

GCA Policy Forum

Meeting on Migration and Development in Africa

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GCA Co-Chairpersons' Summary Report

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GCA Policy Forum

Migration and Development in Africa

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The GCA Policy Forum on migration and development in Africa brought together ministers and senior officials from African countries and their development partners, representatives of international and non-governmental organizations, and experts on migration to consider migration and development in Africa. GCA Co-Chairpersons H.E. Meles Zenawi, Hon. Hilde Johnson and Hon. Frene Ginwala presided over the meeting, which was opened with brief statements by H.E. Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia and GCA Co-Chairperson and Hon. Dr. Frene Ginwala, GCA Co-Chairperson.

After welcoming participants on behalf of the Government and people of Ethiopia, Prime Minister Zenawi emphasized that migration is truly a global issue, citing the United Nations' estimate that currently one in every thirty five people is an international migrant. He commented that the negative dimensions of migration tend to overshadow its positive contribution to development, before considering the effect of skilled migration on African countries. While underscoring the importance of development and the creation of conditions conducive to the retention of skills in African countries, Prime Minister Zenawi also urged the support of Africa's partners. In recognizing the African diaspora as a tremendous and underutilized resource, he encouraged strengthened linkages and innovative approaches to involve the diaspora in the development of the continent. He also welcomed efforts to facilitate and reduce the cost of migrant remittances.

Prime Minister Zenawi reminded participants that international frameworks are needed to manage migration with equity and fairness in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. In this regard he commended the efforts of the African Union to develop a framework for migration on the continent, and also recognized the work of African regional bodies. He said that the challenge facing both Africa and its development partners is to build on the positive dimensions of migration and enhance its contribution to development, and urged participants to consider specific actions that could be taken to achieve this goal.

Speaking on behalf of the GCA Co-Chairpersons during the opening session, Hon. Dr. Frene Ginwala suggested that the meeting explore how migration can make a positive contribution to African countries and the continent as a whole, and how it can expand individual opportunity. She reminded participants that migration has been a feature of all communities, cultures and peoples throughout human history, but said that it now demands international attention because of the scale on which it is occurring. Dr. Ginwala called for understanding of, and attention to, the factors influencing migration, and the multiple effects of migration on development in Africa. While recognizing the detrimental effects of brain drain, she encouraged participants to also focus on how brain circulation could contribute to the development of the continent.

Dr. Ginwala underscored that migration in Africa is essentially a development issue, drawing attention to the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons and to those for whom migration is a response to poverty and lack of opportunity. She urged consideration of how the stock of human capital in Africa could be expanded and better utilized, and how the skills and experience of the diaspora could be drawn upon. Dr. Ginwala also observed that international migration must be managed fairly, so that it does not advantage some countries at the expense of others, and encouraged collaborative and concerted action to address the negative aspects of migration, including people smuggling and human trafficking.

In addition, a message from H.E. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of Algeria was delivered to the Policy Forum by his special representative, Ambassador M'hamed Achache. Like Prime Minister Zenawi and Dr. Ginwala, President Bouteflika emphasized that migration can play a positive role in African development and advocated an integrated approach to managing migration for the benefit of all. He stressed the necessity of cooperation to minimize the effects of skilled migration on development in African countries that already suffer from a shortage of human capital. He also underscored the need for protection of migrants' rights and attention to the standard of living enjoyed by migrants. President Bouteflika urged that measures be put in place to facilitate the more complete involvement of migrants in the development of their home countries, through investment, transfer of funds, and sharing of knowledge and skills.

The meeting benefited from introductory presentations by Mme. Ndioro Ndiaye Deputy Director of the International Organization of Migration and Professor Aderanti Adepoju of the Human Resource Development Center. These presentations placed current migration trends in Africa in their historical context, outlined regional patterns of migration, and highlighted emerging issues. In addition, the African Union draft framework for migration was introduced by Dr. Ben Hadj Abdellatif of the Commission of the African Union.

Overview

Migration is a complex issue that is a response to a number of factors, many of them interconnected. Migration in Africa is dynamic and fluid, and patterns are changing in response to circumstances and opportunity. Although African migration to other regions is increasing, most migration is within the continent. Most countries are simultaneously receiving and sending countries for migrants, while some are also transit countries. Insecurity and conflict have resulted in large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, who comprise the most vulnerable category of migrants. Poor governance, political exclusion, poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity are also among the key factors influencing migration on the continent. However, the spread of democratization has resulted in fewer migrants leaving their home countries because of repression or political exclusion. Migration for employment is becoming more prevalent, and for skilled professionals, poor working conditions and limited prospects play a role.

IOM estimates that 48 percent of international migrants are women. Although disaggregated statistics are not available for Africa, it appears that the number of women migrants is increasing and more women are migrating on their own, rather than as family members. There is no single pattern of African female migration. Frequently, women migrants are unskilled and ill-informed

about their prospects as migrants and are vulnerable to abuse. Many illegal women migrants – from African or other countries – find themselves trapped into servitude or prostitution in their host countries. But an increasing number of educated and professional African women are now taking advantage of the opportunities offered by migration. More information and research into the feminization of migration in African countries would contribute to better understanding of the phenomenon and its effects on social and cultural dynamics and attitudes toward women, as well as on family structures.

Migration is also encouraged by globalization, which has created a global market for skills, and the growth and dynamism of industrialized economies that have generated a demand for labor, as well as by disparities in income and opportunity between countries. Migration is a often response to a combination of “push” and “pull” factors, and many migrants face a tension between a moral imperative to serve their countries, and their legitimate desire for personal betterment. In order to develop effective strategies to manage migration, and to build on its positive dimensions, greater understanding of its nature, as well as its causes and consequences, is needed.

At present, there is no common view of migration within Africa, and many governments lack strategies or policies to address it. To date, African governments have tended to react to migration, rather than take a proactive stance to manage it. Their attitude has often been ambivalent, in part because countries both send and receive migrants. This ambivalence extends to societal views of migration. Although out-migration is generally culturally accepted and even valued, incoming migrants are often viewed with suspicion. Public attitudes toward migration are becoming more negative and xenophobia is becoming more prevalent in many countries, largely as a result of an increase in the number of migrants and fears on the part of citizens that migrants will threaten their own security and employment prospects. For the most part, public perceptions about migrants and migration are not based on facts, but nonetheless affect opinions and behavior.

Although the free movement of people has been a fundamental principle of continental and regional organizations, most African countries have not embraced this in their national policies. Concerns about the effects of increased migration have slowed progress toward harmonization of migration policies within regional groupings and have reduced support for integration more generally. Rather than lifting barriers to migration, many countries are moving toward more selective policies and restrictive measures. However, increased cooperation and integration could help to retain skills on the continent by providing greater opportunities on a regional basis. Integration could also reduce long-term migration, if people could move more freely among countries on a temporary basis and engage in seasonal migration without fear of reprisal.

Both African countries and their development partners need to be pragmatic in their assessment of migration and their attempts to address it. They must recognize why people migrate and actively address political, economic and governance problems. There is need for African governments to adopt holistic approaches to migration, and develop forward-looking strategies to meet future demands. As development, broad-based economic growth and increased opportunity will lessen the impulse to migrate, poverty eradication strategies should be at the top of the agenda for both African countries and their development partners. National migration policies

should be integrated into the development strategies of African countries, and regional and continental policies also pursued.

Developing a common view of migration would facilitate the harmonization of migration policies within regional economic groupings and the continent as a whole. This is the intent of the draft framework for migration policy developed by the African Union. It recognizes that migration and development are linked, and seeks to build on the positive aspects of migration, while managing its more negative dimensions. The framework represents a significant step in the formulation of an African approach toward migration, and discussion with all stakeholders would both strengthen it and facilitate its implementation.

A common African position on migration would also help ensure that African concerns are reflected in international frameworks to manage migration, as well as strengthen the position of African countries in negotiations concerning migration with development partners. African countries need to clearly determine and articulate what they want from partner countries in terms of migration policy, and what reciprocal arrangements can be realistically implemented. Collaboration and cooperation both within Africa and globally is necessary to manage migration so that it benefits countries and expands individual opportunity.

Migration cannot be addressed by governments alone. The involvement of all stakeholders is necessary if comprehensive and inclusive migration policies are to be effectively implemented. Governments, civil society organizations and the media could help to lessen antagonism toward migrants by engaging in public information campaigns to both explain government policies and underline the positive contribution migrants can make to development. Dialogue is also important to ensure that migrants' rights are respected and that there is a common understanding of how migrants should be treated.

Attention is also needed to address the increasing number of unskilled, and often irregular, migrants. Whatever the difficulties, such people will continue to try to migrate as long as they feel that it affords them better social and economic prospects. Although more countries are moving toward them, restrictive policies and punitive measures have not proven very effective to date, and strategies such as legal temporary migration for work purposes may have a better chance of success. Harsh measures may also encourage illegal migration and the involvement of criminal networks. Even though it is not yet as great a problem as in some other regions, Africa has seen an increase in people trafficking in recent years, and some countries have become transit countries for international trafficking syndicates. While women and children are most at risk from trafficking, all unskilled and irregular migrants are vulnerable to abuse.

Although attention is most often given to its negative consequences, migration should be seen as an opportunity for development and its positive elements built upon. Migration can contribute to the development of human resources because of the transfer of skills and know-how and new perspectives and practices that returning migrants can promote.

Addressing Skilled Migration

Brain drain, or the loss of skills through migration, has caused concern in recent years. In contrast to more developed countries that have a larger stock of human capital and can better absorb the loss, the migration of skilled professionals has a profound effect on development and on the capacity of African countries to manage their own development strategies. It is estimated that the continent loses around 23,000 qualified academic professionals a year. Skilled migration negatively affects the delivery of services, reduces the return on public investment in education and training, and limits the growth of the private sector. In some countries, the migration of health professionals has resulted in a virtual health care crisis. African governments are faced with a dilemma in that migration of skilled professionals retards development, and yet without development it will be difficult to retain needed skills and expertise and create opportunity.

African countries need to consider creative approaches to retain skills, or recoup their investments in education and training. The feasibility of requiring repayment of state-provided education or introducing community service and bonding schemes to recoup public investment in education should be considered. To date, the effective administration of such schemes has proven difficult, and they have not usually encouraged skilled professionals to remain in their countries of origin beyond the duration of the program. Nonetheless, given the scarcity of resources, African countries can ill afford to train personnel only to lose them to migration.

People will migrate if other countries provide substantially better opportunities, but they are less likely to migrate if a conducive environment exists in their own country. Governance improvements, including greater accountability and predictability, would make a significant difference. So would more employment opportunities and better working conditions. Governments could do more to promote and attract the private sector, which in turn would generate employment for both skilled and unskilled workers. They could partner with the private sector to provide services, while targeted training and provision of credit for small businesses could also help to retain skilled workers. Investment in technology could improve the efficiency and enhance the working environment of public institutions, as well as expand the skill base of employees. At the same time, innovative approaches could be explored, such as the use of paramedics to increase health care coverage and reduce the burden on more skilled medical personnel.

Given the general shortage of skills and high cost of training, brain drain obviously presents a significant problem for African countries. However, most migration is within Africa, suggesting that while skills may be lost to individual countries, they may not be lost to the continent as a whole. Yet the phenomenon of brain circulation has not been fully recognized or exploited. Most countries do not have complete records of either outgoing or incoming migrants, and so there is no real knowledge of what skills exist or how they are utilized. Countries with relative stability and prosperity, such as Botswana and South Africa, have benefited from brain circulation in that they have attracted qualified professionals. In contrast, poorer countries and countries in conflict have found it hard to retain necessary skills.

Better understanding of how to capitalize on brain circulation could encourage greater regional cooperation to promote and support centers of excellence. Assistance to such centers by development partners would make them more sustainable and also contribute to capacity development on the continent. The development of databanks of needed and available skills

would also enable African countries to better take advantage of brain circulation and to engage the diaspora. From time to time African governments have engaged in professional exchange schemes, whereby skilled personnel serve for a fixed period in another country. The utility of such schemes could be revisited in the context of managing migration.

Although most migration remains within the continent, developed countries have certainly benefited from the migration of skilled African professionals. UNCTAD has estimated that developed countries save training costs in the order of \$184,000 per person by employing skilled migrants. A number of European countries, Canada, the United States, and Australia have all attracted skilled professionals from African countries, as have the Gulf States. Most countries have preferential arrangements for migrants with needed skills, and governments in partner countries are increasingly attempting to control migration by differentiating between groups of migrants. One set of policies applies to those with necessary skills, whom governments are competing to attract, while more restrictive policies are applied to unskilled workers. In Africa also, governments are adopting a similar approach.

Given that developed countries benefit from skilled African migrants, the issue of compensation could be pursued. Although it is unlikely that agreement on cash compensation could be easily reached, partner countries could provide additional resources for training in order to replenish skills stocks lost to migration. Similarly, support for centers of excellence would help to retain skills within the continent and allow African countries to benefit from brain circulation. African countries could do more to clearly determine shortages and the levels of skills training and capacity building needed to fill them. Partner countries and organizations could also encourage the retention of skills and creation of employment opportunities in African countries by employing qualified nationals in development projects.

Relations With The Diaspora

In recent years, there has been increased focus on the African diaspora, which is generally recognized as comprising both more recent migrants and those with historical connections to Africa. Both individual countries and the AU are concerned to encourage the greater involvement of the diaspora in the development of the continent. The AU draft framework for migration policy identifies enhanced collaboration with the diaspora as a key element in furthering the development impact of migration, while NEPAD identifies it as a priority. There is also increased recognition that African Americans and the African diaspora in the Caribbean represent considerable political, economic and cultural resources, and that constructive linkages could be forged between them and African countries. This recognition of the diaspora as an important resource has coincided with a greater interest on the part of migrant groups and African Americans in influencing policies toward Africa and with more active engagement in African countries themselves.

Although many African countries do not yet have policies specifically targeted toward the diaspora, a number have established government departments to liaise with their nationals abroad and some have established programs to expand opportunities for involvement of migrants to provide needed skills and shortages, often on a short-term basis. At the same time, diaspora organizations have become more active in building relations with governments, communities and institutions in African countries. Thus linkages have been established with universities to facilitate visiting professorships and other exchanges, and physicians and medical specialists have undertaken visits to their home countries to provide specific services. Home town organizations have funded community health and education projects, diaspora groups have provided disaster assistance, and religious organizations have channeled a funding and other assistance to their affiliates in African countries. Non-governmental organizations have also drawn on the expertise and resources of migrant communities, while in some instances, political parties in African countries have benefited from the contribution of the diaspora.

However, these efforts are not generally well documented and greater information would facilitate sharing of experience. The experience of countries such as Senegal, Mali, Cape Verde, Algeria and Nigeria could be drawn upon by other African countries. African embassies could be utilized to develop registers of migrant skills, as well as contacts with diaspora organizations. There is need for research and information on projects that have encouraged the greater involvement of diasporas in the development of their home countries to see what has worked and what conditions and factors contribute to their success. The experience of countries in other regions, as well as Africa, should be considered. India and China have developed extensive programs to link with their diasporas, and several countries in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have benefited significantly from the involvement of migrant communities. Although specific projects are not easily replicated, lessons could be learned and ideas generated. It might also be possible to scale-up successful African ventures.

In many host countries, diasporas from other regions have exerted considerable influence on policies toward their home countries. African diaspora organizations are learning from this, and are now more actively advocating and promoting the continent. African migrants can also influence public opinion in their host countries, and build support for policies and assistance to

Africa. The way migrants behave affects public perceptions. Generally, greater assimilation helps to build understanding and acceptance, and more positive views could be encouraged to the extent that migrants and migrant organizations are seen to be actively contributing to the development of their home countries. Diaspora organizations are also creating linkages with home countries and institutions to transfer skills and expertise as well as financial assistance. Research on the impact of such programs could lead to their institutionalization and expansion.

The greater involvement of the diaspora in the development of the continent could be facilitated by innovative and flexible policies and increased cooperation among host and home countries. Dual citizenship and schemes for temporary return and employment could be explored, and the success of current initiatives assessed. Development partners could make concerted efforts to hire members of the African diaspora for projects to encourage linkages as well as the transfer of skills and technology. Institutions and private companies in host countries could also help by implementing exchange programs, providing sabbaticals and granting leave of absence with re-entry rights to African migrants interested in serving their home countries. There is also need for attention as to how the skills and expertise of Africans employed by international organizations could be more actively drawn upon once they retire. This is a considerable resource that has not fully been utilized to date.

Greater involvement in the development of their home countries may also encourage members of the diaspora to return. However, African governments must realize that returning migrants are unlikely to stay unless a conducive political, macroeconomic and social environment exists. The same issues and problems that cause people to migrate in the first place act as a constraint to their return, and both African governments and their development partners need to be pragmatic. Improved governance, free and fair elections and greater democratic participation would all help to create a conducive environment, but economic opportunities must also be there. The human dimension of migration must also be recognized and taken into account. The expectations of returning migrants may be unrealistically high, and they may be resented by those who have remained behind, especially if it appears that they are given special privileges and benefits. Returning migrants also often find it difficult to adapt to local circumstances and attitudes, especially if they have lived elsewhere for long periods.

In the past, programs to encourage the return of skilled migrants have had mixed results. As a consequence, attention is now being given to engaging the diaspora through a variety of initiatives, rather than concentrating solely on the return of migrants. Cheaper transportation and communications and technological advances have made short-term technical assistance projects and on-going involvement from a distance more viable. IOM is now promoting a multi-strand approach, encompassing use of technology, sequenced visits, investment, and permanent relocation. More innovative use of technology on the part of African governments and institutions could allow them to draw on the skills and experience of the diaspora more fully and to institutionalize arrangements for transfer of skills. In turn, this might also facilitate retention of skilled professionals in African countries.

Remittances

Throughout the world, migrants have traditionally supported family members in their home countries through remittances, and Africa is no exception. Recently, and as their volume has increased, more attention has been paid to remittances as a source of financing for development. Globally, remittances now outstrip development assistance, and even though the volume of remittances to African countries is less than to other regions, they still represent substantial flows of foreign capital. In 2002 remittances transferred to Africa through formal channels accounted for \$12 billion, with \$4 billion flowing to Sub-Saharan African countries.

The volume of migrant remittances to Africa is probably considerably in excess of recorded official flows, because of the widespread use of informal transfer mechanisms. Their impact is felt most strongly at the family level, where they provide an important source of financing, especially for consumption. As such, they provide a valuable safety net for families, but their impact could be enhanced if there were more opportunities for investment and if banking systems provided greater coverage in rural areas and more targeted services. However, remittances processed through formal channels also benefit governments by improving the balance of payments and increasing foreign exchange reserves, and are generally considered to be less volatile than other external resource flows.

In order to increase the volume of remittances, both African governments and their development partners could implement policies and measures to facilitate their transfer at reduced cost. The AU could promote such measures. It could also usefully review the experience of Latin American countries that have attracted increased levels of remittances through the innovative use of technology that has both reduced the cost and increased the ease of transfer. Recognizing the value of remittances, some African governments have implemented schemes to attract higher volumes through special banking and tax provisions. Their experiences could also usefully be shared and the more successful strategies built upon.

Efforts to attract increased remittances should be placed within the overall context of increasing savings and investment. Just as efforts are needed to retain skills, so African governments need to encourage retention of capital. An estimated 40 percent of Africa's wealth is currently held outside of the continent. Strategies to reduce capital flight and those to attract remittances and investment by the diaspora need to be pursued concurrently. For the most part, such strategies will require the implementation of sound macroeconomic policies to guarantee stability, as well as expansion of investment opportunities and financial intermediation.

Proposals and Recommendations for Action

Following extensive discussion of various aspects of migration, a number of suggestions and recommendations for action were proposed by the meeting.

African countries should objectively assess and accept the realities that drive migration and constrain the return of migrants and involvement of the diaspora. Governments should be pragmatic in their approach to migration and adopt holistic and comprehensive approaches, integrating migration into development strategies and formulating inclusive people-centered migration policies. They should recognize and take into account tensions between the personal

aspirations of migrants and their commitment to their home countries, and involve civil society and the private sector in developing strategies to address migration.

Overall, African governments should place poverty reduction at the top of their policy agenda and adopt realistic poverty reduction strategies. They should face up to existing governance shortcomings and seriously work to address them. In order to create a positive environment for the retention and return of skills, they should also pursue sound macroeconomic policies, promote the private sector to create employment opportunities, and develop education systems that meet the needs of the country. African governments should implement policies that maximize the contribution of remittances by developing financial mechanisms to facilitate the transfer of remittances and their use for savings and investment, as well as consumption.

The AU and regional organizations should promote regional cooperation on migration, the harmonization of migration policies, and dialogue among sending, transit and receiving countries on the management of migration. They should encourage open borders and facilitate the free movement of people within regional groupings and the continent as a whole. The AU and regional organizations should also explore ways of capitalizing on brain circulation, for example by identifying needs and building regional skills banks, and creating and supporting regional centers of excellence, particularly in science and technology, to facilitate sharing of expertise.

In addition, the AU should engage in broad-based consultation to enrich and develop its comprehensive strategic framework for migration policy. It should promote dialogue and cooperation among African countries and between Africa and other regions. It should adopt a common African policy toward migration that could inform discussions on international frameworks on migration and ensure that African concerns are taken into account. The AU should work with member countries to determine what Africa wants in its dialogue with partner countries on migration, and use this as platform for negotiation. It should encourage countries to adopt common approaches in their dialogue with partner countries within the context of the AU and NEPAD.

The AU and regional organizations should explore what can be learned from other regions in terms of migration policy and relations with diasporas and identify successful mechanisms and strategies that could be adopted. They should also facilitate exchange of information among African countries and identify initiatives that could be replicated or scaled up. They should work with member countries to encourage law enforcement and border control.

Partner countries should clearly understand the global realities that influence migration, and recognize that migration needs to be managed as equitably as possible. Governments should promote greater policy coherence, particularly between migration and development policies. They should also be more cognizant of the broader implications of their policies and actions in particular sectors. Partner countries and organizations should adopt comprehensive development policies toward Africa, including trade and investment.

Partner countries and organizations should support regional centers of excellence to encourage brain circulation and retention of skills on the continent. They should also recognize the contribution of migrants to development and support national efforts to replenish skills lost to

migration, and substantially increase their investment in education and training in African countries to compensate for the loss of skills.

International organizations should research how the contribution of migrant remittances to development can be maximized and what policy and practical measures are needed to facilitate this. Partner countries should adopt policy measures to facilitate and reduce the transmission costs of remittances, recognizing that remittances are a supplement to, not a substitute for, development assistance. They should support the involvement of diasporas in the development of their home countries through innovative and flexible policies and arrangements.

Diaspora organizations should build links between diaspora groupings and their home countries, research how to maximize the contribution of the diaspora to the development of the continent, and identify realistic and feasible mechanisms for engagement. They should also capitalize on their political influence in host countries, lobby for policies that support Africa, promote increased investment in Africa, and create linkages with African institutions for capacity building.

African and partner countries as well as international, continental and regional organizations should work to manage and prevent conflict on the continent. All governments and organizations involved with migration should recognize and uphold the right to migrate and promote and protect the human rights of migrants. Individuals, organizations and governments should publicize facts about migration and the contribution of migrants to development, as well as promote public dialogue on migration and actively counter xenophobia.

Governments and organizations should fund and undertake research to determine the actual situation with regard to migration, and to gain a better understanding of the profile of migrants and the migrant stock in receiving countries. Research on the feminization of migration and its effects on the family, society and the status of women should also be undertaken. Governments and organizations should also use information technology and new technological advances to engage with the diaspora, facilitate the transfer of skills, and create employment and opportunity in African countries.

All parties involved with migration should work toward the effective and equitable management of international migration, and the development of global frameworks based on principles of fairness. They should also actively engage in collaboration to control trafficking in people and provide assistance to victims of trafficking.