

## **International migration from a regional and interregional perspective**

Main conclusions, messages and recommendations from the  
United Nations Development Account project (6th Tranche),  
“Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration:  
maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact.”



**UNITED NATIONS**

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## Contents

Abstract.....	5
Introduction .....	7
I. Messages and conclusions.....	9
A. Migrants' rights .....	9
B. Data collection and research.....	10
C. Dialogue and cooperation .....	12
D. Contributions of migrants .....	14
E. Facilitating regular migration .....	14
F. Migration and crisis .....	16
II. Recommendations .....	19
III. Lessons learned.....	21
Appendix.....	23

## Boxes

Box 1	Progress on migrants' rights in Latin America and the Caribbean: the case of Argentina.....	10
Box 2	Addressing gaps in international migration data .....	11
Box 3	Improved capacity to produce and use migration statistics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia .....	12
Box 4	Africa Regional Dialogue on International Migration (ARDIM) recommends close cooperation between countries to promote regional integration .....	13
Box 5	The contributions of migrants to development in the Western Asian region.....	15
Box 6	Facilitating regular migration in Asia and the Pacific.....	16
Box 7	Migration and multiple crises in Africa .....	17
Box 8	Dialogue and cooperation on migration between regional commissions .....	22



## **Abstract**

This report summarizes the main outcomes of the Development Account project “Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact”, executed by the United Nations regional commissions and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations, under the coordination of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The report builds on meetings and studies carried out as part of the project's regional and interregional activities, which have focused on emerging trends and institutional approaches related to international migration in (and between) the five regions. This included intraregional movements, return migration, irregular migration, forced population movements and asylum-seeking, as well as temporary migration, skilled migration, remittance flows and the presence of diasporas in receiving countries. The report also presents recommendations and underscores lessons learned during the project implementation with respect to cooperation between the implementing partners and interaction with different actors such as governments, civil society, international organizations and academia.



## Introduction

This report summarizes the main outcomes of the Development Account project “Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact”. The project was conceived and coordinated by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE) – Population Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and has been jointly implemented since 2009 with the other four United Nations regional commissions, namely the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and with technical collaboration from the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)<sup>1</sup>. The report builds on meetings and studies carried out as part of the project's regional and interregional activities, which have focused on emerging trends and institutional approaches related to international migration in (and between) the five regions.<sup>2</sup>

With a positive view of migration for development and an emphasis on the protection of the human rights of all migrants, the project provided a comprehensive overview of the growing complexity of international migration. This included intraregional movements, return migration, irregular migration, forced population movements and asylum-seeking, as well as temporary migration, skilled migration, remittance flows and the presence of *diasporas* in countries of destination.

The project also highlighted the intensification of South-South and female migration, in addition to the usual South-North and male-dominated migration. Although South-South flows have generally been shown to be valuable for both origin and destination regions in terms of remittances and employment, in many cases its temporary nature has resulted in challenges and obstacles for possible development impacts, mainly associated with high migration costs and lack of social protection for migrant workers.

For several countries in different regions, migration and remittances have in fact become a strategy for dealing with population pressures, unemployment and poverty. Only a few, however, have

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<sup>1</sup> More information is available online at: <http://www.cepal.org/celade/DAmigration.asp>.

<sup>2</sup> See the appendix for a list of documents produced and activities carried out in the framework of the Development Account project.

implemented a development strategy that addresses international migration in a comprehensive way, including legal and other supporting frameworks to facilitate labour migration.

Many countries have become countries of origin, destination and transit at the same time, while a wide range of voluntary and forced migration patterns are emerging, especially from countries in the South to other countries in the South. Countries with emerging economies have become countries of origin as well as countries of destination due to their growing economic opportunities. The increasing restrictions placed on migrants in developed countries, often related to recent global financial and economic crises, have also given rise to emerging trends and new migration routes, such as those from African countries to South American countries. These trends have been extensively discussed within the framework of the project.

This report, which draws from the experiences, lessons learned and best practices resulting from the cooperation and interaction among the regional commissions and DESA's Population Division, aims to promote the exchange of regional and interregional experiences and to identify challenges and solutions in the field of international migration, human rights and development.

A wide range of actors in the arena of the global migration agenda is expected to benefit from this report, from technical and political government officials to migration experts and members of civil society and international organizations. Many of them have actively contributed to the implementation of the project activities, and they continue to be part of the resulting network of institutions, organizations and individuals. The document is also intended to serve as an input to the debate on the prospects for regional and interregional cooperation and dialogue in the field of international migration.

The report is organized as follows: section I summarizes the main messages and conclusions that emerged from the studies and discussions produced as part of the project activities, which are grouped in six main topics: migrants' rights; data collection and research; dialogue and cooperation; migrants' contributions to origin and destination countries; the facilitation of regular migration; and migration and crisis. Although the messages are generally of a regional nature, they refer mostly to issues and concerns that are common to all regions and subregions, whatever their specificities.

Section II presents recommendations distilled from section I. Again, although many of the recommendations refer to issues originally affecting the migration dynamics of specific regions or specific interregional flows, lessons drawn from these experiences constitute a relevant and important contribution to the ongoing process of constructing and reconstructing the global migration agenda, particularly in light of the forthcoming Global Forum on Migration and Development (Mauritius, 2012) and the United Nations High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (New York, 2013).

Lastly, section III underscores lessons learned during the project implementation, especially in relation to the cooperation between the implementing partners and the interaction of the different actors participating in the project, namely, governments, civil society, international organizations and academia.

The report also includes an appendix with the list of documents produced and activities carried out in the framework of the Development Account project on "Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact".



# **I. Messages and conclusions**

## **A. Migrants' rights**

Although a human-rights-based approach has been gradually introduced into the regional and national debate on migration in recent years (see box 1), migrants still remain overly exposed to situations that curtail or prevent the exercise of their human rights both during the journey and at the place of destination. These situations include slavery, prostitution, abuse, gender violence, discrimination, expulsion, lack of social support networks and obstacles to obtaining basic health services. In general, this vulnerability is compounded in the case of border migrants<sup>3</sup>.

The protection of all labour migrants is an area of major concern. To date, only 45 States have ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Many migrants work long hours under harsh conditions, live in poor accommodation and remain isolated from social networks.

The *kafala* system, for example, which emerged in the 1950s and remains the main system of labour migration management in Western Asia, has the effect of leaving migrants in a situation of vulnerability relative to their employers, since their residency is linked to their employment and they are not able to change employer without permission. The employment of women in domestic work is of particular concern, as they often face abuse of various kinds and are employed in private households, which can isolate them from social networks. This situation is exacerbated by the exploitation of migrant domestic workers by private recruitment agencies in both origin and destination countries, as well as the lack of protection for workers in this sector under current labour law.

The stigmatization of migrants, together with other forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia that affect migrants from all regions, could become a chronic problem in some societies if governments and civil society are not alert to their earliest manifestations, especially at times of crisis. Measures to create awareness among citizens, a determined and sustained effort in the field of education against discrimination and the adoption and enforcement of laws to face discrimination of every kind are essential for dealing with this problem.

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<sup>3</sup> People who move across borders and travel regularly between neighbouring locations in different countries (commuters) or who are in transit towards a third country. In this context, borders constitute spaces of interaction where people, goods and products circulate between communities of neighbouring countries.

**BOX 1**  
**PROGRESS ON MIGRANTS' RIGHTS IN LATIN AMERICA**  
**AND THE CARIBBEAN: THE CASE OF ARGENTINA**

International migration has been progressively incorporated into the national development agendas of Latin American and Caribbean countries, including recent issues such as emigrant diasporas and immigrant flows and communities. At the same time, human rights have become an increasingly important element of migration over the years, particularly in the framework of intergovernmental forums such as the South American Conference on Migration, the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Andean Community, the Organization of American States (OAS), and the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government. The fact that 17 of the 45 States that have ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families are from the region constitutes a good example of this concern with migrant rights. Indeed, many countries have taken major steps to reform their constitutions, regulations or institutions.

The implementation of the Development Account project in Latin America and the Caribbean allowed for an intensive exchange of positive experiences on migration and human rights. Good practices in this field include a new law on migration enacted in Argentina in 2004,<sup>a</sup> which restructured the country's immigration policy around two main axes: a regional perspective that emphasizes the regularization of migrants from countries of the region and a human-rights-based approach.

This law recognizes migration as an essential and inalienable right. It also recognizes the right of all foreigners to family reunification, education and social and health care, regardless of their immigration status, and it promotes initiatives for the social integration and participation of migrants. Argentina is currently the largest recipient of migrants in the region.

In the context of the new law, Argentina implemented a national programme known as *Patria Grande* in 2005,<sup>b</sup> with the goal of regularizing the situation of migrants coming from other South American countries. Data from the National Bureau of Migration of Argentina indicate that 423,697 migrants had benefited from the programme by August 2010.

Regularization of migrants could also have benefited the host society through the positive economic impact of a possible increase in formal employment. According to the Ministry of Labour, formal employment in the private sector of the Argentine economy increased substantially among migrants between 2002 and 2010,<sup>c</sup> which could be mainly credited to the new immigration policy.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

<sup>a</sup> Law No. 25,871 of 21 January 2004.

<sup>b</sup> Disposition No. 53,253 of 13 December 2005.

<sup>c</sup> Baer, G., N. Benítez, D. Contartese and D. Schleser (2011), "El trabajo inmigrante en una etapa de recuperación del empleo e integración sudamericana", *La Inmigración laboral de Sudamericanos en Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social / ILO.

## B. Data collection and research

As migration gains prominence in national, regional and global development and political agendas, the need for migration data has become increasingly evident. Lack of data still constrains efforts to produce meaningful migration policies, as well as relevant programmes and strategies for improving management of international migration.

Initiatives are emerging at the global and regional levels to improve the availability and use of migration data (see box 2), including those generated in the context of the project activities (see box 3). Nevertheless, significant gaps still exist worldwide, especially in developing countries, as

regards the availability of basic migration data and an understanding of what is needed to support the development of evidence-based policies. This is, for instance, a major problem for migration policymaking in both origin and destination countries in West Asia, where migration data, definitions and classification according to such basic factors as age, sex, occupation and educational attainment do not meet international standards.

## **BOX 2**

### **ADDRESSING GAPS IN INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION DATA**

In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly will hold its second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. As this summit meeting approaches, there is a need for accurate, up-to-date, relevant and comparable data on international migration to inform policies that seek to enhance the benefits of international migration for development and to address the challenges posed by it. Yet the statistics available to count the number of international migrants at regular intervals are often more than 10 years old, whereas data to monitor international migration flows are completely absent for many countries in the world. Similarly, key characteristics of international migrants, including their country of birth and country of previous residence, age, sex, level of educational attainment and occupation, are also often lacking. Information on the impacts of international migration at the national, regional, local and household levels is often not collected.

One key capacity-building tool used is the report “Migrants count: five steps toward better migration data” produced by the Center for Global Development.<sup>a</sup> The Report succinctly summarizes measures to improve migration statistics without excessive cost implications.

Even when data are collected according to international standards, there is no guarantee that they are disseminated in sufficient detail and in a timely fashion. It often takes years before the tabulations on international migrants are released by national statistical offices. Even then, the tabulations often lack sufficient detail or do not provide the most information cross-tabulations. To address these shortcomings, countries are encouraged to provide access to census data at the micro-level, giving due regard to protecting individual information. Improving countries’ capacities to produce, disseminate and analyse migration information should be a priority of the international community, especially in view of the 2013 High-Level Dialogue.

Source: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

<sup>a</sup> Available [online] <http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1422146/>

Similarly, there is still a lack of sustainable mechanisms for regularly exchanging information about global and regional programmes in the field of migration statistics. As a consequence, duplications occur, synergies are lost and available resources are not used in the most effective manner.

To convert current challenges in the field of migration data and information into opportunities, it is necessary (a) to promote the dialogue between producers and users of international migration data at both the national and regional levels; (b) to harmonize the terms and definitions used in migration statistics between and within regions and countries; (c) to develop new data sources; and (d) to improve methodologies used for the production of migration statistics.

Besides quality data, expertise and skills are also needed for developing evidence-based policies on international migration, particularly at the national level, leaving important issues under-investigated. For instance, there is a clear deficit of research on the impact and added value that migration creates in destination countries, as studies tend to emphasize the economic impact of remittances to the origin countries. Similarly, there is a need for studies on the potential development impacts of South-South migration on countries in the South.

Gender and youth are other dimensions that have not been sufficiently investigated in the context of international migration. For example, in some countries, studies are needed on the impact of the growing number of female emigrants on institutional and social structures, including social networks and gender equality, while in others there is a need to investigate the impact of the current financial crisis on young migrants, who are often the most affected by unemployment. In addition, many countries need to better understand the interaction between international migration and emerging issues of specific concern, such as environmental change and population ageing.

### **BOX 3** **IMPROVED CAPACITY TO PRODUCE AND USE MIGRATION STATISTICS** **IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA**

In cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) organized three capacity-building workshops in which producers of migration data and policymakers from Eastern Europe and Central Asia exchanged experience and received guidance for resolving their statistical challenges. In addition to the exchange of experience between countries, the workshops improved communication among relevant agencies at the national level. At the end of the project, at least three countries reported significant progress in this regard (Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine), including the implementation of new initiatives and reforms to improve the institutional organization of migration management and the efficiency of the information management systems. This resulted in more and better information on migration available to the national agencies.

The workshops also led to the preparation of a review of data sources on international migration and a Practical Guide on International Migration Statistics for Countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Guide targets statisticians, policymakers, individuals working on migration management, researchers and representatives of mass media. It combines theoretical and practical aspects of migration statistics and aims to improve understanding of migration data by policymakers and other users.

In response to the participating countries' strong interest in data exchange, ECE established an online repository of basic migration statistics – the ECE Clearinghouse on Migration Statistics. The data are available through a user-friendly interface in English and Russian that greatly improves the accessibility of the data to outside users. In the past, much of this data was not publicly accessible, nor was it presented in a standardized manner using internationally agreed definitions of international migration. The Clearinghouse improves the potential to use regionally comparable migration data. It can also lead to improvements in estimates of emigration for these countries by utilizing immigration data of other countries in the region.

Source: Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

## **C. Dialogue and cooperation**

In recent years, networks involving the main actors in the process of building the international migration agenda have emerged at both the regional and subregional levels. Still, dialogue and cooperation between countries should be strengthened, with a balanced consideration of the interests and perspectives of origin, transit and destination countries.

For example, coordination between receiving countries in Western Asia and sending countries from Asia and the Pacific is generally poor and inadequate, particularly in areas such as recruitment and social protection of migrants. Improved dialogue could strengthen coordination substantially through the identification of areas for cooperation. Even existing agreements are not applied as consistently as they should be, due at least in part to the absence of clear frameworks for dialogue

between these countries to facilitate regular migration and ensure maximum benefits for all parties. As a result, migration can easily become an ad hoc and irregular process.

Dialogue and cooperation should also be strengthened between governments, civil society and migrants themselves. Civil society, in particular, should be much more involved in dialogue processes, such as the Abu Dhabi Dialogue in West Asia, and in monitoring the conditions of migrants in their countries of destination. Similarly, the private sector should participate in the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating migration policies.

In Africa, significant progress has been made in the formulation of policy frameworks, protocols and agreements on migration, emphasizing the importance of cooperation and dialogue at the regional and multilateral levels (see box 4). For all its richness, complexity and importance to development, however, international migration in Africa remains underresearched. This is, in part, because international migration still remains peripheral to the development planning process in the region. More importantly, it also results from the lack of data and documentation on international migration in most of the countries involved.

#### BOX 4

##### **AFRICA REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION (ARDIM) RECOMMENDS CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN COUNTRIES TO PROMOTE REGIONAL INTEGRATION**

A one-day high-level dialogue on international migration took place on 17 October at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.<sup>a</sup> The dialogue was attended by senior African policymakers from 36 Member States, African Union Commission, United Nations agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Union, diplomats from various embassies and development partners, who met to discuss collaboration to ensure that migration benefits both economic growth and regional integration on the continent. The regional dialogue was organized with the following objectives: to provide a policy platform for discussing international migration and development in Africa; to consolidate Africa's common position in the international policy agenda on migration; and to start the process of Africa's preparation in the High-Level Dialogue in 2013.

The Africa Regional Dialogue on International Migration (ARDIM) was structured around a report titled "International migration and development in Africa: cooperation and policy dialogue to promote regional integration". This report highlighted progress made in understanding migration and its resource potentials for development and described a conceptual shift from control to management and good governance of international migration and from a pessimistic (brain drain) to a positive and optimistic approach or discourse (brain gain and brain circulation). These developments are accompanied with increasing recognition of regionalism and multilateralism as practical frameworks for cooperation and policy dialogue on international migration. These and other key issues in the report were discussed in three breakout groups, which focused on the global agenda on international migration and development; migration patterns, trends and institutional structures and their implications for cooperation and policy dialogue in Africa; and regional economic communities and regional consultative processes.

ARDIM emphasized the importance of intensifying cooperation and policy dialogue at the regional and multilateral levels in Africa. In particular, the African Union Policy Framework on Migration needs to be implemented, together with the policy frameworks and protocols developed by the Regional Economic Communities. Countries should develop capacities to implement migration policies and strategies, to collect data, to undertake policy research and to frequently update national migration policies in the context of regional cooperation and integration. They should also increase their investment in migration to attract and encourage diasporas to invest in their home countries.

Source: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

<sup>a</sup> For more information, see [online]

[http://www.uneca.org/eca\\_resources/Press\\_Releases/2011\\_pressreleases/pressrelease12711.html](http://www.uneca.org/eca_resources/Press_Releases/2011_pressreleases/pressrelease12711.html)

There are specific circumstances in which cooperation between governments and civil organizations tends to be particularly important. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, civil organizations play an essential role in the provision of support to vulnerable migrant populations in places where governments have less of a presence, such as border areas. In general, these organizations represent one of the few sources of assistance available to border migrants and the most efficient channel for aid.

## D. Contributions of migrants

Migration has the potential to bring mutual benefits to origin and destination countries, as well as to migrants themselves, though it should not be viewed as a substitute for development planning. In Africa and Latin America, for instance, migration plays multiple roles in alleviating poverty and in providing cash flows through formal and informal channels to health, education, housing and other social needs.

Although remittances are an important factor in the migration and development nexus in all developing regions, migrants contribute in many different ways to their home societies. The *Diasporas* from countries in Western Asia, for example, are large and have shown a great potential to contribute to the development of their countries of origin, even though the links between migrants and their home countries are weak and need to be enhanced (see box 5). Similarly, African diasporas are increasingly becoming involved in development activities in their countries of origin as a consequence of a recent surge in interest among African governments in migrants' investment potential.

Most of the related literature emphasizes the impact of migration on origin countries, particularly through the effect of remittances, such that the contributions of migrants to destination countries remain largely underestimated. One of the few studies in this area suggests that Latin American migrants have made substantial contributions to the United States of America. First, they contribute to demographic reproduction, by offsetting the declining birth rate of the national population. Second, they contribute to economic production, by increasing the workforce. Finally, they contribute to social production, by engaging in activities and occupations that are essential for social functioning, but are usually avoided by the national population.

Notwithstanding the benefits for origin and destination countries, the social impacts of international migration are a great concern, particularly in contexts where migration has become a fundamental component of societies and economies. For example, the consequences of indebtedness due to high recruitment costs, the impact of migration on family members left behind and the social protection of migrants all represent significant challenges in Asia and the Pacific, requiring the prompt attention of policymakers.

## E. Facilitating regular migration

Migratory movements have become progressively more complex. Migrants have increasingly diversified profiles, and their status can change in the course of a journey. Indeed, one of the emerging issues on the migration agenda involves mixed migrations, meaning movements that could include refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, unaccompanied minors, environmental migrants, stranded migrants and victims of trafficking and smuggling. A common characteristic of these mixed flows is the vulnerability associated with an irregular status, which is often magnified in the case of migrants living in border areas.

**BOX 5**  
**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MIGRANTS TO DEVELOPMENT IN THE**  
**WESTERN ASIAN REGION**

Migrants move between their countries of origin and destination (and back again) not only with their labour power, but also with the human, social and financial capital they have acquired in each location. It is this combination of different types of capital and their transfer which enables migrants to influence development in both their origin and destination countries.

The 14 member countries of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)<sup>a</sup> illustrate the contributions migrants can make. The six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council<sup>b</sup> are all characterized by the rapid development of physical infrastructure and a sharp increase in living standards in the second half of the twentieth century. While exploitation of natural hydrocarbon resources provided the possibility for this development, the small population bases and lack of relevant skills among the populations of these countries meant that this development would not have been possible without the large-scale hiring of migrant workers at all skill levels and across all sectors to build infrastructure, provide services and even manage projects. Today, migrants constitute the majority of the workforces in these countries, a trend that is likely to continue due to longstanding demographic factors and the structure of the labour market.

From the perspective of countries of origin in the ESCWA region, migration has brought benefits through the remittances of migrant workers, particularly to Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan. These remittances have enabled the families of migrants to improve their living conditions and invest in businesses. They have also had macroeconomic effects, such as supporting the liquidity of Lebanon. Moreover, migrants from ESCWA countries such as Lebanon have been able to provide the skills and networks they developed abroad to support institutional development in the country.

Migrants have thus been able to contribute to development in ESCWA countries. However, migration has also proved to be a challenge. In Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, an overreliance on migration at middle and low skill levels has led to highly segmented labour markets, promoting unemployment among nationals. In countries of origin, emigration can lead to skill shortages in key sectors, particularly at the higher end of the skill spectrum. For example, it is estimated that in 2005, 9.5 per cent of all Syrian-trained doctors were practising outside the Syrian Arab Republic, representing lost investment in training and exacerbating existing labour force shortages in health systems. In addition, national policies to make the most of remittances and skill transfers are not in place, which reduces the potential multiplier effects of these transfers and limits the benefits from many initiatives.

These experiences illustrate the relevance of mainstreaming migration in the development policies in the ESCWA region, so that countries not only benefit from migrants' positive contributions, but also limit the potential negative effects.

Source: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

<sup>a</sup> Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

<sup>b</sup> Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Irregular migration is a significant and continuing problem for countries of destination and of transit. This is especially the case where border crossing is facilitated by porous borders. In Africa, for instance, European immigration policies have turned many former emigration countries into transit or final destination countries by default. One particularly sensitive issue that has come up in this regard concerns irregular migration, an increasingly important feature of international migration in Africa. Apart from physical abuse, human rights violations and xenophobia, the land and sea trips involved are fraught with dangers, and many migrants have perished while crossing the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa and the Gulf of Aden from East Africa.

Given the general lack of efficacy of restrictive measures on migration, which usually tend to increase the levels of irregular migration, and the undesirable and often lamentable consequences of combating irregular migration through police force, governments should move beyond security concerns by mainstreaming international migration in national development plans and strategies at the national and regional levels (see box 6). This certainly requires coherence and coordination between national authorities working on international migration and those working on development planning and international relations.

**BOX 6**  
**FACILITATING REGULAR MIGRATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

There is an urgent need to facilitate and support regular migration channels to offset irregular forms of migration. The persistence of irregular migration flows reflects both supply and demand, where regular forms of migration remain time consuming, bureaucratic and costly. In addition, migrants often take on excessive personal costs in the visa application process, meaning that a great proportion of their earnings is spent repaying money lenders, family members or other financial supporters.

From the perspective of countries of origin and destination, the main challenges relating to labour migration are reducing the costs of migration, minimizing recruitment fraud and abuse, extending social protection to all workers (including domestic workers, who are mostly women) and developing and recognizing the skills of migrant workers. The regulation and oversight of recruitment processes, including recruitment agencies in both origin and destination countries, is one important step in ensuring that recruitment and placement costs be reduced in order to maximize the benefits of international migration.

A number of countries have made considerable progress in the formalization of migration processes. This includes a greater focus on more transparent recruitment transactions and better preparation of migrants prior to departure. A number of Asian-Pacific countries have established pre-departure training for migrants to impart complete and accurate information about employment and have implemented regulations that will lead to a reduction in recruitment costs, minimize irregular migration, ensure that migrants are aware of their rights while abroad and better assist with the return and reintegration of migrants.

Enhancing formal migration channels requires the cooperation of both origin and destination countries, in particular the recruitment offices of both countries. Civil society also has a key role to play. While progress has been made in bringing about more transparent and thorough processes, countries of origin, destination and transit still have much work to do to ensure that regular migration channels remain effective in meeting the needs of all parties.

Source: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

## F. Migration and crisis

Social, economic and political crises have a strong impact on migrants' conditions (see box 7). The recent financial crisis, in particular, has confirmed that migrant workers' rights are eroded further in situations of economic recession and general uncertainty, making this a highly vulnerable population.

In addition, the current crisis and its ramifications, with their adverse consequences for migrants' rights, are also threatening progress with cooperation in this field and creating obstacles to the construction of a genuine multilateral migration agenda.



### **BOX 7**

#### **MIGRATION AND MULTIPLE CRISES IN AFRICA**

Forced movement is an important component of international migration in Africa. Conflicts and environmental catastrophes, such as droughts and famines, have forced millions of people to flee their homes and countries. An important characteristic of migration in East and Central Africa is the internal displacement of persons (IDPs), estimated at around 10 million people or 38 per cent of the world's IDPs. Sudan accounted for more than 40 per cent of the African total, with around five million people displaced in various regions. Darfur alone, with between 1.9 million and 2.7 million IDPs, had more IDPs than the two next biggest situations in Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1.7 million IDPs) and Somalia (1.5 million). IDPs in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia together represented more than 70 per cent of all IDPs in Africa. Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania saw a notable increase of between 23,000 and 52,000 refugees during the first half of 2011. The increase in Kenya (more than 50,000 people) and Ethiopia (19,000) is due to an influx of Somali refugees fleeing both conflict and the current drought conditions. In relative terms, the increase of refugees in Djibouti (17 per cent) is also noteworthy. The increase in Tanzania is largely associated with Burundian refugees, which now includes more than 22,000 refugees spontaneously settled in villages and awaiting local integration by the government.

A food crisis hit the horn of Africa by mid-2011. About 12 million people in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia were in dire need for food, water, shelter and sanitation. As a result, about 3,500 people fled daily from Somalia to Ethiopia and Kenya. The crisis resulted in massive need for food aid. Between January and June 2011 about 300,000 people in Mogadishu were given food assistance by humanitarian agencies on a monthly basis. Approximately 100,000 malnourished children were treated through some 418 nutrition centers in south Somalia from January to May 2011.

Elections became a major factor behind the displacement of persons in West Africa in 2010. In Côte d'Ivoire, disputed presidential elections in November led to violence and the displacement of thousands of people. The United Nations made contingency plans for up to 450,000 IDPs in 2011. In Nigeria, clashes between supporters of rival candidates broke out in 2010, months ahead of presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 2011, leading to short-term displacement.

The Arab Spring has also generated new migration and displacement patterns, particularly in relation to the conflict in Libya. Large-scale return migrations from Libya have caused economic migrants to become forced migrants and forced migrants to enter irregular migration channels for survival. However, the number of sub-Saharan migrants leaving Libya is much smaller than the number of North African or South Asian migrants, suggesting that sub-Saharan migrants may be stranded inside the country. In addition, the humanitarian crisis in Libya has triggered a refugee crisis in the region, with an increasing number of Libyans fleeing to Tunisia.

Source: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

The impact of shifts and changes in the global economic situation on the forms, conditions and characteristics of migration raises the need to rethink agendas, assess formal progress and seek new approaches appropriate to the changing situation on the ground. In particular, governments, civil society and international organizations should redouble their efforts at a time of crisis like the present, to prevent the erosion of migrants' rights while strengthening cooperation and renewing the multilateral migration agenda.



## II. Recommendations

**Governments should respect and promote the human rights of migrants**, guaranteeing their right to legal protection and access to justice regardless of their status.

**Governments should ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.** Those that have already ratified it are urged to ensure its full implementation.

Migration policies need to include a contextual perspective and be sensitive to factors such as local conditions of inequity, discrimination and poverty that make migrants vulnerable, especially in border areas. Due to gender-specific vulnerabilities and the nature of their work, **the protection of migrant women should constitute a priority** requiring specific policy interventions. This should also be the case for children and migrant youth.

**A growing and sustained effort is required by governments to collect, disseminate and analyse relevant, timely and reliable data on international migration** to provide the evidence base for effective policymaking. In particular, governments and academia in all regions should develop a concerted strategy to build institutional capacity in this regard.

**Governments should provide resources and develop strategies to facilitate and promote the many ways in which migrants can contribute to national development** in countries of origin and destination. For instance, they should investigate ways for families, communities and countries of origin to reap the full benefits of remittances, while taking into consideration that remittances are private earnings and should not replace governments' responsibilities in the areas of development, social protection and poverty reduction.

**Governments, civil society and international organizations should foster cooperation** to better manage migration, enhance the protection of migrants and counteract threats such as xenophobic attacks or racism in destination countries.

**Governments should adopt a comprehensive rather than a security-oriented approach to irregular migration**, while concurrently targeting networks of groups engaged in human trafficking. Root causes of irregular migration, such as restrictive migration policies, poverty and unemployment, and the existence of large informal sectors of the labour market in countries of destination should be addressed and more opportunities developed for potential migrants in their countries of origin. A comprehensive policy on this issue needs to include coordination between both

origin and destination countries. **Addressing the costs and barriers to regular migration is essential if irregular migration, including trafficking, is to be curtailed.**

**Governments should also move beyond security concerns by mainstreaming international migration in national development plans and strategies.** This will require coherence and coordination between national authorities working on international migration and those working on development planning and international relations.

### **III. Lessons learned**

The project has demonstrated the need to strengthen institutional collaboration at the national and regional levels in order to produce and analyse migration statistics and better inform the policymaking process.

The cooperation and dialogue between the regional commissions proved extremely productive and rewarding, thanks to the capabilities, experience and knowledge of each commission in the field of international migration (see box 8). The discussions between the commissions were very enriching since each of them could present its specific experience but also learn from the others. Despite regional differences, common concerns were recognized and best practices identified.

Among the aspects important to the success of the project have been the cooperation, networks and synergies created with the leading actors in migration work, namely, governments, civil society organizations, research centres, academic institutions, regional networks and international organizations. The effort of joint reflection, debate and work among United Nations agencies in multilateral contexts such as the Global Migration Group, the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and the Global Forum on International Migration should be strengthened and repeated in the future.

To give continuity and support for the products and good practices generated from the development of the project, sustained effort should be devoted to the following areas: (a) building on the synergies created among stakeholders in the migration field; (b) enhancing interregional coordination and cooperation; (c) fostering common work among the regional commissions and between the latter and the agencies of the United Nations system dedicated to migration topics; (d) strengthening regional and subregional networks generated in the context of the project; (e) mainstreaming migration into national development agendas; (f) improving data and information sources (traditional and nontraditional); and (g) permanently advocating for the human rights of migrants in regional and multiregional forums on migration.

### **BOX 8**

#### **DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION ON MIGRATION BETWEEN REGIONAL COMMISSIONS**

Cooperation, exchange of experiences and joint work between the United Nations regional commissions have been some of the most valuable achievements of the interregional project on international migration. In the framework of project activities, two interregional workshops were organized by regional commissions.

In recognition of the significant migration from the countries of South and South-East Asia to the Western Asian countries of the Arab Mashreq and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its important effects on social and economic development in both regions, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) collaborated to hold a workshop on “Strengthening dialogue between ESCWA and ESCAP countries on international migration and development” on 28–30 June 2011 in Beirut.

Three Western Asian countries and five Asian-Pacific countries were represented at this workshop, along with the secretariat of the GCC and representatives of civil society organizations from both regions. The workshop specifically aimed to assist processes of dialogue by producing outcomes that could feed into future consultation and action, particularly through the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, a regional consultative process bringing together Ministers of labour from Asian-Pacific countries of origin and Western Asian countries of destination.

The workshop addressed issues of migration and protection, including the social protection of migrants; migration and gender; and interregional cooperation. Discussions centered on the legal context of migration; the experiences of migrant workers; the costs of migration; and, given the particular salience of the issue to countries from both regions, the situation of migrant domestic workers. Participants from member countries also highlighted good practices and lessons learned from their own experiences. Finally, participants developed specific recommendations relating to migration and development, the governance of labour migration, the protection of migrant workers, and multilateral and multi-stakeholder cooperation and dialogue. These recommendations focused on skills upgrading, reintegration of return migrants, improving migration data, reviewing migration policies, strengthening multilateral cooperation through memoranda of understanding and other agreements, the extension of social protection to migrants, and continued interregional collaboration within the United Nations system.

A second interregional workshop on “Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impacts” was jointly organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Geneva on 22–23 September 2011.

The workshop was attended by government delegates from selected countries of the three regions, migration experts and representatives of civil society and international organizations. The topics addressed at the workshop were organized based on two main interrelated thematic areas: (a) new and emerging aspects of migration dynamics between Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean and their relation to human rights and development, taking into consideration aspects such as gender relations, the role of remittances, changes in labour insertion of migrants, migration of children and older persons, integration and rights of migrants, socio-economic and health conditions among migrant people, and the effects of the global crisis on interregional migration; and (b) institutional and regulatory agreements in the field of development and international migration in selected countries from Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean, including topics such as social integration, anti-discrimination, regularization programs, transnational communities, the fight against trafficking and smuggling of persons and other relevant aspects within the framework of the obligations assumed by states that could be considered as good practices in terms of handling migration issues on the basis of the principles for human dignity and respect.

Both meetings allowed for the exchange of experiences and good practices among different stakeholders, countries and regions, as well as reflection on existing knowledge and resources.

Source: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

## Appendix

Documents produced and activities carried out in the framework of the Development Account project on “Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact”<sup>4</sup>

### Documents

- Recent African immigration to South America: the cases of Argentina and Brazil in the regional context (September 2011)
- Africans in the Southern European countries: Italy, Spain and Portugal (September 2011)
- Migration patterns and immigrants' characteristics in North-Western Europe (September 2011)
- International migration: trends and institutional frameworks from the African perspective (September 2011)
- Migración internacional en América Latina y el Caribe. Nuevas tendencias, nuevos enfoques (May 2011)
- Taller sobre el fortalecimiento de las capacidades nacionales para la gestión de la migración internacional: nuevas tendencias, nuevos asuntos, nuevos enfoques de cara al futuro (March 2011)
- Draft Report of the Regional Workshop on Migration Statistics (December 2010)
- Report of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the GFMD 2010 (September 2010)
- Background of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD): History and Main Recommendations (September 2010)
- Key Trends and Challenges on International Migration and Development in Asia and the Pacific (September 2010)

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<sup>4</sup> The activity reports and documents are available [online] <http://www.cepal.org/celade/DAmigration.asp>

- Resumen del estudio sobre marcos institucionales, normativos y de políticas sobre migración internacional en El Salvador y una exploración en Costa Rica (September 2010)
- Resumen del estudio sobre las profundas contribuciones de la migración latinoamericana a los Estados Unidos (September 2010)
- Resumen del estudio sobre marcos institucionales, normativos y de políticas sobre migración internacional en México (September 2010)
- Resumen del estudio sobre marcos institucionales, normativos y de políticas sobre migración internacional en la Argentina, Chile y el Ecuador (September 2010)
- Resumen del panorama migratorio en España, el Ecuador y Colombia a partir de las estadísticas locales (September 2010)
- Institutional framework, regulations and policies concerning international migration in El Salvador and Costa Rica (Executive Summary) (September 2010)
- The profound contributions of Latin American immigrants in the United States (Executive Summary) (September 2010)
- Legal, institutional and policy framework for international migration: the case of Mexico (Executive Summary) (September 2010)
- Legal, institutional and policy framework for international migration in Argentina, Chile and Ecuador (Executive Summary) (September 2010)
- An overview of international migration in Spain, Ecuador and Colombia based on local statistics (Executive Summary) (September 2010)
- Report of the Workshop on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region (July 2010)
- Proceedings and recommendations of the Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities to deal with International Migration (April 2010)
- Linking International Migration and Development in Asia (April 2010)
- Linking International Migration and Development in Asia (Executive Summary) (April 2010)
- Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact in the Pacific Islands Sub-region (April 2010)
- Report of the Regional Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities to Improve Migration Data (February 2010)



## Activities

- ECE-UNFPA Regional Workshop on Migration Statistics, Antalya, Turkey, October 2011, see [online] <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2011.10.migration.html>
- ECLAC-ECE-ECA Interregional Workshop on Strengthening Capacities to Deal with International Migration: "Examining development, institutional and policy aspects of migration between Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean", Geneva, September 2011, see [online] [http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/celade/agenda/9/44329/P44329.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl-i/p3f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom\\_dam.xslt](http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/celade/agenda/9/44329/P44329.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl-i/p3f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom_dam.xslt)
- ESCWA-ESCAP Biregional Workshop on "Strengthening dialogue to make migration work for development in the ESCAP and ESCWA regions", Beirut, June 2011, see [online] [http://www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/E\\_ESCWA\\_SDD\\_11\\_WG-5\\_7\\_Report\\_e.pdf](http://www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/E_ESCWA_SDD_11_WG-5_7_Report_e.pdf)
- UNECE-UNFPA Regional Training Workshop on Migration Statistics, Istanbul, December 2010, see [online] <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.12.migration.html>
- ESCAP Asia-Pacific Regional Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking, Bangkok, September 2010, see [online] [http://www.unescap.org/sdd/meetings/GFMD\\_mig\\_sep2010/index.asp](http://www.unescap.org/sdd/meetings/GFMD_mig_sep2010/index.asp)
- ECLAC Workshop on Strengthening National Capacities in International Migration Management: "Looking towards the future: new trends, issues and approaches", Santiago, Chile, September 2010, see [online] [http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/celade/agenda/3/40193/P40193.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl/p3f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom\\_dam.xslt](http://www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/celade/agenda/3/40193/P40193.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl/p3f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom_dam.xslt)
- ESCWA Workshop on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies, Beirut, July 2010, see [online] <http://www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1321E>
- ESCAP Workshop on Strengthening Capacities to Deal with International Migration, Bangkok, April 2010, see [online] <http://www.unescap.org/esid/Meetings/migration10/>
- ECE Regional Workshop on Migration Statistics, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, February 2010, see [online] <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2010.02.migration.html>