



Integrating migration in the post-2015 UN Development Agenda

Position Paper

As the United Nations (UN) is convening its second High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in October 2013, the Global Migration Group (GMG) calls on Member States to seize this opportunity to firmly anchor their approach to migration in the three fundamental principles of human rights, equality, and sustainability, and to make migrants and migration issues an integral part of the development agenda succeeding the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

INTRODUCTION: CURRENT MIGRATION DYNAMICS IN CONTEXT

The international community is working to reframe the global framework for sustainable development at a time when the world is experiencing significant demographic, social, political, cultural and economic transformations. Many of these shifts also reflect, and are reflected in, changing patterns of migration and evolving modes of governance. With an estimated one out of seven persons on the planet engaged in some form of mobility – across borders or within their country – migration is a central component of current population dynamics and is a key enabler for development at the global level. Today there are an estimated 232 million international migrants¹, and the number is expected to rise to 405 million by 2050.² In 2012, international migrants sent some USD 400 billion in remittances to their families and communities in developing countries, representing more than three times the level of official development assistance.³ These figures suggest that the contributions of migrants to development are far more significant than is often acknowledged, and that the number of people that depend on migrants and migration for their livelihoods and well-being is growing. With international migration increasing in scope, scale and complexity, more countries are now simultaneously countries of origin, transit, and destination for migration. New forms of partnership and cooperation have emerged to

¹ UN DESA Population Division “Trends in International Migrant Stock: The 2013 Revision”, available from <http://esa.un.org/unmigration/wallchart2013.htm>.

² IOM 2010, World Migration Report “The future of migration: Building capacities for change”, page 3, available from www.iom.int/cms/wmr. Regarding estimates on internal migration, cf. UNDP 2009 Human Development Report “Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development”, page 21, available from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2009/>.

³ World Bank 2013, “Migration and Development Brief 20”, April 19, 2013, available from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1110315015165/MigrationandDevelopmentBrief20.pdf>

govern migration, including in the context of South-South cooperation and engaging private as well as non-governmental actors.

In the context of globalization, migration brings both development opportunities and challenges. While many migrants are able to move, live and work in safety and dignity, others are compelled to move as a result of poverty, lack of decent work, and environmental degradation. Human rights violations, including generalized violence, armed conflict, and persecution too often result in forced migration. Closing the gap between humanitarian and development aid by ensuring a more effective transition in the context of the return of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons and their reintegration in places of origin could help reduce the incidence of forced or involuntary migration.

In the absence of sufficient regular migration opportunities, migrants resort to irregular migration channels which place them at risk during transit and upon arrival in countries of destination. Many migrants, particularly those who are in an irregular situation and those working in precarious sectors, encounter human rights violations, labour exploitation including poor working conditions and low wages, trafficking and sexual abuse, violence, lack of social protection, discrimination and xenophobia. Thus, for too many migrants, their human development aspirations and potential remain unfulfilled, and their important contributions to the host society go unrecognized. Regardless of status, migrants, and in particular those who are most vulnerable, therefore require equal and specific inclusion in the development agenda at global, regional and national levels.

REALIZING THE POTENTIAL OF MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION

Evidence suggests that, despite the considerable challenges that exist, many migrants and their families already reap substantial gains from migrating: the 2009 Human Development Report found that those who moved from countries with a low human development index (HDI) to countries with a higher HDI experienced, on average, a 15-fold increase in income, a doubling in education enrolment rates, and a 16-fold reduction in child mortality.⁴ These benefits can be enhanced if a rights-based approach to migration is adopted enabling them to participate in and contribute to the social, cultural, political and economic life of countries of destination and origin alike.

Migrants' families in countries of origin stand to benefit from remittances, which increase household incomes and enable recipients to invest in housing, health, education, and entrepreneurship development, as well as to increasing household resilience in cases of natural disasters or other shocks. Although remittances are first and foremost private transfers made for household consumption, they can also have benefits at the macro-economic level. For a number of developing countries, remittances represent a significant share of GDP and an important source of foreign currency earnings, supporting national income and allowing countries to pay for critical imports, gain access to capital markets, and pay lower interest rates on sovereign debt.⁵

⁴ See Footnote 3. UNDP 2009, p. 71 ff.

⁵ World Bank. 2006. "Global Economic Prospects 2006: Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration". Washington, DC; UNCTAD 2012, Least Developed Countries Report "Harnessing Remittances and Diaspora Knowledge to Build Productive

Across countries, migrants, diaspora groups and transnational communities play an important role in stimulating economic growth by increasing demand for goods and services, job creation, investment, entrepreneurship, technology and knowledge transfers, and opening new enterprises and trade markets. They also spread new ideas, attitudes and behaviours and act as agents of political and social change. Migrants take home a host of skills, innovations and knowledge known as “social remittances”, including changes in tastes, perceptions and attitudes which enhance diversity in our societies. At destination, migrant workers’ contribution also includes rejuvenating workforces, rendering traditional sectors economically viable, and supporting social security schemes. Migrants of all skills levels fill crucial labour and skills shortages in emerging industries and services, and can promote innovation.⁶

The GMG has long taken the view that if the human and labour rights of migrants are effectively respected and migration is well governed throughout the entire migration process, including through enhanced access to affordable, safe and regular migration channels, substantially improved human development outcomes will result for migrants, their families, communities and countries. More effective governance of international migration would also address negative phenomena such as brain-drain and brain-waste. Informed and rights-based policy choices involving a participatory process would ensure decent living and working conditions for migrants and their families, and reduce poverty levels and income differentials in countries of origin and destination alike.

HOW TO INCLUDE MIGRATION IN THE POST-2015 UN DEVELOPMENT AGENDA?

To date, the human and labour rights of migrants and the human development aspects of migration remain inadequately incorporated in national, regional and global development plans and programmes. Even though migration was highlighted in the Millennium Declaration, it is missing from the MDGs, despite having a significant and documented impact on key MDG areas.

The post-2015 UN Development Agenda provides a unique opportunity to remedy this omission. Now that migration has become a global phenomenon affecting almost all countries in the world, and in view of its crucial links with development, the GMG believes that migration must become an integral part of the post-2015 UN Development Agenda, including through its integration in goals and targets⁷, monitored by specific and appropriate indicators.

Specifically, the GMG recommends that the post-2015 UN Development Agenda incorporate migration in three ways:

Capacities”, available from <http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=249>; UNCTAD 2013, “Maximizing the Development Impact of Remittances”, available from http://unctad.org/en/Docs/ditctncd2011d8_en.pdf.

⁶ For example, foreign nationals living in the United States accounted for 25.6 per cent of all patent applications and founded 26 per cent of start-ups, including a majority of those in Silicon Valley. See: Matthews, D. 2013, ‘Five things economists know about immigration’, *The Washington Post*, January 29.

⁷ See also *A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015*, Report of the Secretary General, UN doc. A/68/202 (26 July 2013), e.g. paras. 93 and 111.

First, migration should be addressed as part of a new global partnership for inclusive development – an expanded and revitalized MDG 8.

No country can manage international migration effectively alone. It requires cooperation amongst all stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society, academia, national human rights and justice institutions, and, of course, migrants themselves. It hinges upon effective cooperation and coherence at the global, regional, and national levels. The international community should therefore aspire to a transparent and cooperative partnership aimed at facilitating international migration that is safe and enriching for migrants, operates under the rule of law and is consistent with international standards, is less costly in human, social and financial terms, and is more beneficial for all stakeholders concerned.

A broadly formulated partnership commitment on international migration and development should be underpinned by more specific indicators to measure progress regarding, for example, the:

- effective respect, promotion, protection and fulfilment in law and in practice of the human and labour rights of migrants and their families in countries of origin, transit and destination, in particular those of the most vulnerable;
- inclusion of migration in national and sub-national development and poverty reduction strategies and plans, as well as National Adaptation Programmes of Action and disaster risk reduction strategies;
- adoption and implementation of regional free movement agreements and/or other trans-border labour matching schemes;
- existence of enhanced regular migration channels, including for family reunification;
- reduction of the human costs of migration including loss of lives and infringement of fundamental rights;
- reduction of costs for sending remittances and expansion of migrants' access to financial services;
- reduction of upfront costs for migrants, especially recruitment costs;
- regulation and monitoring of the recruitment industry;
- mutual recognition of foreign educational qualifications and the portability of social security benefits, including through the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements;
- establishment and effective implementation of laws which prevent and protect migrants and their families against all forms of discrimination, labour exploitation, abuse, xenophobia, violence and related intolerance, with a focus on the most vulnerable, including children, adolescents, youth and women;
- inclusion of migrants, including migrants in an irregular situation, in national strategies and plans of action on housing, health, education, employment, social security and protection; and
- reduction of the number of migrants in immigration detention and increase in the number of countries implementing alternatives to such detention.

Second, recognizing its cross-cutting nature, migration should be incorporated in targets or indicators where it is directly relevant to the achievement of other development goals.

Goals on health, education or poverty reduction could include indicators related to the facilitation of remittances (reduction of costs, use of electronic payment systems) and their contribution to those areas. Goals related to education could include indicators on inclusive education policies to address the marginalization and discrimination against children and young people in the context of migration, who often lack access to quality education in countries of origin, transit and destination. Under goals related to good governance, human security, and/or the empowerment of girls and women, a target on 'preventing and eliminating all forms of exploitation and abuse, including human trafficking' could be introduced and tracked in terms of prosecutions of human trafficking; countries offering special visa protections for victims of trafficking and exploitation; and businesses screening their supply chains for forced labour, especially child labour.

Other examples might be to include health indicators to measure the effectiveness of HIV/AIDs, TB and malaria prevention, treatment and support amongst migrant populations. Another could be to improve the conditions of migrant slum dwellers under a goal or target related to urbanization or disaster risk reduction. Similarly, indicators could be considered for migration policies that impact on the human development of migrants and reduce the negative elements associated with migration, for example by seeking to cease the detention of children and adolescents on the basis of their immigration status, reduce the number of adult migrants in immigration detention, and implementing alternatives to such detention, in particular for children, adolescents and their families.

Third, the labour and human rights and well-being of migrants should be addressed through appropriately disaggregated indicators.

A development agenda that strives to be universal and that has equality of opportunity and treatment at its core must address all migrants' experiences of discrimination, violence, abuse and exploitation and keep track of their human development outcomes compared to the general population. Particular attention should be paid to marginalized migrants and those living in poverty, including migrants in an irregular situation.

Goals and targets on health, education, productive employment and decent work for all, good governance, protection or gender equality, amongst others, would become more relevant if they contain indicators that are disaggregated so that the situation and human rights of migrants, including migrant children and other 'at risk' groups, can be appropriately assessed and monitored. Examples might be to disaggregate indicators related to working conditions, wages, occupational safety and health; social protection and social security; recognition of skills and qualifications; access to adequate health services, including sexual and reproductive health services; or access to education to assess whether and to what extent migrants receive equal treatment. Sufficient data should be made available to assess how migrants are faring in all of those areas.

CONCLUSION: HOW THE GMG CAN SUPPORT MEMBER STATES

The GMG aims to be a resource for Member States as they discuss how migration could become part of the post-2015 UN Development Agenda. Bringing together the collective knowledge and experience of 15 United Nations entities and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the GMG can offer practical support for testing migration and development goals and formulating and effectively implementing policies at the country and regional level. For example, the GMG can work within UN Country Teams or regional bodies on migration issues to mainstream migration into UN Development Assistance Frameworks and collaborate with the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) to support the implementation of its recommendations. It also offers substantial expertise in migration data collection and situation analyses, promoting decent work for migrant workers, capacity development, and assisting governments to better understand and implement a human rights-based approach to migration and development programmes and policies. In this endeavour, it collaborates closely with the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) aims to create and synthesize multidisciplinary knowledge and evidence; generate a menu of policy options for migration policy makers; and provide technical assistance and capacity building for pilot projects, evaluation of policies, and data collection.

Concretely, under its work plan for the period 2013-2015, the GMG plans to produce, among other products:

- A series of issues briefs on migration and the post-2015 UN Development Agenda;
- A practical guide on the use of migration data;
- A second edition of its handbook on Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning, including sector-specific guidance notes;
- A set of indicators on the human rights of migrants and their families, with a focus on the most vulnerable;
- A compendium of good practices on labour migration and an employers' handbook on labour migration and development; and
- A dynamic inventory of GMG training activities and training support for GFMD Focal Points.

Through this work, the GMG hopes to encourage and support governments' consideration of the relationship between migration, human rights and sustainable development in the deliberations on the next global development goals and in regional and national agenda-setting processes. The GMG is committed to working together with governments, including through inter-ministerial platforms, civil society and other stakeholders at national, regional and global levels, to ensure that migrants and migration are incorporated to the fullest extent possible in the post-2015 UN Development Agenda.