

# Refugee Return and Social Cohesion

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# Background: Crucial to maintain peace

- Preferred “solution” to displacement for many refugees is to return home (UNHCR 2019).
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  - For some of these refugees return will occur eventually, even if decades have passed since they left their home communities.
- Some will be “forced” to return by their host countries.
- Scarce evidence of the impact of repatriation on social cohesion in communities of return.
  - Crucial to maintain peace in communities that are recovering from conflict.

# In this paper...

- We explore the impact of repatriation on social cohesion in communities of return.
- We focus on Burundi for the empirical analysis.
- We also explore how these effects differ across different sub-samples based on ethnic composition, (pre-war) land scarcity and attitudes towards returnees.

# Conceptual Motivation

- Out-group and in-group cooperation after conflict.
- International displacement, return and identity formation.
- Community homogeneity.
- Competition for scarce resources.

# 1. Out-group and in-group cooperation after conflict

- Exposure to violence and conflict leads to more prosocial behaviour (Bauer et al., 2016).
- Myriad of activities: from behaving more altruistically (including in lab games) to a higher likelihood of joining social groups (Bellows and Miguel 2009; Gilligan et al. 2014; Voors et al. 2012).
- Increase in prosocial behaviour is towards one's own identity group members (Bauer et al. 2014; Cecchi, Leuveld, and Voors 2016).
- Conflict reinforces societal divisions between groups (i.e. less cooperation with out-group members).

## 2. Displacement, return and identity formation

- We posit that the process of displacement and return can create diverging identities between returnees and stayees.
- **Returnees** share the common experience of escaping conflict, adapting to life abroad, sometimes even growing up abroad, and returning home (with many being forced to return).
- **Stayees** can have different perceptions on patriotism, nationhood and deservedness of limited community resources given their role in protecting these resources during the conflict.
- Schwartz (2019) ethnographic work provides evidence of group identification based on the location during war: **Les repatriés** and **Les résidents**.



*“Migration-related divisions not only cut across ethnicity, but frequently divided families where members had lived on either side of the border during the war. As such, migration-related categorizations existed independent of, though sometimes associated with, ethnic categorizations” (Schwartz 2019).*

Returnees are likely to be seen as out-group members by stayees and vice versa.

- This leads to our first two hypotheses:

### Hypothesis 1:

Repatriation will have a negative impact on social cohesion.

### Hypothesis 2:

The effect of repatriation on social cohesion should be more negative (less positive) in communities with stronger signs of migration-related divisions.

### 3. Community Homogeneity

The level of diversity of the receiving community in terms of key markers of identity also plays a role.

- Large literature on the implications of multiculturalism (Crisp and Meleady 2012).
- Individuals often react negatively to threats to homogeneity, at least in the short-term (Ramos et al. 2019).
- In communities that are more homogenous in relation to other key markers of identity, the arrival of returnees with a clearly different identity can have a more adverse effect on social cohesion.

- This leads to our third hypothesis:

### Hypothesis 3:

The effect of repatriation on social cohesion should be more negative (less positive) in communities with less diversity related to other factors.

## 4. Competition for scarce resources

The impact of repatriation is not confined to identity issues only, there could be broader economic concerns (Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2021).

- Refugee return could also reduce social cohesion because of the additional competition for scarce resources.
- This effect should be greater for those resources (e.g. fertile land), in which the scarcity cannot be solved in the short-term.

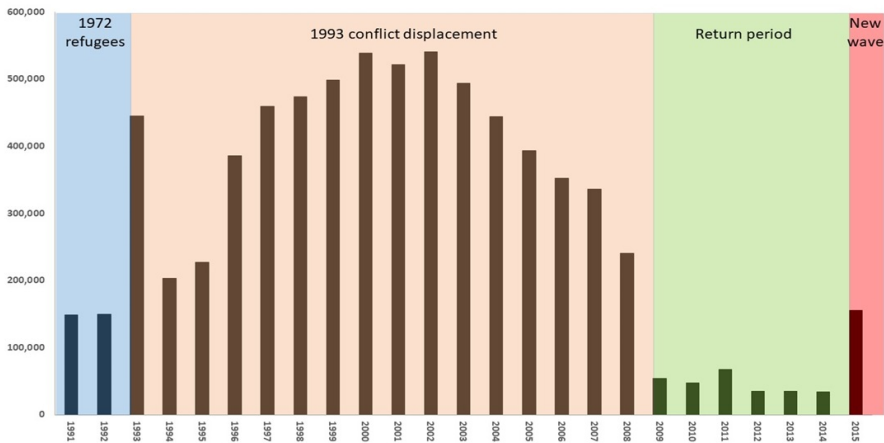
- This leads to our last hypothesis:

#### Hypothesis 4:

The effect of repatriation on social cohesion should be more negative (less positive) in communities in which resources are scarcer.

- **Conflict during 1993-2005:** 5% of the population killed, 10% was internationally displaced.
- **Most displacement occurred by foot:** most refugees in Tanzania (regional safe haven).
- **Tanzania pushed them out:** closing refugee camps, ending protection and services.
- **Large return:** Over 500,000 refugees returned in the period of a few years.
- **Returnees able to reclaim land in their communities of origin:** scarce resource in the country. Recovery of the “promised” agricultural land was very problematic.

# Number of Burundian refugees in Tanzania





- Household survey in which 15 households were interviewed in 100 communities (i.e. *sous-collines*) across the 17 provinces of the country.
- Community survey in which a local leader was interviewed in each of the 100 communities.
- The number of communities selected in each province was based on information from the 2008 Census.
- Analysis excludes Bujumbura.
- Data collected in 2011 and 2015 but use 2015 for the analysis.

# Location of communities surveyed in Burundi



# Measuring social cohesion (with examples)

Social cohesion is a multi-dimensional concept.

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  - Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following people, groups, and institutions.

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- Trust:
  - Please indicate the extent to which you trust the following people, groups, and institutions.
- Household members participation:
  - How many household members are active members of any of the following organizations?.

# Measuring social cohesion (with means)

## Panel A: Support

Help each other	0.4343
Borrow money	0.5851

## Panel B: Violence and reconciliation

Peaceful community	0.9601
Unlikely reoccurrence of conflict	0.1330
Reconciled with war	0.7630
Justice has been done	0.3730

## Panel C: Trusts in

People in the community	0.8898
Returnees	0.8862
Other ethnic groups	0.9223
Community leaders	0.8013
Ex-combatants	0.7652

## Panel D: Household members participating in

Agricultural cooperative	0.1229
Credit/savings association	0.1972
Religious group	0.2274
Political party/group	0.3513

$$Y_i = \delta_j + \beta R_c + \phi H_i + \rho C_c + \epsilon_i,$$

- $Y_i$  is one of the indicators of social cohesion.
- $\delta_j$  is the province indicator.
- $R_c$  is the share of returnees in the community.
- $H_i$  indicates a series of household level controls.
- $C_c$  are a series of community level of controls.



- **Ethnicity:** Hutu group 85%, Tutsi 14%, others 1%.
  - A community is less ethnically diverse if the majority group accounts for 90% of population.
  - 45% of respondents live in less ethnically diverse communities.
- **Pre-war land availability:** A community has more pre-war land availability if the community leader indicated that:
  - Pre-war land availability was very high and pre-war land quality was high.
  - Pre-war land availability was high and pre-war land quality was very high.
- **Attitude towards return:** add the four responses to the return question (i.e. help the country, fit in, bring new ideas, and receive preferential treatment), higher values indicate worse attitudes. Divide above and below the mean.

- Tanzania mandated the return of all Burundian refugees from the 1993 conflict.
- Returnees also had a very strong incentive to return to their communities of origin as this was the place in which they were entitled to land, a scarce resource in the country.
- **Concern:** communities with initially large levels of international displacement, and more return later on, could be inherently different from other communities and that this is what may be driving the results regarding social cohesion.

# Instrument for the share of returnees in the population

- Instruments:
  - **Proximity** = Logarithm of the inverse of distance to the border of Tanzania.
  - **Flatness** = Logarithm of the inverse of altitude.
- Once we control for conflict exposure, international displacement largely depends on the accessibility of a safe haven.
- Displacement occurred by foot and distance to the border and altitude affected the level of international displacement from a given community.
- Traditional tests on instruments and use of pre-conflict information to show that proximity and flatness do not relate to unobserved factors that affect variables related to social cohesion.

# Results I: Impact of refugee return on different measures of support

Variable	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
		Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
<b>Panel A: Help each other</b>							
Share returnees	-1.0266*** (0.3912)	-1.5623** (0.7959)	-0.5991 (0.4814)	-1.3433* (0.7202)	-0.6368 (0.4191)	-0.3018 (0.6305)	-0.6068* (0.3472)
Observations	926	417	509	479	447	433	493
<b>Panel B: Borrow money for emergencies</b>							
Share returnees	-0.8397** (0.3761)	-0.2273 (0.7136)	-1.2657** (0.5005)	-1.5393** (0.6945)	-0.2017 (0.4027)	-0.9524* (0.5612)	-0.3854 (0.3308)
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Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
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# Results II: Impact of refugee return on violence and reconciliation measures

Variable	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
		Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
<b>Panel A: Peaceful community</b>							
Share returnees	-0.5604*** (0.2174)	-0.6088* (0.3319)	-0.5274** (0.2684)	-0.5474 (0.3551)	-0.1649 (0.2080)	-0.2792 (0.25470)	-0.6054*** (0.2281)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
<b>Panel B: Unlikely reoccurrence of conflict</b>							
Share returnees	0.4294* (0.2356)	-0.0772 (0.4078)	0.2518 (0.2985)	-0.1221 (0.4173)	0.2580 (0.2242)	-0.2745 (0.4263)	0.3733 (0.2301)
Observations	893	406	487	467	426	418	475
<b>Panel C: Reconciled with war</b>							
Share returnees	-0.4072 (0.3340)	-0.1462 (0.6234)	-0.7793 (0.4750)	-0.8471 (0.6310)	0.1330 (0.3557)	-0.2617 (0.5070)	-0.5480* (0.3046)
Observations	922	417	505	477	445	431	491
<b>Panel D: Justice has been done</b>							
Share returnees	-0.1158 (0.3651)	0.3941 (0.7094)	-0.4333 (0.4764)	0.6145 (0.6516)	-0.4322 (0.4028)	-0.4324 (0.6252)	-0.5737* (0.3131)
Observations	871	393	478	456	415	410	461
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X



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Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

# Results III: Impact of refugee return on trust measures

Variable	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
		Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
<b>Panel A: People in the community</b>							
Share returnees	0.1553 (0.2633)	0.4281 (0.4211)	0.0782 (0.3626)	0.3059 (0.4408)	0.3981 (0.2688)	0.7679* (0.3967)	-0.1306 (0.2826)
Observations	923	416	507	476	447	432	491
<b>Panel B: Trust returnees</b>							
Share returnees	0.0625 (0.2719)	0.1843 (0.4594)	0.0571 (0.3692)	0.1868 (0.4933)	0.6015** (0.2697)	0.5721 (0.4907)	-0.0716 (0.2654)
Observations	911	412	499	472	439	428	483
<b>Panel C: Other ethnic groups</b>							
Share returnees	0.2126 (0.2344)	0.6529* (0.3518)	0.0883 (0.3230)	0.5119 (0.4528)	0.3514 (0.2162)	0.6136 (0.4775)	-0.0632 (0.2349)
Observations	923	416	507	476	447	433	490
<b>Panel D: Community leaders</b>							
Share returnees	0.3855 (0.2942)	0.9687* (0.5065)	-0.1274 (0.4520)	0.8720* (0.5147)	0.2884 (0.3359)	0.8556* (0.5223)	0.3071 (0.2742)
Observations	923	417	506	476	447	432	491
<b>Panel E: Ex-combatants</b>							
Share returnees	0.2543 (0.3159)	0.6547 (0.5648)	-0.0535 (0.4514)	0.9539 (0.6072)	0.3757 (0.3455)	0.7694 (0.5773)	0.0148 (0.2894)
Observations	900	398	502	469	431	427	473
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

# Results III: Impact of refugee return on trust measures

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Observations	900	398	502	469	431	427	473
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

# Results IV: Impact of refugee return on household participation in community activities

Variable	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
		Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
Panel A: Agricultural cooperative							
Share returnees	0.2089 (0.1867)	1.1359*** (0.423)	-0.3783 (0.2677)	-0.1049 (0.4038)	0.3351* (0.1839)	-0.5744 (0.4233)	0.2339* (0.1407)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel B: Credit/savings association							
Share returnees	-0.3369 (0.2835)	0.5512 (0.6420)	-0.783** (0.2647)	-0.2981 (0.3906)	-0.6218* (0.3214)	-0.4165 (0.3754)	-0.0233 (0.2573)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel C: Religious group/organization							
Share returnees	-0.5050 (0.3126)	-0.8514 (0.6293)	-0.3649 (0.4079)	-1.0871* (0.5635)	0.2636 (0.3598)	0.1426 (0.5167)	-0.3846 (0.2766)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel D: Political party/group							
Share returnees	-0.1172 (0.3441)	-0.2714 (0.6788)	-0.0977 (0.4650)	-1.0478* (0.6400)	-0.0612 (0.3730)	-1.5484** (0.6523)	0.0687 (0.3282)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
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Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel C: Religious group/organization							
Share returnees	-0.5050 (0.3126)	-0.8514 (0.6293)	-0.3649 (0.4079)	-1.0871* (0.5635)	0.2636 (0.3598)	0.1426 (0.5167)	-0.3846 (0.2766)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel D: Political party/group							
Share returnees	-0.1172 (0.3441)	-0.2714 (0.6788)	-0.0977 (0.4650)	-1.0478* (0.6400)	-0.0612 (0.3730)	-1.5484** (0.6523)	0.0687 (0.3282)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

# Results IV: Impact of refugee return on household participation in community activities

Variable	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
		Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
Panel A: Agricultural cooperative							
Share returnees	0.2089 (0.1867)	1.1359*** (0.423)	-0.3783 (0.2677)	-0.1049 (0.4038)	0.3351* (0.1839)	-0.5744 (0.4233)	0.2339* (0.1407)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel B: Credit/savings association							
Share returnees	-0.3369 (0.2835)	0.5512 (0.6420)	-0.783** (0.2647)	-0.2981 (0.3906)	-0.6218* (0.3214)	-0.4165 (0.3754)	-0.0233 (0.2573)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel C: Religious group/organization							
Share returnees	-0.5050 (0.3126)	-0.8514 (0.6293)	-0.3649 (0.4079)	-1.0871* (0.5635)	0.2636 (0.3598)	0.1426 (0.5167)	-0.3846 (0.2766)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Panel D: Political party/group							
Share returnees	-0.1172 (0.3441)	-0.2714 (0.6788)	-0.0977 (0.4650)	-1.0478* (0.6400)	-0.0612 (0.3730)	-1.5484** (0.6523)	0.0687 (0.3282)
Observations	925	418	507	478	447	433	492
Controls	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
IV	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

- Limit the sample to stayees only.
  - Slightly larger coefficients, somewhat more significance, but main story remains the same.
- Changing our measure of the returnee share of the population.
  - From relying on the household roster, to the information from the community leader. Again story remains the same.



# Conclusion: summary

- Repatriation involves the reencounter of groups that were separated for many years and often decades. This process could lead to the reestablishment of old societal divisions or to the creation of new ones.
- The results suggest varying impacts of refugee return on different aspects of social cohesion.
- Stronger effects, suggest that refugee return has a negative impact on the feeling that community members help each other, could borrow money for emergencies from non-household members and felt that the community is peaceful.
- Estimated impacts on measures of reconciliation, post-conflict justice, trust and participation in community groups are mostly statistically insignificant.

# Conclusion: sub-sample

- Results from sub-samples suggest that:
  - The negative effect on the feeling that community members help each other tends to be stronger in communities with worse attitudes towards refugee return.
  - The negative effect on the feeling that community members help each other tends to be stronger in communities with less ethnic diversity.
  - The negative effect on the feeling that community members help each other tends to be stronger in communities with less pre-war land availability.

# Conclusion: general results

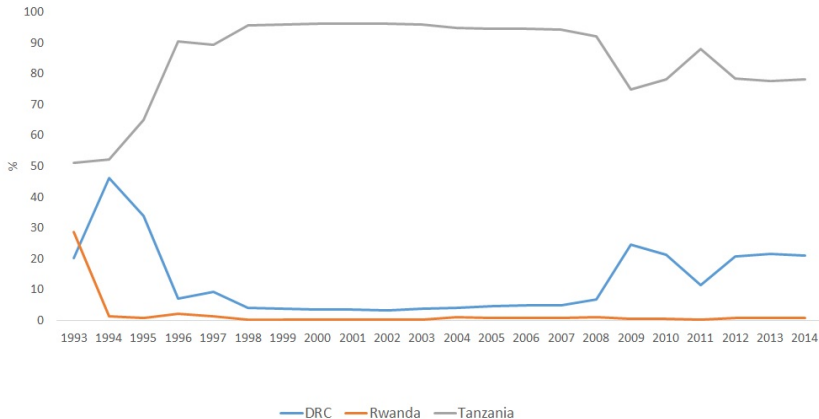
- Overall, the results suggest that there is not a single driver or mechanism related to refugee return that can cover all aspects of a complex concept such as social cohesion.
- However, the results do suggest that the process of out-migration and return could lead to new divisions in society based on the location of individuals during the conflict.
- These effects could be present in other countries and even supersede (or get mixed with) previous societal divisions.

# Thank you!

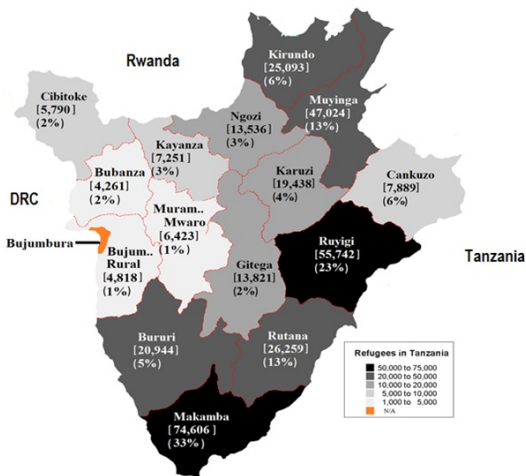
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# Main locations of Burundian refugees (% in each country)



# Refugees in Tanzania in 2005 by province of origin in Burundi



# Means of control variables

Age head	47.8205
Primary edu head	0.2843
Married head	0.8227
Female head	0.1632
Household size	5.7027
Child to adult ratio	0.8782
Internally displaced	0.2616
Land disputes	0.3449
Deaths/disablement in conflict	0.2184
Restriction on movement	0.5643
Community land disputes	0.1602
Community deaths/disablement in conflict	0.1105
Community restriction on movement	0.1726
Ethnic diversity	0.4519
Land availability (pre-war)	0.4832

# Means of independent variables

	All	Ethnic diversity		Land availability (pre-1993 war)		Negative attitude towards return	
		Less	More	Less	More	Less	More
		Panel A: Support					
Help each other	0.4343	0.4435	0.4235	0.4635	0.3982	0.4306	0.4348
Borrow money	0.5851	0.5612	0.6039	0.6180	0.5459	0.5694	0.5968
		Panel B: Violence and reconciliation					
Peaceful community	0.9601	0.9568	0.9608	0.9583	0.9597	0.9689	0.9526
Unlikely reoccurrence of conflict	0.1330	0.1259	0.1350	0.1346	0.1315	0.1510	0.1186
Reconciled with war	0.7630	0.7663	0.7598	0.7678	0.7590	0.7957	0.7366
Justice has been done	0.3730	0.4209	0.3347	0.4026	0.3349	0.3788	0.3705
		Panel C: Trusts in					
People in the community	0.8898	0.8868	0.8922	0.8985	0.8724	0.8935	0.8793
Returnees	0.8862	0.8857	0.8845	0.8994	0.8792	0.9017	0.8792
Other ethnic groups	0.9223	0.9205	0.9235	0.9120	0.9329	0.9187	0.9266
Community leaders	0.8013	0.8101	0.7918	0.8113	0.7830	0.8201	0.7861
Ex-combatants	0.7652	0.8010	0.7366	0.7851	0.7448	0.7700	0.7675
		Panel D: Household members participating in					
Agricultural cooperative	0.1229	0.1247	0.1216	0.1357	0.1096	0.1340	0.1146
Credit/savings association	0.1972	0.2014	0.1961	0.1733	0.2260	0.1794	0.2134
Religious group	0.2274	0.2302	0.2275	0.2255	0.2304	0.2225	0.2332
Political party/group	0.3513	0.3741	0.3314	0.3528	0.3468	0.3540	0.3439



# Descriptive statistics of the instruments

Variable	Descriptive statistics	
	Mean	SD
Distance (kms)	56.52	35.09
Proximity ( $\ln(1/\text{distance})$ )	-3.80	0.76
Altitude (meters)	1,570.80	310.81
Flatness ( $\ln(1/\text{altitude})$ )	-7.34	0.23

# First Stage Results

	First stage regressions
Proximity	0.0830*** (0.0150)
Flatness	0.2115*** (0.0209)
<b>Underidentification test</b>	
Kleibergen-Paap LM statistic	106.80
$\chi^2$ P-value	0.0000
<b>Weak identification test</b>	
Kleibergen-Paap Wald F statistic	77.73
<b>Overidentification test</b>	
Hansen J statistic	0.075
$\chi^2$ P-value	0.7837
F-test excluded instruments	77.73
Controls	X

# Impact of proximity and flatness on pre-war household and community characteristics

Panel A: Pre-war trust and community participation				
Variable	High pre-war trust	High pre-war community participation		
Proximity	-0.0397 (0.1517)	0.1050 (0.1405)		
Flatness	-0.2619 (0.3829)	-0.2374 (0.3546)		
Communities	87	87		
Panel B: Pre-war household characteristics				
	Pre-war livestock	Pre-war land	Years education	Primary school
Proximity	-0.0414 (0.0701)	0.6753 (0.6262)	0.4438 (0.3234)	-0.0430 (0.0469)
Flatness	-0.2080 (0.1339)	-0.7541 (0.9495)	-0.7902 (0.7117)	-0.0686 (0.1033)
Households	368	368	550	754

# Attitude towards emigration and return I

<b>Panel A: When people leave the country</b>	<b>% share agree</b>
It makes life harder for those who stay	<b>32.01</b>
They still contribute to the country of origin	<b>38.24</b>
They are able to support families in country of origin	68.38
They abandon their country	25.42
They get rich	59.54

# Attitude towards emigration and return II

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**Panel B: When people receive money    % share agree**  
**from abroad**

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They become lazier	18.48
It leads to resentment from others	64.17
They get rich	51.91
It helps develop our country	48.33

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# Attitude towards emigration and return III

<b>Panel C: When people who have lived abroad come back they</b>	<b>% share agree</b>
Help the country	57.98
Do not fit in	<b>23.47</b>
Bring new ideas, knowledge and technology	68.65
Receive preferential treatment	66.83