

INPUT TO THE EIGHTH COORDINATION MEETING ON  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

*United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*

A. INTRODUCTION

The 2005 World Summit Outcome acknowledged the important nexus between international migration and development and the need to address the challenges and opportunities presented by migration. A collaborative, coherent and comprehensive approach on this topic is essential to ensure that migration is prominent on the global development agenda and that regular migration is seen as an opportunity for development in both origin and destination countries, rather than as a threat. This is especially important given the current global economic and financial crisis which threatens to impact migration and remittance flows and might undermine the development benefits of migration.

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

The recent economic downturn has important implications for future migration flows, although little concrete evidence is available on the magnitude of the impact. As more countries are affected by an economic recession and as unemployment rises, migration policies may become more restrictive and public perception of migrants may become more negative. Migration flows have already shown signs of reversing in the hardest hit sectors of the economy and in turn have also affected the flow of remittances.

Women might be especially affected by the economic and financial crisis, including discrimination due to their immigration status and gender, which might make them more vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination and abuse. The extent of the impact on female migrants varies by region and type of migration as women are well represented in the employment sectors hit by the crisis such as manufacturing, real estate, and the hotel industry, but also in the sectors that have not been negatively affected by the crisis or that have even expanded during this time including health, social work, social and personal services, and education.

Many women are employed in the informal sector of the economy and are at an increased risk of discrimination and exploitation. The plight of domestic workers not benefiting from the protection of labour laws in most countries deserves particular attention in times of crisis. Also, as competition for jobs increases, female migrants may be forced to accept inadequate terms and conditions of employment, something that affects formally employed migrants and migrant workers in an irregular situation in the informal economy.

As the economic crisis continues, female migrants are likely to find it increasingly harder to obtain regular employment abroad. If they do find jobs, it is likely that the jobs will pay less and will have decreased benefits. This may impact the amount of remittances they will be able to send home which, in turn, will impact the quality of life of families who count on remittances to provide for food, health care and education. Children and pregnant women may not receive the health care they need and girls may be forced out of school to help support the family. While

women typically send a larger percentage of their earnings home to their families, it remains to be seen how resilient these remittances will remain during the economic crisis.

Women who are unable to find employment through regular channels may resort to traffickers and smugglers, exposing themselves to exploitation and human rights abuses in sweatshops, the sex industry and domestic servitude where they may find themselves at increased risk of physical and mental health problems, including HIV/AIDS, yet lack adequate access to appropriate health-care information and services.

Timely and reliable age and sex disaggregated migration data in conjunction with culture, gender and age-sensitive research are essential for evidence-based policymaking, development planning and programme formulation. This includes research that enhances the understanding of the implications of Government responses to the economic crisis, the effect of the crisis on migration and development, and the impact on female migrants. The 2010 round of censuses may shed some light on the impact of the crisis. However, there is a risk that the economic downturn may affect countries' ability to conduct censuses.

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

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continues its collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) offering seminars on key migration issues for Government delegates at the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York. These seminars are intended to provide Government officials with a better understanding of the relationship between migration and development and a forum for discussions.

UNFPA collaborated with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and other partners in the preparation for the UNAIDS twenty-fourth programme coordinating board thematic seminar on People on the Move<sup>1</sup>, held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 22 to 24 June 2009, which called attention to the barriers that migrants face in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. The seminar also examined successful policies and programmes that provide accessible and culturally appropriate HIV-related services to diverse mobile populations.

The Fund continues its partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the IOM, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the European Commission-United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMEDI)<sup>2</sup> to set up and reinforce migration and development networks, identify good practices, and inform policymaking on migration and development. The collaboration also included participation in the virtual fair during the Global Forum on Migration and Development held in Athens, Greece, from 2 to 3 November 2009 which invited virtual visitors to watch filmed interviews with civil society leaders and policymakers present in Athens, explore an online exhibition of good practice projects, and participate in a discussion blog regarding the daily activities during the Global Forum meeting.

In order to strengthen the evidence base on international migration and development, UNFPA participates in the Suitland Working Group to develop practical guidance on how best to use household surveys to measure international migration and describe the characteristics of migrant populations. The Fund highlighted the importance of using census information for migration and mobility studies at a recent Needs Assessment Conference for Census Analysis, in Dakar, Senegal, held from 11 to 13 November 2009.

A number of UNFPA country offices have initiated surveys, research studies and supported meetings to better understand the phenomenon of migration. The topics of the studies include cross-border migration, youth migration, remittances, migrant rights, access to sexual and reproductive health services among migrant populations, the needs of women migrants, and communities living abroad. Some country offices have worked with Government offices to sensitize policymakers to key population issues including international migration. UNFPA is also preparing concept notes for its country offices on the linkages between migration and other urgent population issues, including HIV/AIDS, human rights and climate change.

As a member of the Global Migration Group (GMG), UNFPA collaborated with GMG partners in the preparation of fact sheets on the impact of the economic crisis on various aspects of migration. UNFPA prepared the fact sheet on *The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Female Migration*, showing that the crisis makes female migrants more vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination and abuse.

UNFPA will continue to be an active member of the GMG and will work with its partners to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach to the institutional response to international migration.

#### D. CONCLUSION

The current economic and financial crisis is raising concerns about the short- and long-term impact on international migration flows. Although further research and data are needed to fully understand the extent of the impact, the crisis has already prompted some Governments to tighten immigration controls and employers to cut jobs and wages in a number of sectors, with negative consequences for migrants. In some areas, the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments has made migrants the target of xenophobic reactions. Concerns are being raised about ensuring respect for the human rights of migrants in this time of crisis. It is important to underscore that human rights are non-negotiable and that respect for the human rights of migrants is a fundamental responsibility of all States and must underlie all policies and practices with respect to their treatment by public authorities.

It is essential that short-term measures addressing the crisis should not overshadow longer-term considerations in shaping migration policies. Migration should be regarded not as a problem but potentially as part of the solution to overcoming the global recession and promoting development.

While international migration cannot be a substitute for development, it must be an integral part of the development agenda. Differences in opportunities and incomes between countries and demographic imbalances caused by ageing populations make future movements of people across borders inevitable. Cooperation and collaboration between sending and receiving States is essential to ensure flexible and coherent policies that promote the orderly flow of

migration and protect the rights of migrants. Effective migration and development policy requires capacity-building, compilation and exchange of information, and linking research and policy.

UNFPA looks forward to continue working with GMG partners, United Nations Member States, United Nations agencies, other international organizations and civil society to address the increasing challenges of migration and to ensure that migrants do not become the innocent victims of the economic and financial crisis.

---

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the meeting, see [http://www.unaids.org/en/AboutUNAIDS/Governance/PCBArchive/24th\\_PCB\\_Meeting\\_June\\_2009.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/AboutUNAIDS/Governance/PCBArchive/24th_PCB_Meeting_June_2009.asp) (accessed 25 February 2010).

<sup>2</sup> For further information on the Joint Initiative, see <http://www.migration4development.org/content/about-jmdi> (accessed 4 January 2010).

---

#### REFERENCES

United Nations (2005). World Summit Outcome in General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/1 of 16 September 2005.

United Nations Population Fund (2009). *The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Female Migration*. September 2009. New York: United Nations Population Fund.