

## *Development Economics*

### **Changing migration patterns: Drivers and constraints**

International migration has received a lot of international attention lately as migration flows from conflict zones and poor regions (Africa) expanded rapidly in recent years. What are the drivers of such migration and what are the consequences of migration to Europe and other countries for migration within Africa? Different angles could be chosen to study these complex migration issues.

**Contact person:** Stein Holden, School of Economics and Business, NMBU:  
[stein.holden@nmbu.no](mailto:stein.holden@nmbu.no)

### **Youth livelihood strategies in a changing world**

Youth unemployment has become a growing problem in many countries. Economic stagnation and crisis combined with digitization/robotification which may cause many types of jobs to disappear. Growing landlessness and continued rapid population growth contribute to youth migration and unemployment in Africa. Some fear that a concentration of desperate unemployed youth in growing numbers in urban areas can increase the risks of social instability and political unrest. What is being done in different countries to tackle this problem and how effective are the policies used?

**Contact person:** Stein Holden, School of Economics and Business, NMBU:  
[stein.holden@nmbu.no](mailto:stein.holden@nmbu.no)

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

The UN recently launched the new Sustainable Development Goals and a strategy to operationalize them. How is this being done, how do they aim to measure achievements and what impacts do the SDGs have on specific actions taken by international organizations and various countries? Studies may focus on specific SDGs and how they are attempted operationalized.

**Contact person:** Stein Holden, School of Economics and Business, NMBU:  
[stein.holden@nmbu.no](mailto:stein.holden@nmbu.no)

### **Impacts of digitalization and new communication technologies in developing countries**

Mobile phones, internet, satellite imagery, etc. have reduced costs of communication an order of magnitude and can connect people living in remote places to the global economy at a much lower cost than earlier. This has likely contributed to the much more rapid economic growth we now see in many developing countries and this again stimulates investment in infrastructure and other aspects of development. How does this affect market characteristics in developing countries?

This may vary across different types of markets and locations over time. How does it e.g. affect credit markets and how far credit institutions penetrate into rural areas? How does it affect seasonal price volatility for food crops that are produced in rain-fed agriculture? Are economies

## **Temaer er aktuelle kun for masterstudenter ved Handelshøyskolen, NMBU**

getting better integrated and thereby more protected against climate shocks?

**Contact person:** Stein Holden, School of Economics and Business, NMBU:  
[stein.holden@nmbu.no](mailto:stein.holden@nmbu.no)

### **The effects of improved international market access for agricultural products**

Inside the WTO some developing countries try to improve the access for imported agricultural products in the markets of the industrial countries. This will make changes to both consumption and production in the developing countries. How will this work in the rural areas you study? What is the effect on poverty, and may this trigger economic development and redistribution?

**Contact person:** Roberto Garcia, School of Economics and Business, NMBU:  
[roberto.garcia@nmbu.no](mailto:roberto.garcia@nmbu.no)

### **Microfinance**

Assessing the performance and possible development effects of such schemes in one or more districts could be suitable as a Master thesis project.

**Contact person:** Mette Wik, School of Economics and Business, NMBU: [mette.wik@nmbu.no](mailto:mette.wik@nmbu.no)

### **Income diversification and food security**

Many places in developing countries rural households do not control enough land to fulfil dietary needs of the household. It is likely that other sources of income (eg. sales of fish, animal products and handicrafts, other employment or migration) are used for purchase of food. Possible research questions: What are the major strategies for food security? How are these strategies influenced by access to resources, use of resources, agricultural production system, market access and other socio-economic factors? Which socioeconomic factors influence the nutritional status the most? How important is agricultural production in determining nutritional status? How important are other sources of income? What effect does diversification of income sources have on the distribution of income? Does higher income guarantee higher food expenditures, resulting in higher nutrient intake and an improvement in nutritional status? Are some sources of income more important than others when it comes to improving nutritional status?

**Contact person:** Mette Wik, School of Economics and Business, NMBU: [mette.wik@nmbu.no](mailto:mette.wik@nmbu.no)

### **Possible thesis topics on social networks:**

#### **The impact on livelihood of access to social and institutional resources**

The suggestions below include two types of social/institutional resources: Organizational membership in RPOs, and informal social networks within and across villages. A Rural Producer Organisation (RPO), is traditionally a cooperative, aimed at providing farmers with better market access, better prices, cheaper loans, transport facilities and negotiation power towards buyers etc. This is mainly provided through organising the farmers to constitute larger groups, and provide knowledge and know-how. The larger groups make marketing more efficient, and provide more negotiation power, i.e. make it possible to act as a larger and stronger unit than the individual smallholder farmer. Activities targeted to the individual farmer, such as

## **Temaer er aktuelle kun for masterstudenter ved Handelshøyskolen, NMBU**

credit, planning and advising farmers concerning when to sell, when to buy seeds, fertilisers etc., in order to better organize own production.

Generally, the farmers live relatively isolated from the market; they lack information, relationships throughout the marketing chain, and they suffer from small-scale disadvantages. Thus, an RPO has the objective of diminishing these disadvantages, provide information through being transparent, and give more power to the farmers, as well as transferring competence and knowledge. Social, informal networks as well as Rural Producers' Organisations can be considered as assets, to which farmers have access to a varying degree. In addition, those with access to RPOs sometimes nonetheless choose to be a non-member. According to this reasoning, we have four suggestions for research questions concerning this topic:

**Contact person:** Mette Wik, School of Economics and Business, NMBU: [mette.wik@nmbu.no](mailto:mette.wik@nmbu.no)

### **How do the RPOs contribute to the marketing of produces, and how useful are the activities?** (From the farmers' perspective, and both potential and actual contributions)

This includes investigating: What kind of activities are organised through the RPO (markets, loans, transportation, etc.)? To what extent are the farmers participating in the activities, alternative markets and marketing activities? Are RPO activities relevant for some crops more than others? How do the farmers judge the RPO and their activities and organisation? What are the farmers' requirements for a RPO to be attractive as an organisation?

**Contact person:** Mette Wik, School of Economics and Business, NMBU: [mette.wik@nmbu.no](mailto:mette.wik@nmbu.no)