

## INPUT TO THE EIGHTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

### *International Organization for Migration (IOM)*

#### A. INTRODUCTION

With the Eighth Coordination Meeting focusing on international migration and the financial crisis, it is important to highlight adjunct key areas of the migration discourse that have been particularly affected by the financial crisis.

The human rights of migrants and their protection are priority concerns for the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The financial and economic crisis has affected the well-being of migrants all over the world, and while only a few receiving countries have experienced a significant decline in migration inflows, the crisis in general has increased migrants' vulnerability. This is particularly significant among migrants in an irregular situation: their vulnerability to exploitation and the association of irregular migration with human smuggling and trafficking networks are persistent issues of global concern which have been exacerbated by the financial and economic crisis. In addition, the line between "voluntary migration" and "forced migration" has become increasingly unclear. While international and national laws clearly differentiate between asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants, the reality on the ground is often blurred: the reasons for migrating are often mixed. Current global trends only complicate further the challenge of successfully and humanely managing migration in such a context. Therefore, IOM considers shared understanding of migration issues and subsequent partnerships to be of paramount importance.

Climate change and environmental degradation and their nexus to population movement and displacement are another important area of debate directly linked to sustainable development efforts and how this is affected by the financial and economic crisis. The impact of environmental change on all is a matter of concern for policymakers and the wider public as awareness of human-induced climate change increases. Rising sea levels, deforestation and dry land degradation, as well as natural disasters pose challenges in terms of their effect on development and livelihoods, settlement options, food production and health. These environmental changes might lead to large-scale displacement of people —both internally and internationally. Existing gaps at the policy, research and operational levels need to be addressed if the international community is to achieve progress in this field, particularly in the context of adaptation measures and overall sustainable development.

#### B. THE IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRISIS ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

The current global economic crisis is affecting large sectors of the economy and society in both countries of origin and destination. Often migrants are the most vulnerable group of workers in terms of job losses, treatment in the workplace, access to social support, and potential marginalization. Women migrants face further difficulties as they have more limited access to information and resources, and can be subject to abuse and various forms of exploitation as they work in sectors which are typically more precarious and unprotected.

IOM has been monitoring the effects of the crisis on migrants and in its 2009 policy brief on the issue, has noted that the impact of the crisis has varied by country, and affected groups of migrants differently depending on their circumstances, legal status, and situation back home. IOM is aware that, as in previous economic crises, this recession seems to reduce new migration flows but not migrant stocks, an observation that is difficult to measure given that data on return migration is often limited. IOM collects information from its offices around the world on a quarterly basis to assess key policy changes occurring in each region in response to the economic crisis and the related ongoing policy debate. Among the most noticeable effects of the crisis obtained from this research in the field, have been job losses, more restrictive admissions policies, a reduction of foreign nationals admitted for employment, and stricter measures to combat irregular migration as well as a reduction in benefits and entitlements for immigrants.

Another early finding relates to the return of migrant workers, with some Governments enacting new or accrued assisted voluntary return and reintegration measures while others are beginning to initiate forced return policies for undocumented migrants. The response to these programmes, including through return incentives, have thus far not proven particularly effective. Acknowledging that demographics and labour demands will not be fundamentally changed by the crisis, IOM calls for sound integration policies in order to avoid the xenophobic reactions that have been reported.

One of the main impacts of the crisis in the area of development is on remittances. The World Bank (2009) has estimated a 6.1 per cent decline in remittance flows to developing countries between 2008-2009, and the impact is likely to be felt hardest in developing countries which received approximately US\$ 283 billion of remittances in 2008 (World Bank, 2008). At the same time, as remittances are counter-cyclical, some countries are witnessing a temporary increase in remittance flows owing to job insecurity and the need to return home. Taking into account the essential role of remittances sent by migrants to households in developing countries, which for some households constitute the main source of income, loss of income by the principal migrant may affect not only his or her household but also the wider community in the country of origin.

In addition, the crisis is affecting female and male migrants differently as both senders and receivers of remittances. Job loss by migrant men and women depends on the scope of the crisis, the sector of the economy, and on whether this sector relies predominantly on men, e.g. in construction, or women, e.g. in manufacturing. As far as remittances are concerned, the impacts of the crisis are expected to disproportionately affect women as they are often the main recipients of remittances.

In addressing the problems and challenges caused by the economic crisis, IOM has developed a three-point strategy as described below with examples of concrete interventions that have been undertaken by IOM in collaboration with other agencies. First, IOM has undertaken analysis, monitoring and research of the effects of the crisis on migration through regular policy briefs, quarterly surveys by IOM offices worldwide, and through ongoing regional studies and analysis of past crises. IOM has recently been requested by the European Commission to carry out a study on the crisis in the European Union. IOM has also conducted a worldwide survey on national policy responses to the economic crisis and will continue updating the results of the survey. Such an approach can ensure that migration is incorporated into the policy responses for economic recovery.

Second, IOM has engaged in fostering policy dialogue on migration, development and the economic crisis. IOM is facilitating collaboration between Governments and other national

and international participants in the field of migration in order to find the best possible solutions to the crisis' effects on migration and further harness the development potential of migration. The offices of IOM in Moscow, the Russian Federation, and Dushanbe, Tajikistan, have both held policy roundtables to discuss the impacts of the crisis on migrants. Other events include a recent meeting in Bangladesh to discuss the specific impact of the crisis on women, and an upcoming event in Morocco on the same subject. In Moldova, IOM collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to initiate a project to estimate the potential impacts of the economic crisis on poverty and social exclusion in Moldova and to identify possible measures to mitigate its impact. At the global level, IOM has worked with its partners in the Global Migration Group (GMG) to deliver a consolidated message to the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) meeting in Athens in 2009. Moreover, IOM has been collaborating with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations to ensure dialogue to raise awareness of the important contributions that migrants can make, particularly during an economic downturn, and ask for their protection from discrimination and xenophobia. Such dialogue can contribute to a better understanding of the crisis and the policy and practical measures required.

Third, adapting and implementing programmatic responses, IOM has recently opened a reintegration centre "Bienvenido a Casa" in Colombia and is managing a network of migrant service centres in Eastern Europe which provide advice on reintegration opportunities for returning migrants. IOM has also assisted interested Governments in establishing and managing reintegration centres and programmes in South Africa. The Regional Office of IOM in South Africa (2009) has recently completed a report entitled *Towards Tolerance, Law, and Dignity: Addressing Violence against Foreign Nationals in South Africa* in order to contribute to the Government's efforts to reduce xenophobic attitudes and related violence targeted at migrants and to facilitate their socio-economic integration. Also, a number of anti-discrimination training workshops for the judiciary have been carried out in the Baltic States.

In conclusion, IOM has made the following suggestions for policy and practical interventions in crisis situations:

For countries of destination:

- (a) Develop non-discriminatory, non-protectionist, gender-sensitive and human-rights based migration policies where short-term responses to the crisis are balanced with longer-term implications for development;
- (b) Enhance protection against xenophobia through awareness-raising among local population, since in times of economic crisis there is an increased risk of discrimination in host societies which perceive migrants as taking the jobs of native workers. This particularly concerns women who may become victims of discrimination due to their status as a migrant worker and as women;
- (c) Develop reintegration packages to encourage voluntary return of migrants and guarantee possibilities of re-entry when the crisis is over;
- (d) Leave regular migration channels open to meet any continuing structural demand for migrant workers, in order to avoid irregular migration and human trafficking, and
- (e) Reduce remittance transfer costs and encourage the productive use of remittances to maximize the longer term impact of remittances.

For countries of origin:

- (a) Develop gender-sensitive assistance programmes to facilitate the reintegration of returning migrants;
- (b) Develop national strategies and programmes on harnessing the migration development potential, including through enhanced use of remittances and potential of transnational communities, and
- (c) Encourage public awareness regarding the positive contributions that migrants can bring to destination countries with regard to economic, cultural and social contributions.

For international organizations:

- (a) Assist returning migrants with regard to reintegration and protection of their rights, including through anti-discrimination and anti-xenophobia programmes;
- (b) Foster development of cooperation between countries of destination and countries of origin, and
- (c) Contribute to the development of national migration and development policies and strategies through research, policy and legislative recommendations and capacity-building of Governments and local communities.

### C. RECENT INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN THE EVIDENCE BASE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The migration and development nexus is of concern to the international community, as reflected in both the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the discussions at the past three Global Forums on Migration and Development. Capitalizing on the positive relationship between migration and economic and social development has long been a strategic focus of IOM's work on migration management. With high numbers of international migrants worldwide, there is a particularly urgent need to (a) develop a fuller understanding of the linkages between migration and development; (b) take practical steps to enhance the benefits of migration for development, and (c) sketch sustainable solutions for problematic migration situations. IOM approaches the linkages between migration and development from the perspective that international migration, if properly managed, can contribute to the growth and prosperity of countries of origin and destination, as well as benefit migrants themselves.

In 2009, IOM developed a series of Migration Profiles for countries in the Balkans, Western and Central Africa, and Latin America, many in partnership with the European Union. The profiles follow an evidence-based approach to assess the migration situation in a given country to contribute to greater coherence of national migration policies and enhance regional cooperation, bringing together existing information from different sources in a structured manner, and provide a comprehensive overview of key international migration and socio-economic development trends. The profiles, using a common template, allow for comparability despite data limitations and different national contexts. The reports cover a range of statistics and other data related to immigration, emigration, return migration, remittances, labour migration and irregular migration, including human trafficking and smuggling. Besides explaining some of the key

factors underlying current migration patterns, the country reports also provide an assessment of the institutional and policy framework governing migration with respect to domestic legislation, institutional actors, and bi- and multilateral cooperation and its effectiveness. Drawing on the information and data presented, these country profiles show policymakers existing data gaps and possible strategies to improve migration statistics and manage migration.

A global meeting of the chairs and secretariats of Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 4 to 5 June 2009.<sup>1</sup> Hosted by the Thai Government in collaboration with the IOM, the purpose of the meeting was to draw together representatives from major RCPs in the world to share experiences and exchange views on the value and benefits of promoting regional dialogue, capacity development and cooperation on migration through RCPs. Participants also examined the value of collaboration between RCPs, as well as exchange between RCPs and the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

#### D. CURRENT AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

For 2010, IOM is planning a number of activities in the area of international migration and development. As reported at prior coordination meetings, IOM views the Global Forum as an important State-led process providing a platform for dialogue to address the links between migration and development in a practical and action-oriented way. IOM is firmly committed to supporting the GFMD and its continued success. IOM seconded a migration expert to the taskforce for the past three Global Forum meetings. During the preparatory phase of the Global Forum 2009 meeting, IOM received requests for substantive support and drafted background papers for three roundtables; IOM was also invited to present initial findings of a comparative analysis of RCPs in one of the roundtables. IOM has offered its full support and cooperation to the Government of Mexico, the host of the 2010 Global Forum both in its individual capacity and as a member of and in conjunction with the GMG.

IOM is also participating in the European Commission-United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative, implemented in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNDP, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Joint Initiative is working to (a) set up and reinforce networks of groups working on migration and development; (b) identify good practices in the field of migration at the local and international levels, and (c) inform policymaking on migration and development.

On migration and economic and community development, IOM is pursuing two types of activities. The first aims to harness the benefits of migration for the development of countries of origin and destination. It focuses on building the capacity of Governments and other stakeholders in countries of origin to communicate with their expatriate communities and engage them in initiatives related to home country socio-economic development, and on contributing to the establishment of development-oriented migration policies. The second type of activity addresses the root causes of economically-motivated migration, including the effects of environmental degradation, by enhancing the ability of Governments and other key players to focus development actions more strategically on home country migration dynamics. Projects focus on expanding economic opportunities and improving social services and community infrastructure in specific geographical areas that are prone to economic migration or in need of development to absorb and sustain the return of migrants.

Through its programmes to support the return and reintegration of qualified nationals, IOM will continue supporting national development or rehabilitation and reconstitution processes in developing countries, countries with economies in transition or those recovering from conflict, through the return and socio-economic reintegration of skilled and qualified nationals from abroad on short, repeated or longer-term professional assignments. Such programmes include measures to identify gaps in human resource needs that cannot be met locally, to identify, recruit, and place qualified candidates in sectors that are important to the country's development or reconstruction, and to provide transport and other assistance. IOM also assesses and researches potential programming support and provides technical advice for countries setting up mechanisms to encourage returns within a broader national policy and international community plan for development, rehabilitation and reconstruction that comprises the transfer of knowledge and skills acquired by qualified nationals abroad.

Also in 2010 IOM will continue to encourage inter-state dialogue on migration at the regional level, including through its support for several RCPs.

Lastly, together with partner agencies, IOM has finalized a handbook to guide policymakers through the process of mainstreaming migration into poverty reduction and development strategies. It is targeted at policymakers from different backgrounds whose areas of competence affect or are affected by migration. The handbook can also serve as an important reference tool for other stakeholders, such as academia, donors, non-governmental organizations, employers, and trade unions interested in obtaining a better understanding of the interplay between migration and development issues.

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NOTE

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the global RCP meeting, see <http://www.iom.int/jahia/jahia/policy-research/regional-consultative-processes/2009-global-rcp-meeting> (accessed 19 July 2010).

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