

## **POLICY AND PROGRAMME WORK OF UNFPA ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

### *United Nations Population Fund*

The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in New York in 2006 and the Global Forum on Migration and Development held in Brussels in 2007 recognized the developmental benefits of international migration. Both gatherings offered an opportunity for the international community to identify ways to maximize the benefits of migration and to reduce its negative impacts. There was general agreement that international migration could be a positive force for development in both countries of origin and countries of destination, provided that it was supported by the right set of policies.

The increasing link between international migration and development has significant implications for the policy and programmatic work of UNFPA. Taking an active part in the preparations for both the High-level Dialogue and the Global Forum, UNFPA organized a number of expert group meetings to discuss how properly managed migration can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to address the particular challenges of female migration.

The 2006 edition of the “State of the world population” published by UNFPA focused on women and international migration and showed how women can both benefit from migration and be subject to discrimination and abuse when migrating. The report examined the impact of female labour migration on source and destination countries and addressed, *inter alia*, issues of empowerment and risks, including human trafficking; and the social and economic implications of women’s migration, including disruption of families on the one hand and benefits of remittances on the other.

UNFPA participated in both the High-level Dialogue and the Global Forum and co-convened, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other governmental and United Nations partners a round table on “Regional migration consultation processes and development: Advancing cooperation” at the Global Forum.

UNFPA continues to be an active member of the Global Migration Group (GMG). The GMG can play an important role in facilitating the work of the Global Forum and can encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. It can be instrumental in providing direction and leadership in a system-wide context; contributing to greater consistency in policy formulation and programme implementation; identifying critical issues, challenges, gaps and best practices, and promoting interest and dialogue on migration-related issues.

UNFPA continues to be engaged in a number of activities in the context of the first meeting of the Global Forum and its follow-up. The Fund’s approach towards policy and programmatic interventions in this area is rights-based and culture- and gender-sensitive. Among issues of particular concern are challenges of female migration, including trafficking of women and girls; migration and the spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS; the provision of basic social services, including reproductive health services in areas of destination; the role of migration in socio-economic development; and the protection of the human rights of migrants.

UNFPA participates actively in the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP). The Fund undertakes many activities to help prevent trafficking of women and girls and to assist victims. For example, the Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia (RHIYA), a partnership of the European Union and UNFPA, works in collaboration with NGOs in a number of high-risk impoverished areas in Nepal to keep girls safe from trafficking.

UNFPA also continues its collaboration with UNITAR and IOM offering seminars on key migration issues for Government delegates at the permanent missions to the United Nations in New York. The seminars are intended to provide Government officials with a better understanding of the relationship between migration and development and a forum for discussion of important issues of concern to all countries. Seminars convened in 2007 included: building partnerships; facilitating migrants' participation in society; migration and ageing, and expatriate communities and development in conflict-affected countries.

Other on-going activities include supporting capacity-building for data collection, especially preparations for the 2010 census round, providing assistance to meet the reproductive health needs of women in emergency and refugee situations, preventing HIV/AIDS among refugee and migrant communities, and sponsoring "safe houses" where trafficking victims can receive counseling and health care.

Both the High-level Dialogue and the Global Forum pointed out that age and sex disaggregated migration data are essential for evidence-based policy dialogue, development planning and programme formulation. Research is essential in order to enhance understanding of the migration process, including in such areas as: the root causes of migration; the relationship between migration and development; the impact of remittances; the impact of migration on gender equality and women's empowerment; labour migration in a globalized economy; the role of the expatriate communities, and the impact of migration on the environment.

To help fill this void in data and research, UNFPA has recently embarked on a two-year project with IOM to study the phenomenon of transit migration from sub-Saharan African countries to the Maghreb and beyond. The project aims to take stock of available information on the scope and characteristics of transit migration in the region and to document the micro- and macro-implications and challenges of transit migration from sub-Saharan Africa. It will provide policy recommendations to address the challenges of transit migration in order to maximize the positive and minimize the negative consequences of migration for sending, transit and receiving countries as well as for the migrants themselves. The study focuses on the following seven countries: Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia.

The project seeks to establish a dialogue between migration experts and policymakers in order to build capacity of countries to address issues related to transit migration. A situation analysis of transit migration in each country is being prepared using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Each situation analysis will describe the magnitude of the transit migration phenomenon, determine the availability of information on migration flows, describe the laws and policies on international migration, and identify the existing knowledge base and institutional capacity in the country. A concurrent activity is a review of existing literature and a compilation of all available information on the scope and characteristics of transit migration in the region.

Three countries—Mauritania, Morocco and Niger—were identified for further study including conducting interviews of transit migrants in order to capture and better understand transit migration trends and determinants. An interview questionnaire was developed to obtain information on the socio-economic characteristics of transit migrants, the situation in the country of origin, the decision to migrate and the migration journey; the situation in the country of destination, including labour market participation, sending of remittances, social situation and living conditions, health status and access to health and social services, and attitudes and treatment of migrants by the host country.

Country case studies and monographs are planned which will focus on specific issues of transit migration in order to place this type of migration in the socio-economic and political context of the countries in the study. The final report will document the trends and determinants of transit migration in the region;

describe the situation of the migrants; analyse the economic, social and political impact of the phenomenon; describe the policy and legislative responses to transit migration, and provide policy recommendations to address the challenges posed by the increasing numbers of transit migrants in the region.

UNFPA looks forward to working with its GMG members, Member States, United Nations agencies, and other international organizations on the important challenges of international migration in the context of the second meeting of the Global Forum to be held in Manila in October 2008.

---

REFERENCE

United Nations Population Fund (2006). *State of the World Population 2006. A Passage to Hope. Women and International Migration*. New York: United Nations Population Fund.

