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## Shifting the balance

**N**o one would argue that scientific jobs are dispersed unequally around the world. Western, developed countries, especially the United States and Britain, have a disproportionately larger share of funds, both in the public and private sector. As a result, they can attract scientists from parts of the world that have fewer resources or opportunities. There are long- and short-term views of the ramifications of this brain drain from poorer nations — and short- and long-term ways to deal with it.

The older, short-term view is that this is a crisis that requires outside intervention — perhaps investment of vast sums of money by monolithic entities such as the World Bank to allow the nations to build up their scientific infrastructure. A new view, explored in a collection of articles at SciDev.net, an online resource for science in developing countries, says that the brain drain is really ‘brain circulation’, and that a combination of market forces, good will and sound policy in the poorer nations can create scientific jobs there.

Market forces have already led Indian information-technology experts back from Silicon Valley to Bangalore. Good will — especially when bolstered by philanthropic organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation — is leading Western science to pursue clinical research of AIDS and other infectious diseases in developing countries (see *Nature* **426**, 736–737; 2003). And sound policy — in the form of repatriation grants, and a peer-review system free of corruption — is already being used in European countries that have lost scientists to the United States, and could easily be adopted by poorer nations.

It’s likely that well-intentioned bodies will try both short- and long-term approaches. But the scientists will flow, as always, to where they have the most opportunities and fewest barriers to entry.

**Paul Smaglik**  
Naturejobs editor



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