

*Background Guide*

United Nations Economic and Social Council

# Brain Drain



# JACKRABBIT MUN VIII

L.B. POLY - MAY 23th, 2026

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# CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

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Hello Delegates!

I am one of your co-chairs for Jackrabbit MUN VIII! This is my third year hosting Jackrabbit and I think it's going to be the best one yet! For any new, unsure delegates, don't be scared to jump right in. The more work you put in, the more fun you'll have so I encourage all of you to do as much research as you can. MUN has provided me with so many great public speaking and debating experiences as well as amazing ways to learn about global issues!

A little bit about me, I am a senior here at Poly and have been doing MUN for three years. Outside of MUN I am the varsity water polo captain and am on the swim team. In my free time I enjoy going to Knotts Berry Farm with my friends, listening to Noah Kahan, and eating at Cassidy's Corner.

I encourage all of you to go into this experience with an open mind. I assure you that if you really try you will have a great time!

Sincerely,

Soriya Chheang

ECOSOC: Brain Drain | Co-Head Chair

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# CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

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Hello delegates!

My name is Earl and I will be your Vice-Chair for Jackrabbit MUN 8. I'm a Poly Alumni, only having graduated last year. Up until right before this conference I will have been living in Morocco, studying MSA and the local dialect since September. In my time in Morocco I have also participated in a MUN conference and I am so excited to get to do it again!

My favorite hobbies are playing Ice Hockey and listening to music. I've recently been listening to a lot of this classic French rapper named MC Solaar. I listen to his album "Prose Combat" on repeat and I definitely recommend it.

If you have any questions about anything please ask, I'm an open book. Thanks for joining us and I can't wait to see you guys!

Sincerely,

Earl Wright

ECOSOC: Brain Drain | Co-Head Chair

earlfhw@gmail.com



# POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

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- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Sunday, May 17th**.
- Delegates **must** submit position papers to be eligible for **research AND committee awards**.
- Position Papers can be submitted through a Google form:
  - <https://forms.gle/H3ruhahP2SQUEPs38>
- At the top of each paper, include your character/country name, first and last name, school name, and appropriate committee.
  - Character/Country Name
  - First Last
  - School Name
  - ECOSOC
- Papers should be emailed as a PDF file
  - Paper content should also be copied and pasted into the body of the email so it can still be graded in the event of any technical difficulties
  - Please name the file and subject line of the email [Committee\_Country]
    - Ex. **ECOSOC\_United States**
- Papers should be 1-2 pages in length with an additional Works Cited page in MLA format
- Papers should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font and include no pictures or graphics
- Please include the following sections for each committee topic:
  - Background & UN Involvement
  - Position of your Country
  - Possible Solutions

If you have any questions or concerns, please email one of your chairs.

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# TOPIC SYNOPSIS

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Brain drain refers to the emigration of highly skilled or educated citizens often from developing countries or regions looking to move to countries that provide better pay, quality of life, and more job opportunities. These individuals are typically driven due to the lack of infrastructure, political stability, and economic development in their own country. This large-scale emigration weakens the countries' development due to the loss of their doctors, scientists, and researchers. Not only does this prevent advancement in their economy, but also in their healthcare systems. The receiving countries benefit from these highly skilled workers boosting their economy while not having to pay for their education. These countries are often in the west such as the US, Canada, and the UK.

While brain drain is primarily negative for the original countries who are losing their citizens, there have been cases where the emigrated citizens are able to give back to their communities. This is known as the "brain gain" phenomenon in places like India, the Philippines, and Taiwan which has allowed them to improve their networks and invest in education. Still, brain drain steals the essential skilled professionals that help support their countries' economy.

In this room, delegates will discuss the economic, social, and developmental benefits and setbacks of brain drain as well as solutions that support both the countries and the individuals.

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# COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

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The United Nations Subcommittee ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) is an organization under the umbrella of the UN. Its responsibilities are to oversee a wide array of topics from the fifteen specialized agencies, the eight functional commissions within the UN. ECOSOC consists of 54 member states that change based on elections from the General Assembly.

The 54 member states preside over a wide array of topics such as: Social Development, Narcotics and other humanitarian topics. It works very closely with many NGO's and can be found with its touch on many efforts across the world. Seen as the workhorse of the UN it is where many of the smaller issues go to be dealt with.

The structure is built around an equalizing effort for where its topics are found most prudent. African Nations holding the most spots but with other highlighted areas of needed representation such as Eastern Europe. This is a committee where equality is expected and imbalance is stamped out.



# BACKGROUND

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## ORIGINS OF BRAIN DRAIN

The term brain drain was coined in the United Kingdom in 1960 to describe the migration of skilled workers such as scientists and engineers leaving Europe post World War 2 and traveling to North America. Today, it is used to express the emigration of trained professionals leaving their developing nation and going to developed ones. This is often driven by the hope of better pay, more job opportunities, better working conditions, and political stability. Small developing countries have the highest rates of skilled workers leaving to find these opportunities in developed countries, leaving their home country with less workers to help their own development. While this is a positive improvement for the individual workers, it forces these smaller countries to lose even more resources. Success stories are futile and mainly come from larger countries such as India and China. Some migrants do return after gaining more education but it is rare to find migrants sharing these new skills with their home country and government on a large scale.

## ECONOMIC EFFECTS

Brain drain has been a growing concern for migrant sending countries because of the immense loss of income and economic stability that depends on having these skilled jobs that aren't being filled.

One way these countries are affected is that Brain drain directly reduces income tax revenue for the smaller countries that are losing their skilled workers. This is because as more people are emigrating, they are losing people for high earning jobs such as doctors, engineers, and scientists. This affects the tax revenue because those

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are the jobs that typically pay the higher income taxes. This creates challenges by dropping the human capital and in turn dropping tax receipts which stunt economic development.

Another effect is that brain drain also reduces the payroll tax and consumption. This is all due to the departure of countless skilled workers. With less citizens and ones that spend less, their overall tax base shrinks as well. This can be called a “fiscal drain” which means their countries’ overall revenue is decreasing. Some effects of this are reducing the funds for public infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

Sadly, with the loss of tax revenues from these higher skilled workers, many small, developing countries face a higher tax burden placed upon their citizens. This is extremely hurtful because it falls on the remaining lower-income population to afford public services which again increases inequality. As brain drain transfers more skilled and high earning workers from their home country, they create a hidden tax on developing nations. This causes them to lose the ability to invest in their education system further pushing their citizens down a path of rising taxes. In addition, they provide education for these skilled workers but receive no tax return from them as they emigrate.

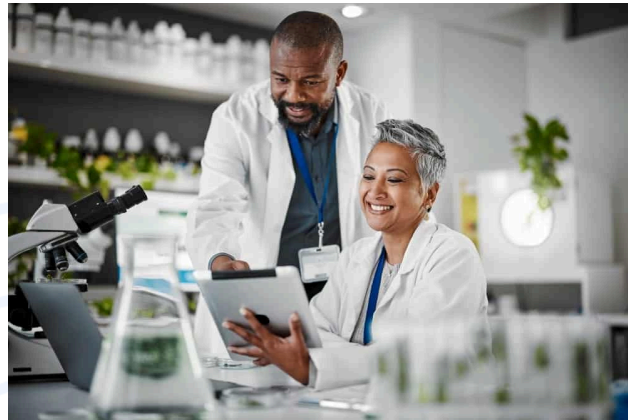
## **IMPACTS ON DEVELOPMENT**

Brain drain is at an overall 18.4% emigration rate but in small developing countries it has grown to 43.2%. This means that 3 out of 7 university-educated citizens are living abroad supporting other countries' industrial development. In specific countries this number is much higher. The Caribbean has experienced rates as high as 79.4% while Sub Saharan Africa holds 41.7%. With Sub Saharan Africa also having 25% of all global diseases, it is integral that they have the resources and support to defend



their country from these diseases. Due to their emigration rate due to brain drain being so high they often face shortages with healthcare staff causing them to continue to spiral deeper into the brain drain.

Another effect is the overall human capital shortage. Over 2 million skilled professionals are currently emigrating from some of the poorest nations to more developed ones in search of more



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opportunities. This affects the industry growth because with the lack of engineers, scientists, and researchers, they are unable to provide technological advancements, innovation, and healthcare quality. Not only does this make developing countries stagnant but it also reduces their capacity to continue training skilled workers. This has been seen in India, the Philippines and Mexico. As smaller countries lose more and more workers, they are unable to train as many people that will stay in their country and help train others. Overall, this widens the economic and industrial gap between developing and developed countries causing more citizens to emigrate out leaving the home countries without support.

### **BENEFITS FOR MIGRANTS**

While brain drain restrains developing countries on their road to stability, there are numerous benefits brain drain provides to the individual immigrants. First, these skilled workers benefit from an early education from their home country but sometimes are restrained by the lack of education opportunities. Brain drain allows



them to go to developed countries that will help them gain a post graduate degree to further their professional abilities. This allows them to gain higher wages that they could not receive in their home country. Along with the educational benefits, emigrating to developed countries are more likely to have political stability and improved quality of life which makes emigration so enticing.

## **BRAIN GAIN**

In addition to brain drain helping individual immigrants, new studies have also proven there can be successes. This is called brain gain and is when the emigration of skilled workers to developing countries is able to give their benefits back to their home country. This can stem from foreign investment policies that focus on returning skilled workers to individuals who benefitted from brain drain investing in education for their home countries.

One example of a foreign investment policy in the early 2000s when the US relaxed their visa cap encouraging large trained workforces to come. One of these groups were nurses. Nearly 27,000 nurses left the Philippines between 2000 and 2006 to work in the US but they got their education in the Philippines. While so many of them left, nearly three times as many stayed in the Philippines to support the health and growth of their country. This also happened in India leading to a surge of computer science training. While many emigrated to the US with their new IT skills, even more stayed behind to continue their work in India. Overall, these success stories depended on the origin country to



have the training infrastructure that could allow them to meet the demands for the skilled workers.

Another example of brain gain is when countries create policies aimed to return skilled workers with better educations than when they left. This fosters diaspora networkers while innovating local infrastructure. In China, they created return incentives such as the “Thousand Talents Plan” to lure emigrants back home once they’ve received a better education. This plan offers bonuses, housing, and research funding to any overseas professionals looking to return. This was done to combat the over 30% hiring demand for Chinese workers. With over 12.7 million university students graduating their year, China fears a large portion of them will seek job opportunities overseas. Still, eight in ten emigrants returned last year to China with either a master’s or bachelor’s degree proving the incentives work. Thus, brain drain has the ability to use developed countries' resources to help developing countries stabilize.



# UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

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The UN has been working to combat brain drain since the early 1970s when a surge of skilled workers migrated to developed nations in 1973. While it was addressed in 1963, it was not until 1972 when the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) began working on a reverse technological transfer to combat the economic instability that followed. Since then many United Nations bodies have been discussing solutions to this international crisis. One initiative developed by IOM's Migration for Development in Africa program that implemented facilities that gave migrants similar job opportunities to the ones they were receiving abroad. In addition to this, they address the diaspora skills that the facilities need. Plans like these help migrants return so that they can invest the knowledge they gained abroad in their home countries. One of these programs was the African Diaspora Remittance fund which invests in businesses that give job opportunities to Africans in Africa who might be searching for better work in other countries. UNESCO also does this by implementing projects like building digital infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa that encourages skilled workers to return home to find jobs. This was also seen in Somalia where they partnered with MIDA to build hospitals staffed with doctors from around the world who could mentor local doctors. They were able to encourage 400 Somalis from 17 different countries in the past 20 years.

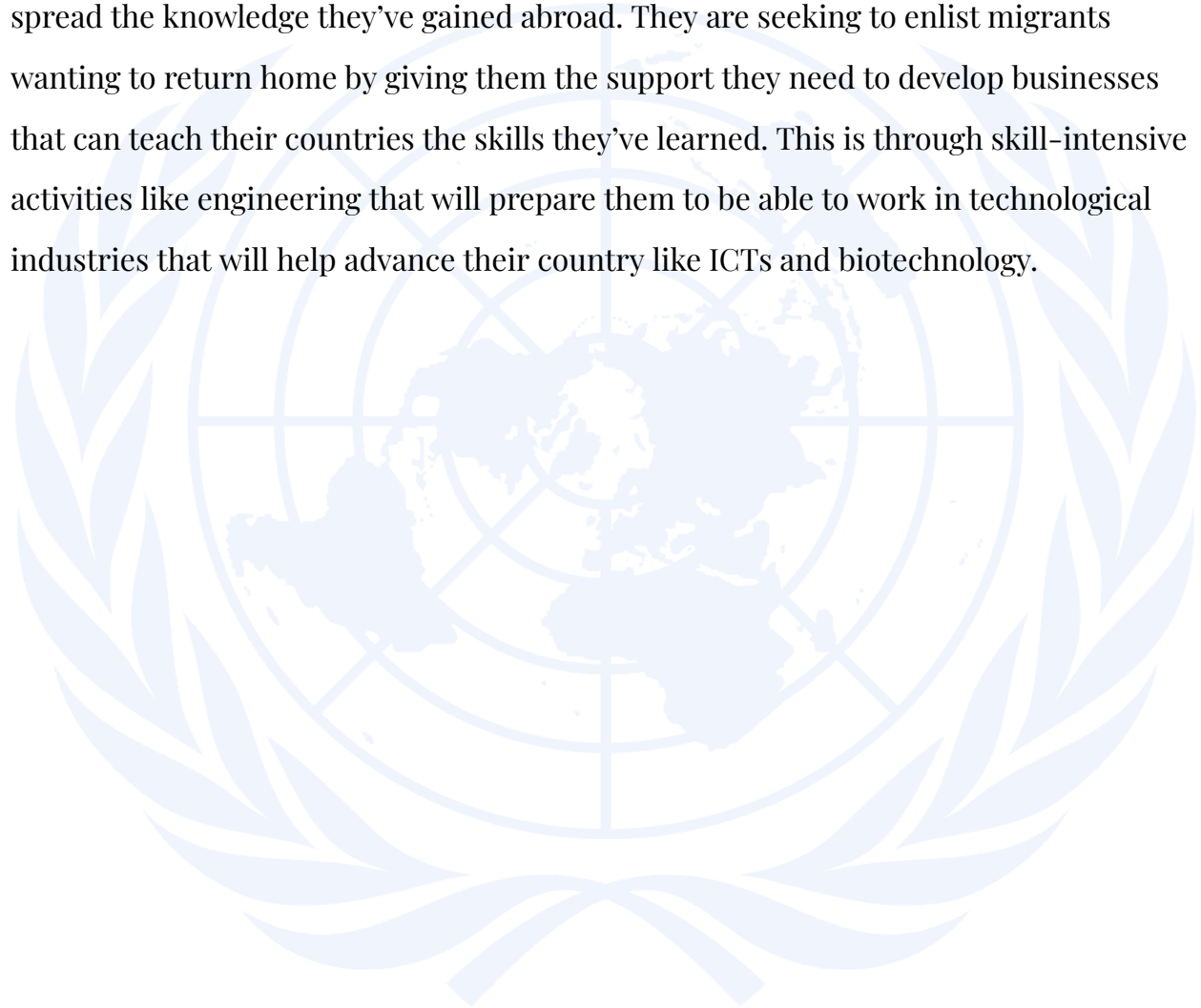
IOM has also worked in Ukraine after finding that 900,00 Ukrainians had migrated to Poland by 2017. IOM made a statement that every fifth labour migrant was interested in investing in a business back in Ukraine. This encouraged Ukrainian immigrants who found work and education in other countries to return home to invest

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in their communities. The United States Agency for International Development funds these projects by matching participants' funds.

Acknowledging the staggering 1.3 million emigrants leaving developing countries, UNCTAD has proposed a new international support mechanism that focuses on encouraging highly skilled workers to invest and return to their home countries to spread the knowledge they've gained abroad. They are seeking to enlist migrants wanting to return home by giving them the support they need to develop businesses that can teach their countries the skills they've learned. This is through skill-intensive activities like engineering that will prepare them to be able to work in technological industries that will help advance their country like ICTs and biotechnology.



# BLOC POSITIONS

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**African Bloc:** Many countries in Africa feel the strongest effects of Brain Drain, which only exacerbates ongoing economic and social issues. Since 1990, the African continent has lost an estimated 20,000 professionals annually. More than 300,000 professionals from the continent reside outside of Africa, with countries like Ethiopia losing a large percentage of their skilled workforce in the past decades. The outflow is driven by a combination of low wages, political instability, and a lack of resources in home countries against the lure of better pay and working conditions in developed nations, especially for women. The African Union and bodies like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are working on frameworks that, while supporting migration, aim to manage the loss of qualified workers.

**Asia-Pacific Bloc:** Countries located in Asia and the Pacific often benefit and suffer from “brain drain”. High-skilled women from developing Asian countries are migrating at higher rates than their male counterparts, driven by better status and opportunities abroad. This has left the region in a demographic imbalance as well. The region emphasizes managing the outward movement of skilled workers by promoting temporary mobility and encouraging the return of talent to boost local development. The focus is on tackling the underlying drivers of migration, such as income inequality, lack of local economic opportunities, and the need for better working conditions. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) advocates for stronger regional cooperation, sharing of best practices, and policy-oriented approaches to manage the impact of labor migration on development.

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**Western European and Developed Bloc:** Western Europe and more countries in more advanced stages of development have reaped the benefits of Brain Drain for decades. These nations attract skilled workers due to better economic prospects, more research opportunities, and political stability, which brings in “brain gain”. Developed nations, particularly in the EU, view the migration of skilled labor as a necessity for economic growth, aiming to attract high-skilled workers. There is a growing focus on shifting from “brain drain” to “brain circulation,” which encourages the return of talent or knowledge sharing without requiring permanent return migration. In response to the loss of health professionals from developing nations, western countries have supported codes of conduct for ethical recruitment, ensuring that hiring does not cripple essential services in the country of origin.

**Middle Eastern Bloc:** The Middle East has experienced extreme amounts of brain drain, with an estimated 32.8 million people leaving annually, and only 44% staying in the region. Iran faces the highest rate, with over 250,000 specialists, including doctors and engineers, abroad. The phenomenon costs approximately \$2 billion dollars annually as significant loss of educated talent restricts growth, diversification –especially in oil-dependent economies like Iran– and innovation. Most of the factors that are driving skilled workers out are political instability, a lack of meritocracy, and high inflation. Many proposed solutions involve improving working conditions in order to encourage return migration and leverage the diaspora for knowledge transfer.



**Latin American and Caribbean Bloc:** For countries in Latin America and the Caribbean “brain drain” has been an extreme hindrance to national development, especially with rampant political instability that leads to declines in funding for public education. The Caribbean, in particular, has been identified as a region suffering from high rates of emigration of highly skilled natives. Governments are often faced with a dilemma where they rely on money sent back by workers who have left to prop up weak economies while losing the human capital needed for actual development and progress. While acknowledging the negatives, many governments have highlighted that remittances sent home by migrants provide crucial economic stability and support, acting as a form of “brain gain” for the home economy. The region encourages policies that promote “circular migration” ,temporary or seasonal work, to allow skilled individuals to contribute to both the host and home countries.



# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

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1. What is the relationship between the cost of losing skilled workers versus the gain from returning citizens?
2. What are the best ways to take advantage of the diaspora?
3. What can countries losing large amounts of skilled professionals do to ensure their return?
4. What can developed countries do to encourage migrants to return after gaining higher education?
5. How can developing and developed countries collaborate to receive the greatest benefits from brain gain?
6. How can technology be used to spread knowledge gained by the diaspora?



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