

Project # 19
Rural-urban migration and poverty in Brazil, 1991 and 2000
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This project is a research track on a broader research project on “Regional Diversity in Pathways out of Rural Poverty in Brazil: Implications for the Design of Public Policies” coordinated by Steven Helfand (University of California – Riverside) and sponsored by BASIS/USAID.

Objectives

Research objectives are to assess the importance of rural migration as a pathway out of rural poverty in Brazil and to derive policy implications for poverty alleviation. The fundamental question is how the incidence of poverty affect the migration decision and, on the other had, how migration contributes to poverty alleviation. The first stage of the research track will concentrate on the search for the causes of migration at the municipal level . The objective is to identify the determinants of the spatial patterns of rural migration flows between municipal districts and later to undertake the analysis of the consequences of migration.

Data

Sources of data are fixed-period information on the place (municipal district and rural or urban situation) of residence five years ago obtained from the IBGE Demographic Census of 2000 and 1991. The analysis uses the migration flows between municipal districts (classified according to rural or urban origin and destination) derived from the fixed period information. Socio-economic data at municipal level obtained from the Demographic Census of 1980 and the Economic Census of 1980, 1985 and 1995 complement the database.

Methodology

Major analytical sources are, at the micro level, the Harris-Todaro variants of the human capital model and, at the macro level, the gravitational models of migration. After a descriptive analysis of the patterns of migration, econometric models of the determinants of migration flows will be estimated using as instruments the lagged socio-economic and demographic data from the previous Census. Panel data analysis of migration flows between 3659 minimum comparable geographic areas (MCA) will allow a more rigorous assessment of rural migration patterns during the 1990s.

Outputs and schedule:

Three research reports are expected:

A – Quantification of the extent of migration and description of the spatial patterns of migration during the 1990s with particular attention on the distinction between rural-urban as opposed to rural-rural or urban-rural flows¹. Description of the patterns of rural migrations during the 1990s based upon the geographic, demographic social and economic characteristics of the municípios of origin and destination of migration flows. The analysis will evaluate the importance of rural/urban vis-à-vis rural rural/rural migration flows and will quantify their patterns in terms of geographic and socio-economic attributes of municipal districts (March 2007).

B – Estimations at the municipal level the determinants of the spatial patterns of migration base upon gravity models. In addition to geographic distance and the differences of population density between origin and destination municipalities the model will specify other spatial (region, soil quality, climate, vegetation, etc.) and socio-economic (income per capita, education, age structure, access to social services, etc.) determinants of rural migration flows. The estimated model could be used to project future patterns of migration and population growth in the different regions of Brazil (December 2007)

C - Evaluate the extent to which migrants are able to escape poverty by moving from rural to urban areas. Since no data sets provide information about the incomes of migrants in their past

¹ There has been significant concern in recent years about the official definitions of “rural” and “urban” in Brazil. Many analysts believe that urbanization is overstated as more and more rural areas are reclassified as urban. Fortunately, the Demographic Census categorizes census tracts on a spectrum from urbanized areas of cities to isolated rural areas. We can rely on this more refined variable if necessary.

(rural) locations, this would involve imputing their past income based on their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and the characteristics of the communities from which they migrated (December 2008).

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