



United Nations General Assembly

2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development

Roundtable 1 Background Paper:

Assessing the effects of international migration on sustainable development and identifying relevant priorities in view of the preparation of the post-2015 development framework

With less than 1,000 days to the 2015 ‘finish line’ set for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a participatory discussion on a successor framework—the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015—is now underway, including consultations on the formulation of possible future Sustainable Development Goals. Migration which was notably absent from the MDGs, has undeniably contributed to their achievement. Migration is also relevant to the three pillars of sustainable development—economic, social and environmental. Migration has gained traction in the discussions on the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, building on the heightened awareness and policy dialogue generated by the first United Nations High-level Dialogue in 2006 and successive meetings of the Global Forum on Migration and Development. The next step is to ensure that migration features prominently in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

Although governments, international organizations, academia, civil society, regional consultation processes and global fora have done much to highlight the links between migration and development, a more thorough, evidence-supported understanding of the development impacts of migration and labour mobility on migrants, their households, their communities as well as on countries of origin, transit and destination is imperative to forging a global consensus on the role of migration as a driver of global development. Such an understanding can further be leveraged by governments in the formulation and execution of national policies that seek to enhance the benefits of migration while reducing its adverse outcomes, as well as in the development of bilateral and multilateral policies and programmes to achieve these objectives. **The High-level Dialogue is an opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to send a clear message to the beyond 2015 process that the time has come to make migration an integral part of the next global development agenda.**

Millions of people around the world rely on migration to improve their livelihoods, to escape poverty and conflict, to adapt to economic and environmental shocks, and to enhance the health and education outcomes of their families. Migrants tend to move from a poorer place to a richer one and thus generally multiply their incomes as a result of their movement. Annual remittances to developing countries alone surpass \$400 billion, triple the amount of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Millions of people work in enterprises established by migrants and benefit from new technologies created by migrants. Through trade and investments in their home countries, migrants contribute directly to economic development. There is mounting evidence that migration contributes to human and community development, through the accumulation of human capital, increased access by migrants’ households to social services, notably health and education, and women’s increased participation in productive employment.

Important momentum has been generated since the first High-level Dialogue, including new commitments to reducing the cost of financial and social remittances; promoting efficient and ethical practices of recruiting for overseas employment; tackling the scourge of human trafficking; collaborating on health workforce development; strengthening the rights of domestic workers; and addressing the emerging challenge of disaster and climate-induced migration.

Yet, the current state of migration governance and the notable absence of regulation create a number of vulnerabilities and challenges. Too often, migrants and their families face high costs and risks, including discrimination, violence and human rights violations at work and in their daily lives; lack of access to health, education and other basic social services; family separation; a devaluation of their skills and experience due to the lack of recognition of foreign qualifications and work experience; and excessive recruitment fees to secure a job.

Moreover, countries face increasing global competition for talent as well as challenges related to the integration and reintegration of migrants, including the adaptation of national labour markets and systems for health, education, and social security to increasingly diverse and interconnected societies.

There is clear evidence that if states make more informed policy choices they can accrue large economic and social gains, while fulfilling the human rights of migrants and of their families and ensuring decent living and working conditions for migrants. How can the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 best support such an outcome where migrants become both subjects and agents of development?

There are a number of options for including migration in a future development framework:

1) *The evidence-base on the link between migration and the three pillars of sustainable development, i.e. economic, social and environmental, could be strengthened.*

This could be an overarching objective aimed at consolidating and operationalizing the emerging global consensus on the role of migration as a driver of development and promoting commitment to the human development of all migrants and their families in the narrative for the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

2) *Migration could be addressed as part of a new global partnership for development – an expanded and revitalized MDG 8.*

No country can effectively govern international migration alone. A global partnership on international migration could provide the framework for multilateral, regional, bilateral, national and local partnerships among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to make progress in key areas such as:

- Facilitating safe and legal migration, e.g., by improving cross-border labour matching, developing national qualification frameworks that address skill development, accumulation and certification, human mobility agreements, and combating trafficking and smuggling of migrants;
- Lowering the human, social and financial costs of migration, including those related to recruitment and remittance transfers;
- Enhancing migrants' contributions to development by promoting the recognition of foreign qualifications and work experience, the portability of benefits, and access to financial services;
- Tackling discrimination and labour exploitation of migrants, and ensuring protection of the human rights of all migrants;
- Integrating migration and the role of diaspora into national and sub-national development strategies in both developed and developing countries and improving policy coherence, including in trade agreements;
- Enhancing governments' capacity to integrate migration and labour mobility in national development strategies.

3) *Migration could be incorporated into other goals where it directly contributes to their achievement.*

- Goals relating to poverty eradication, health, education, social protection or gender equality could be bolstered by improving the facilitation of remittances (reducing costs, using electronic payment systems and new mobile technology, simplifying 'Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism' regulations for small-value transfers, avoiding exclusive partnerships, and encouraging greater competition);
- The role of science, technology and innovation could be harnessed by engaging highly skilled migrants in the diasporas;

- Goals related to good governance, human security, or the empowerment of girls and women, could include a commitment to prevent and eliminate all forms of human trafficking and migrant exploitation and abuse. This commitment could be tracked in terms of prosecutions of human trafficking, countries offering special visa protections for victims of trafficking, and businesses screening their supply chains for forced labour, especially child labour.
- Other examples might be to include measuring the effectiveness of HIV prevention or prevalence of vaccinations amongst mobile populations.

4) *For all goals, as appropriate, progress could be monitored for migrant populations.*

A development agenda that strives to ‘leave no one behind’ and that has equality of opportunity and treatment at its core might address migrants’ experiences of discrimination, abuse and exploitation, for example by monitoring:

- Migrant workers’ enjoyment of equal treatment in terms of working conditions, wages, safety and social protection;
- The ability of migrant populations to access adequate health services regardless of status, and access to education by children, adolescents and youth affected by migration;
- The inclusion of migrant populations in disaster preparedness and response strategies, including, for example, access to early warning systems and emergency services.

Yet, the most pressing task may be to forge a consensus on a shared understanding related to international migration and development, drawing on states’ international commitments, national priorities and existing partnerships among countries and with other stakeholders.

With so many standing to gain from enhanced governance of migration, including migrants and their families, local communities, businesses, and economies, a United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 that measures and recognizes the costs and benefits of migration by addressing both the human development of migrants *and* their development contributions would be the right step in the right direction.

Questions for consideration during Round Table 1

1. What concrete measures and initiatives could be undertaken to more systematically assess and monitor the development impacts of migration in countries of origin, transit and destination, in both the North and the South? How can Governments, international organizations and the research community best support these efforts?
2. Given that migrants are both the subjects and the objects of human development, what role should human rights, increased access to economic opportunities and sustainability play in international migration governance beyond 2015?
3. Given the many “competing” priorities in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, the scope for including migration will be limited. What goal, target or indicator on migration could the High-level Dialogue recommend for inclusion in the future sustainable development goals?
4. What partnerships and initiatives could the High-level Dialogue recommend to promote the inclusion of migration in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015? What roles could the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Migration and the Global Migration Group play in this regard?