



Economic Commission  
for Africa

# International Migration and Development: Implications for Africa

## Executive Summary

A background document for the High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development  
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**M**igration of people across national borders and continents is crucial for peace, stability and development at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The potential for migrants to help transform their native countries has captured the imagination of national and local authorities; international institutions and the private sector. There is an emerging consensus that countries can cooperate to create triple wins -- for migrants, for their countries of origin and for the societies that receive them.

On 14 and 15 September 2006, high-level representatives of all member States of the United Nations will gather in the General Assembly to explore the relationship between migration and development. For Africa, this meeting and the process leading up to and following it is important as international migration plays an important part in the continent's struggle to develop and improve welfare, peace and stability for its growing population.

The report, **International Migration and Development: Implications for Africa**, aims to contribute to the ongoing discussions on migration by providing background data and analysis from an African perspective. Drawing on the ongoing debate about migration and development, the report argues that maximization of the benefits requires better management of international migration, and sound political and economic governance in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The report expounds this argument in six analytical chapters covering the dimensions, economic and social implications of migration; impacts on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); harnessing remittances for development; and security aspects of migration. The report's final chapter charts a way forward, providing suggestions for better management of international migration in Africa.

### ***Migration streams are larger within Africa***

Migration flows within and out of Africa display a wide range of patterns, modulated by strategies to cope with factors such as economic and ecological problems, intra-regional disparities in economic well-being, political instability, and restrictive migration policies. African international migration involves a wide range of voluntary and forced cross-border movements within the continent, as well as regular and irregular migration to destinations outside the continent. Migration streams within Africa are much larger than those out of Africa, and forced migration plays a significant part. African nations, already struggling to provide for their own populations, were harbouring about one-third (three million) of the world's refugees at the end of 2005. The first three chapters of the report expand on African migratory patterns and their social and economic implications, particularly for attainment of the MDGs.

### ***Depletion of Africa's human resource pool***

International migration impacts development in Africa in a wide range of ways such as loss of human capital, but also remittances and the acquisition of skills. A key challenge for African States who already face serious human resource shortages is skills migration or

'brain drain'. The African human resource pool is continuously depleted as the educated choose to emigrate and apply their skills abroad. In the case of the health sector, where African countries are facing increasing demand as a result of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, several countries experience a net depletion of their health work force. For example, 926 Ghanaian doctors practice in the OECD alone, representing a much-needed 29% of the doctors still practicing in Ghana. In Chapter 4, we examine these trends, and suggest mitigation strategies such as setting up mechanisms for compensation for lost skills.

African migrants contribute to African development through a number of channels. Diaspora remittances and the income multipliers they create are becoming critical resources for the sustenance strategies of receiving households as well as agents of local and national development. In 2004, remittances to Africa amounted to \$14 billion, with Egypt, Morocco and Nigeria being the largest recipients. Based on existing research, Chapter 5 describes how households that receive these migradollars tend to use the proceeds primarily for current consumption (food, clothing) as well as investments in MDG-related areas such as children's education, healthcare and improvement in household food security through investments in agricultural technology.

### ***Migration and security***

Chapter 6 examines how migration is closely linked to security concerns, at the individual, national, and global levels. Conflicts and violence spurs population movements, while migrants can experience threats to their individual security while in transit, as well as at their points of destination. Some countries are concerned that migrants may constitute a security threat. Importantly, unlike goods and services, the movement of people abroad involves a wide range of social issues, such as human rights, family unification and social integration, that would need to be efficiently and appropriately managed, to increase human security, ensure respect for people and human rights, and harness resources for development.

The response of African Governments to migration challenges has been very limited and fragmentary. Few countries have implemented international conventions and related policies on migration. International migration barely features in national development plans and strategies, and has not been adequately addressed in any of the regional development frameworks such as the NEPAD, MDGs, and PRSPs. However, international migration is increasingly gaining the attention of African leaders. In this regard the African Union (AU) has put a policy framework in place to stem the brain drain through the creation of employment opportunities, and to mobilize the African diaspora for the development of their countries.

In the concluding chapter of the report, we argue that the way forward should be based on sound management of international migration, which requires capacities for greater collaboration within and between countries and regions. However, in Africa, this is largely constrained by lack of data/information and knowledge on international migration and development.

These are issues that would need to be addressed in order to understand the scale and dimensions of international migration and the labour market for development in Africa.

Based on available knowledge, the report proposes a range of actions and policies necessary for minimizing the harms and maximizing benefits and opportunities of international migration. Key among the recommendations is the promotion of all human rights, particularly the rights of the international migrants and their families, through ratification and implementation of the relevant international conventions, and through bi-lateral and multilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries.

### ***Coercive policies work against peace and security***

International migration involves diverse cultures. Therefore, there is a need for action to bring about tolerance and coherence to nurture integration and support multiculturalism. Coercive policies in both sending and receiving countries work against peace and security at all levels, and against the maximization of the benefits of international migration. Therefore, governments will need to cooperate more to eliminate the coercive policies and to enhance the contribution of the migrants and their families to international development.

The contributions of international migration to development extend beyond economic gains to encompass cultural enrichment, social welfare, health and education, and political stability. Therefore, it is imperative that these neglected dimensions be harnessed for sustainable development. There is need for constructive engagement between countries to bring international migration more to the arena of international development cooperation.

Also, it is necessary for countries to harmonize their national policies and the roles of various ministries and agencies involved in international migration. Finally, human and institutional capacity building is important for maximizing the benefits of international migration.

Continuous investment in education and health will bring about long-term benefits that would need to be realized through the creation of employment opportunities and commensurate wages.

### ***Way forward***

In an increasingly globalized world, the way forward in managing migration for increased benefits of sending and receiving countries, and of migrants and their families may be found in:

- Promoting the ratification of international conventions and protocols and aligning national policies to such international obligations;
- Promoting advocacy and awareness creation, especially in the receiving countries, and highlighting the positive contributions of migrants to sending and receiving countries;

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- Emphasizing that the contribution of international migration to development touches many dimensions of development including economic advancement, social welfare and cultural enrichment, health promotion, and political stability;
- Supporting bilateral and multi-lateral agreements between sending and receiving countries as channels of enhancing the contribution of international migration to international development;
- Promoting coherence among different national policies and increasing the capacity of all stakeholders to implement policies geared towards improvement of legal and statistical systems on international migration;
- Building human and institutional capacity for maximizing the benefits of international migration and minimizing perceived disadvantages;
- Promoting regularized consultative processes on international migration at global, regional and sub-regional levels;
- Providing improved social and economic conditions in the sending countries (the south) to minimize factors that make people leave their countries in search of self-improvement;
- Promoting international, regional and sub-regional partnerships, including those organized in the diaspora;
- Focusing investment into areas which optimize the generation of jobs for available skills; and
- Continuing the dialogue on global trade, with emphasis on complementing the notion of open markets with complete elimination of subsidies.