

**TENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

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**INPUT OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
TO THE TENTH COORDINATION MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION<sup>1</sup>**

*Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has a long term interest in migration issues as migration processes are closely related to agriculture and rural development, food security, and natural resource management, for which FAO has a mandate within the United Nations system.

FAO is aware of the migration-development nexus and strategically works to maximise positive impacts of migration, particularly in rural areas, fostering rural-urban linkages, advocating for a better management of rural labour mobility and identifying good practices. The ultimate goal is to enhance country capacity and policy coherence to reduce distress migration and promote gainful migration patterns to improve food security in sending and receiving countries.

Migration is part of livelihood strategies through which rural households diversify their assets and activities in different locations, thus reducing risks and vulnerabilities. Food insecurity and high food prices have been reported, in countries like Nepal and Yemen, as one of the causes of increased migration for work, especially among rural households (Compton *et al.* 2010). In general, limited employment opportunities at home are the main reason for people to migrate. Rural out-migration is often internal, as poor people lack the financial resources and skills to migrate internationally. In the world, there are about 740 million internal migrants, compared to 214 million international migrants (UNDP 2009). It is also acknowledged that international and internal movements are closely linked, even if these linkages have not sufficiently been explored. Among international migrants, half of them move within the same region and nearly 40 per cent to neighbouring countries. Many migrants are very young: in developing countries a third of total migrants are aged 12 to 24 year (World Bank 2006).

Women, increasingly migrating independently, constitute half of total international migrants, reaching up to 70-80 per cent in certain cases (IFAD and FAO 2008). Female migrants are mostly employed in the informal sector as domestic workers, care-givers and sex workers, or in labour-intensive and export oriented manufacturing industries. Female migrants are more vulnerable than their male counterparts and continue to suffer from gender discrimination and severe decent work deficits in terms of wages, levels of protection and security, and working conditions.

Transformation processes in agriculture and rural areas influence migration patterns and migration dynamics have in turn significant implications for agriculture and rural development. The magnitude and direction of migration-related impacts are highly context specific and vary according to migration patterns, household characteristics, and socio-cultural factors:

- Migration affects household allocation of labour and it may create labour shortages in sending areas particularly in the short run, thereby changing labour market dynamics. In rural areas, it may also accelerate the shift away from agriculture, especially of youth who do not perceive farming as a productive occupation to engage in. Further, changes in the spatial population distribution, resulting in the ageing and feminsation of rural populations, can considerably affect both the supply of food and the demand for types of food produced and consumed.
- Remittances may help compensate for labour and income shortages, enabling poor households to hire new labourers. Money sent home by migrant workers can also have positive impacts on employment in rural areas when remittances are productively invested in farm and non-farm activities, creating new jobs. At the household level, remittances are a crucial supplement of regular income, particularly in rural areas. They

contribute to reducing vulnerability and help poor households in coping with income shortages and smoothing consumption. About 60-80 per cent of remittances are spent on basic consumption, including food, shelter and clothing (IFAD (2011)). Migration and remittances can help families to cope with high food prices and increasing food price volatility. As women are usually the main remittance recipients and the ones in charge of food preparation, migration can increase their role in allocating resources, spending more on the quality and quantity of food consumed, but also investing in their children's education and health.

- Migration has also impacts on gender relations; female migration can be a driver of social change, increasing women's economic and social empowerment. Male out-migration can increase women's participation in agriculture and productive activities, and increase their role in financial and managerial decision-making in the home as well as in the farm. Nonetheless, migration can also increase the work burdens of those left behind and reduce time for household work and child care.

### ***Migration, agriculture and rural development: the role of FAO***

Although not directly contributing to international mechanisms such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the Global Migration Group, FAO has a key role to play in migration issues. So far, the organisation has engaged in a range of different activities:

- In terms of contributing to knowledge generation, FAO has developed diverse materials on international migration and the role of remittances in agriculture and rural development, particularly as regards understanding the relations between migration and agriculture / rural development and promoting productive investments in rural areas<sup>2</sup>
- In terms of capacity development, policy advice and initial support to countries has been provided on mainstreaming migration, mobility and decent work issues in policies and programmes. FAO has participated in UN Joint Programmes on youth employment and migration<sup>3</sup>, and engaged with key stakeholder in the Ministry of Agriculture and Labour, and with farmers association and migrant networks, seeking to assess migration impacts on development, in order to enhance the development impact of migrant remittances in rural communities. In particular, FAO carries out analytical work and country case studies<sup>4</sup> to better understand the impact of emigration and remittance flow on production,

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<sup>2</sup>FAO contributed and published the following materials:

Journal of Development Studies Vol. 46:1, *Special Issue: Migration, Transfers and Economic Decision Making Among Agricultural Households*, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London

FAO, Agricultural Development Economics Division (ESA), *ESA Working Papers series*

FAO, IFAD and ILO (2010), "*Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: Differentiated pathways out of poverty*", Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, Rome

FAO, IFAD and ILO (2010), "*Making migration work for women and men in rural labour markets*", Gender and Rural Employment Policy Brief #6, Rome

IFAD and FAO (2008), "*International migration, remittances and rural development*", International Fund for Agricultural Development, Rome

<sup>3</sup> UNJP on youth employment and migration in Honduras and Tunisia

<sup>4</sup> In collaboration with the Commonwealth Foundation and the Ramphal Commission on Migration and Development, FAO has conducted country case studies to investigate the impact of international migration on food

social stress and equity, and the consequent effects on poverty and food security, in order to generate informed policy recommendations and strengthen the capacity of policymakers, researchers, financial institutions and donor agencies to leverage of migration and remittances for agriculture and rural development, and thus for promoting food security and reducing<sup>5</sup>

### *New initiatives in the area of international migration*

Policy options need to provide viable alternatives to distress rural out-migration, helping to better manage labour migration and ease the pressure on urban centers. The aim is at the same time to address push factors in rural areas, and ensure that migrants can access decent work opportunities and equal standards of protection and services. Therefore, FAO is interested in making its contribution to initiatives on migration and development. Given its mandate and comparative advantage, as well as activities conducted so far, FAO could foster collaboration with development partners, including promoting South-South cooperation, in the following areas:

- Improving knowledge on the linkages between migration, agricultural development and food security, focusing on the role of remittances in the rural farm and non-farm sector. FAO consider also of high importance to better understand the interactions between internal and international migration, with attention to rural-urban linkages and social, gender and employment implications for rural populations.
- Strengthening sustainable management of natural resources, improving food security of rural communities and fostering investments in agriculture in order to provide economically and socially viable rural communities. FAO recommends to strengthen lucrative forms of rural enterprise, such as farm production, off-farm services, and agribusiness, facilitating access to remittances and financial services in rural areas, and improving access to vocational training and entrepreneurial skills, especially for youth.
- Supporting return migration and the engagement of diaspora groups, considering their key role in transferring knowledge and skills, and channeling resources in rural areas through collective and social remittances.
- Improving job recruitment policies for migrants seeking decent work standards, and especially promoting good practices in terms of seasonal migration schemes for rural workers.
- Ensuring the protection of human rights and the promotion of decent work for migrants, for instance by providing migrant workers with pre-departure information about their rights, protection and potential risks.
- Developing capacities at national and international levels, to better incorporate migration considerations into agriculture and rural development policies and improve national

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security in eight Commonwealth developing states, and the potential for diasporas to support farming and agricultural improvement. <http://www.ramphalcentre.org/>. Following this initiative, the Commonwealth Heads of Government, meeting in Perth, Australia, from 28 to 30 October 2011, affirmed the importance of managing migration effectively in the Commonwealth in point 3h) of the CHOGM Communique

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fao.org/tc/policy-support/areas-of-expertise/migration-and-agricultural-development/en/>

labour market information systems to leverage the potential of migration for development, with particular attention to disadvantaged groups, including migrating women and youth.

In view of the above, FAO is committed to contribute to the preparation of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, including the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and to exchanging information on current and future activities in the areas of international migration. FAO stands ready to transform its knowledge into action in relation to maximise the potential benefits of migration for agriculture and rural development, and to contribute to mainstreaming migration into agriculture and rural development planning<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/ninthcoord2011/mainstreamingmigration.pdf>