

## **INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT KEY ISSUES FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE 2006**

*United Nations Population Fund*

### **A. KEY ISSUES FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE DURING THE SIXTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN 2006**

International migration is not a new phenomenon. What is different now is the magnitude and complexity of migration flows. New patterns of migration have arisen as countries that had not experienced significant out-migration face an ever-increasing number of people who emigrate. Likewise, countries that had once been considered countries of emigration are now experiencing flows of immigrants. In addition, below-replacement fertility and population ageing have changed the population structure in many countries. With the decline in fertility, migration has taken on increased significance, becoming an important component of population growth in a number of countries. Current international migration flows have placed the issue of migration high on the international agenda.

A number of issues and challenges are at the forefront of current debates on international migration. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) proposes the following key issues for consideration at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in 2006:

#### *1. Migration as a development force*

Migration is increasingly seen as a force that can contribute to development. The importance of maximizing the development benefits of migration cannot be underscored: migration can assist countries in forwarding their development agenda. The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) both impacts and is impacted by the effective management of migration. While acknowledging the contribution of migrants in host countries, it is important to note that the flows of financial, technological, social and human capital back to countries of origin contribute to the development of migrants' home countries. Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that remittances sent home by migrant workers have significant impacts on poverty and potentially on long-term economic development. Understanding the important relationship between migration and environment, poverty and development will enable countries to better address the challenges of international migration and maximize the benefits of migration for both sending and receiving countries.

#### *2. The special needs of women migrants*

Globally, the number of female migrants is increasing, both in terms of sheer numbers of women involved and in terms of the share of the world's migrant population. Yet gender aspects of migration are not given the attention that they deserve. While the fact that women are migrating on their own rather than as part of family migration seems to indicate greater freedom and choice, very often this is not the case at all. The concentration of women in vulnerable sectors has generated much debate and valid concern. Women are often found in gender-segregated and unregulated sectors of the economy. They are at much higher risk of gender discrimination, violence, human trafficking and sexual abuse.

#### *3. The human rights of international migrants*

Respect for migrants' human rights is one of the most basic determinants of migrants' well-being and essential to the achievement of greater social and economic development. It is important that migrants of all ages have access to affordable basic social and health services, including reproductive health. The

emphasis on the human rights of migrants reflects an appreciation for the vulnerabilities of migrants to rights abuses and the necessity for national and international attention in this area. The proclamation by the General Assembly of December 18 as International Migrants Day heightened the visibility of migrants and their plight and raised awareness of the need to disseminate information on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants, the sharing of experiences and the need for action to ensure the protection of migrants. The continued deterioration of the human rights of migrants, especially discriminatory and exclusionary practices and the increasing tendency to restrict the human rights of migrants is cause for concern. While it is the sovereign right of States to make laws and regulations concerning the entry of aliens and the terms and conditions of their stay, international human rights instruments call on States to abide by international humanitarian and human rights laws.

#### *4. Human trafficking*

Human trafficking is on the rise and constitutes one of the fastest growing crimes, as well as one of the most profitable. It has often been characterized as a modern form of human slavery. Victims who find themselves ensnared in the trafficker's web are in great need of assistance and support. Traffickers must be brought to justice on a much more swift and consistent basis. The appointment in April 2004 by the United Nations Human Rights Commission of a Special Rapporteur on Trafficking is a major initiative to address this issue.

#### *5. Refugee Protection*

The almost 10 million people worldwide who have fled their homes in need of protection attest to the fact that the refugee problem is an international one and that addressing the issue requires an approach based on multilateral cooperation. The Agenda for Protection adopted in 2002 constitutes a comprehensive framework for global refugee policy with goals, objectives and suggested activities to strengthen refugee protection. No formal agreement has yet been concluded but a number of important issues have arisen, including ensuring a better response to mass influx; targeting development assistance to achieve more equitable burden-sharing and promoting self-reliance of refugees; and establishing multilateral commitments for resettlement. Refugee protection has become more complex in recent years due to the increasing difficulty in availing access to asylum systems resulting from heightened security considerations. Many who have been refused asylum remain in the country of destination and, together with those who have overstayed their visas or crossed borders without the proper documents, contribute to the growing numbers of irregular or undocumented migrants.

#### *6. Need for migration data/information/studies/analysis*

Reliable data on population movements are essential for sound migration policy and management. There is an urgent need for comprehensive, accurate and timely migration data to provide a solid basis for the formulation and implementation of international migration policy and programmes. More efforts are needed to harmonize definitions for the different migration categories and to help countries improve the quality of data collected. Data analysis, dissemination and utilization also pose a challenge. In addition, more studies that address migration-related issues are needed to help inform decision-making in this area.

### **B. ACTIVITIES OF UNFPA THAT ADDRESS THE KEY ASPECTS OF MIGRATION**

UNFPA's work in the area of international migration focuses on facilitating policy dialogue, research, training, advocacy, data collection and capacity building. In promoting the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development in this area, the Fund seeks to enhance countries' ability to respond to issues relating to international migration, to promote orderly migration flows and to address the needs of migrants.

UNFPA supports research in migration and development, organizes national, regional and international meetings and workshops on migration topics, supports the enhancement of national capacity for the collection of migration statistics, including gender-specific migration data and advocates for addressing the special concerns of women migrants including elimination of discrimination and violence, and trafficking. UNFPA also plays a major role in providing assistance to meet the reproductive health needs of women in emergency and refugee situations through the UNFPA Emergency Relief Operations.

UNFPA facilitates regional policy dialogues by supporting the inter-agency International Migration Policy Programme (IMP) that was launched in 1998 to strengthen the migration management capacity of governments and to foster regional and international cooperation towards orderly migration and the protection of migrants. By the end of 2003, 15 regional meetings had been organized in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Central and Eastern Europe. Since 2002, the IMP is tracking the impact of these regional meetings with its Country Reporting System that monitors progress and obstacles to achieving implementation of IMP recommendations and developments in such areas as training, legislation and cooperation.

In October 2004, UNFPA launched, together with the IMP, the joint publication “Meeting the Challenges of Migration: Progress Since the ICPD” at a Round Table on International Migration and Development: The Challenges Ahead. The report highlights the linkages between migration and population and development issues, discusses developments in this area since the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action in 1994 and points to some of the challenges that lie ahead.

UNFPA is a strong advocate for the collection of reliable data to inform policy and programme planning. The Fund supports data collection efforts, including improving the collection, analysis and effective use of migration data. UNFPA supported the Migration Data Pilot Project implemented by IMP to facilitate the collection, analysis and exchange of migration data. The Fund especially advocates for the collection of disaggregated migration data in order to, *inter alia*, obtain a better picture of the flows of the different categories of migrants, a better understanding of the determinants of migration, and more information on the feminization of migration.

Addressing the challenges of international migration requires a high degree of coordination and inter-State cooperation and collaboration both regionally and at the international level. It requires an awareness and understanding of the social and economic implications of migration, the political will to manage migration flows and to address the consequences of migration, institutional capacity and trained staff, and resources to manage migration flows.

UNFPA looks forward to continuing its work in this area in cooperation with its United Nations sister agencies and other stakeholders in the field of international migration.