, Kenyan, Nigerian, Rwandan, South African, and Ukrainian communities in the United Kingdom and for non-resident South Africans remitting to Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Swaziland—with more information on the way. Similar projects are in the pipeline in Spain and other European countries.

Finally, some countries are developing consumer protection arrangements. Some countries' financial regulations contain provisos concerning the protection of remitters. "Fair Exchange" in the United States and other projects are exploring the notion of granting accreditation to service providers that observe good practices. More generally, grassroots groups are making their mark by gathering consumer momentum in immigrant neighborhoods to exert pressure on service providers. For example, in the United States, TIGRA (Transnational Institute for Grassroots Research and Action) is working in partnership with community and ethnic associations to organize Million Dollar Remitters Clubs in immigrant neighborhoods to advocate for "transnational community benefits agreements" with remittance industry leaders. In addition to lowering transaction fees, they aim to encourage remittance service providers to reinvest a percentage of their profit in immigrant neighborhoods here and in people's communities of origin, expand financial services to migrants, and encourage good practice in the industry.

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Events (April–June 2007)

- April 15–18 – NACHA Payments 2007, Chicago. www.nacha.org
- April 16 – High-Level Remittance and Diaspora Policy Roundtable, sponsored by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas, Ottawa.

- May 10–11 – Competitive Forces Shaping the Payments Environment: What's Next? Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. <http://chicagofed.org>
- May 10–14 – First Latin American Migrant Summit, Morelia, Mexico.
- May 17 – Accelerated Microenterprise Advancement Project (AMAP) After Hours Seminar on Remittances, sponsored by USAID, Washington, D.C. www.microlinks.org/afterhours
- May 25–26 – Workshop on Remittances and Methodologies, ISIM, Washington, D.C.
- June 10–12 – Second Annual Underbanked Financial Services Forum (Center for Financial Services Innovation and SourceMedia), Dallas. www.sourcemediaconferences.com/conferences.html ♦

Publications (since December 2006)

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Editors: Manuel Orozco and Anna Lindley

Newsletter team: Jill Reifsteck (IAD); Maria Jaramillo (ACCION); Bryanna Millis (DAI); Kitty Stone (DAI); Orlantha Hoes (DAI)

Contributors: Onome Ako (Africa Recruit, UK)

Editorial review group: Douglas Pearce (DFID); Nhu-An Tran (USAID)

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