

**TWELFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

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MIGRATION, FOOD SECURITY AND RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION¹

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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

A. FAO'S WORK ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. *FAO's contribution to the follow-up and implementation of the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development*

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, poverty reduction, food security, and natural resource management. Being aware of the migration-development nexus, FAO 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 and poverty reduction.

FAO is highly committed to follow up and implement the Declaration of the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, as well as the eight-point agenda for action of the Secretary-General. FAO is engaged in particular in the following actions: (1) Protect the human rights of all migrants; (2) Reduce the costs of labour migration; (6) Integrate migration into the development agenda; and (7) Strengthen the migration evidence base.

In achieving these objectives, FAO's work to date has mainly involved knowledge generation and contribution to global normative work, as well as technical support and capacity development at country level. Recently, FAO has developed a technical note on migration and remittances, as well as a technical brief on irregular migration and the role of agricultural and rural development.

a. FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework and future areas of engagement

In its Strategic Framework, FAO has renewed its commitment to work on migration issues. In particular, under the programme of action for Strategic Objective 3 *Reduce Rural Poverty*, FAO acknowledges the role of migration and remittances as part of its integrated approach for rural poverty reduction. Building on its strong technical expertise and close relation with governments and agricultural stakeholders, FAO's area of work will focus on:

- Enhance evidence about labour migration and the impact of migration and remittances on rural livelihoods. Together with partners, FAO will carry out assessments of how transformation processes in agriculture and rural areas influence migration patterns and how migration and remittances can contribute to improve income security of rural households, reduce rural poverty and enhance food security.
- Provide technical support and capacity development to governments and rural stakeholders to enhance policy coherence and better incorporate migration considerations into agriculture and rural development policies, strategies and programmes.
- Strengthen policy dialogue between governments and rural stakeholders, including producers' organizations and migrant networks, on innovative mechanisms facilitating the investment of remittances in productive activities in agriculture and rural areas.
- Contribute more systematically to existing global cooperation mechanisms, such as the Global Migration Group and the Global Forum on Migration and Development, as well as the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), the Global Remittances Working Group, the United Nations Task Team for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the General Assembly's Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Further, the International Year of Family Farming offers an opportunity to raise awareness on migration and family farming.

FAO will expand these areas of work in collaboration with partners. It will engage in particular with other UN agencies, but also with partners from the private sector and civil society. FAO will work closely with the following agencies to develop specific programmes:

- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD): FAO envisages strengthening its collaboration with IFAD on favouring innovative financial instruments to support the channeling of remittances towards productive activities in the agricultural sector and to support entrepreneurship development in rural areas, especially for women and youth.
- World Bank: FAO has started collaboration with the World Bank to carry out rapid assessment of migration and its impact on agriculture and rural development. More collaboration could be envisaged within the recently launched KNOMAD.
- International Labour Organization (ILO): Together with the ILO, FAO will promote good practices in terms of seasonal migration schemes for rural workers. This could include matching seasonal migration schemes with robust co-development programmes to promote the investment of remittances in farm and off-farm activities. FAO and ILO would further work together to raise the awareness of Governments, local authorities and communities on the need to promote decent work for migrants, for instance by providing migrant workers with pre-departure information about their rights and potential risks, as well as creating mechanisms for them to access social protection and social services.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM): Collaboration is being pursued with IOM in the area of international migration and linkages with transnational groups. In this regard, IOM would mobilize associations of migrants willing to invest in agricultural projects in their countries of origin, while FAO would identify favourable models of agricultural investment in concerned countries, followed by capacity building activities and policy support.

B. MIGRATION IN THE POST-2015 UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

1. *Migration for development*

The post-2015 development agenda provides an opportunity to reaffirm the contribution of migration to development. The United Nations post-2015 Task Team has described migration and mobility as an important enabler for inclusive and sustainable development. With 214 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants (UNDP, 2009), migration affects the lives of millions of people around the world and shapes development pathways of countries of origin, transit and destination.

While the drivers of migration are complex and varied, migration is mainly triggered by poverty, food insecurity, inequality, poor income-generating opportunities and increased competition for scarce land and water resources (UNCTAD, 2012; ILO, 2010; IOM, 2008). Population dynamics, lack of decent jobs in rural areas, especially for youth, recurrent and protracted crises push people to seek better prospects outside their country/area of origin. In the past 50 years, 800 million people have moved from rural areas into cities¹. Precise estimates are lacking, but the numbers of people moving from one rural area to another within the same country are believed to be even higher. More and more people are also moving due to climate and environmental changes. Those people, either forcedly displaced or seeking adaptive strategies, are largely moving short distances, mainly within countries and in many cases end up exposed to more precarious and vulnerable conditions (United Nations Task Team, 2012).

As societies and economies undergo structural transformations, the movement of people among and within countries is inevitable. Migration and income diversification are vital to the livelihoods, and thus resilience, of many rural households. Migration is not simply a means for individuals to escape poor living conditions, but often a household strategy. For many poor households, migration of one or more family members is a strategic decision geared towards minimizing risk and diversifying the household's

income by seeking more gainful and productive employment opportunities (Mendola, 2006; Massey et al., 1993; Stark and Bloom, 1985).

Migration is not only a problem to be solved, but an opportunity for countries of origin and destination alike. By migrating, people may be able to escape conditions of poverty and food insecurity, thereby reducing pressure on resources and labour markets in their countries of origin. Emigrants can also make significant contributions to the development of their areas of origin through the transfer of remittances, know-how and technologies, as well as networks. Meanwhile, for countries of destination, migrants represent an important way to fill gaps in domestic labour markets.

While migration can be beneficial, it can also have negative impacts. In countries of origin, emigration can hinder domestic economic development due to losses in human capital and agricultural labour that may affect crop production and food availability, particularly when families are unable to hire new labourers. Migration of skilled and young workers has raised particular concerns with respect to the ageing and feminization of rural populations and the increased work burdens on those left behind. In countries of destination, the arrival of large numbers of migrants can strain government resources, exert downward pressure on wages and give rise to resentment and xenophobia. Migration might be dangerous for the migrants themselves. Low-skilled migrants are likely to undertake underpaid and informal work, face unsafe working conditions, have little job security or access to social protection.

The international community should promote efforts to maximize the positive impacts and minimize the trade-offs associated with migration for the benefit of countries of origin, destination and transit alike.

2. Integrating migration into the post-2015 development agenda

Migration should feature prominently in the post-2015 development agenda. It should be an explicit part of the broader global agenda for inclusive growth and employment, as well as be acknowledged as one of the key enablers to achieve food security and eradicate poverty. FAO suggests including a specific reference to migration and mobility in the formulation of the post-2015 development goals. FAO also recommends the inclusion of specific targets and indicators related to decent work in rural areas, working conditions and enforcement of labour standards for migrant workers, remittances and innovative financial mechanisms, and partnerships for migration and development. The post-2015 development agenda offers a unique opportunity for governments to recognise the dynamics of internal and international migration and acknowledge the roles and needs of rural areas, enhance access to safe and regular migration channels, facilitate remittances and investments, enhance policy coherence and mainstream migration into national development policies and programmes, and foster global and regional partnerships for migration.

a. Create decent farm and non-farm jobs in rural areas

Large numbers of people migrate for work and to seek better opportunities. Generation of viable options for rural people, including in the rural non-agricultural sector, is needed to break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty. Migration will remain a key component of household livelihood strategies as long as on- and off-farm jobs remain limited and of poor quality. This is particularly true for youth, who often choose to migrate rather than engage in the drudgery associated with low-productivity agriculture. Countries must therefore prioritize the creation of decent on- and off-farm employment within the context of agricultural modernization and structural economic transformation in rural areas. Decent rural employment is work that provides a living wage and reasonable working conditions, thereby empowering rural workers and their families to lead productive, healthy and dignified lives. Promoting viable and attractive employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture and rural areas, particularly for young people, can make a significant contribution to easing migratory pressures and reduce distress out-migration.

b. Ensure safe mobility

Increasing incentives for regular employment, eliminating unduly bureaucratic regulations and promoting good practices in terms of bilateral agreements and seasonal migration schemes are all necessary steps to prevent irregular migration and reduce the risk of exploitation among migrant workers, especially of those less-skilled who are more vulnerable. Governments and their partners should launch information campaigns in rural areas to inform rural populations about their rights as migrants and about the actual opportunities available to ensure safe, lawful and less costly movements both for skilled and less-skilled migrants. These efforts could be more effective if implemented in coordination with programmes for employment promotion and skills development. The international community should also strive for monitoring the compliance of migrant rights, both through the promotion of good practices in managing migration and through close monitoring of the ratification and adoption of relevant international instruments and core human rights and labour standards. As stated in the eight-point agenda for action, countries should eliminate all forms of discrimination against migrants with regard to working conditions and wages, and ensure the protection of human rights at all stages of the migration process.

c. Facilitate remittances and investments from the transnational community

Remittances play an important role, especially in rural areas. Limited access to formal finance and credit is deemed as one of the major constraints to rural employment and small-scale enterprise development. Remittances from internal and international migration play a crucial, supplementary, role in providing liquidity to rural households, helping to repay debts and avoiding households having to sell off assets (a plough or a cow) during times of stress and shock. However, only a very small part of remittances is invested in agricultural activities. At global level, there is scope for reducing the transfer costs of remittances and favouring financial instruments to support the investment of remittances in agriculture. There is also potential for mobilizing transnational communities and facilitating their investments as well as special funding and savings schemes to generate funds for example for youth-led start-ups and agribusiness activities. The work of international organizations in this area should be reinforced, including on-going efforts to develop innovative financial mechanisms and increase economic opportunities for the rural poor to benefit from remittances.

d. Enhance policy coherence and evidence-based policymaking

Governments should improve the coherence between migration policies and agriculture and rural development policies, strategies and programmes. With an appropriate framework of policies and programmes, countries can develop more diverse and dynamic rural economies that provide gainful income-generating opportunities. Given the interconnected nature of development and migration, it is crucial that these policy areas complement each other and work towards the common objective of a coherent vision for long-term (rural) economic development.

In order to support more informed policymaking, it is also necessary to address the knowledge, data and evidence gaps related to internal and international migration flows, the links between migration and agricultural and rural development, as well as between human mobility and food security. Obtaining necessary data may in some cases involve adding questions to national censuses. There is also scope to explore data to better match labour supply and demand, thus further improving skills and jobs matching at domestic and international levels. There is a need for increased evidence on the effects of migration flows on agriculture and rural development and the role of agricultural development in reducing rural out-migration. With a greater understanding of these issues, policy-makers will be better equipped to address them in national sectoral policies and regional processes.

e. Promote partnerships for migration

Effective partnerships are central to maximizing the benefits of migration and minimizing its risks. Countries cannot deal with migration alone. International, regional and bilateral agreements should be pursued to better manage migration flows and address the different needs of countries of origin, destination and transit. Although at times those needs can be of opposite nature, dialogue and collaboration should be fostered to enhance the mutual benefits of migration at all stages of the process, and reduce its negative implications. Private sector and civil society partners should also be included in discussion at global and country level. The role of migrants as key actors of development should not be understated. Migrants should be given adequate voice and protection to claim for their rights, and be put in the conditions to effectively contribute to the livelihoods of their families, communities and countries both at origin and destination. To do so, better governance structures and institutional capacity need to be in place, which will ensure a coherent approach to migration and development.

NOTES

¹ Data drawn from the website of the Roles of Agriculture Project, Agricultural and Development Economics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), www.fao.org/es/esa/roa/index_en.asp.

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