

# MIGRATION IN THE 2030 AGENDA



International Organization for Migration

The UN Migration Agency

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# MIGRATION IN THE 2030 AGENDA



Edited by

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# FOREWORD

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, and migration features prominently in this Agenda, a remarkable development considering that migration was absent from the Millennium Development Goals.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) political declaration breaks new ground by recognizing the “positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth” and the “multi-dimensional reality” of migration.

Migration is inserted in several goals and targets, in particular through a dedicated target on “facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people” within goal 10 on reducing inequalities. The situation of migrant workers is addressed in the goal on decent work and economic development. Trafficking is called the “modern day slavery” that should be abolished, and the situation of trafficked women and children is given special recognition. Migration is also of relevance for targets on sustainable cities and resilience in the face of climate change.

It is no longer possible to see human mobility just as background context for development, or even worse, as a by-product of lack of development. Rather, with the SDGs, migration is an important contributor to sustainable development. The International Organization for Migration is, in consequence, a significant actor in the implementation of migration-related SDG objectives.

This collection of papers explores the many linkages between migration and SDGs and discusses the policy responses that may be called for. Our hope is that it will be a prompt to reflection and action for both policymakers and researchers.



William Lacy Swing  
Director General



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# INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of record that migration was not included in the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework. The reasons for this are not entirely clear. One possible explanation is that development practitioners were, at the time, rather skeptical about the purported contribution of migration to development.

Two problems loomed large in their field of view.

First, the word *migration* itself had strongly negative connotations. It was supposed to be all about border control and the repression of movement, a barrier in the way of migrants from developing countries seeking access to labour markets in developed countries.

Second, when migration pathways were available, there was – rather paradoxically – a high degree of concern about the so-called brain drain. Was not migration the process whereby developing countries are divested of their “best and brightest”, the highly qualified nationals lured away by irresistible job offers from abroad?

The MDG Declaration acknowledged, at least, the existence of migration but only to identify it as one of the causes of the worsening of the global malaria problem and to deplore acts of discrimination, racism and intolerance targeting migrants.

For migration policymakers and researchers worldwide, it was therefore a moment of special significance, a coming of age, as it were, when the Report of the United Nations System Task Force on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (*Realizing the Future We Want for All*) acknowledged migration as one of the core enablers of development and called for fair rules to manage migration. This paved the way for the inclusion of migration in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) under cover of target 10.7, which prescribes the facilitation of “orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. For good measure, the SDG Declaration:

- Recognized the positive contribution of migrants to inclusive growth and development;

- Called for the empowerment of vulnerable groups, including refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants;
- Highlighted the impact of humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people on development;
- Called for access by all to lifelong learning opportunities; and
- Committed to the eradication of forced labour and migrant trafficking.

The international migration community is now faced with the challenge of implementing the SDG goals and targets, including the difficult selection and definition of indicators to measure progress. This will be a long and complex process requiring the cooperation of all stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels. Nor will this process focus exclusively on target 10.7. Given its cross-cutting nature, migration and migration-related considerations will necessarily feature in action plans addressing many other goals and targets such as the eradication of forced labour and slavery (target 8.7), the protection of safe and secure environments for all workers (target 8.8) or, again, the reduction of transaction costs for migrant remittances (target 10.C).

The purpose of this collection of papers is first of all to draw attention to the many dimensions of the migratory experience covered by the SDGs and secondly, to offer practical suggestions as to how these aspects of migration can be addressed effectively during the implementation process.





# DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Liesl Riddle<sup>1</sup>

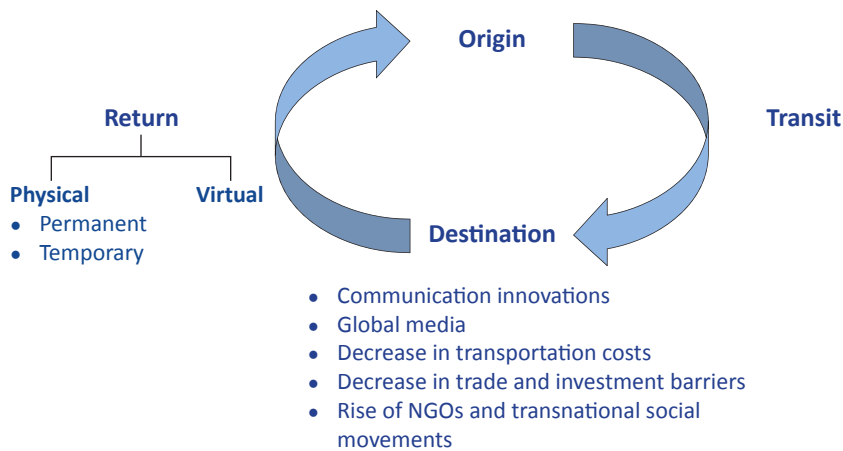


## Introduction

Recent unprecedented movements of people across borders have taken place against the backdrop of globalization. Globalization has altered the psychosocial experience of migrants, creating new opportunities for global actors to engage migrants and their descendants, or “diasporas”,<sup>2</sup> to achieve sustainable development in their countries of origin and heritage.

The twenty-first century migration experience is quite different from that of previous generations: migrants and their descendants have many opportunities to maintain or develop identificational and structural ties to their countries of origin/heritage. Globalization has both catalysed and been shaped by communication innovations, the rise of global media, decreased costs of transportation, and lowered trade and investment barriers. As a result, it is much easier for today’s migrants and their descendants to return – both physically and virtually – to their country of origin/heritage. It is also easier for them to purchase goods and services and send remittances or goods purchased abroad back home. At the same time, the rise in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and transnational social movements associated with globalization have created opportunities for individuals with similar heritage, or “diasporans” to connect, exchange ideas and coordinate activity within and across borders through diaspora organizations and media.

**Figure 1: Twenty-first century migration experience**



Gabrielle Sheffer defines a diaspora<sup>3</sup> as

*A social-political formation, created as the result of either forced or voluntary migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries.*

Thus, globalization has engendered the possibility for diasporans to live a transnational community life, psychologically identifying and socially interacting simultaneously with their countries of origin/heritage and their countries of residence if they are interested and willing to do so. As a result, globalization has broadened the set of actors that potentially have a stake in national development to not only include local residents but also emigrants and their descendants as well – if they can be engaged, enabled and empowered to do so.<sup>4</sup>

Diasporans acquire and possess endowments of human, financial and social capital in countries of residence, sometimes in excess of average individual endowments of those in the country of origin/heritage.<sup>5</sup> Many global actors, including international organizations, nation States, private-sector corporations and NGOs, have sought to engage diasporans to leverage and/or transfer these capital endowments to assist with development goals in the country of origin/heritage through a variety of mechanisms. Diaspora engagement mechanisms include remittances and tourism, volunteerism,

philanthropy, direct business investment and portfolio business investment in the country of origin/heritage. Each of these mechanisms engage diasporas to contribute human, financial and/or social capital to the country of origin/heritage for the purposes of development.

Although the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes migrants as “agents of change” and “enablers for development in countries of origin, transit and destination”, the Agenda primarily focuses on the migrant as a *beneficiary of the ends* of sustainable development (e.g. through greater protections, rights and transparency), but not as an agent of the means of sustainable development itself. Furthermore, the Agenda does not make reference to the broader concept of diasporas or to the role that they do and can play in development globally. Diasporans can only be part of the “means” if their own development potential is maximized.

In this paper, the author posits that diasporas can be engaged as potential partners for sustainable development and that diaspora human, financial and social capital can be employed to achieve progress on a myriad of development goals in countries of origin. First, the multidimensional context that structures diaspora engagement at the individual, organizational and ecosystem levels is explained. Then, several case studies of diaspora engagement for development are presented, identifying specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to which they contribute. Lastly, the article concludes with several suggestions and cautionary notes for global actors seeking to engage diasporas for development purposes.

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRIMARILY FOCUSES ON THE MIGRANT AS A **BENEFICIARY OF THE ENDS** OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT BUT NOT AS **AN AGENT OF THE MEANS** OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ITSELF. WHAT ABOUT ENGAGING DIASPORAS FOR DEVELOPMENT?

## Context

The context of diaspora engagement for sustainable development is multidimensional, involving dynamics at the individual, organizational and ecosystem levels that affect the degree and nature of potential diaspora engagement for any given diaspora.

**Figure 2: Diaspora context**



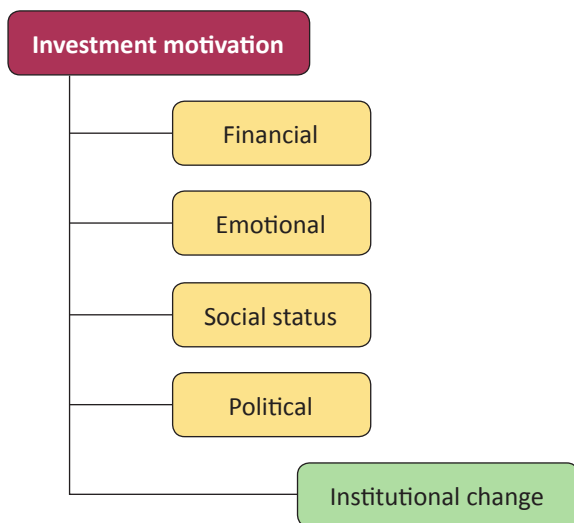
*Individual level.* Research concerning diaspora investment has revealed that diasporans invest their human, financial and social capital in their countries of origin/heritage, expecting to gain various types of returns on those investments.<sup>6</sup> Some diasporans invest capital because they seek some kind of potential financial return, or “gains to the wallet”. Others seek more emotional returns, or positive warm-glow feelings or “gains to the heart”. Still others are more motivated by social status returns, or potential increased respect or social hierarchical standing as a result of making investments in their country of origin/heritage. Even still, others are motivated by political returns; perceived gains in political access, influence or protection; or because they seek institutional change as a result of the investments made in their country of origin/heritage.

Although in some cases, diasporans may be motivated to engage with their country of origin/heritage to invest their capital for a singular type of diaspora-investment return, it is more common for diaspora investment motivation to be multidimensional, whereby multiple types of investment returns are expected by the diasporans, at varying levels of degree. Diaspora investment motivation varies not only at the individual level, but also at the subgroup and diaspora-community level as well. For example, in some studies, differences in motivational profiles for men and women have been recorded.<sup>7</sup> Other studies have identified differences in motivational profiles by immigration



generation (e.g. migrants exhibiting different profiles from their children and grandchildren), migration wave and countries of residence. At the aggregate level, diaspora-investment motivation may be quite different across different diasporas, whereby certain motivational drivers may be more salient to one diaspora versus another.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 3: The multidimensional motivations of diaspora investment**



Non-pecuniary diaspora investment motivations (e.g. emotional, social status, political and institutional change expected returns) could translate into several potential development benefits of engaging diaspora investment capital. For example, diaspora non-pecuniary investment motivations could make diasporans less likely to extract capital in periods of political and/or economic risk and more likely to continue to remit (or increase remittances), visit, volunteer, give to charity and invest in businesses during these times of crisis.<sup>9</sup> They may also be less likely to repatriate profits from ventures/subsidiaries and are more likely to reinvest in existing firms or establish new operations and ventures in the country of origin/heritage. They may be more likely to invest in newly established activities rather than merely merging or acquiring local firms, particularly in more rural areas, thereby creating positive employment effects. Diasporans may also prefer local inputs and employees over imported products and labour, as well as innovative, socially and environmentally responsible practices when engaging economically in the country of origin/heritage. This may not only affect their own business behaviour but also decisions when travelling to, volunteering for, giving charity to, or sourcing products/services from the country of origin/heritage.

*Organization level.* One of the major obstacles to diaspora engagement is identifying effective and efficient means of reaching diasporans to promote opportunities for engagement. “When I want to call the diaspora, who do I phone?” is a common question that plagues those seeking to engage diasporas for development. Often already engaged in activities in the country of origin/heritage, diaspora organizations can serve as useful partners in development activities, contributing human, financial and social capital directly as a group. In addition, diaspora organizations are often comprised of individual members and/or possess communication mechanisms (e.g. websites, e-mail or social media lists, newsletters and in-person events) that can be utilized by those seeking to target diasporas for development activities.

The diaspora organizational landscape includes various organizational forms that may differ in terms of their mission. Diaspora organizations include groups that focus primarily on cultivating a sense of community and whose activities are primarily social and cultural in nature. They also include organizations whose activities centre on economic and social development in the country of origin/heritage, faith-based groups, and language or cultural learning institutions. Some diaspora organizations are more focused on political issues and advocacy both in the country of residence and/or country of origin/heritage, or providing social services to diasporas in the country of residence. Still, others centre their activity around the needs of a particular subgroup within the diaspora, such as students, women and youth.

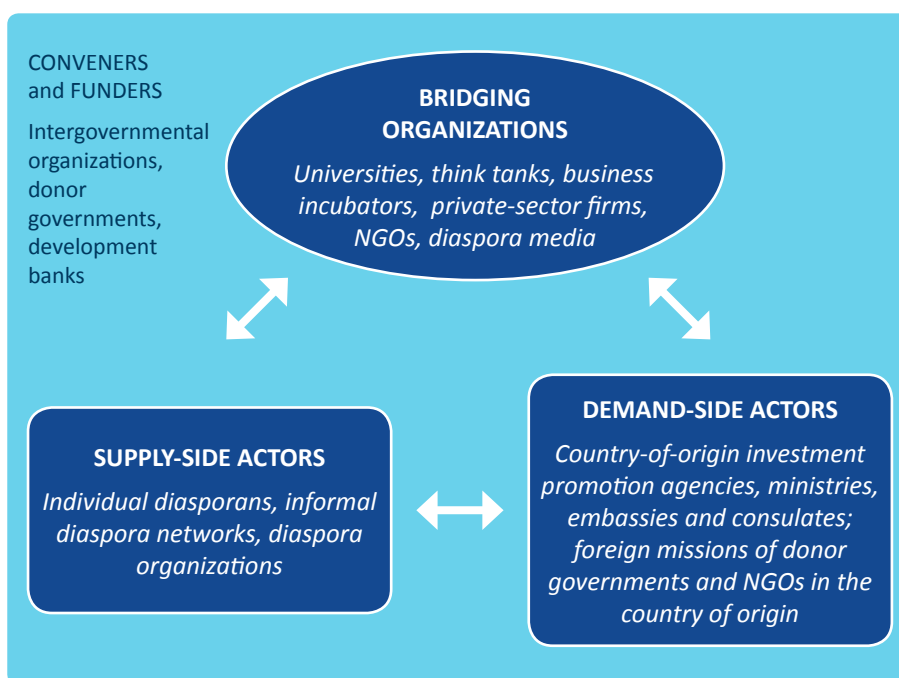
Mapping the diaspora organizational landscape and relationship-building with the leaders and influencers of these organizations is a key task for those seeking to engage diasporas for development. Diaspora organizations vary in terms of their degree of formality (e.g. specified leadership roles and responsibilities, organizational structure, physical space, codified rules and procedures and established routines and events), capacity, size, sociopolitical diversity, geographic scope and perceived legitimacy and credibility among the diaspora. These diaspora organization characteristics affect the organizational reach and mobilization potential of a given diaspora organization. Since no one organization is completely inclusive and comprehensive, successful diaspora engagement often involves simultaneous and coordinated partnership with a wide variety of organizations, which sometimes (but not always) possess some overlap in leadership and membership. Since many of these organizations are run on limited budgets and mostly (or completely) volunteer staff, there is often frequent turnover in leadership, which contributes to the time-intensive nature of diaspora organization engagement activities.

## TYPES OF DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS

- **Community** – organizations whose mission focuses primarily on cultivating a sense of community and identity and whose activities are primarily social and cultural in nature.
- **Development/Humanitarian** – organizations whose mission focuses on the economic or social development of the country of origin/heritage and whose activities are primarily driven at raising money and volunteerism from the diaspora to achieve development ends in the country of origin.
- **Faith-based** – organizations whose mission is focused on the spiritual well-being and identity of a diaspora community and whose activities are religious in nature.
- **Language/School** – organizations whose mission is focused on educating knowledge about the language, history and/or culture of a country of origin within the diaspora and whose activities are primarily learning related.
- **Political** – organizations whose mission is focused on advocacy, awareness and engagement of the diaspora in politics and policy in the country of origin whose activities are primarily political in nature.
- **Professional** – organizations whose mission is to provide professional networking and/or mentoring opportunities for the diaspora and whose activities are mostly career-focused in nature.
- **Social services** – organizations whose mission is to provide social services to diasporans in countries of residence whose activities are largely assistance-related to diasporans in the local community.
- **Student** – organizations whose mission is to provide social opportunities for university or college students and whose activities are primarily social/educational in nature.
- **Women** – organizations whose mission is to provide targeted support, activities and/or advocacy to female diasporans in countries of residence or that organize female diasporans in some way for specific social or economic impact on women in the country of origin.
- **Youth** – organizations whose mission to provide targeted support, activities, and/or advocacy to youth diasporans in countries of residence or that organize youth diasporans in some way for specific social or economic impact on youth in the country of origin.

*Ecosystem level.* Although initial groundbreaking efforts to engage diaspora for development were initiated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as early as the 1970s, the value of engaging diaspora capital for development became particularly salient across other actors at the global level in the early 2000s, following the G8 Sea Island Summit on remittance prices and the World Bank's 2005 release of the first global study of remittances.<sup>10</sup> Since then, a network of actors have emerged and established linkages. Today, this ecosystem consists of an institutional field of players that cooperate and sometimes compete to promote and facilitate diaspora engagement for development.

**Figure 4: Diaspora engagement ecosystem**



This ecosystem includes four major types of players: (a) demand-side actors; (b) supply-side actors; (c) bridging organizations; and (d) conveners/funders. Demand-side actors are those who need diaspora human, financial and social capital directly in the country of origin/heritage. They include investment promotion agencies and government ministries in the country of origin, as well as embassies and consulates located in countries of residence. Included among demand-side actors are foreign missions of donor governments abroad and NGOs in the country of origin/heritage engaged in development activities.

Supply-side actors are individual diasporans themselves, their informal networks and diaspora organizations. Some NGOs in countries of residence can also play the role of supply-side actor when they engage in diaspora-capital mobilization activities.

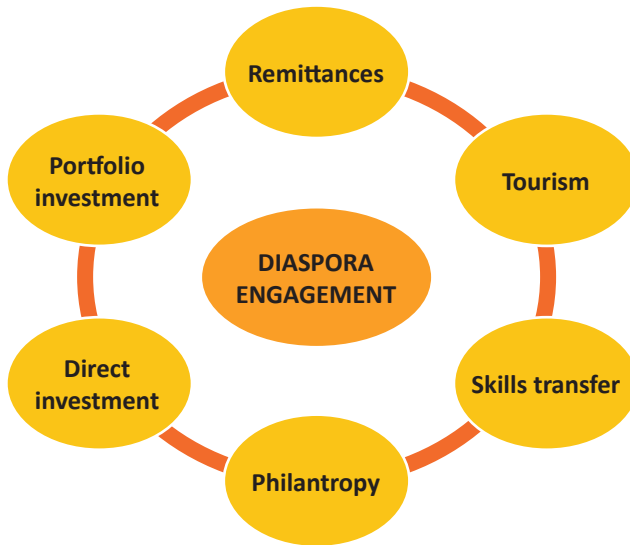
Many different types of organizations bridge the interests, needs and abilities of supply- and demand-side actors together. These bridging organizations include some universities with diaspora programmes and think tanks, such as the Migration Policy Institute, which conducts and disseminates research that benefits both sides of the diaspora-engagement equation. Also included are business incubators, such as IntEnt in the Netherlands, which specialize in providing business incubation services to diaspora entrepreneurs seeking to start new ventures in their countries or origin/heritage while still living in their countries of residence. Several private-sector firms, such as money-transfer organizations, diaspora tourism operators and investment companies, as well as NGOs that organize diaspora volunteer projects or engage in development activities in the country of origin/heritage (e.g. Volunteer for Economic Growth Alliance) also bring supply- and demand-side actors together.

Intergovernmental organizations, such as the IOM, World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, play a key role in the diaspora engagement ecosystem in a variety of ways, often serving as conveners of ecosystem actors and funders of their diaspora-engagement activities. Donor governments, through their development agencies and regional development banks, also play the convener/funder role in the ecosystem.

### **Diaspora engagement opportunities, solutions and the Sustainable Development Goals**

Diaspora capital can be leveraged in several ways for development, including through remittances, diaspora tourism, skills transfer, philanthropy and business investment (via direct and portfolio investments). In this section, these different forms of diaspora engagement are discussed, case-study examples of these activities are examined, and explains how these activities contribute to specific SDGs.

Figure 5: Diaspora engagement



*Remittances.* Earnings remitted by diasporans to families and friends in developing countries exceed USD 441 billion, three times the volume of international aid flows.<sup>11</sup> Considerable attention has been paid to estimating remittance volume in formal and informal distribution channels, year-over-year remittance trends, the costs associated with remitting money back home, the drivers of individual and collective remittance behaviour, and the uses and impacts of remittances on receivers and receiving economies. Some governments, like Mexico, have instituted policies at the local and national level to scale up and match remittances sent by diaspora organizations for development purposes.

While remittances can generate several positive economic benefits in countries of origin/heritage, they also can create negative externalities, including inflation and an increasing dependence of local communities on remittance flows. Mechanisms to “go beyond remittances” have been developed to more productively put remittance flows to economic use in countries of origin. These mechanisms include diaspora savings accounts, whereby remittance flows from abroad are kept in a local savings account in the country of residence/origin and the use of remittance recipients to collateralize remittance flows and diaspora savings accounts to open lines of credit. Other similar mechanisms also include the ability for remitters to pay bills or make insurance premium payments on behalf of a remittance recipient at the point of remittance transfer.

Diaspora engagement to encourage the flow of remittances through formal channels is conducted by several demand-side actors in the ecosystem, such as local banks. For example, in 2016, Banque Internationale Arabe de Tunisie (BIAT) launched an innovative marketing campaign in Paris, directly targeting neighbourhoods with high concentrations of resident Tunisian diasporans in the city. Neighbourhoods – and heavily used street routes that passed by the greatest concentrations of diaspora households – were identified from household registration data and onomastic analysis conducted by a company called NamSor. The bank sent vans on these routes in these neighbourhoods to market the benefits of diaspora bank accounts and explain the requirements necessary to open a diaspora bank account in BIAT bank branches back home.

Diasporans can also remit funds through bridging organizations in the diaspora ecosystem. For example, Thamel.com, which provides diasporans the opportunity to purchase and deliver locally produced products to friends and family in Nepal, recently dramatically extended their line of services to include remittance transfer and other remittance-based products. Through Thamel.com's Sewark service brand, diasporans can leverage remittances to directly pay education, health care, rent, utilities and other bills for those back home. They can also identify reliable Thamel.com employees to conduct a variety of services for them in Nepal, including escorting parents to the hospital and doctor's visits, delivering groceries, collecting rent and conducting legal, accounting and real estate services. Thamel.com's chief executive officer intentionally employs marginalized social groups (e.g. those from lower castes and women) as delivery and service agents to provide employment opportunities for those individuals and encourage greater diversity in social interaction in Nepalese society.

Engaging diasporas to amend remittance-sending behaviour can contribute to many of the Agenda 2030 SDGs. The inflow of capital can contribute to reductions in poverty in general. If remittances go beyond mere cash transfers utilized for immediate consumption and are instead leveraged for social or economic investments, remittances can contribute to good health/well-being, quality education, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and sustainable communities. As the innovative Thamel.com model demonstrates, when remittances are put to creative use, they can also contribute to other goals, such as gender equality and peace and justice goals as well.

*Tourism.* Diasporans not only send money back home, but they also make visits back home as well. Diaspora tourism can include visits to family, business trips, *bleisure* (business + leisure) excursions, medical tourism and heritage/

roots/birthright tours. Diaspora tourism can create development benefits beyond merely the cash spent while in the country. Many diasporans are comfortable exploring outside the high-tourism-traffic population centres and more likely to stay at locally owned or smaller accommodations, buy locally produced goods, and visit locally owned restaurants. They often serve as tourism ambassadors and demonstration agents for friends and family back home, encouraging travel to the country of origin/heritage and often non-traditional destinations and activities to new visitors. Diaspora visits often inspire additional diaspora engagement via other pathways, as experiences back home can generate volunteer, philanthropic and business involvement as well.

In many cases, individual diasporans or diaspora organizations in countries of residence engage diasporas for tourism purposes in countries of origin/destination. Diasporans often assume tour operator roles, organizing visits to the country of origin/heritage and marketing these excursions to their respective diaspora communities. A native of Senegal, Chef Pierre Thiam is an innovative diaspora entrepreneur, who leverages his cultural heritage to market educational culinary experiences in the United States via his New York restaurant, gastronomical events around the country, and his award-winning cookbooks, as well as organizing many educational culinary tours to Senegal itself. While he caters to a general culinary and adventure-tour market, he specifically targets the Senegalese diaspora to promote Senegalese culture and country-of-origin development.

Actors from the demand and the supply side of the diaspora engagement ecosystem are involved in diaspora tourism activities. For example, the Sankara Eye Foundation in India (through their US-based partner foundation), markets the opportunity for non-resident Indians (NRIs) to make short-term stays at eye foundation hospitals, so that diasporans can witness firsthand the life-changing work that these hospitals do. These visits often encourage NRIs to further engage with the eye hospitals through volunteerism and philanthropy.

Diaspora tourism contributes to several SDGs. Engaging diasporas for tourism in countries of origin can help to alleviate poverty and promote decent work and economic growth, industry and innovation through employment effects and tourism supply-chain development. Because diaspora tourism often extends beyond the main population centres, these economic development benefits can reach economically marginalized parts of the country of origin, thus potentially contributing to infrastructure-reduced inequalities. Since many diasporans are motivated to engage in tourism to promote sustainability back home, their product/service choices while visiting may



contribute to sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, and even life on the land.

**Table 1: Diaspora engagement and the SDGs**

Diaspora engagement type	Example 1	Example 2	SDGs addressed
Remittances	BIAT	Thamel.com	Poverty, good health/well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure-reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, responsible consumption and production
Tourism	Chef Pierre Thiam	Sankara Eye Foundation	Poverty, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure-reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, climate action, life on the land
Volunteerism skills transfer	Armenia Volunteer Corps (AVC)	Ghanaian Institute for Management and Public Administration (GIMPA)	Poverty, good health/well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure-reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, life on land, climate action
Philanthropy	Coptic Orphans	Charities Aid Foundation of America	Poverty, good health/well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure-reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, peace/justice

Diaspora engagement type	Example 1	Example 2	SDGs addressed
Direct investment	Connect Ireland	African Diaspora Marketplace	Poverty, good health/well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure-reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, life on land, life below water, climate action, responsible consumption and production, peace/justice/strong institutions
Portfolio investment	Movement Capital	Calvert Foundation	Poverty, good health/well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, life on land, life below water, climate action, responsible consumption and production, peace/justice/strong institutions

*Skills transfer.* Diasporans can also be engaged to invest human capital – either through volunteerism or paid work – in their countries of origin/heritage. While it is most common for diasporans to volunteer in countries of residence through organizations involved with development-oriented activities in their country of origin/heritage, some diasporans directly engage with organizations and individuals in their country of origin/heritage via long-term or short-term stays or through virtual exchanges online.

For example, Armenia Volunteer Corps (AVC), established in Armenia in 2001, has customized job placements for 600+ diaspora volunteers in a wide variety of sectors and organizations, including business, education, environment, arts and culture, finance, health, government and non-governmental agencies. In addition to volunteer placements, AVC also provides all logistical support from airport pick-up, to host-family living arrangements and Armenian language classes.

Recognizing that not all diasporans can make long-term stays, the Ghanaian Institute for Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) designed a creative mixed-modality executive Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme (part face-to-face, part online) to take advantage of short-term diaspora visits. Several of the faculty employed in this MBA programme are Ghanaian diasporans, who travel back to Ghana during breaks in the academic year in their country of residence (typically during winter, spring and summer breaks). The GIMPA executive MBA programme courses involve face-to-face classroom teaching by visiting diaspora faculty during these periods and then move to strictly online course delivery during the remainder of the time when the diaspora faculty returns to the country of residence.

IOM has been a leader in developing programmes that enable diaspora skills transfer back home, particularly in the health sector. For example, since 2008, IOM's MIDA FINNSOM Health Project has contributed to rebuilding and strengthening a depleted human resource base in the health sectors of Somaliland and Puntland. This programme has increased the capacity of receiving institutions to cope with the challenges they face and strengthened the knowledge, skills and abilities of local health professionals.

Assuming diaspora skill sets are well aligned with country of origin/heritage development needs and skill transfer programmes are well executed, diaspora volunteerism can also help contribute to achieving country of origin/heritage's SDGs. Depending on the specific volunteer work that the diasporans do, their knowledge, skills, and output can contribute to goals related to poverty reduction, good health/well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, life on the land, and climate action.

*Philanthropy.* Diasporans can also be engaged to contribute to charities in their country of origin/heritage, as well as create their own transnational charitable organizations. Diaspora philanthropic response to humanitarian crises in countries of origin/heritage tends to be immediate and substantial. But even outside of such crises, diasporans often are interested in contributing to organizations engaging in development-related activities back home. Oftentimes, philanthropic activities are identified and managed by diasporans themselves, mobilizing their unique transnational knowledge and social networks to contribute to the development of their country of origin in unique ways.

For example, Coptic Orphans is a non-profit organization established by Copts (Christian community in Egypt) living in diaspora dedicated to the support of fatherless Coptic children in Egypt. Through their child sponsor programme, Coptic Orphans raises funds from Copts in diaspora that enable the fatherless child to stay with their families and continue their education. Coptic Orphans has touched the lives of over 30,000 Coptic children in Egypt to date and has provided a social safety net to an often-marginalized group in Egyptian society.

Charities Aid Foundation of America has begun to organize diaspora donor-advised charitable funds. Their Bangladesh Diaspora Charitable Fund pooled the capital of three smaller already existing diaspora non-profit organizations. The newly aggregated fund is now governed by a board of the leaders of each of the organizations who collectively manage this fund and utilize fund resources to manage health-related projects in the Sylhet district of Bangladesh. Contributions to this fund are solicited from the Bangladeshi diaspora. A unique feature of this fund is that contributions are matched by a private-sector partner: Chevron matches fund contributions four-to-one as part of its comprehensive corporate social responsibility strategy for its operations in Bangladesh.

Assuming diaspora philanthropic contributions are well aligned with country of origin/heritage development needs and programmes are well executed, diaspora philanthropy can also help contribute to achieving country of origin/heritage SDGs. Philanthropic funds can contribute to activities that address poverty reduction, good health/well-being, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation, infrastructure-reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, climate action and peace/justice.

*Direct investment.* Diasporans can foster business investment in their country of origin/heritage both indirectly and directly. They often serve as country ambassadors, unofficially marketing their country of origin/heritage as a good place to do business to their personal and professional social networks. In some cases, multinational corporations will rely on diaspora managers to investigate the foreign investment potential of their country of origin/heritage or to lead market entry and launch into the country. Some entrepreneurial diasporans establish new ventures in their country of origin/heritage, either permanently returning home to run the business or doing so via circular migration.

Diaspora direct investment can be promoted and facilitated by demand-side actors. For example, ConnectIreland is a non-profit organization based

in Dublin that works closely with the country's investment promotion agency. ConnectIreland seeks to engage Irish diasporans to promote direct investment in Ireland – and financially rewards them for each new job created in the country. ConnectIreland employs creative marketing techniques to engage diasporans to participate in their programme, including an integrated marketing campaign strategy in Ireland's airports, with its taxi fleet, via promotional events, and through its website and viral social media campaigns. To date, ConnectIreland has engaged over 80,000 “connectors” whose investment-promotion activities have registered almost 2,500 new companies in over 14 different counties in Ireland.

Donor governments also have partnered to engage in the promotion of diaspora direct investment. For example, the African Diaspora Marketplace (ADM) programme, was established in 2009 and co-sponsored by the US Agency for International Development, Western Union, George Washington University, and other partners. The ADM promoted African diaspora direct investment by providing diaspora entrepreneurs the opportunity to compete for grant money, mentoring and other technical assistance through a multistage business plan competition. The ADM programme awarded 34 sub-Saharan Africa, Libyan and Tunisian diaspora-owned small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across a wide variety of industries with matched grants to start or expand businesses in their home countries.

Diaspora direct investment creates employment effects and often involves technology and/or know-how transfer. This investment can generate positive spillovers that help alleviate poverty, create opportunities for decent work and economic growth, industry and innovation. Given that diaspora investors are often motivated to invest capital to contribute to social and environmental development of their countries of origin/heritage, their investments may also contribute to other SDGs, such as good health/well-being, quality education, sustainable communities, life on the land, life below water, climate action, responsible consumption and production, and peace, justice and strong institutions.

*Portfolio investment.* While many diasporans may be interested in contributing to business development in their countries of origin/heritage, not all have the financial or human capital necessary to do so. Even many successful diaspora business people may not be able to move back home or go back and forth to start and run a new business back home. Opportunities to invest in country of origin/heritage businesses through portfolio investments, such as investing venture capital or other type of equity fund, contributing to a lending fund, or purchasing mutual funds, other stocks or purchasing direct equity provide the diasporan with the opportunity to invest without



“Black seminole” – or slaves that fled from the plantations and joined the Seminole tribes – wearing Native American costumes and mixing their culture with that of their African origins. © 2013 (Photo: Asier Villafranca)

the personal and financial costs of direct investment. Some governments, such as Israel, India, Ethiopia, Nepal and UNSC resolution 1244-administered Kosovo, have issued sovereign diaspora bonds to raise external capital resources for national development.

Movement Capital is an online investment platform that offers diasporans opportunities to invest in their country of origin/heritage through portfolio investment. Current offerings include opportunities for diasporans to invest in education, health care, agriculture and high-tech related investments in various countries around the world. Most investment vehicles on the Movement Capital site are diaspora bonds, debt and equity funds.

The Calvert Foundation has also created several diaspora-specific investment funds targeting specific national and regional diasporas. Calvert’s Indian Diaspora Investment Initiative raises funds from the Indian diaspora in the United States that are loaned to SMEs in the sanitation, education and health-care sectors in rural India.

Like the benefits of diaspora direct investment, diaspora portfolio investment can create employment. These investments can generate positive spillovers that help alleviate poverty and create opportunities for decent work and economic growth, industry and innovation. Given that diaspora investors are often motivated to invest capital to contribute to the social and environmental development of their countries of origin/heritage, their portfolio investments also may contribute to other SDGs, such as good health/well-being, quality education, sustainable communities, life on the land, life below water, climate action, responsible consumption and production, and peace, justice and strong institutions.

## ■ Implications

Global diasporas now are significant development stakeholders for many migration-sending countries. But there are some challenges associated with engaging, enabling and empowering diasporas to contribute to development.

- (1) **Finding ways to measure and align diaspora capital supply and demand.** It can be a challenge to align what diasporans want/can do with opportunities to engage in countries of origin/heritage. Most importantly, policy coherence – as it relates to migration – is needed at the national level and between the national and local levels. This better enables governments to speak with one voice to their diaspora communities abroad and increases the diaspora-perceived legitimacy, credibility and potential impact of government-sponsored diaspora engagement policies, programmes and products/services.

While diasporans can contribute capital in a myriad of ways, not every diaspora – or every diasporan – seeks to engage in the same way. It is important for migration-sending countries to conduct scientific, generalizable research on their diaspora communities to measure how diasporans are already engaging with their country of origin/heritage, ways they wish they could engage further, and what the diaspora-perceived engagement obstacles are – and how they can be overcome. Some diasporans may have a geographic preference for engagement, such as with their village, city or State of origin/heritage while others do not. Current diaspora engagement, engagement desires and potential, and diaspora-perceived obstacles may vary – by country or city of residence, immigration generation, race, ethnicity, religion, gender and/or socioeconomic status. Given that no population enumeration of individual diasporans exists, creating representative lists of diaspora organizations and individuals for sampling purposes requires investments of time and resources for migration-sending countries.

- (2) **Creating transnational communication channels and coordinated social-economic action in a State-structured world.** Several organizational forums have been created by governments seeking engagement with their diasporas abroad. A study conducted by the Migration Policy Institute identified three main diaspora-engagement organizational categories: (a) government institutions at home (including diaspora ministries, sub-ministry diaspora organizations, special diaspora offices, and local organizations); (b) consular networks; and (c) quasi-government organizations.



Many governments, such as India and Georgia, have established stand-alone diaspora ministries at home to support diaspora engagement efforts. This organizational form creates a one-stop shop for diasporans that want to engage in their country of origin/heritage, which can be particularly helpful for diasporans who return home seeking to engage. Such ministries often must invest considerable time and energy travelling and speaking to their diaspora communities in the many countries of residence where they reside. Diaspora ministries also are burdened by the responsibility of policy and resource coordination and collaboration across other government ministries and agencies that affect (and are affected by) diaspora engagement, such as ministries of foreign affairs, trade, tourism, the central bank and investment-promotion agencies. Successful cross-ministry collaboration and coordination is often dependent on many complex factors, including ministry leadership and individual personalities, as well as resource distribution and sharing norms associated with the general political context.

Some governments, such as Sri Lanka and Pakistan, utilize their consular networks to engage diasporas abroad in countries of residence. Such a strategy has the advantage of being highly local and embedded in countries of residence, and thus readily available to the diaspora community. This decentralized model of diaspora engagement often suffers from a lack of policy and programme coordination. Consular offices based in larger cities often garner greater resources and possess larger staff numbers and therefore are more capable of spending time and resources on diaspora needs. But these cities may not be the locations where diaspora communities are largest in number or where the most engaged diaspora individuals or organizations reside.

Morocco and Mali have partnered closely with NGOs, such as foundations and diaspora councils, to engage diasporas abroad. These public-private partnerships can create significant opportunities for closer communication and collaboration between migration-sending country governments and the leadership of these NGOs. Their effectiveness in terms of holistic diaspora engagement often is largely dependent on how well the NGO communicates and collaborates with the diaspora, as well as how legitimate and credible the NGO is perceived to be by the diaspora. These are typically steep challenges to overcome given the geographic dispersion and political, economic and social heterogeneity of most diasporas. These public-private partnership models are also sometimes difficult to manage if roles, expectations and resource-use issues are not well articulated and agreed upon by all parties involved.



(3) **Investing in continuous relationship management** – Perhaps one of the greatest challenges migration-sending countries face when trying to engage, enable and empower their diasporas for development is to institutionalize relationships between the government and individual diasporans and diaspora organizations abroad. Governments that successfully initiate diaspora engagement strategies are often reliant on the specific relationships that a government leader (or a team) personally establish and maintain over time. But government leadership changes, and individuals leave government positions and change roles. What happens to government-diaspora relationships – and diaspora engagement – when those changes occur? Few governments embrace the idea that diasporans are similar to customers – they are customers for government ideas, policies, programmes and services about diaspora engagement. Long-term diaspora engagement success, then, is often reliant on the employment of relationship-management software and programmes more commonly used in the private sector to warehouse information about each relationship, as well as chronicle interactions, preferences and planned next-step actions with each relationship.

Diaspora human and financial capital can be engaged, enabled and empowered for development successfully, but careful thought and resources are needed to measure and align diaspora capital supply and demand, create transnational communication channels and coordinated action, and consistently maintain those important diaspora relationships over time.



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## Endnotes

1. Liesl Riddle is the Associate Professor of International Business and International Affairs at George Washington University and Associate Dean for Graduate Programmes at the George Washington University School of Business.
2. The word “diaspora” is from the Greek word *diaspeirein* (“disperse”) (from *dia*, which means “across” and *speirein*, which means “scatter”). Until 1990, the term was primarily used in English as a capitalized word and limited to “the dispersion of Jews outside of Israel from the sixth century BC, when they were exiled to Babylonia, until the present time”. But in 1990, the entry to the American Heritage Dictionary was amended to include a more generic, lowercase use of the term “diaspora” to refer to “a dispersion of a people from their original homeland”. The expansion of the term in 1990 was linguistically necessary to describe not only the increased dispersion of people taking place around the globe but also the new consequences and opportunities associated with this dispersion. The term originated in the Septuagint (Deuteronomy 28:25) in the phrase *esē diaspora en pasais basileias tēs gēs*, which means “thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth”.
3. G. Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home and Abroad* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006).
4. International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Diaspora and Development*, homepage (n.d.). Available from <https://diaspora.iom.int/>
5. These higher-than-average capital endowments may be due to selection effects favouring migrants and/or increased opportunities for capital accumulation in countries of residence.
6. See for example: K. Gillespie et al., “Diaspora interest in homeland investment”, *Journal of International Business Studies*, 30(3):623–634 (1999); T. Nielsen and L. Riddle, “Investing in peace: The motivational dynamics of diaspora investment in post-conflict economies”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 89(4):435–448 (2009); United States Agency for International Development (USAID), *African Diaspora Investment Survey* (USAID, Washington, D.C., 2011); and USAID, *Ukrainian Diaspora Investment Study* (USAID, Washington, D.C., 2016).
7. See for example Nielsen and Riddle (2009) and World Bank, *Sierra Leone - Diaspora Investment and Trade Study* (World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2015), available from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/833001468189871473/Sierra-Leone-Diaspora-investment-and-trade-study>
8. For example, USAID has discovered that while Indian diasporans are mostly motivated to invest in India by financial return expectations, Bangladeshi diasporans are more motivated by emotional return expectations, and Ukrainian diasporans are motivated by institutional change expectations. See reports available from [www.chemonics.com/OurWork/OurProjects/Documents/US%20AMEG%20Indian%20Diaspora%20Investment%20Research%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://www.chemonics.com/OurWork/OurProjects/Documents/US%20AMEG%20Indian%20Diaspora%20Investment%20Research%20Final%20Report.pdf), [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00KM7B.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00KM7B.pdf) and USAID, 2016.
9. For example, see K. Gillespie, E. Sayre and L. Riddle, “Changes in Palestinian-American interest in homeland investment 1994–1999”, *Middle East Studies Journal*, 55(2): 237–255 (2001).
10. D. Ratha, “Workers remittances: An important and stable source of external development finance”, In: World Bank, *Global Development Finance: Striving for Stability in Development Finance* (World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2003), pp. 157–175.
11. World Bank, *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016* (World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2016). It is important to note that while this is the most readily available summary statistic for global remittance flows, this measure has been criticized for conflating many types of cross-board capital transfers sent by migrants back home. For an excellent discussion of this, please see IOM, *IOM Position Paper on Remittances* (IOM, Geneva, n.d.).



# IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MIGRATION, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE- RELATED COMMITMENTS OF THE 2030 AGENDA



Eva Mach<sup>1</sup>



## 1. Introduction

The interaction between migration and environment has been omnipresent since the beginning of human history. On the one hand, environmental impacts have long been a factor in driving migration, as people naturally move out of harm's way and towards favourable conditions seeking greener pastures. On the other hand, the influence of migration on the environment has been a universal phenomenon with agriculture, industrialization and urbanization shaping our natural surroundings.

In a world with more than 244 million international migrants and at least 763 million internal migrants,<sup>2</sup> 1 billion people on the move become not only an international or national governance concern but also a powerful engine of development.<sup>3</sup> In order to promote a truly sustainable development, we must take into account this multidimensional mega trend of our century when designing and financing development. At the same time, we must consider the multifaceted risks and opportunities environmental and climate change might bring.

This paper aims to discuss the complex interlinkages between migration and environment/climate change from a bidirectional perspective, as well as explore ways the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their specified targets can help to address the multiple challenges of the migration-environment nexus and turn them into opportunities.

The first section explores the first dimension of the migration, environment and climate change (MECC) nexus by looking at how environmental and climate changes restructure migration patterns and how responding to MECC challenges can support the implementation of the SDGs.

The second section looks at the other dimension of MECC, namely how we can manage migration and capitalize on “green migration governance” to mitigate impacts on the environment and climate and boost green development.

The paper also outlines the key challenges in connection with MECC that might hinder sustainable development and identify how MECC issues can contribute positively to sustainable development.

## 2. Environment and migration in the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted in 2015, setting 17 development goals and 169 associated targets in order to build a global development framework for transformational change: to ensure well-being for all and to protect the planet. The SDGs represent the framework for development for the next 13 years to come and recognize the integral role of migration in contributing to sustainable development and make numerous references to its governance, management and practice:

*We recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. We also recognize that international migration is a multi-dimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses. We will cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries. We underline the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship, and recall that States must ensure that their returning nationals are duly received.*

Although governments must play the leading role in driving sustainable development, acknowledging and harnessing the power of migration is critical. Under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, migration is seen as a way to reduce inequality within and among countries and

was embedded in SDG 10 with target 10.7, calling to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”.

While the most evident reference to migration is found in target 10.7, the cross-cutting migration, environment and climate change issue is to be addressed under several other SDGs.

Environmental considerations are central to the realization of the 2030 Agenda; they are cross-cutting and integrated in all 17 goals.<sup>4</sup> The SDGs recognize the interconnectedness of economic, social and environmental development to be at the heart of sustainable development. The Goals indicate and call for a drastic acceleration of environmental sustainability and climate change mainstreaming into all areas of life, including migration policies and programmes.

In 2016, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) devoted its International Dialogue on Migration to a full review of migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to migration-related targets under the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>5</sup> The two workshops dedicated to migration and SDGs emphasized the cross-cutting nature of migration and its many interlinkages with development, environment, climate change and disaster risk reduction (DRR). They highlighted that migration cannot be considered in isolation from development policies and climate change actions:

*(...) the SDGs reinforce other important international frameworks developed in recent years, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the SAMOA Pathway and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The global compact on migration should bring many of those strands together in a guiding document for the governance of international migration.*

## **2.1. Environmental migration in the SDGs**

Today, twice as many people are displaced by weather-related natural disasters than by conflict and violence.<sup>6</sup> Various data<sup>7</sup> suggests that migration – both internal and cross-border – is expected to escalate given the impacts of climate change on livelihoods. Moving might be, for many, the only practicable adaptation strategy in light of the unprecedented impacts on lives and livelihoods of those relying on natural resources, including both land and water.



The topic of environmental migration has gained significant attention in the past years due to its inclusion in the environmental debates, above all in the climate change discussions concerning climate justice and loss and damage. The First Assessment Report (1990 AR1) of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was key in bringing visibility to the mobility dimension of the climate change debate.<sup>8</sup> While acknowledging the complexity of migration decisions, the most recent Fifth Assessment report (2015 AR5) further highlighted the impacts of climate change – especially of varying climate extremes – on diverse human mobility trends and underlined the link between the impacts of climate change on lives and livelihoods and migration.<sup>9</sup> The 2015 Paris Agreement<sup>10</sup> was a watershed for the topic as it officially acknowledged migration as one of the consequences of and responses to climate change.<sup>11</sup>

Further, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants,<sup>12</sup> adopted in 2016, is the first major international migration text to acknowledge the importance of MECC nexus. The Declaration refers to both dimensions of MECC: (a) migration due to environmental and/or climate change; and (b) environmental change due to migration. The Declaration is a key step forward towards migration policy starting to incorporate climate and environmental challenges.<sup>13</sup>

Environmental factors reshape human mobility across different times, space and with diverse scale. Rapid-onset events trigger migration as a life-saving mechanism and usually result in sudden internal and temporary displacement with studies increasingly pointing out the risk of protracted displacement.<sup>14</sup> Slow-onset events as a result of progressive environmental degradation and climate change may result in longer term, permanent and regional environmental and climate migration.

Migration, on the one hand, acts as an indicator of exposure in areas prone to environmental change, which can be understood by looking at the relative percentage of outmigration from affected areas and in-migration to affected areas (mainly in the urban setting). On the other hand, migration can be an indicator of resilience, as it could potentially increase access to livelihood opportunities for households at risk and increase diversity of resources at hand (including diaspora remittances). Migration as an indicator of resilience can also be demonstrated through the increase in the number of spontaneous, sustainable return of migrants, vis-à-vis the number of displaced by natural disasters,<sup>15</sup> as that would indicate that the community has sufficiently developed its capacity to adapt to natural disasters (with sustainable livelihood options available for local populations).

In the context of global environmental changes, it is crucial to consider the challenges and opportunities migration may pose to achieve sustainable development.

The SDGs provide several entry points for governments to address environmental migration through the following:

- (a) Ending poverty by building resilience of vulnerable populations to extreme events under Goal 1;
- (b) Achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture and strengthening capacity for adaptation to environmental changes under Goal 2;
- (c) Reducing the number of people suffering from water scarcity under Goal 6;
- (d) Promoting the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies under Goal 10;
- (e) Reducing the number of deaths and people affected by disasters through effective DRR practices and strengthening development planning for resilient cities and settlements under Goal 11; and
- (f) Building adaptive capacity in the face of climate change and integrating climate change measures in policies under Goal 13.

Migration management services respond directly to these goals with the following objectives: (a) minimizing forced and unmanaged migration due to environmental and climate change as much as possible; (b) ensuring assistance and protection for those affected and seeking durable solutions where forced migration does occur; and (c) facilitating the role of migration as an adaptation strategy to climate change.<sup>16</sup>

The first two objectives of environmental migration management resonate throughout several targets (see Annex), as they intend to provide assistance for people facing environmental change and facilitate in-situ adaptation. Thus, incorporating migration in DRR, land management, urban design, climate change and other natural resources governance is key to enabling governments to reach SDG targets and advance on the path towards sustainability.

Furthermore, migration represents an adaptation response and DRR measure to environmental and climate change impacts. It can be a coping mechanism and survival strategy for those who move and also for those who

stay behind. Migration can also lift pressures from the environment and from local resources, especially where resource depletion is a problem. Facilitating well-managed migration schemes, which build resilience and help people to adapt to the changing environment, can therefore contribute directly to sustainable development.<sup>17</sup>

In line with the SDGs, migration can play a significant role in the sustainable management of natural resources through the following:

- (a) Improving the understanding of the risks related to marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystem degradation, natural resource depletion and their impacts on local communities and human mobility;
- (b) Identifying vulnerable communities living in areas of climate hotspots where natural resources are at risk, leading to outmigration, including areas under water stress or prone to desertification;
- (c) Informing and raising the awareness of policymakers and communities in order to support inclusive policy development in the cross-cutting field of MECC; and
- (d) Developing projects and programmes at the international, regional and national levels aimed at improving sustainable marine, coastal and land ecosystem management, protection and rehabilitation financed by migrant resources (both financial and human, internal and diaspora remittances).

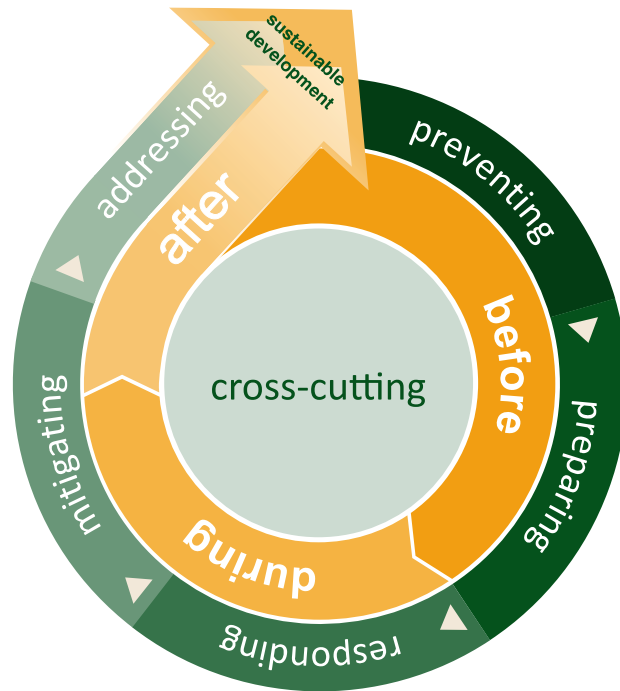
## **2.2. “Greening” migration governance**

The purpose of this section is to show how the SDG framework can provide a compass and be a catalyst for “greening migration governance” by ensuring that environmental considerations and climate change are mainstreamed into operations. Operationalizing and applying environmental governance – which include internationally agreed multilateral conventions aiming to protect the natural environment such as the Rio Conventions – to policies and programmes focused on migration management, can contribute significantly to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Migration management can support the implementation of the SDGs in two ways. First, it can be an effective DRR, resilience-building and adaptation strategy. Second, it has the potential to contribute to mitigation efforts throughout the whole migration cycle. Transition to a low-carbon, sustainable development requires that migration operational frameworks be closely coordinated with environment-related SDG targets during all migratory phases (before, during and after migration occurs).



Figure 1: Different stages of the migration cycle



Source: IOM, 2013.<sup>18</sup>

Given the increasing number of migrants across the globe and the known impacts of migration on the environment, migration governance must play an essential role in achieving environment-related SDGs. Environmentally sustainable practices can be deployed both in the humanitarian and development settings during different migration phases in order to ensure that migration governance does not put natural resources at risk nor increases the burden on the already changing climate.

IOM defines “green migration governance” as migration policy and practice that is designed and implemented in line with environmental standards and aims to deploy innovative green initiatives when managing human mobility.

In light of Goal 6 to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, green migration governance encourages the deployment of environmentally friendly water management systems in camp setting, transit centres and other facilities dealing with migrants and related services. It also promotes responsible water resource management, including sustainable waste water treatment.

Under Goal 7 to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and Goal 13 to combat climate change, green migration governance calls for the scaling up of current clean energy initiatives throughout the whole migration cycle and migration management. Examples of green energy activities, which contribute to mitigation efforts while making a difference in the lives of migrants and host communities, include, inter alia, the Global Solar Lanterns Initiative,<sup>19</sup> solar energy driven development in crisis and post-crisis areas and bioenergy programmes.

Green migration governance also focuses on waste management in line with Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and aims to make sustainable procurement decisions and substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse.

In keeping with the environment-related SDG goals, green migration governance strives to address the environmental drivers of migration, including climate change impacts on local environments, and at the same time contribute to environmentally friendly adaptation and mitigation efforts in partnership with migrant and host communities.



© IOM (Photo: Amanda Nero)

### 3. Conclusion and recommendations

Migration currently remains poorly integrated into the broader development framework. The SDGs can respond to this challenge thanks to the particular construction of the SDG framework, where multiple goals and targets contribute to one overarching purpose.

IOM's Migration, Environment and Climate Change approach brings together the two MECC dimensions. It calls, on the one hand, for the design of migration solutions to save lives and secure sustainable livelihoods; on the other, for the creation of incentives to channel migrant and diaspora investments into sustainable natural resource management practices and green initiatives.

Governments have the responsibility and equally the power to address the challenges and harness the opportunities of the migration, environment and climate change nexus in the context of the SDG framework, while actively seeking out partnerships with the private sector and civil society.

Specific recommendations when designing policies on MECC and SDGs include the following:

- (a) Acknowledge that the sustainable development path is challenged by current global and local environmental and climate changes and their impacts, which need to be factored in when designing migration governance frameworks, migration management programmes and activities.
- (b) Recognize the contributions of migrants and the importance of migration to sustainable development as migration can reduce vulnerability to environmental hazards and lessen the impact of crises on development through well-designed migration schemes, remittances and relocation.
- (c) Explore and support the potential of migration for development with a focus on building resilience and supporting adaptation and mitigation.
- (d) Include policy provisions for the most vulnerable trapped populations who are unable to make use of migration as a coping or adaptation strategy, in line with the commitment to "leave no one behind".
- (e) Factor environmental (including climate) migration in national development planning and incorporate proactive response measures accordingly.

- (f) Ensure that migration management and governance can contribute to the implementation of the environment-related SDG goals and design projects with positive environmental and mitigation benefits.

The future of migration governance will depend on how existing cross-cutting intergovernmental agreements – such as the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – will be operationalized in a truly sustainable and coordinated manner. The impact of the SDGs will depend on how successfully they are mainstreamed across different policy areas and the extent to which these efforts are coordinated. Goal 17 on global partnerships will play a key role in building bridges and harmonizing international and national plans for sustainable development beyond 2030.

The International Organization for Migration – UN Migration Agency supports that well-managed, proactive migration governance benefits all and it can contribute significantly to mitigation and adaptation efforts. Contingent upon timely and well-designed migration policy responses, migration can have positive effects through lifting pressures from local environmental coping capacities by deploying it as an adaptation strategy, as well as through greening migration governance and related activities to support mitigation measures.



Days after Typhoon Bopha left the Philippines, the scale of destruction only become clear with tens of thousands homeless and hundreds still missing. © IOM 2012 (Photo: Billy Jamisolamin)

## Endnotes

1. Written by Eva Mach, Programme Officer, Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC) Division, International Organization for Migration (IOM). Coordinated with Dina Ionesco, Head, MECC Division, IOM and reviewed by Sieun Lee, Programme Officer, MECC Division, IOM.
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Heavy rains in August 2013 left 37 dead and about 20,000 people displaced in Bamako, Mali. IOM, together with the Government of Mali, provided over 500 non-food relief kits to the worst affected families. © IOM 2013 (Photo: Fabrice Recalt)

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## Annex

The objective to address environmental migration resonates through the following targets:

- (a) Target 1.5: By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.
- (b) Target 2.4: By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters, and that progressively improve land and soil quality.
- (c) Target 6.4: By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of fresh water to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
- (d) Target 11.5: Reduce deaths and number of people affected and economic losses caused by disasters.
- (e) Target 11.b: By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.
- (f) Target 13.1: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.
- (g) Target 13.2: Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
- (h) Target 13.3: Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
- (i) Target 14.2: By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans.



- (j) Target 15.3: By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.
- (k) Target 17.18: By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.





# MIGRATION AND HEALTH IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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## Abstract

The 2030 Sustainable Development agenda, with a specific goal on health (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3) and a target on migration (10.7) within the goal on reducing inequalities, presents opportunities and challenges with respect to promoting the health of migrants. Migrants are substantial contributors to development, and migration often results in an improved social and economic status for communities of origin and destination. Yet, many migrant groups are marginalized and, in spite of their right to health, may face considerable barriers in accessing equitable social and health-care services. As a result, migrants' ability to remain healthy and productive can be severely compromised. Based on the principle of "leave no one behind", a number of goals and targets of the SDG Agenda offer opportunities and solutions to promote migrant health, both directly and indirectly, across sectoral lines. Starting with the critical principle of universal health coverage, the health targets outlined in SDG 3 address a broad range of issues, from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases and mental health, and different migrant populations demonstrate particular needs in each. Other SDG targets that address resilience to economic, social and environmental disasters, orderly and safe migration, global multi-stakeholder partnerships, child and gender-based violence, forced labour and trafficking, and social protection schemes, to mention a few, must also be examined through the broader lens of social determinants that impact

migrant health and well-being. This paper will review current practices and policies related to migrant health, identify model national or regional SDG initiatives to enhance the health of migrants, and suggest areas for future work.

**Figure 1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**



Source: United Nations.

## 1. Introduction

Global migration offers both opportunities and challenges with respect to the health of migrants and for the systems called to respond to their health needs. Migrants may enjoy an improved health status through access to income-generating opportunities, better housing, improved nutrition and a higher standard of health care and security. However, migrants can face many risks during the migration process, are often marginalized in their countries of destination, and may encounter barriers in accessing health-care services due to restrictive policies, discrimination, and a lack of migration-sensitive health systems and conducive policies across sectors. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on countries to overcome health inequalities, leaving no one behind. It recognizes that safe, dignified and regular migration is linked to equitable access to health services.

Migrants are not a homogenous group, and specific health resilience and vulnerability factors are associated with each typology, phase and context of the migration process, whether voluntary; acute and crisis-driven; or long-term, structural and disparity-driven. While many migrants experience a higher standard of living and health status in their destination countries, and are able to improve the lives of their families at home through remittances, there are groups that are exposed to very specific health risks. These include irregular migrants and low-skilled workers, particularly women and youth in precarious employment settings, who are often invisible in health and social protection systems. Achieving universal health coverage (UHC) will require bringing these groups out of the shadows to protect their right to health and ensure their access and inclusion to equitable health services.

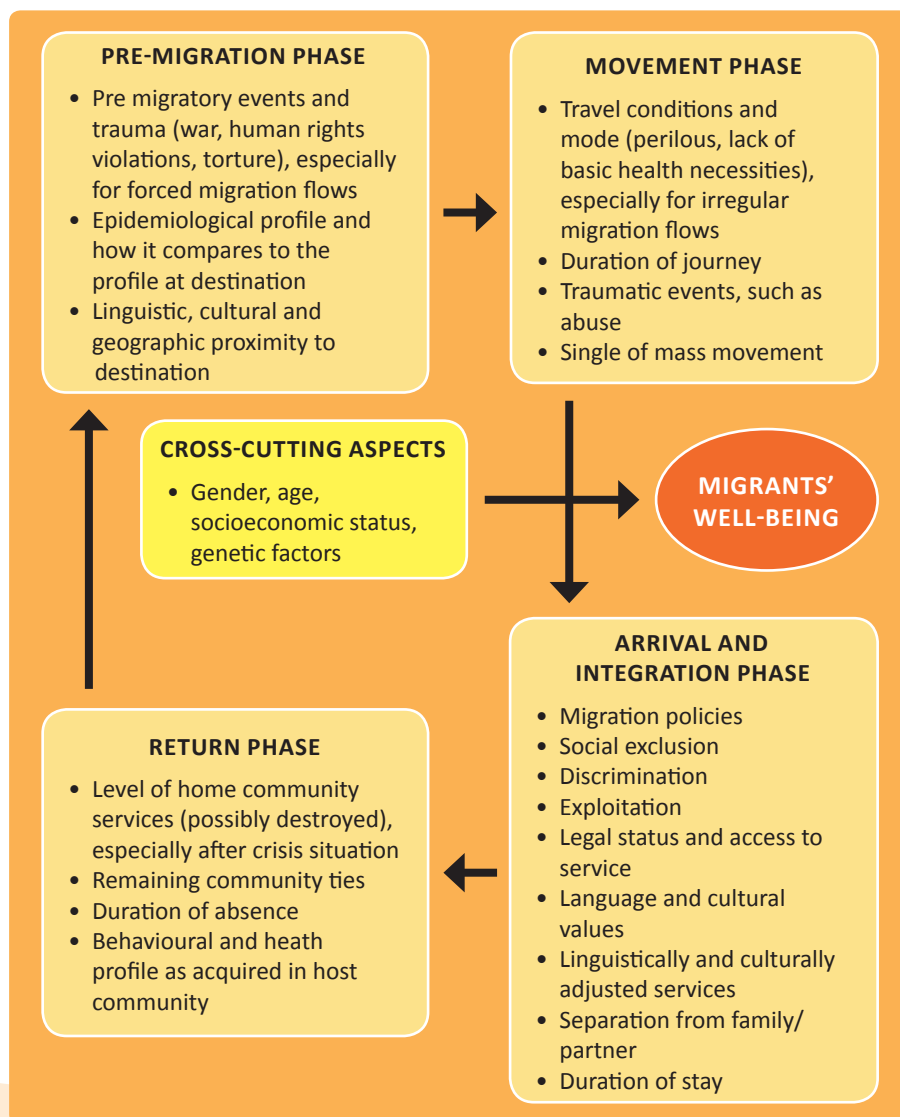
Improving access to needed health services is, however, not the only consideration in achieving positive health outcomes for migrants. The migration process itself is increasingly recognized as a social determinant of health for migrants, their families and communities. Policies and practices related to education, gender, labour, development and the humanitarian sphere affect migrants' resiliency and vulnerabilities, demanding an all-of-government and all-of-society approach to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Individual, societal and structural factors need to be addressed through a multisectoral approach to have a meaningful impact on the health of migrants.

Migration has begun to find a place in global health discussions, and health issues are being raised in high-level dialogues on development and migration. Yet migration health remains an under-researched area in global health and is scarcely addressed by health system planners. Given the ever-growing prominence of migration and human mobility across the globe, governments are challenged to integrate the health needs of migrants into national plans, policies and strategies. Healthy migrants contribute to the advancement of human capital in both sending and receiving countries, supporting healthy communities and healthy economies. The authors argue that investing in the health needs of migrants and mobile populations throughout the migration cycle protects global public health, facilitates social integration and contributes to economic prosperity. This paper will identify key issues and promising practices related to the health of migrants across a broad range of SDGs, including those related to the realization of UHC, and highlight national and international efforts to address migrant health through a collaborative, cross-sectoral approach.

## 2. Context of health issues in migration

The migration process may be considered as a social determinant of health,<sup>1</sup> with various benefits and risk factors at different stages of migration (see Figure 1). As the numbers of migrants moving between countries has increased on a global scale, the variety of motivations and conditions for mobility, as well as the socioeconomic and political climate within which this happens, adds to the complexity of responding to health challenges faced by migrants in their sending, transit and receiving countries.

**Figure 2: Factors of migration stages that can affect migrants' health<sup>2</sup>**



Migration can improve the health status of migrants and their families by providing an escape from persecution and violence, as well as improving their socioeconomic status through better education and the economic benefits realized through higher income and the sending of remittances. There is extensive evidence showing that the vast majority of migrants are young, fit and healthy when they embark on their migrant journeys. On the other hand, the migration process itself can expose some migrant groups to health risks through unsafe travel, changes in disease epidemiology, poor nutrition or living conditions and psychosocial stress. Some migrants may be especially vulnerable, such as those forcefully displaced, or being trafficked, or in an irregular status. In their destination countries, their living and working conditions, their distance from their families and support system, as well as their access to adequate, appropriate and continued health care, especially for those with chronic medical conditions, and reliance on self-medication or cultural practices of alternative medicine can affect the overall health status of migrants. Additionally, recent evidence from a number of Asian countries highlight the health and psychosocial impacts on the left-behind families of migrants.<sup>3</sup>

Addressing the health of migrants is a sound public health strategy and critical to assuring global health security. Providing easily accessible and quality health care to migrant workers and their families not only benefits migrant populations, productivity and self-resilience, but also serves to simultaneously protect the people of the transit and receiving communities. If migrant workers are unable to access public health systems (for example, due to undocumented status, fear of arrest or job loss, stigmatization, financial costs or lack of time), then they will be forced to remain untreated, potentially undermining the comprehensive public health response required to keep all persons on the nation's territory healthy and safe.<sup>4</sup> Health vulnerabilities of migrant workers also extend to exposure to health security threats, such as influenza pandemics and other public health emergencies of international concern. An example is the health vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers in poultry and animal husbandry sectors in the context of an avian influenza viral outbreak. Furthermore, restrictive migration policies that criminalize irregular migration, often placing undocumented migrants, including children, in overcrowded detention settings, and policies that prohibit their access to health care can increase their health risks and lead to poor health outcomes, including psychosocial issues. Due to a combination of legal, sociocultural, behavioural, language and economic barriers, some migrant workers have limited awareness of or access to health and social services, which extends to pandemic preparedness, mitigation and response at national level.<sup>5</sup>

Migrants move with their health profiles, needs and conditions, whether acquired prior or during the migration process. Migrant health is thus a matter of shared responsibility and interest that extends beyond national boundaries. Regional and global stewardship is required, as well as interventions that focus specifically on migrant and mobile populations to help reduce the global burden and possible cross-border spread of diseases, while achieving safe and orderly migration. For example, efforts to identify and treat diseases through a non-discriminatory and health promotion approach, such as tuberculosis (TB) screening linked with treatment, follow-up and contact tracing during immigration health assessments, not only benefits the migrants themselves, but also their families, host communities and overall public health.

Migrant health issues cannot be solved by the health sector alone. Migration and health are inextricably linked to other policies on, for example, development, foreign policy, security, foreign employment and the environment, and solutions require the broader engagement of a multisectoral constituency, as well as coherent and coordinated policies. An effective response will also require the establishment of permanent networks of interested countries willing to support the advancement of the agenda on the health of migrants in multiple platforms of international debate and cooperation, and to tackle policy obstacles through committed global health diplomacy.

### 3. Tracing migrant health through the SDGs: Opportunities and solutions

Looking forward to the promotion of migrants' health through the SDGs also requires reflecting back at what has already been achieved. In 2008, Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted a resolution on the health of migrants (WHA 61.17) that paved the way for the 2010 Global Consultation on Migrant Health in Madrid. Co-organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), WHO and the Government of Spain, the consultation defined an operational framework to guide Member States and stakeholders in implementing the WHO resolution. The framework reaffirmed the need to take a rights-based, equity-driven, multisectoral approach through four priority areas for action:

- (a) Monitoring of migrants' health;
- (b) Policy and legal framework;
- (c) Migrant-sensitive health systems; and
- (d) Partnerships, networks and multi-country frameworks.





IOM's Director General addresses Member States during the High-level Panel on Migration, Human Mobility and Global Health at the 106th Session of the IOM Council. © IOM 2015.

More recently, at the 106th IOM Council in November 2015, a High-level Panel on Migration, Human Mobility and Global Health offered recommendations to advance the unfinished migrant health agenda for all.<sup>6</sup> Migration health issues were also raised at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016,<sup>7</sup> the WHO Executive Board in January 2017,<sup>8</sup> and the Second Global Consultation on Migrant Health in Sri Lanka in February 2017.<sup>9</sup> The latter offered a platform for multisectoral dialogue and political engagement, particularly through the endorsement of the Colombo Statement,<sup>10</sup> to ensure the mainstreaming of the migration health agenda and a coordinated response to future governing bodies and international development processes.

Building on these efforts, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers a framework for addressing the health of migrants, engaging efforts and resources of national and international actors as they work to achieve the SDG targets. Three key points in the agenda open the door for migrant health-oriented efforts: (a) the overarching goal of “leave no one behind”; (b) the specific targets in the health goal, SDG 3; and (c) the inclusion of an explicit goal related to migration, SDG 10 – to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. These should compel communities, national governments, humanitarian and development stakeholders to work together to integrate health needs of migrants into national plans, policies and strategies across sectors.

In examining the SDGs, there are health-specific targets in SDG 3 for which migrant needs can be identified, such as target 3.8, which calls for UHC, and there are also migrant health issues contained in other sectoral goals and targets (see Figure 3). The themes related to these include the exploitation of and violence against migrants; the conditions of migration; and strengthening the health practice, policy, and partnership infrastructure. Each will be examined in more detail below.

**Figure 3: Tracing migrant health through the SDGs: Opportunities and solutions**



### **SDG 3: Good health and well-being**

As the leading global health agency, the WHO has analysed the health-related goals and targets within the SDGs. The cornerstone, SDG 3.8, calls for UHC, while an additional 13 targets in SDG 3 have been identified as related to migrants. This confirms the critical need to address social determinants of health with a multisector all-of-government and all-of-society approach for cost-effective and participatory solutions. This paper will focus on a few SDG goals with particular relevance to migrants’ health.

When viewed through the lens of “leave no one behind”, SDG target 3.8 on achieving UHC demands the inclusion of migrants, irrespective of their legal residence status, under the national health coverage schemes, with dedicated financial mechanisms and adaptation for such coverage. Failure to do so would run counter to global health, and public health principles, ethics and UHC goals.

The realization of universal health care for migrants will require innovative practices and policies, and sustainable financial mechanisms that balance public health costs due to exclusion and neglect, with the positive dividends of a healthy and integrated migrant population. Considered in tandem with SDG 1.3, which calls for implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, current efforts to achieve health coverage of migrants through a variety of national approaches can be identified. For example, a few countries offer health protection for their citizens who move abroad, including Sri Lanka and the Philippines. The Overseas Filipinos Program covers nationals living or working abroad, regardless of their legal status, including, dual citizens and international students. Land-based overseas workers are required to pay their premiums individually, while shipping companies cover the cost for sea-based workers. Other countries require migrants or their employers to purchase health insurance, which may be private or sponsored by the Government. Malaysia has a mandatory private medical coverage scheme for all foreign workers, and Singapore has a similar requirement for semi-skilled workers. Thailand allows undocumented migrants to opt into its Compulsory Migrant Health Insurance scheme, which regular migrants obtain through their employers, often having to pay part of the premium. However, the scheme does not have the same benefits as those available for Thai citizens.<sup>11</sup>

Only a handful of countries, including (but not limited to) France, the Netherlands and Denmark, give legal migrant workers unconditional inclusion in a system of health coverage.<sup>12</sup> Other countries such as Sweden allow equal access for regular migrants but more limited access for undocumented migrants. In Italy, for example, undocumented migrants are entitled to essential and basic health-care services, such as maternity care and health care for infectious diseases. After a three-month waiting period, migrants in Canada are entitled to the same health-care coverage as Canadian nationals, but the entitlements of undocumented migrants and certain asylum seekers are less comprehensive. In Costa Rica and Morocco, foreigners who are in the country irregularly can access the health system for emergency services.<sup>13</sup>

However, from a global perspective, the vast majority of migrants (and nearly all irregular migrants) lack access to adequate, affordable health protection. Social and political antagonisms towards migrants have stripped many health benefits from national health programmes that previously offered them, and the trends in this direction are gaining force in many countries. Even when they do have access to insurance, migrants often have difficulties accessing health services. There is often a lack of awareness of these health benefits among migrants, health and social care providers often discriminate,<sup>14</sup> and there are linguistic and cultural barriers to accessing foreign health systems.<sup>15</sup>

With respect to other health targets in SDG 3, there are several of particular concern to migrant health, including those related to maternal and childhood mortality, access to reproductive health rights and services (also in 5.6), communicable diseases and mental health. Migrant women and girls, especially those who have been trafficked or are in an irregular situation, often lack access to reproductive health services and experience worse outcomes, from unwanted pregnancy<sup>16</sup> to infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. An IOM-sponsored mobile clinic in North Darfur has offered antenatal care, nutritional assistance and education programmes for girls, women and midwives on a variety of reproductive health issues.<sup>17</sup> Several key global health programmes, such as those for TB, HIV/AIDS, malaria and non-communicable diseases, are now recognizing the importance of targeting vulnerable populations such as migrants, without whom national and global targets cannot be achieved. For example, the newly launched End TB strategy specifically addresses the needs of migrants and calls for adaptation at the country level and collaboration with the migration sector.<sup>18</sup> Finally, while migrants may leave their home countries in a relatively healthy condition, acculturation to the lifestyle of high-income countries can increase their risk for a variety of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and coronary artery disease.<sup>19</sup>



IOM's health facility in an internally displaced persons settlement in Jowle in Somalia © IOM 2015.

With respect to mental health, the various stages of the migration process create specific risk factors that can lead to increased mental health difficulties. From traumatic conditions that may motivate the migration process to displacement and loss issues that arise in transit and resettlement, being a migrant involves exposure to a variety of psychosocial distress and adjustment issues.<sup>20</sup> Migrants in irregular situations often live for prolonged periods in a state of uncertainty about their fate, and have limited or no access to services, factors that impact negatively on their mental well-being.<sup>21</sup> Researchers in Germany, which has received a record number of migrants and asylum seekers in the last two years, are looking at both causes and potential interventions for the high prevalence of psychosocial disorders they are seeing in this population.<sup>22</sup>

### **Exploitation of and violence against migrants**

Several SDGs address the issue of violence towards and the exploitation of migrants. Fleeing from conflict situations, and encountering unsafe travel conditions and exploitation during the migration process, put migrants at risk of violence, both physical and psychological (SDG 16.1). Women and girls, who are particularly vulnerable to physical and mental abuse and sexually transmitted diseases as a result of trafficking, are addressed in SDG 5.2, and the abuse and exploitation of children is called out in SDG 16.2. This violence may be experienced even in regular employment situations. A recent study of Sri Lankan women returning from domestic employment in the Middle East showed evidence of injuries, repetitive/systematic violence, psychological trauma and confiscation of personal identity papers and travel documents.<sup>23</sup> These vulnerabilities are often hidden, especially for those in an irregular situation, and migrants are often deliberately kept from the health and social service system. When they are able to access services, providers need to probe for and address the trauma experienced as a result of migration-related violence. In Thailand, IOM has supported the work of the national victim-screening unit to identify trafficked persons among detained migrant groups from Lao People's Republic, Myanmar, Cambodia and Viet Nam before deporting them. The migrants, mainly women and children, are interviewed by trained officials and referred for further assistance if there is evidence that they may have been trafficked. IOM supports translation services for victims of trafficking during their stay in the shelters so as to facilitate their case preparation with social workers. This also enables the migrants to access other available services, such as psychosocial rehabilitation, legal assistance and vocational training.<sup>24</sup>



## The conditions of migration

There is a variety of health issues that come up under the category of goals related to aspects of migration, from housing and human services to the impact of disasters to labour rights. SDG target 10.7 on orderly and safe migration requires that the health of migrants be promoted and protected throughout the migration process through improved policy coordination among multiple sectors that impact on the health of migrants, as well as application of rights-based approaches to ensure equitable access to health services for all migrants respecting international standards of care.

Attention to housing and services in SDG 11.1 has health implications for migrants. Housing conditions for migrants are often deplorable, whether they work on migrant farms, in factories or on construction sites, with poor protection from environmental conditions and inadequate facilities. In urban areas in emerging economies, migrants often live in impoverished situations in dense urban slums. Migrants both bring and are exposed to a variety of communicable diseases, malnutrition, diseases related to poor sanitation, overcrowding and have limited access to health services that are already quite strained.<sup>25</sup>



IOM outreach health worker visits a patient in Myanmar daily to observe her while taking her treatment, check for any side effects, arrange support for follow-up appointments and provide support. © IOM

Migrants are particularly vulnerable when economic, social and environmental disasters strike (SDGs 1.5 and 11.5), as they are often considered as an easily replaced workforce in economic crises and left out of environmental

disaster preparedness and response plans. These crises often trigger large migration movements, which by their nature, put individuals and families at risk during long periods of displacement without access to adequate shelter, food or medical care. The United States funded a multi-year disaster preparedness strategy that included the development of programmes, training and resources specifically targeted at vulnerable communities including migrants, and sponsored the development of a resource database to facilitate dissemination of good practices, including in health.<sup>26</sup>

Targets 8.7 and 8.8 address the need to protect labour rights, promote safe and secure working environments, and eradicate forced working arrangements, child labour and trafficking. The concept of “decent work” is especially relevant to migrants, who are often working in dirty, dangerous and demeaning jobs, do not have occupational health protections, and may be easily exploited. Occupational risks are common in mining, construction, manufacturing and agriculture, including inadequate training, lack of protective gear, and exposure to toxic agents and conditions. An IOM-London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine analysis of migrant worker conditions in the gold mining industry of Peru proposed strategies to meet the health needs of mine workers through multisectoral coordination and funding of mobile health units such as La Caravana de la Vida. A separate study on domestic migrant workers has established that they too have to cope with health threats associated with adverse work conditions, such as physical, verbal and sexual abuse at the workplace, caregiving tasks associated with musculoskeletal strain, and chemical exposure associated with respiratory difficulty.<sup>27</sup> In 2016, the Colombo Process – a regional consultative forum of contractual labour-originating countries in Asia – resolved to address the health issues of labour migrants and promote the implementation of migrant-inclusive health policies to ensure equitable access to health care, as well as occupational safety for migrant workers.<sup>28</sup>



The Life Caravan: Health on the Move, Peru © IOM 2015.

## 4. National and international responses to migrant health: Strengthening the health practice, policy and partnership infrastructure

Given the cross-sectoral nature of migrant health issues, there is a powerful argument for whole-of-government responses at a national level and multipartner initiatives at an international level. The best efforts will include data gathering, consultation, dialogue, policy development and best-practice support and dissemination.

The Government of Sri Lanka has, for instance, created a participatory, evidence-based and intersectoral National Migration Health Policy. The programme features the following:

- A broad definition of migration dynamics;
- Commissioning of a national research agenda to inform policy development;
- Focus on needs that could benefit from immediate action;
- Reporting and accountability framework;
- National interagency coordination; and
- Engagement with regional and international partners.

The effort has resulted in an impressive list of actions and achievements over the seven-year development and implementation process.<sup>29</sup>

At the national, regional and international levels, one of the most critical needs is data gathering and analysis, as discussed in SDG 17.18. It is impossible to take any meaningful action without data to plan, monitor and evaluate efforts to improve the health of migrants. Addressing the health needs of migrants should be coupled with improved monitoring of their health status and risk factors. This can be achieved by including migration variables in routine national surveys, such as demographic health surveys, surveys conducted by national disease control programmes, and workforce and living standards surveys. Better data can improve the understanding of migrant health needs, their level of participation in social protection schemes, and the impact of migrant-targeted programmes. More can be done to build on existing health information systems for data collection and analysis, introducing new measures where required.<sup>30</sup>

An example of effective inclusion of migrants in early warning and risk reduction/management systems (SDG 3.D) is to be found in the Mekong Basin Disease Surveillance programme involving Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam.<sup>31</sup> The goals of this



network are as follows: (a) improve cross-border infectious disease outbreak investigation and response by sharing surveillance data and best practices in disease recognition and reporting; (b) develop expertise in epidemiological surveillance across the countries; and (c) enhance communication and cooperation between the countries. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) Health strand is a questionnaire designed to supplement the existing seven strands of the MIPEX, which monitors policies affecting migrant integration in 38 countries in Europe, Asia, North America and Oceania.<sup>32</sup> The questionnaire measures the equitability of policies relating to four issues: (a) migrants' entitlements to health services; (b) accessibility of health services for migrants; (c) responsiveness to migrants' needs; and (d) measures to achieve change. The questionnaire is based on a European Commission-funded consultation process that involved researchers, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and a wide range of specialists in health care for migrants.

In addition to efforts on data collection, there are a number of other exemplary global multi-stakeholder partnerships that can point the way for future action on SDG 17.16. The Partnership on Health and Mobility in East and Southern Africa (PHAMESA) engages 11 countries to support programmes that address the health of migrant mine workers, and to offer HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for sea workers and those they are in contact with in southern African port cities.<sup>33</sup> WHO, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF have worked together to produce technical guidance on the vaccination of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Europe. Similar international agency partnerships are responding to the Syrian refugee crisis with the help of national governments.



Mine workers in Mozambique © IOM 2014.

## 5. Conclusion: Investing in migrant health for development

In order to fully realize the economic and social benefits that migrants bring to their home and host countries, the health of migrants must be explicitly addressed in national and global development strategies. Few national development plans currently address migration, and those that do tend to focus on immigration control, irregular migration and human trafficking, rather than seeking to enhance the benefits of migration for development. As a result, migration and development initiatives remain scattered, underfunded, lacking in national ownership and limited in scale and impact. The development potential of particular migrants groups, such as low- and semi-skilled workers, diasporas, refugees, forcibly displaced populations and returning migrants, is rarely recognized. The SDG agenda, through its various goals and targets, provides an excellent opportunity for focusing on the health of migrants in the context of national development plans. The recent Migration Governance Index project, jointly implemented by IOM and the Economist Intelligence Unit, assesses the implementation of migration-related SDGs through the evaluation of country-specific migration governance structures.<sup>34</sup> It identifies several key considerations that are also applicable to the inclusion of migrant health in the SDGs. For example, there is a need for the following: (a) institutional and policy coherence across sectors



In March 2015, IOM Somalia's monitoring and evaluation unit and public information unit visited several IOM projects in Somaliland. © IOM 2015

and countries; (b) cross-border collaboration including bilateral agreements and regional consultative processes; and (c) designation of a lead agency to ensure strong institutional capacity on various migration thematic areas. Each of these strategies is echoed in other policy statements on advancing migrant health. Addressing the health needs of migrants through specific goals, programmes, funding and evaluation in SDG national and international strategies is a good public health practice, reduces long-term health and social costs, facilitates integration and contributes to social and economic development. The healthier migrants are and remain, the more efficient and balanced will be the future of our integrated and globalized world.<sup>35</sup>



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# ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA



Ludvik Girard



## Abstract

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 aims at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. This goal is critical to achieve migration governance as defined by the International Organization for Migration's Migration Governance Framework, by fulfilling the rights and maximizing the socioeconomic well-being of all migrants and society. It requires assessing the specific challenges that affect women and girls, with particular emphasis on discriminatory practices influencing decision-making and the ability to migrate. It also requires determining how to empower women and girls through migration. To tackle these challenges, SDG5 indicators are critical to build evidence-based systems and gender-sensitive policies.



## Introduction

The United Nations General Assembly resolution, adopted on 25 September 2015 (A/Res/70/1), sets a clear time frame to achieve gender equality through its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: all forms of discrimination against women and girls must be eliminated by 2030. This goal recognizes that gender equality is a fundamental human right. But it is also a response to the fact that gender inequality remains a global challenge, considering that women and girls still suffer disproportionately from discriminatory practices and violence worldwide. Finally, the scope of SDG5 is not limited to a static vision of gender equality; it also includes the more forward-looking notion of women and girls' empowerment.

SDG5 outlines clear targets pertaining to specific gender-related challenges (5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.A, 5.B and 5.C) that translate the general goal into a series of actionable objectives. For example, target 5.4 aims to promote and value unpaid domestic work through policies related to infrastructure, social protection and public services while promoting shared responsibility within households. In all cases, the targets are complemented by a set of indicators allowing for progress to be monitored. Indicator 5.1.1, for instance, measures whether legal frameworks exist that promote and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, while indicator 5.4.1 measures the proportion of time spent carrying out unpaid domestic work disaggregated by sex, age and location.

Beyond SDG5, the challenges of gender equality are referred to in various parts of the resolution document. The targets set by SDG4 with regards to inclusive access to education and learning opportunities aim at eliminating gender disparities that affect access to education.

In the field of migration policy, SDG5 reminds policymakers and practitioners how important gender-sensitive approaches are to achieving migration governance. The International Organization for Migration's Migration Governance Framework (IOM MiGOF), for instance, calls for the systematic mainstreaming of gender considerations into public policy, in order to ensure that policies appropriately address the needs and experiences of all migrants, including women and girls.

The global context of gender dynamics in migration requires that we look beyond mere differences in male and female migration flows. Features such as the type of migration or the likelihood of mobility are important, but it is also important to consider the inequalities that are typically hidden by those trends. For instance, while nearly half of migrants worldwide are women, a figure that might suggest an acceptable gender balance in terms of global flows, it does not provide adequate insight into the underlying social constraints nor of the significant qualitative differences that characterize the migration of women.<sup>1</sup> Being a woman or a man may well trigger very distinctive migration pathways as a result of gender-related disparities and discrimination. It is therefore crucial to assess the full picture of gendered realities to shape policies accordingly.

It is necessary to contextualize the relationship between gender and migration in the current trends of migration and recognize current attitudes and awareness of gender itself. In academia, gender as a research area



for migration studies emerged in the 1980s. Within the UN community, it is often considered that the 1995 World Conference on Women held in Beijing set a landmark, calling, inter alia, for disaggregated data by sex. Significant progress was made in the early twenty-first century in putting forward a number of mandatory regulations, such as special measures to protect beneficiary populations from sexual exploitation and abuse by UN and other aid workers,<sup>2</sup> and other tools seeking to address gender-related issues. This growing awareness driving the migration governance agenda has accompanied the rise of globalized migration. Recently, the notion of the feminization of migration has emerged as we witness an increase in the number and percentage of women migrating independently, as opposed to within the context of other migrating family members. Current policy dialogue, such as the negotiations of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, offer new fora to discuss these structural trends and facilitate the achievement of the SDGs, including SDG5.

Addressing the challenges of gender inequality in the context of migration demands an acknowledgement of the degree of violence that migrant women and girls endure. Gender-based violence affecting women and girls, such as domestic violence and forced marriage, may drive migration from the country of origin. Sexual violence may also impact migrant women and young girls along migration routes. Current data indicate that women and girls are also disproportionately exposed to trafficking and discriminatory practices against domestic workers.

Migrant women are also more frequently affected by socioeconomic challenges, such as unemployment, underemployment and deskilling. They often face a higher burden of reproductive labour and in many cases productive labour responsibilities<sup>3</sup> due to traditional gender roles.<sup>4</sup> Finally, their significant participation in unpaid domestic work and market labour is not always fully taken into account, for instance due to gender-based expectations that women mostly migrate for family reunification and/or as the dependants of male migrants.

Achieving SDG5 within the context of migration governance requires twofold action. First, assessing inequalities and, in particular, gender-based discrimination and vulnerabilities is needed to inform policymaking. Second, promoting the opportunities offered by migration for women and girls – such as their education and economic independence – is essential to support their own empowerment. Transforming these actions into sustainable opportunities requires robust monitoring systems and data solutions.



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## Assessing gender inequalities and vulnerabilities within migration

All migrants seek better life opportunities, and in so doing are confronted by challenges, but migrant men and women do not have access to the same opportunities, nor are they confronted by the same challenges. Women are, for instance, particularly exposed to gender-based violence during the migration process, and are affected disproportionately by migrant trafficking. They are also significantly at risk of being recruited for forced labour in the sex trade or as domestic workers or caregivers.

The study of women as a vulnerable group has been the subject of various research initiatives. Migration must take into account the complementarity of “family roles” and “market roles”. Migrant women should not be defined solely in terms of their relations to men (such as relative or dependant) but first and foremost on the basis of their independently defined socioeconomic role and characteristics (such as employment status, qualification or work experience).

Two potential scenarios on gender-related discrimination in relation to migration can be envisaged. First, gender-related discriminatory practices may push women to migrate as they pursue liberties they are deprived of. For instance, early marriage, domestic violence or female genital mutilation may

drive women to leave their country of origin. Second, discrimination may undermine their ability to freely and independently determine whether they want to migrate or not. This could stem, for instance, from legal regulations that impose constraints on women, whether to ensure they respect the wishes of male relatives or to “protect them from harm”. Another limiting factor is access to education: if young girls are unable to complete their education, they may become dependent on male relatives or acquaintances and forced to turn to them for important life choices. Conversely, research indicates that discriminatory social institutions have limited effects on male migration.

The scope of these effects cannot be underestimated if SDG5 is to be achieved: the traditional perception of female migration as a by-product of male migration is fundamentally incompatible with the idea of gender equality. This approach puts the identification of women’s rights violations at risk by suggesting that migrant women are dependants, passively following their male counterparts. Likewise, it undermines the awareness of how gender-specific discriminations can directly trigger pull and push factors.

Academic research suggests that discriminatory social norms and institutions shape female migration. Specifically, it has a particular impact on South–South migration decisions and destinations. Strong social expectations regarding gender roles influence decisions to migrate and migratory behaviour, both because of the attempts to avoid discrimination and the limitations that hamper women’s abilities to migrate.

Violence against women and girls does not only affect those migrating. As a traditional phenomenon rooted in relations of unequal power, domestic violence is a common form of discriminatory violence at the household level. Armed conflict is frequently accompanied by specific forms of sexual violence affecting women and girls. However, refugees and internally displaced persons caught up in situations of conflict or residing in camps often continue to follow established gender roles, with women continuing to exercise domestic responsibilities for their families and men taking on distinct productive roles. These differentiated gender roles and norms may further contribute to female migration and displacement patterns.

Gender inequalities also account for unbalanced labour economics, a situation reflected in labour migration statistics. Women in informal employment are over-represented in the domestic sphere. This includes both situations where women work for an employer or carry out unpaid domestic work at home. Migrant women are particularly at risk of poverty within these professions. The broader labour market has also showed persisting gender pay gaps, with

the glass ceiling phenomenon affecting female workers worldwide. These socioeconomic realities reflect gender inequality and the restrictions that tend to be imposed on women. At the other end of the professional spectrum, women entrepreneurs remain a minority, and corporate leadership roles remain overwhelmingly male-dominated.

These elements of discrimination affecting women show that migration patterns are not gender neutral. Both North–South and South–South migration can be assessed in terms of gender equality. Gender plays a direct role in the costs and opportunities of migration, and discriminatory social institutions can impact those. Specifically, gender inequalities play a complementary role to the variable of wealth disparities across countries.

Some have referred to the Millennium Development Goals’ (MDGs) outcomes as “unfinished business” regarding gender equality. The new Sustainable Development Agenda encourages taking bold action by achieving SDG5. In that respect, migration policy can play a significant role in protecting women’s rights and addressing discriminatory practices.

## Harnessing the potential for migrant women’s empowerment

There are many ways in which migration can contribute to the empowerment of women.

First, migration can offer women access to education and careers that might not be available in their countries of origin. If and when such migrants return home through the so-called circular migration process, they can take back and disseminate norms of behaviour and practices that improve the position of women in their society of origin. Female refugees and asylum seekers may derive special benefits from the protection they receive in their host county and take advantage of this to acquire new professional qualifications or develop new skills.

Second, migrant women may earn better incomes, enjoy greater degrees of autonomy and freedom, and exercise new leadership roles. Their social status can thus be enhanced, as can their ability to influence decision-making within their social circle. Increasing participation in society can be another example of that process. Structural changes in labour dynamics can also reflect empowerment trends, with women traditionally dominating international migration for care services as opposed to corporate leadership roles.

Third, many migrant women provide steady flows of remittances to their countries of origin. The very act of sending money to family back home can be a role – and even life – redefining activity whereby women who have been in situations of dependency prior to departure can become a financial mainstay for their family, thus acquiring a new capital of influence and authority. Less tangible remittances transmitted, for example, in the form social skills, expert knowledge or technical know-how, are also of significant value.

These various transfers are obviously not an unmixed blessing: family expectations of assistance and support may weigh heavily on the migrant women, and there are enduring concerns about the impact of the brain drain on the country of origin in the case of highly qualified migrant women. All things considered, however, the balance sheet for women can be positive, provided migration policies in both countries of origin and destination are formulated, with due regard for the particular needs and experiences of migrant women and girls.

Based on gender analysis of labour migration dynamics, it is possible to adjust policies to take into account gender-specific trends, for instance by organizing programmes for admission of foreign workers specialized in particular fields. Au pair programmes or initiatives to give work permits to executives' spouses have demonstrated that it is possible to tailor migration policies in ways that are gender-sensitive, the ultimate test being whether these policies do, in fact, encourage and enable women to accede to areas (such as corporate leadership) that are currently difficult for them to reach.

Recent research has confirmed that levels of discrimination in destination countries play an important role in shaping female migration flows, as migrant women are often attracted to countries where more gender-equitable norms and practices offer them greater freedom and rights.

The key difference between the 2015 agenda compared to the MDGs' targets for gender equality might lie in a shift from the objective of social development to the broader goal of women's participation in the socioeconomic sphere. A rather narrow focus on women and girls' health and education has given way to a broader recognition of the often overlooked social and economic contributions of women. The consideration of the time spent on unpaid domestic and care work disaggregated by sex illustrates that approach.

Women face constraints to access quality jobs globally, as well as equality in pay, and significant progress is needed to achieve gender equality. Empowerment strategies ultimately drive development by positively affecting poverty, inequalities and school attendance. Migration policies and migrants themselves can play an active role to support their achievement.

## Monitoring gender and migration to achieve SDG5

The MDGs' monitoring requirements created a significant incentive for statistical communities to come up with new data at the country level, which has led States to collect quality, comparable data across the world. Building on these efforts, the new development agenda seeks to monitor progress made against the SDGs.

Monitoring gender equality requires, in the first place, accurate assessments of gender-based forms of violence and discriminatory practices. It also demands looking into all forms of women's empowerment, such as economic power, political participation and leadership. It also facilitates the prioritization of gender in the policy agenda by significantly raising its visibility. As such, monitoring systems fulfil a strategic function by creating clear stimuli for public action, beginning with identification of funding priorities.

In the context of migration, the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data is required both at the level of migrants and social institutions. The current knowledge of international migration is still limited by data gaps, lack of reliability and the irregularity of data collection. These are all obstacles to the establishment of strong monitoring systems. Addressing those challenges and improving the availability of data are essential for evidence-based policymaking, a principle required to achieve gender-sensitive migration governance under the IOM MiGOF. Once established, data-collecting systems will deliver material that can be analysed to identify gender-related trends and challenges.

Some existing tools already allow the monitoring of key indicators to assess the state of gender equality. For example, the Social Institutions and Gender Index, developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development offers policymakers a standard to measure gender inequalities across countries. The United Nations Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index and the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index are among other useful instruments. Index-based tools combining quantitative and qualitative data are particularly appropriate to capture the

complex spectrum of gender data. Combined with migration data, they allow policymakers to develop tailored solutions that support the achievement of SDG5.

Data collection efforts must learn from the lessons of past successes and limitations that have characterized monitoring of MDGs. They should avoid data discrepancies between an international statistical system and the national systems by developing harmonized methodologies and data-collecting instruments and thus improving both the validity and reliability of the data collected.

Ultimately, the analysis of gender and migration to achieve equality and empowerment must benefit from what has been recently called the “data revolution”. This term reminds policymakers and researchers that technological capacities to collect and process data have reached unprecedented levels of power, putting innovative solutions within the reach of practitioners.

## ■ The way forward: Orderly and dignified migration for all

SDG5 and the entire Sustainable Development Agenda framework, along with the IOM MiGOF, are congruent: evidence-based policy, rights-based approaches and partnerships are equally necessary to deliver quality results. Specifically, migration governance can contribute to achieve gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment through the systematic incorporation of gender data to measure vulnerabilities and support empowerment strategies. This requires accurate monitoring of the indicators defined by the Sustainable Development Agenda, in line with the possibilities offered by the data revolution and the objective to develop gender-sensitive policies. Ultimately, this will also facilitate orderly and dignified migration pathways for all.<sup>5</sup>

## Endnotes

1. As a social construct, gender roles and norms are shaped by the social and cultural contexts to which individuals belong. Social perceptions may be conducive to discriminatory practices that, in turn, influence migration processes.
2. See, for example, General Assembly resolution 57/306 of 15 April 2003 and Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13 of 9 October 2003.
3. "Reproductive labour" refers to work performed in the domestic or private sphere to help sustain a household, such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children; "productive labour" refers to paid work that is generally performed in the public sphere and is enabled through reproductive labour.
4. This is true both for migrant women and girls who have left their communities and for those who have not.
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# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND LABOUR MOBILITY: A CASE STUDY OF ARMENIA

Elisa Mosler Vidal

## Abstract

Through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), labour mobility is recognized as a development issue for the first time in the mainstream global development landscape. The article traces labour mobility entry points in the SDG targets, reviewing how these identify its links to development. It also explores features of relevant targets that increase their chances of success, including how they call for a strongly multi-stakeholder approach. Using the SDG framework, countries are better equipped to address, institutionalize and leverage labour mobility and development linkages. The article examines how this process has been kick-started in Armenia through an SDG nationalization project. Firstly, the SDG framework is helping Armenia highlight its most significant labour mobility challenges. These include ongoing issues, such as labour rights and remittances, and other vulnerabilities such as labour trafficking. Additional challenges include addressing drivers of Armenian labour mobility such as skills matching, and tackling emerging tasks such as refugee labour market integration. Through a national consultation process using the SDG framework, Armenia could critically examine, relate and prioritize these issues in accordance with national development objectives. Secondly, the SDG framework is helping Armenia improve data collection and usage on labour mobility. Through a comprehensive data review and adaptation exercise, Armenia is developing a set of tailored indicators to measure progress against selected labour mobility targets. In this way, the

SDGs are tools to improving Armenian capacity to craft evidence-based labour mobility policies and nationally manage labour mobility issues in the future.

## The SDGs and labour mobility

Labour mobility has become one of globalization's defining features, and there are an estimated 150 million migrant workers around the world today.<sup>1</sup> These workers play an important role in the growth and development of origin and destination countries alike, through transfer of financial, human capital and other resources. For example, in 2015 alone, over USD 441 billion of remittances were transferred to developing countries.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, challenges remain to protect migrant workers and more broadly to regulate labour mobility to maximize the benefits to countries and migrants themselves. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) marked the first time that mainstream international development agenda recognized many of the links between labour mobility and development. Throughout its targets, the SDGs highlight ongoing, emerging and overarching issues of labour mobility that relate directly to better managing labour migration.

Important ongoing issues in labour mobility are mentioned in large part through Goal 8 on promoting decent work for all. For example, the goal calls for the protection of labour rights and promotion of safe and secure working environments for migrant workers (8.8). As migrant workers around the world commonly face rights violations and other vulnerabilities, this target would significantly improve their situation by strengthening ethical recruitment and other key processes. Other targets address significant ongoing labour mobility issues, such as child labour and labour trafficking (8.7) and social protection coverage (1.3). Further, the SDGs address evolving issues in labour mobility. For example, they acknowledge the increased feminization of migration by highlighting the need to protect migrant domestic workers (8.8 and 5.4). There are approximately 11.5 million migrant domestic workers worldwide, and almost 75 per cent of these are women.<sup>3</sup> Working in a largely unregulated space, these women are commonly subject to labour exploitation and abuse. By calling for greater recognition of these workers, the SDGs are also helping countries adapt to emerging labour mobility trends. Finally, the SDGs attempt to address some of the drivers of international labour mobility. For example, by recognizing linkages between migration and education (4.B and 4.4), they enable dialogue on matching of skills, knowledge and labour markets, a common driver of labour migration. Further, by associating labour mobility targets with goals on decent work and inequality (8 and 10), the SDGs acknowledge how these factors can affect

labour mobility and recognize the interplay between employment, inequality and labour migration. By successfully bridging theory and practice to harness so many labour mobility concepts into actionable targets, the SDGs highlight how multidimensional labour mobility is as a development topic. The SDGs thus provide the international community with a comprehensive framework to better conceptualize and address core, emerging and underlying labour mobility topics. This also means they have the potential to transform the ways labour mobility data is collected and used around the world; government at local, regional and national levels will have an interest in improving data to underpin relevant policies, programmes and SDG monitoring, and labour migration data, traditionally dominated by statisticians, will become more of a priority for policymakers.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to this, the SDGs' multidisciplinary nature increases the potential for multi-stakeholder collaboration in labour mobility. The targets naturally implicate a plurality of actors. By addressing so many different labour mobility issues, they can engage many migration stakeholders beyond the traditional policymaker domain, such as central banks and major employers. Further, as targets address labour mobility issues relevant to origin and destination alike, they are more likely to engage different countries. Finally, the targets combine a mix of approaches in addressing labour mobility challenges, for example combining a rights-based approach (labour rights, 8.8) with a growth-focused perspective (remittances, 10.C), which also has the potential to open the targets to more actors. Overall, the SDGs accurately reflect the multidisciplinary nature of migration and labour mobility,<sup>5</sup> enabling a variety of countries and stakeholders to collaborate on labour mobility management.

## ■ Armenian labour mobility: Issues and challenges

The process of translating the SDGs into national objectives and programmes was kick-started in Armenia through the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) project titled Monitoring Progress in Achieving Migration Targets of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Armenia. The project's goal was to strengthen the institutional capacities of Armenia to enhance migration data collection, processing and sharing, with a view to sustainably monitor Armenia's progress in migration and development in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Armenia has a mixed set of labour mobility challenges and opportunities. Among other features, the country has traditionally high rates of seasonal labour migration and a sizeable diaspora around the world, while more recently, it has seen rising numbers of labour migrants and Syrian refugees

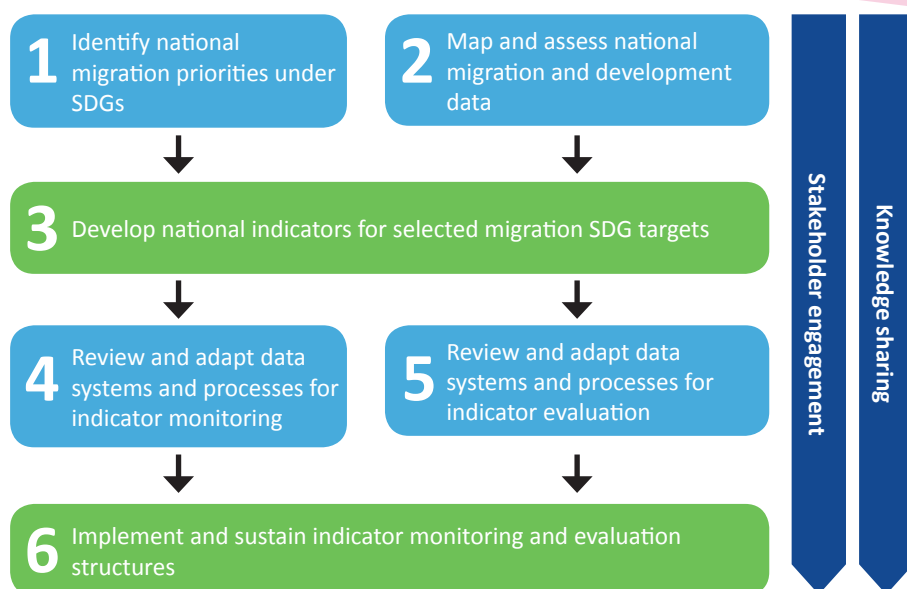
arrive. Many migrants work abroad in employment for which they are overqualified and on return to Armenia, experience the same scenario. In addition to this, it is difficult to retain national human capital; Armenia loses a certain proportion of its qualified youth as unemployment pushes young people abroad to study or look for opportunities to work. Other central labour mobility issue areas include improving the social and labour market reintegration of returning labour migrants, protecting migrant labour rights and improving the development impact of remittances. Migration management is decentralized, and migration policies and systems are undertaken by different government agencies. This is especially the case for labour mobility, where there is currently no comprehensive framework in place to regulate or monitor this.

Further, Armenia lacks comprehensive labour mobility statistics, and it is hard to track patterns over time. There is a general lack of infrastructure to collect, process and publish regular labour mobility data, mostly due to the absence of an adequate policy framework. As a result, labour migration data sources are fragmented, and there is limited data comparability between these. For example, an annual household survey (the Integrated Living Conditions Survey or ILCS) collects data on employment of immigrants but not duration of stay; the Census collects data on employment of immigrants but only every 10 years; a population register provides information on whether immigrants work (not specifying occupation) but reliability of this is low; the Border Management Information System (BMIS) collects data on border entries but not reason for entry. As is, there is no systematic collection of variables on labour migrants, such as gender, age, occupation, educational attainment and others.<sup>6</sup> Further, Armenia's decentralized migration management model inhibits comprehensive data collection. For example, although there has been significant diaspora investment over the last decades, there is no single national-level framework in place to facilitate this. As a result, data on the topic is fragmented and limited to diverse sector-specific projects,<sup>7</sup> making it difficult to gain an overview of the engagement of the Armenian diaspora. Overall, Armenia's ability to tackle its labour mobility challenges through policy is constrained by a lack of relevant data.

## Methodology

To help build the Government of Armenia's capacity to address these issues, IOM worked closely with the National Statistical Service (NSS) and other government bodies to tailor the SDGs' labour mobility and other migration targets to national context. This involved a two-step process to prioritize and consequently monitor SDG targets. This was done through the following stages (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: SDG nationalization approach in Armenia for migration



- (a) **SDG prioritization.** This involved prioritizing SDG migration targets according to Armenian objectives.
- (b) **Data mapping.** This involved mapping existing Armenian migration data at local and national levels to SDG monitoring information needs and conducting a gap analysis.
- (c) **Indicator development.** This involved developing tailored indicators to measure Armenian progress towards prioritized SDG targets.
- (d) **Indicator monitoring.** This involved ensuring necessary migration data is captured and monitored for these indicators, setting up new data collection systems and processes as appropriate.
- (e) **Indicator evaluation.** This involved ensuring migration data can be analysed to evaluate progress towards these indicators; building sustainable data mechanisms as appropriate.
- (f) **Sustainable review.** Once these data systems and processes are in place, reporting of the indicators begins and progress towards meeting its migration SDG targets can be assessed.




In addition to this, extensive stakeholder engagement and close collaboration with the NSS during the prioritization and data mapping stages were crucial to the project. The exercise included consultation of migration stakeholders including civil society, the private sector, academia and the public, and



engaged almost 100 people through direct consultation and/or workshops in the first two stages. Interministerial consultation was especially important, given the range of Armenian government bodies engaging in mobility issues. This increased the comprehensiveness and inclusivity of the exercise, improving the value and sustainability of its outputs.

## Labour mobility prioritization

Through a participatory consultation process, stakeholders critically examined and prioritized relevant SDG migration-related targets. Given that so many nationally relevant labour mobility issues – such as return migrant labour market integration – require multi-agency cooperation, the process was strongly inclusive. Diverse partners across government, non-governmental organizations and academia were mobilized to gain different perspectives on migration priorities and solutions during a workshop. Stakeholders identified targets that were most relevant to Armenia’s context and where national attention would have a large impact. This involved taking a forward-thinking perspective to address possible migration priorities over the next 15 years to reflect the 2030 Agenda time frame, and linking SDG targets with relevant national, local or UN plans. For example, care was taken to link the exercise to the Armenia’s UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which identified one outcome on migration for 2016–2020 (Outcome 4: By 2020, migration, border, and asylum management systems are strengthened to promote and protect the rights of migrants and displaced people, especially women and girls<sup>8</sup>). Participants identified the following targets as the most relevant for Armenia:

SDG target	Armenian priority area
 <p><b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION</p>	<p><b>4.B. Scholarships and student mobility</b> → Increasing skills matching opportunities for labour migrants and returnees</p>
 <p><b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	<p><b>8.8. Labour migration</b> → Improving labour migration management to address the needs of different labour migrant profiles, including refugees</p>
 <p><b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p>	<p><b>10.7. Migration management</b> → Strengthening migration management, focusing on facilitating reintegration of return migrants</p>



## SDG target

## Armenian priority area



**17.16.**  
**Global**  
**partnership**



Engaging the diaspora to support national development, through knowledge and skills transfer and remittances



**17.18.**  
**Migration**  
**data**



Improving data collection, analysis and usage capacities in relevant migration areas

Given the prevalence of labour migration in Armenia, each of the prioritized SDG targets involved a labour mobility dimension. The comprehensiveness of the SDGs allowed stakeholders to choose targets that reflect the range of labour mobility issues Armenia faces. These include more traditional labour mobility issues, such as labour rights and remittances, as well as emerging issues such as refugee labour market integration. In this way, the SDGs offered a conceptual framework for Armenia to proactively respond to its evolving migration profile.

## Labour mobility data mapping

A comprehensive review exercise of Armenian migration data sources and processes was conducted to evaluate data availability and use in different labour mobility areas. Through the use of interviews and questionnaires, the data mapping exercise assessed national statistical and administrative migration data across different topics. The exercise was broad-based, and 19 interviews were conducted across government agencies and other organizations. The ministries of Education and Science, Labour and Social Affairs, Diaspora, Healthcare, Foreign Affairs, Economic Development and Investments, the State Employment Agency and State Migration Service were interviewed, as well as the Central Bank of Armenia, three departments of the police service and numerous international organizations. The exercise examined data capturing, storing, processing, sharing, dissemination and publishing, assessing these mechanisms against international migration data standards, including SDG-specific guidance and metadata from the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and IOM documents.

The findings of the exercise showed there was a general lack of comprehensiveness in national migration statistics and further, incomplete data capture on a number of key labour mobility topics. There was, in particular, a strong need for reliable statistics on emigration and immigration in different labour market sectors, as well as increased data capture on other topics, including but not limited to return migration and reintegration, diaspora engagement, remittance utilization and migrant rights. Below are selected labour mobility data challenges identified and solutions recommended as part of the exercise:

- **Knowledge and skills transfer.** In order to derive greatest benefit from the human capital of the diaspora, there is a need to improve data collection in respect of the education, skills and knowledge of Armenians abroad. There were noticeable gaps on Armenian migrants' professional activities and skills needed in domestic labour markets. One recommended response was more accurate and regular data collection by relevant bodies on the professional activities of education migrants after their graduation. Another was for the Republican Union of Employers, or an alternative body, to expand its employers' surveys to more sectors, including catering and domestic work.<sup>9</sup>
- **Seasonal migration.** Short-term seasonal migrants, absent from their place of residence for a period of time shorter than three months, are common in Armenia.<sup>10</sup> It is difficult to measure short-term migration, as much of seasonal migrants' time abroad is often irregular and/or not tied to a visa or permit. Further, seasonal migrants do not typically change their address or country of residence in Armenian administrative records. The exercise recommended using the ILCS to gain further data on this, by amending an existing question on migration duration to specify whether travel was within or over three months. Given it is possible to distinguish between tourists and migrants among those who travelled for under three months via a subsequent question, this would yield crucial counts on seasonal migrants and, further, enable this data to be cross-referenced with other useful socioeconomic information collected by the ILCS.
- **Migrant labour rights and recruitment.** There was no effective mechanism to monitor labour migrants' rights or their recruitment methods and costs. Much of Armenian labour migration recruitment is irregular, curtailing the potential of regular channels to generate data, such as Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) or consulates abroad. Further, as the use of recruitment centres to organize employment

abroad is relatively low in Armenia, it is not possible to draw on records of recruitment agencies for information. To collect data in this area, the exercise recommended a range of solutions. These included reinstating the Armenian Labour Inspectorate's mandate to carry out site inspection of workplaces, introducing a periodic specialized labour migration module to the ILCS, enhancing bilateral cooperation with destination countries such as the Russian Federation and the United States on data sharing, and introducing a labour attaché programme if resources allow this.

As seen above, some labour mobility areas would see a strengthening of existing data processes, while others would enjoy significant statistical attention for the first time. In this way, the SDGs also allow governments to identify labour mobility areas that are under-monitored, and often as a result, poorly understood. As of June 2017, the project is still operational and entering the second phase of indicator formulation. Based on the above prioritization and data mapping findings, a detailed set of SDG indicators and accompanying modalities of collection and analysis will be created and implemented in collaboration with the NSS and other stakeholders.

## SDG 17.18: Strengthening national capacity with the NSS

In addition to improving data on the prioritized SDG targets, working closely with the NSS and other agencies on target 17.18 specifically contributed to the strengthening of national capacity to collect labour mobility information and use this to inform policy. It did this by focusing the attention of several agencies – especially the NSS – on several cross-cutting features of effective migration data management.

Firstly, the project made clear that effective monitoring and evaluation of certain topics would require combining migration data from a range of sources. Many labour mobility topics cut across government agencies and other actors' activities, meaning successful tracking of these require cross-sectoral solutions and a mix of statistical and administrative data sources. Migration data solutions that use statistical rather than administrative data sources are often prioritized, as these already have established regular dissemination processes to a large sample size, and tend to require fewer resources to update. Accordingly, many of the project's recommendations focused on taking advantage of the annual household survey to obtain more labour mobility data. Nevertheless, there were some limitations to Armenian statistical data sources in the SDG context. SDG target progress follow-up and

review will take place over a 15-year period at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on SDGs meetings held every four years. Target progress should be reported nationally and internationally at least a few times before 2030, and ideally in four-year reporting cycles for the HLPF. Hence, the Census' value for target review is limited as, running every 10 years, it is not timely enough. Further, there are a number of administrative data sources relevant to certain SDG migration topics, and which have the potential to generate relevant statistics for SDG review. For example, addressing return migration calls for data on the socioeconomic characteristics of returnees and their challenges. Given the State Employment Agency plays a key role reintegrating returnees into labour markets through various local MRCs, this agency is well positioned to provide information on returnees by sharing its administrative records. Therefore, to develop a holistic view of particular labour mobility issues, it can be important to consider combining existing statistical data with administrative data that provides more qualitative information on migrants' well-being.

Secondly, a key focus on the project was on improved variable disaggregation in migration data. Reporting disaggregated statistics was limited in many countries during the MDG process, and a lesson learned for SDG implementation is to improve disaggregation of monitoring data to better serve certain vulnerable groups.<sup>11</sup> This helps ensure that aggregated statistics do not mask hidden inequalities, and improves the inclusive potential of migration data for policy use, in keeping with the 2030 Agenda's objective to "leave no one behind".<sup>12</sup> This requires, for example, the collection of more information on variables, such as migrants' gender, age, occupation, employment status and income. Therefore, improving data disaggregation was a key focus of the project across labour mobility sectors. For example, Armenian police records collect data on the residence status, nationality or occupation of victims of trafficking; however, these variables are generally not reflected in end reporting. As statistics and reports on trafficking do not show these variables, it is difficult to detect characteristics and trends of sex and labour trafficking victims in Armenia.

Thirdly, the project allowed government agencies to consider how to strengthen existing procedures for migration data collection and usage. Despite migration policy and data processes in Armenia lacking an overall organizational framework, several existing instruments are valuable and can easily be amended for better labour mobility data capture. Simply modifying certain migration-related questions in the ILCS would yield improved data collection in several areas. For example, amending an existing question on educational attainment for the lowest skilled to include vocational

education details would generate valuable data for skills matching policy. Further, Armenia's decentralized migration management model means much valuable migration data is already captured and could be better utilized for policy simply through improved inter-agency data exchange. For example, existing data on Armenian students abroad is not compiled effectively, as several bodies that send Armenian students abroad do not share records with government bodies. By compiling statistics from major education stakeholders and adding these to their own statistics, the Ministry of Education and Science could offer a fuller picture of Armenians studying abroad. Thus, many aspects of migration data management involve amending existing processes and do not require extensive resources.

Therefore, apart from enabling the NSS and other government agencies to immediately improve its data collection and usage in certain labour mobility policy areas, the exercise highlighted certain migration data best practices and features as above. This is ultimately building the capacity of the NSS and other Armenian stakeholders to sustainably monitor and manage labour mobility issues in the future.

## Conclusion

As migrant workers continue to move around the world, there is a growing need for labour mobility to be addressed by the international community using a global framework. This framework is provided by the SDGs, which are allowing labour mobility to come alive as a global development issue. Thanks to the SDGs, countries are better equipped to identify, institutionalize and leverage the labour mobility and development links most relevant to them.

In Armenia, the SDGs have allowed government stakeholders to identify labour mobility priority areas and better monitor these. Further, by comprehensively reviewing and adapting data processes in prioritized areas, policymakers are able to craft more targeted labour mobility programmes. In this way, the project is a crucial first step to enable the Government of Armenia to effectively manage its evolving labour mobility landscape using nationally owned processes.<sup>13</sup>



Participants at the event “Localizing SDGs: Development of National Indicators for SDG targets in the area of migration and development”, 18 November 2016 in Yerevan. © IOM Armenia 2016 (Photo: Matevosyan)



## Endnotes

1. International Labour Organization (ILO), 2015.
2. World Bank, 2016.
3. ILO, 2015.
4. KNOMAD, 2016.
5. Lönnback, 2014:5.
6. As per the Nineteenth ILO Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (ILO, 2013).
7. GIZ, 2011.
8. See United Nations Office in Armenia, 2015a and 2015b.
9. Expanding a survey or another type of labour assessment to the domestic sector would be especially significant as it would complement target 8.8 on female migrant workers.
10. Note the UN does not classify those travelling abroad for under three months as migrants. See Manke, 2011:23; however, this category is considered here in order to take stock of subquarterly Armenian migration.
11. United Nation Economic Commission for Europe, 2016:32.
12. KNOMAD, 2016.
13. Elisa Mosler Vidal works as a consultant for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the area of migration and development, where she is managing work in Armenia to nationalize the Sustainable Development Goals. Elisa previously worked at a non-governmental organization in the Philippines on SDG localization issues. Additionally, she has worked in migration research with several organizations, including the Overseas Development Institute, the Institute for the Study of International Migration, the World Bank and the Mayor's Office of Washington, D.C. She has a master's degree in Foreign Service and International Development (Georgetown University) and a bachelor's degree in Philosophy and Politics (University of Edinburgh).

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# MIGRANTS AND CITIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES<sup>1</sup>

June J.H. Lee, Lorenzo Guadagno and Fernando Murillo

For the first time in history, most people in the world now live in cities. An increasing proportion of these people are migrants. International migration is currently at an all-time high and has largely become an urban phenomenon in parallel with the exodus of people from rural areas to urban settlements.

In many parts of the world, the proliferation of informal settlements has accounted for much of the physical growth of cities throughout most of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The expansion of urban settlements that lack access to water, adequate sanitation, durable housing and sufficient living area has contributed to the growth of slums.<sup>2</sup> It is now estimated that some 863 million people are living in slums, as compared to 650 million in 1990 and 760 million in 2000. In sub-Saharan Africa, 61.7 per cent of the urban population lives in slums.<sup>3</sup>

Recent studies indicate that migrants are disproportionately represented among the urban poor in these informal settlements.<sup>4</sup> For example, 92 per cent of migrant households live in one slum, Old Fadama, in Accra, Ghana, without a ready supply of water; water has to be purchased daily or drawn from nearby wells, while 94 per cent of migrants in the same slum do not live in accommodation with toilet facilities.<sup>5</sup> In many cities in low- and middle-income countries, informal settlements commonly function as entry points for incoming migrants. Despite the hardships of living in such circumstances, migrants can find economic activities and opportunities to

improve their current well-being and prospects<sup>6</sup> in such informal settlement or slums as Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya or Old Fadama in Accra, Ghana.

Early migration models viewed such informal opportunities found in urban settlements as a temporary staging post for new migrants on their way to formal sector employment. However, it can typically take migrants generations to build assets and invest in education and skills, and the differences in the circumstances between recent and settled migrants can be striking. Older settlements are often home to the descendants of migrants, whereas newer settlements tend to be home to recent migrants.

The Sustainable Development Goal 11 requires that cities and human settlements be made inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Two sub-goals deserve to be highlighted; first is access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services for all by 2030 and the upgrading of slums. The reduction in the proportion of the urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing will indicate progress towards this sub-goal. Second, it calls for inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management needs to be enhanced in all countries by 2030. This can be achieved by enabling civil society partners in urban planning and management to participate directly, democratically and regularly in urban planning and management.

This article will discuss the vulnerabilities of migrants and the specific challenges they are confronted with. It also presents the opportunities that urban migration brings about and some of the inspiring solutions that are being tested on the ground, including those through migrant participation in planning and management of informal settlements.

## Patterns of vulnerability among migrants in urban areas

Migration to cities may often involve using informal and irregular channels in the absence of regular migration routes. Once in cities, migrants often face difficulties in accessing housing, employment and other basic services such as health care. Newcomers often have no choice except to settle in hazard-prone, poorly planned areas, where they have limited access to resources and opportunities that are essential for resilience. In many informal settlements in the peri-urban areas of less developed countries, migrants end up working in low-paid and potentially exploitative conditions in the informal economies of these cities. As such, when disasters strike, they are among the first and worst affected.

Migrants move to cities in search of livelihood opportunities and to escape socioeconomic and other pressures in their communities of origin. Yet, migration may, in fact, increase vulnerability to hazards and reduce resilience to such threats. The urban environments that migrants find themselves in may be prone to disaster, and the lack of access to adequate housing, employment and services renders them less able to cope. Hazards in urban areas disproportionately affect migrants as a subset of the urban poor. Language, knowledge, administrative and legal barriers can serve to aggravate the situation. Mass displacement to urban areas is another phenomenon that brings risks and challenges in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The limited access of migrants to essential resources and opportunities is linked to socioeconomic, cultural and political barriers that are created by the interplay between policies, institutions and markets of the destination area and individual profiles, experiences and sensitivities of migrants themselves. The most recurrent barriers are the following:

- **Linguistic barriers:** Lack of linguistic skills can impede access to local labour markets, information (including disaster preparedness warnings), health care and education and limit understanding of administrative procedures that are keys to daily life. Linguistic barriers cut across internal and international migration; they may come up between communities in countries where more than one language is spoken, or be absent in the case of international migration between two countries speaking the same language.
- **Legal and administrative barriers:** Laws and regulations can exclude all or some specific groups of migrants from formal access to housing, employment, health care, education, and response and recovery assistance in the case of disasters. While such situations are often the result of policies regulating immigration from abroad, they can also stem from registration requirements for internal urban migrants.
- **Reduced access to social networks:** Moving away from the place of origin often disrupts family and community ties that help provide income, health and childcare and education, emotional support or additional resources to cope with hardship. Availability of these forms of social capital is usually reduced in urban areas of destination. However, social ties and connections both with people from areas of origin and with kin, origin or ethnicity-based networks in areas of destinations are significant sources of resilience for urban migrants, and often one of the key factors influencing their decision to move.

- **Reduced knowledge of the local environmental and social context:** Moving out of a local context also means that site-specific knowledge is lost, and that it might not be replaced, at least in the short term, by an equal level of understanding of the context of destination. This may include insufficient awareness of local resources and opportunities (e.g. housing, health care, social support systems) and how to access them, as well as local hazards (e.g. violence, illness, landslides, floods). Both can result in specific patterns of exclusion and risk for incoming populations.
- **Inadequacy of skills for urban labour market:** Urban labour markets may require completely different skill sets from those in the areas of origin. Consequently, people arriving in cities might face specific challenges in accessing income opportunities, and may have to deal with unemployment or deskilling. This is likely to be more relevant in the case of rural–urban than urban–urban movements. In some instances, a different skill set might also be an advantage when filling local skill gaps.
- **Lack of representation, discrimination and xenophobia:** Lack of political representation results in a lack of recognition within decision-making processes of the needs and capacities of migrant communities. In some cases, an outright hostile environment can lead to excluding migrants from the delivery of basic resources and services (e.g. housing, employment, health care) or to exposing them to risks linked with their migration status (e.g. xenophobic violence).

These barriers can reduce the ability of urban migrants, displaced persons and refugees to access basic resources and opportunities or receive support from formal and informal systems and networks. Migrants may end up living in informal settlements and slums and forced to make a living by working in the informal economy. These conditions push people into situations of limited personal, environmental and financial security.<sup>7</sup>

These barriers may arise in the case of all kinds of mobility (internal or international migration, displacement and relocations). As a consequence, the type of population movement people are involved in is not necessarily the main determinant of their level of well-being and risk. It is rather the socioeconomic and institutional context in which the movement takes place that plays a bigger role in determining outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

## ■ Opportunities to build resilience through migrant inclusion

The rapid growth of informal settlements is not an inevitable part of rapid urbanization; many cities that have grown rapidly have a low proportion of their population in informal settlements and close to universal coverage for basic infrastructure and services.<sup>9</sup> The lack of proactive planning of low-cost settlements to accommodate rapid urban growth is the issue, and this may stem from deliberate policy measures aimed at deterring migrants through the provision of low quality living conditions. Such policies can in turn fuel negative public opinion and xenophobia against migrants.<sup>10</sup>

In many urban areas of Latin America, Asia and Africa, government restrictions on land has limited the supply of affordable housing, which has contributed to the growth of informal settlements. Informal settlements, squatting and slums are in part a response to the lack of low-income public housing or subsidies<sup>11</sup> and reflect weak urban planning and governance both at local and national levels.<sup>12</sup>

The situation can be improved by according secure land tenure through the regularization of land markets and the residential status of people. This can lead to improved livelihoods for the urban poor including migrants, as well as local development. The relatively fewer slums in North Africa are largely attributed to better urban development strategies, including investment in infrastructure and the upgrading of urban settlements. Morocco's national urban improvement plan has sought to re-house slum dwellers through the Cities without Slums programme.<sup>13</sup> Likewise in China, at a time when the urban migrant population grew more than 80 per cent (2000–2010), the number of urban slum dwellers dropped, in part, due to State controls on the building of shanty towns.<sup>14</sup>

Cities in West and Central Africa are now reportedly integrating customary land transactions into formal land markets, but poor immigrants are unlikely to benefit from this. Comparative studies of the regularization of informal settlements in Latin America have found that, rather than applying one single approach, urban planners should present alternative options for secure land tenure for slum dwellers, such as communal land tenure as an option for the lowest income group.<sup>15</sup> There is a dearth of data on migrants and slums, including about their role in transforming slums into mainstream communities.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the decisions that influence the vulnerability of migrants, displaced persons and refugees are taken at the local level by institutional, non-governmental and private sector actors. Targeted local efforts towards the inclusion of incoming people are essential to reducing the risks that migrants face, as cities assume an increasing role in international policy on development and the environment.

In most systems, local authorities are responsible for many activities that are key to the everyday life of urban dwellers, including land use planning, development of building codes and infrastructure, transportation and provision of social services. Planning processes can effectively promote migrant participation in public affairs, better addressing their needs through improved access to services and opportunities and leveraging their skills and capacities for the well-being of the whole community. For instance, the city of Portland in the United States has structures in place for inclusive neighbourhood-level development planning, while many cities, including Amsterdam, in the Netherlands promote spatial diversification as a way of achieving social and economic inclusion.<sup>17</sup>

Efforts by local authorities, often complemented by private sector and civil society actors, can effectively lower many of the barriers faced by newcomers, facilitating their access to economic initiative and income opportunities, health care and education, and promoting harmonious communities.<sup>18</sup> A number of cases even exist of local authorities that have looked at fostering participation of migrants in host communities by involving them in development programmes targeting their communities of origin.<sup>19</sup> The experiences in Los Pinos, Buenos Aires is illustrative.

***Los Pinos: Evolution of an informal settlement in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires<sup>20</sup>***

*Los Pinos is an informal settlement surrounded by gated communities in Escobar, in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. It is a low-income area that has grown through informal land occupation, progressively attracting international immigrants (mostly from Peru, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Paraguay), who represent 68 per cent of the local population today. It has long been overlooked in local planning, and is not connected to local water and sewage networks nor served by public transportation. It has no health and education facilities. In addition, the area is prone to recurrent floods.*

*In recent years, and in collaboration with the non-governmental organization (NGO) known as TECHO, the community has been through a bottom-up process to promote upgrading and regularization of the settlement. The “compass”, a participatory methodology to collect and compare data on access to land, housing, infrastructure, social services, as well as food, livelihood and environmental security, was used to guide the decision-making process. The community and municipal authorities jointly identified the following priority objectives to improve access to basic services and opportunities for the people in Los Pinos:*

- (a) A neighbourhood-level urban plan to prevent encroachment of open spaces critical for sunlight, ventilation and recreation;*
- (b) Infrastructural improvements (street lights, roads and a drainage system) to enhance accessibility and personal security, and prevent flooding;*
- (c) Better access to affordable sanitation systems and potable water; and*
- (d) Improved waste management, by defining a site for dumping waste and negotiating the weekly removal of rubbish with the public collection company.*

*Various forms of self-organization that are typical of the migrants’ places of origin in the Andes region helped to improve local standards of living. The neighbourhood association organized fundraising events to pay for streetlights and drainage. Community members contributed labour to infrastructure projects through solidarity mechanisms (so-called minga), which are routinely used to help the weakest community members, for instance, by supporting housing construction. Rotating savings and credit associations financed local micro-businesses, while mothers organized collective childcare.*

*The experience in Los Pinos is now being replicated in all of Escobar’s slums. It should be noted, however, that the introduction of structured service provision can potentially reduce its affordability, and result in reduced access for the poorest members of the community. In addition, the successful experience of Los Pinos has led to some resentment in other communities, as people perceive that it is unfair for migrants to receive assistance. To reduce the potential for inter-communal conflicts, settlers of formal and informal neighbourhoods are now*



*taking part in Participlan, a gathering in which municipality-wide strategies to address the issue of informality are being discussed. The success of these community-led efforts is based on strong social ties and trust among members, which are identified and nurtured throughout the bottom-up decision-making process.*

## National/regional policies for migrant inclusion in housing

There is a clear lack of mechanisms in place to manage the complex process of informal urban expansion. One study reported that from a sample of 120 local governments, 70 did not have policies for controlling informal urban expansion resulting from, for example, slum formation.<sup>21</sup>

However, the participation and inclusion of migrants in their host communities is an indispensable part of building stable, open and vital communities that assure the socioeconomic future of a country today. A recent global Economic Policy Forum meeting in China on “Urbanization and Migration” drew a direct correlation between effective provision of services and urban development in all the major emerging economies.<sup>22</sup> In pursuing a more “integrated urban governance”, cities today tie local urban social cohesion to economic growth and global competitiveness.<sup>23</sup>

Cities are thus at the centre of a shift in the debate on multiculturalism and migrant integration to a more inclusive approach to community building and public participation in municipal tasks, which involves but does not single out immigrants. Traditional concepts of integration have given way to more universalist approaches that guarantee equal rights, access and opportunities for all while addressing some specific social and material needs of vulnerable groups, women, children, the elderly and migrants in irregular status.<sup>24</sup> Local initiatives, such as Berlin’s “socially integrative urban development” and “neighbourhood management” projects, are offering new integrated models of urban citizenship for the whole community.<sup>25</sup>

In Latin America, there is a clear trend to promote the local integration of migrants as reflected in some publications, tools and approaches that guide national and local governments.<sup>26</sup> For example, Costa Rica has developed a series of manuals to help public officials to integrate especially poor migrants into the urban life.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned before, one such widely practiced participatory methodology is COMPASS, which promotes local governments’ collaboration with various actors of communities to determine priorities for action. It is specifically



designed to produce and validate information concerning low-income communities living in informal settlements, with the goal of informing participated planning for neighbourhood-level development efforts.

COMPASS empowers communities by encouraging them to identify main needs and priorities, to propose solutions and promote dialogue with relevant institutions. The methodology has been applied in 17 cities in 7 Latin American countries, that is, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia and Guatemala.

## ■ Migrant involvement in disaster risk management systems

Migrants often find themselves on marginal, unserviced land exposed to natural hazards, such as landslides and floods. They also often live in unsafe buildings and lack access to the information and resources needed to prevent or cope with disasters when they occur. For these reasons, migrants may end up disproportionately suffering in disasters. It is essential that they be included in risk management plans covering what needs to be done before, during and after disasters.

Given that cities are becoming, at the same time, more prone to disasters and increasingly diverse – because of internal and international population movements – urban migrants, displaced persons and refugees will, of necessity, have to be included in disaster risk reduction plans.

Migrant housing may be liable to damage or destruction when disaster strikes, either because of greater exposure or structural fragility. In addition, migrants are more likely to be overlooked in reconstruction and recovery assistance efforts. Limited access to social networks can also reduce informal accommodation options available to non-natives. They may, as a consequence, be more likely to experience situations of protracted displacement and suffer from xenophobia or scapegoating.

### *Latino migrants in New York before and after Hurricane Sandy<sup>28</sup>*

*Twenty per cent of the total population of Staten Island and Long Island (two of the New York areas most heavily affected by Hurricane Sandy in 2012) was foreign-born at the time of the disaster. Migrants accounted for well over 50 per cent of the residents of specific neighbourhoods. The impact of the storm on their well-being was significant. Forty per cent of the migrants living in affected areas reported economic loss; one in three*

suffered from damage to home or property. In Staten Island, 60 per cent of the migrants reported damage, and 40 per cent were displaced. However, only 22 per cent of those affected applied for relief, due to a lack of understanding of the system in the United States, and only 25 per cent of those who applied actually received assistance.

Language barriers, administrative requirements and lack of organization hindered migrant access to assistance by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and local charities. Many migrants avoided applying fearing the possibility of xenophobic incidents. “Non-qualified aliens”, including some groups of documented migrants (such as those under Temporary Protected Status in light of the situation of their country of origin), could not access cash assistance or unemployment benefits. Other migrants were eligible for benefits because their children are citizens of the United States, but did not apply for fear of arrest and deportation, despite statements from national and local authorities that no immigration enforcement initiatives would be conducted. This, in turn, meant that some migrant children were deprived of assistance.

Migrant communities were disproportionately affected by loss of income and livelihoods related to the physical destruction of homes and displacement; for many migrants employed as domestic workers, for instance, there was no workplace anymore. Reduced access to safety nets for migrant workers resulted in widespread unemployment (11% of the migrant community) and economic hardship. Thirty per cent of migrants reported falling back on the payment of rents, and there were reports of migrant tenants abused by landlords (e.g. through retaining security deposits, or being forced to repair their home in spite of contractual obligations). For the 53 per cent of migrants in low-income groups, the 50 per cent increase in rents in disaster-affected areas had devastating consequences on the availability of affordable accommodation, and resulted in migrants being more likely to live in unsafe conditions and overcrowded dwellings in the aftermath of Sandy. This led to further suffering as a cold wave followed the storm. One year after the storm, the media reported that many migrant residents were still waiting for aid, and that non-English speakers were still receiving insufficient information on the recovery process.

*This sparked collective action and complaints to the State and National Government.*

*On the other hand, the continuity of migrant business and activities, accounting for 22.4 per cent of New York state's gross domestic product, was essential to the economic and social recovery of the whole region. Thousands of migrant workers were recruited by businesses and individuals to support with early recovery activities, including rubble removal and infrastructure rehabilitation. Up to 75 per cent of these informal day labourers were undocumented, and many ended up facing further hazards linked to unsafe working conditions and exploitation by employers in order to access the opportunities linked with reconstruction.*

Migrants play an important role in building the resilience of home and host communities through the exchange of resources and support. They and their networks can contribute to managing risk for the community at large. Migrants are often overrepresented in the healthy, productive age groups and provide diversified skills that can support disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts, particularly in ageing societies. In addition, they may be more mobile geographically or socially.

After the Northridge earthquake in the United States, Hispanic immigrant groups (including undocumented individuals) collaborated with local NGOs in delivering assistance to affected areas that were not adequately covered by official responders. This led to the creation of the Pico Union Cluster, a community-based, independent preparedness structure, which eventually joined Los Angeles' official NGO disaster preparedness and response coordination body.<sup>29</sup> Involvement of migrants in emergency assistance, search and rescue, rubble removal and early recovery and reconstruction efforts were also observed in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in New York by Asian migrant groups,<sup>30</sup> and after the Tōhoku disaster, when Pakistani, Filipino and Chinese groups managed emergency shelters and food distribution facilities.<sup>31</sup>

The inflow of people into cities after urban disasters is, in fact, often essential to provide the resources needed for recovery,<sup>32</sup> something that was observed in New Orleans after Katrina in the United States, when newly migrated Latino workers were engaged in building, demolition, hauling and sanitation efforts.<sup>33</sup> Migrants' webs of contact with their location of origin are also of value; following the 2012 Emilia earthquake, affected towns received funding and in-kind resources from the migrants' societies and communities of origin.<sup>34</sup>

Local-level efforts by various actors can help address specific aspects of vulnerability faced by migrants in times of disasters. Japanese prefectures and municipalities, for instance, provide multilingual hazard awareness and risk information documentation and training,<sup>35</sup> while the Japanese government agency, the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, has developed a toolkit for multilingual emergency communications.<sup>36</sup> Such efforts, often complemented by those of NGOs and academic institutions, have also been essential to providing warnings and information to linguistic minorities before, during and after the 2011 Tōhoku triple disaster.<sup>37</sup>

Local media can also be keys to the circulation of information in disasters. New Orleans' Spanish-language radio station in the United States disseminated evacuation alerts and key relief and recovery information in Spanish, despite the lack of translated official communications. During the 2007 fires in San Diego, it was Spanish-speaking TV channels that disseminated evacuation and relief information, including through their own live coverage of the event.<sup>38</sup> In Nairobi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has partnered with local radio stations and telecommunication companies to disseminate early warnings and emergency messages to spatially segregated refugee groups.<sup>39</sup>

Involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse communities is a priority for many local authorities governing increasingly diverse communities. City-level risk management institutions in Australia, for instance, have worked with representatives of local migrant communities to set up preparedness, warnings, evacuation and displacement management that are informed by local cultural and linguistic diversity.<sup>40</sup> Better inclusion is also promoted through the set-up of specific liaison structures, or through direct involvement of representatives of foreign groups, specifically newcomers, and young migrants and refugees, as volunteers or staff members within risk management structures.<sup>41</sup>

## Concluding remarks

Cities can drastically expand migrants' access to essential resources, services and opportunities. For most migrants, moving into a city is a sound well-being and resilience decision. However, migration, when inadequately managed, can result in conditions of exclusion and vulnerability for those moving, as well as for their host communities. Migrants often face specific barriers and obstacles that produce specific patterns of marginalization. Consequently, they often end up over-represented among the weakest, most vulnerable social groups within urban communities – those that are worst affected by natural and man-made hazards.

At the same time, examples from around the world show that good planning and local coordination can help reduce these risks. Inclusive policies are key to making migrants more resilient, and more resilient migrants help reduce risk for both communities of origin and of destination; the exchanges of material and immaterial resources migration fosters help build socially and culturally vibrant, economically dynamic and more resourceful human settlements. Proactive and inclusive urban planning at the local level and effective national mobility management policies are therefore essential not only to prevent the vulnerabilities linked with movement into cities, but also to build the resilience and increase the well-being of migrants.



Dozens of Cambodians commute through the Thai border in Poipet. For many, they work daily in nearby border towns, while others might venture further in to work for short- to long-term periods. © IOM 2016 (Photo: Muse Mohammed)

## Endnotes

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# MIGRATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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## Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at risk from environmental change. People respond to the impacts of environmental shocks and stressors with a combination of in situ and ex situ strategies, including mobility. Human mobility manifests in various forms (e.g. displacement, migration and resettlement) in the communities affected by environmental change. This article explores the implications that different forms of mobility in the context of environmental change could have on the SDGs. It also suggests that achieving some of the SDG targets could create enabling conditions that could reduce the risk of displacement and/or unleash potential of migration. This article advocates the mainstreaming of human mobility within climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and SDG mechanisms at the national and local levels. For a better integration of these policy domains, there is a fundamental need for the various narratives on these themes to converge and identify multi-stakeholder forums at the national level to discuss the approaches for such integration.

## 1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at risk from environmental change. The adverse impacts of environmental shocks and stressors will be disproportionately high in developing countries, especially among the poor and vulnerable populations. People will respond to these impacts with

a combination of in situ and ex situ strategies, including mobility. Human mobility will manifest in various forms (e.g. displacement, migration and resettlement). The Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recognizes that complex patterns of migration are shaped by economic, political, social and demographic drivers. Hence, the establishment of a causal relationship between climate change and migration is extremely complex (IPCC, 2014). However, the weight of evidence would suggest that patterns of mobility can be modified or exacerbated by climate events and trends, even though an environmental stimulus in the decision to migrate is not the sole criterion that determines whether a migrant would contribute towards adaptation and development of the family left behind (Banerjee, 2017).

Rather than limiting this discussion only to “environmental migrants”,<sup>3</sup> this paper explores the implications that different forms of environmentally-induced mobility could have on the SDGs. The SDG targets have been organized around themes, such as migration governance, food, decent work, inclusive cities and social protection, skills development, gender and enabling conditions (see Table 1). The challenges and opportunities associated with environmental change and human mobility are discussed in the context of these themes. The paper is organized in sections. Section 2 provides a brief overview of different forms of mobility associated with environmental change and highlights the divergence of opinion among stakeholders regarding the relationship between mobility and environmental change. Section 3 discusses the ways in which various forms of mobility associated with environmental change will affect the attainment of certain SDGs. This section also suggests that achieving some of the SDGs could result in a reduction of the risk of displacement and/or unlock the development potential of migration. The mobility outcomes and their consequences are contingent upon the local demographic, environmental, socioeconomic, institutional and political context. Section 4 suggests an approach that aims to reduce risks and maximize benefits from mobility in the context of environmental change and SDGs. This article advocates the mainstreaming of human mobility within the climate change adaptation (CCA), disaster risk reduction (DRR) and SDG mechanisms at the national and local levels.

## 2. Environmental change and migration

The Working Group II report of the IPCC Fifth Assessment (AR5) discusses the difficulty in categorizing any individual as a climate migrant because of the complex motivations for migration decisions (IPCC, 2014). The complex patterns of migration are shaped by economic, political, social and

demographic drivers. These patterns are likely to be modified or exacerbated by climatic events and trends. Therefore, the establishment of a causal relationship between climate change and migration was extremely complex (ibid.). It is worth noting that even when climate change has a disruptive impact on the livelihoods of a community, not everyone would be expected to migrate.

The loss of place of residence or economic disruption due to extreme weather events results in population displacement of a largely temporary nature (ibid.). In 2015, nearly 19.2 million people across 113 countries were displaced by disasters (IDMC, 2016:5). Nearly 85 per cent of these displacees were from South and East Asia regions and the Pacific (ibid., 15). Though most of the people displaced by disasters remain within their country, some persons may move across border to a neighbouring country (The Nansen Initiative, 2015). The IPCC AR5's Working Group II report recognizes that "climate change over the 21st century is projected to increase displacement of people" (IPCC, 2014:20). Disasters triggered by weather-related hazards (primarily flooding and storms) accounted for 14.7 million displacees in 2015 compared with 4.5 million for geophysical disasters (IDMC, 2016:20). Melde (2015) suggests that the poorest are at a higher risk of displacement due to natural disasters. They often lack access to socioeconomic, cultural, social and other resources to migrate.

Migration for work is a household strategy to reduce the impact of environmental stressors. In the aftermath of Hurricane Gilbert in Jamaica, the inflow of remittances from workers abroad increased as a response to rainfall shock-related income losses in the Philippines, (Foresight, 2011). It is well established that global remittance flows have been growing steadily and are a stable source of income in times of crisis (Ratha, 2003). Internal remittances are important for the poor households that adopt migration as a strategy to spread risks, seek employment, increase income and accumulate investment capital (Castaldo, Deshingkar and McKay, 2012). Moreover, the circulation of ideas, practices and identities between the destination and origin communities is facilitated by migrants (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011). Within the environmental change and migration discourse, migration has been considered by some stakeholders as a form of adaptation (e.g. McLeman and Smit, 2006; Foresight, 2011). Others have considered migration to be a failure to adapt or an option of last resort (e.g. Baro and Deubel, 2006). A few have considered the framing of migration as an adaptation strategy to be mismatched with the intended objective since autonomous actions of individuals or households are envisaged to address structural determinants of vulnerability to climate change (e.g. Felli and Castree, 2012).

In small island developing States and along the coasts, livelihoods are affected by salinization and coastal erosion, and sea-level rises will lead to the physical loss of land. People may have to move to avoid severe deterioration in habitat and risk to lives, and may be unable to return (Wilkinson et al., 2016). Previous studies (e.g. IPCC, 2014; Kelpsaitte and Mach, 2015) have reported that some governments are considering relocation and resettlement as potential strategies to address observed climate changes and projected changes in resource productivity and risks. The experience of past resettlement programmes suggests negative social outcomes for the resettled, psychological stress, community dislocation, and perception of cultural loss (IPCC, 2014). The Asian Development Bank (ADB, 2012) suggests that there is a need to strengthen and enforce international protection frameworks with specific arrangements developed for resettlement and relocation.

### 3. Mobility, environmental change and SDGs

Achieving the SDGs is expected to be challenging due to the current trends in environmental shocks and stressors. Since mobility is one of the human responses to the impacts of environmental shocks and stressors, it is necessary to assess the challenges or opportunities that mobility may pose for the SDGs. The SDGs 8 and 10 refer to migration and remittances. Other SDGs do not directly address either migration or the relationship between climate change and migration. However, the Declaration accompanying Agenda 2030 identifies refugees, internally displaced and migrants among actors whose needs are reflected in the Agenda (United Nations, 2015:6). None of the SDGs make any explicit reference to displacement or resettlement in the context of environmental change.

#### 3.1. Migration governance

SDG 10 considers the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies and reduction in transaction costs of remittances among the means to reduce inequality within and among countries.<sup>4</sup> Since the recognition of migration as a form of adaptation to climate change in the Cancun Adaptation Framework during the Conference of the Parties (COP16) in 2010, the deliberations on migration have continued in global processes associated with climate change and DRR. The Summary for Policymakers in the IPCC AR5's Working Group II report states that the vulnerability of populations at risk of being displaced by the impacts of climate change could be reduced if opportunities for mobility could be expanded (IPCC, 2014). This report suggests that there could be changes in migration patterns in response

to extreme weather events, as well as longer-term climate variability and change, and migration could be an effective adaptation strategy (ibid.). The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (SFDRR) suggests that as part of a broader and a more people-centred preventive approach to disaster risk, governments will have to engage relevant stakeholders, including migrants, in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015). The SFDRR recognizes that knowledge, skills and capacities of migrants could contribute to the resilience of communities and societies (ibid.). Paragraph 50 of the COP21 agreement recommends that a task force be established by the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism to “develop recommendations for integrated approaches to avert, minimize, and address displacement related to the adverse impacts of climate change” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015:50). Warner et al. (2015) suggest that a better integration of human mobility within national and regional adaptation planning processes could help to avoid displacement. However, the mainstreaming of mobility within the national adaptation programmes remains a work in progress. For example, migration is negatively perceived in the six MECLIP pilot countries, and there is a lack of “concrete strategies and actions to address such migration due to environmental change” (Kelsaite and Mach, 2015:7). Banerjee (2017) reports that environmental change and migration remains at the fringe of migration research in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. Here, issues associated with migration, especially internal migration, remain at the periphery of policy discourse in most of the countries.

### **3.2. Food**

To strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather and other disasters, SDG target 2.4 prescribes sustainable food production systems and the implementation of resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and maintain ecosystems.<sup>5</sup> Findings from South-West China, North-East India and Eastern Nepal suggest that remittance-recipient households are more likely to reduce their farm size in the long-term than non-recipient households, and in turn their dependence on agriculture would decline (Banerjee et al., 2016; Banerjee, 2017). Ensuring food security also involves access to food commodity markets and timely access to market information (see target 2.C). Warner and Afifi (2014) reports that migration is a common strategy adopted by poor households from Central India and small-holder farmers and livestock keepers from Northern Tanzania for food security. However, the impact of migration on access to food is not a foregone conclusion. In a study in Viet Nam, Entzinger and Scholten (2016) finds that though remittances were primarily spent on food and consumer

goods, migrant households are less likely than non-migrant households to have sufficient access to food.

### **3.3. Decent work**

SDG 8 envisages the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. SDG 10 aims to reduce inequality within and among countries.<sup>6</sup> Many migrant workers from rural communities vulnerable to extreme weather events are part of the informal economy at their point of arrival (Banerjee, 2017). During a crisis, the first workers to be laid off in labour-intensive sectors are usually the temporary workers, many of whom are migrants. Many among the unemployed in India during the global financial crisis of 2008 were migrant workers with short casual contracts (Ghosh, 2009). These informal sector workers do not have access to social security benefits or legal protection. Moreover, migrant workers' access to social protection at their destination is curtailed due to regulations or administrative procedure (Price and Chacko, 2012). For example, a migrant's access to social protection entitlements such as grain rations, public housing, health care and school education in destination used to be heavily restricted under the hukou system (*ibid.*), although reforms are gradually being introduced.

### **3.4. Inclusive cities and social protection**

Target 11.5 envisages a reduction in the number of people affected and economic losses due to disasters, with a special focus on people residing in vulnerable situations.<sup>7</sup> Foresight (2011) identifies environment change and population growth as the twin challenges that will pose an increasing threat to urban areas in the future. Newly arrived and/or low-income migrants and their families often live in substandard housing at high risk from extreme weather events, with poor access to clean water, sanitation, health care and education (Deshingkar and Anderson, 2004; Liang and Ma, 2004). There could be downward pressure on wages and undermining of labour rights due to migrant inflows in specific segments of labour markets, particularly among low-skilled groups. These could lead to resentment within the host population (Foresight, 2011). Migrants may be seen, not only as competition in the struggle for employment and resources, but equally as a threat to the local sense of identity and a potential source of conflict. This is particularly likely to occur when the new arrivals belong to a different ethnic, cultural or social group (Mahajan et al., 2008). Despite the short-term benefits, the vulnerability of the migrants and their families to new risks may increase in the long-term from migrating to urban destinations.



### 3.5. Skills development

SDG target 4.4 aims to enhance the size of the skilled workforce by 2030.<sup>8</sup> A large number of migrant workers from and within developing countries are either semi-skilled or unskilled. A joint study by the GIZ and the International Labour Organization (2015) reports that the labour demand in Gulf Cooperation Council countries will continue to focus on largely low-skilled foreign labour in the construction and service sectors. ADB (2012) considers low-skilled migrants among the most vulnerable people in society. These workers are in a weak position to bargain for better working conditions and higher wages. A 2014 government study in Nepal reports that semi-skilled and skilled workers respectively earn NPR 10,000 and NPR 13,250 more per month than low-skilled workers (CTEVT, 2014, cited in Thami and Bhattarai, 2015:3). In cities of low-income countries, these migrant workers often live in congested environments and in informal settlements with limited access to health, water and other services (Foresight, 2011). The “migration with dignity” policy of Kiribati aims to improve the levels of educational and vocational qualifications in the country to support migrants to seek economic opportunities abroad and build expatriate communities in receiving countries. In the long-term, this would enhance remittance inflow and the expatriates could then support new migrants (McNamara, 2015).

### 3.6. Gender

Several SDG targets acknowledge the necessity of empowering and building the capacities of women. The IPCC AR5's Working Group II suggests that displacement due to extreme weather events could disrupt the social network of women, resulting in a loss of their social capital, and adverse effects on their mental health (IPCC, 2014). Migration may empower female migrants (ADB, 2012) under certain conditions, but the picture is complex. In Viet Nam's Mekong River Delta, Entzinger and Scholten (2016) found that women were unable to continue their economic activities after relocation. They considered these women to be potentially more vulnerable to future environmental shocks. The outmigration of men could increase the vulnerability of women due to an increase in their workload (IPCC, 2014), unsafe working conditions, exploitation and loss of respect (Pouliotte et al., as cited in IPCC, 2014:13). At the same time, the male outmigration could also empower women to revamp traditional roles, increase their access to public decision-making forums, and seek new livelihood opportunities (IPCC, 2014). However, if these new roles are not accepted by the community, women might find it difficult to enforce their de facto decision-making power and protect their goods against others (ADB, 2012). The working conditions and wage rate are likely to influence the remittance behaviour of female

migrant workers, income of the family-left behind, and to an extent influence the type of risk management strategies adopted by the family-left-behind. However, the female migrants in lower-end informal sector occupations earn a lower wage than male migrants, do not enjoy any maternity entitlements, lack access to proper sanitation, and are vulnerable to exploitation from illegal placement agencies (Price and Chacko, 2012).

### **3.7. Enabling conditions**

While exploring the impact of migration on development, de Haas (2012:19) found that “migration was not the factor that triggered development, but rather that development enabled by structural, political, and economic reforms unleashed the development potential of migration”. Several SDGs (e.g. 1, 6, 9, 13 and 15) aim to create enabling conditions that include climate actions, water security, restoration of degraded land (including land affected by desertification, drought and floods), creation of resilient infrastructure, supporting economic development and human well-being, and increasing access to information and communications technology (ICT). An improvement in generic development conditions and community resilience in the origin and destination communities would reduce the risks of displacement and forms of mobility that erode assets, and may permit the migrants and their families to benefit from new opportunities.

## **4. Opportunities, solutions and the SDGs**

This section suggests an approach that would reduce risks and maximize benefits from mobility in the context of environmental change and SDGs. Fundamentally, this approach advocates the mainstreaming of human mobility within the CCA, DRR and SDG mechanisms at the national and local levels. The key elements of this approach are presented below.

### **4.1. Mainstreaming of human mobility in the CCA, DRR and SDGs**

There should be a shared understanding and common approach regarding human mobility among different government agencies that deal with CCA, DRR and SDGs. This is best done through a multi-stakeholder forum to facilitate regular interaction between these stakeholders at different levels (i.e. local, provincial and national). The operational guidelines on human mobility in policy domains associated with CCA, DRR and SDGs could be harmonized. This could be further strengthened through the development of an evidence base (e.g. data and inventory of good practices). Experts on human mobility could be involved in the CCA, DRR and SDG planning.

Concrete inputs on ways to incorporate human mobility in these processes could be useful to the policymakers and practitioners. For example, national stakeholders could explore ways to mobilize and invest remittances in public or community activities (e.g. disaster preparedness, drinking water supply, food security and infrastructure). In addition, the scope of existing migration programmes could be expanded to disseminate information about strategies to manage environmental risks and contribute to the SDGs.

## **4.2. Planning mobility**

At an operational level, programmes on adaptation and development could assist the migrant-sending households to better plan strategies that would reduce risks from environmental and non-environmental stressors. This could involve supporting the migrant workers and/or their households to: (a) benefit from employment opportunities that guarantee decent working conditions; (b) receive orientation and skill training; (c) access information about travel documents and work permits; (d) prepare a monthly budget (that includes expenditure on CCA and DRR); (e) access formal financial institutions (including digital payment systems) and adopt risk management tools (e.g. insurance); (f) invest financial and social remittances to diversify the livelihoods of family left-behind; and (g) adopt CCA and DRR strategies to increase the resilience of their communities. In addition, these programmes could aim to reduce displacement due to disasters associated with climate change and variability. A durable solution to displacement is the gradual, complex and long-term process that focuses on the return of the displaced persons to their place of origin, local integration with the host population or resettlement in another part of the country.

**Table 1: Sustainable Development Goals and targets relevant for human mobility in the context of environmental change**

	Goal	Targets
Migration governance	Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries	10.7 – Facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.
Food	Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture	2.4 – By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality. 2.C – Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility.
Decent work	Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	8.2 – Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors. 8.3 – Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services. 8.5 – By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value. 8.8 – Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment. 8.10 – Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all.

	Goal	Targets
Inclusive cities and social protection	Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	11.1 – By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums. 11.5 – By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.
Skills development	Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	4.4 – By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
Gender	Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	5.A – Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
	Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	13.B – Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

	Goal	Targets
Enabling conditions	Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere	1.5 – By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.
	Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all	6.4 – By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
		6.5 – By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.
		6.6 – By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.
	Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	9.1 – Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
		9.C – Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020.

	Goal	Targets
Enabling conditions	Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	<p>13.1 – Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.</p> <p>13.2 – Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.</p> <p>13.3 – Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.</p>
	Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss	15.3 – By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.
Disaggregated data	Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development	17.18 – By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.



### **4.3. Investment in urban infrastructure**

Urban centres, especially those that are located within the country of origin, are likely to be favoured by most migrants. Policymakers and urban planners would have to recognize the migrant workers as stakeholders in urban planning. Urban development planning could focus on affordable public and private accommodation, education, health care, public transport, sanitation and water supply. Informal settlements would require special attention from the planners. Measures could be adopted to reduce the pressure on major cities. Investments in the tier II and III urban centres could be explored to reduce risks from extreme events, decongest residential areas, and enhance infrastructural capacity.

### **4.4. Awareness raising and capacity-building**

There are several key stakeholders in this process, such as migrants, their families, origin and host communities, community-based organizations, government officials, multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, think tanks and academia. Awareness about the implications of different forms of mobility in the context of environmental change, and the challenges and opportunities that these would pose to the SDGs varies among these stakeholders. A long-term engagement to raise awareness and build capacity of these stakeholders would be a key to mainstreaming of mobility in the CCA, DRR and SDG programmes.

### **4.5. Reorienting agricultural extension services**

Climate smart agricultural practices (e.g. drought-, flood-, or saline resistant crops) could be promoted among the migrant-sending households, and supplemented by incentives from the government. The capacities of these households to better manage the environmental and market risks to agriculture could be enhanced through emergency food storage, gender-sensitive training and extension services, as well as ICT-based solutions, particularly in remote and rural areas. The experts, technicians and extension workers from development partners and government institutions could support the households in adopting innovative strategies.

### **4.6. Stronger and more inclusive safety nets**

Policymakers should focus on the creation of decent jobs that guarantee a minimum wage, safe working conditions and social security benefits (e.g. provident fund, insurance, health-care benefits, maternity benefits and paid

leave). The governments could also explore ways to extend social security benefits to the informal sector workers. For instance, incentives (e.g. tax break or subsidy) could be extended to the labour-intensive services to encourage employers to provide social security benefits to all the workers, including contractual or temporary workers. In countries where the federal nature of administration hinders the portability of social protection between provinces, the national government and governments of sending and receiving provinces could explore mechanisms to ensure that migrants could access social protection entitlements anywhere within the national territory. Existing mechanisms between sending, transit and receiving countries could be further strengthened to protect the rights of international migrants, as well as persons displaced across international borders.

#### **4.7. Skills and entrepreneur development programmes**

Governments of origin could be encouraged to help international and internal migrant workers acquire skills that are in demand in prospective labour markets. Curricula for skills development programmes for migrant workers could be customized and lead to certification that would be recognized by prospective employers within and outside the country of origin. Destination countries could come together to harmonize their criteria for skill recognition and visa issue. These efforts could extend to the development of entrepreneurship programmes for the families left behind as well as the return migrants. The programmes could focus on the specific needs of marginalized populations, the poor, and women.

## 5. Conclusion

Environmental change will be a challenge to the achievement of the SDGs, particularly in least developed countries (LDCs). Large infrastructure developments will further contribute to environmental degradation. This is currently happening in most of the LDCs. Consequently, already vulnerable populations are exposed to new sources of risk. While countries pursue their development priorities, they ought to ensure that new risks are not created for the vulnerable communities. The development of enabling conditions in origin and destination communities is an essential pre-requisite to unlock the potential of human mobility to reduce risks from environmental change, and in turn contribute to SDGs. There should be an emphasis on development programmes that include aspects of social inclusion, social protection and adaptation planning. To make the policy response on human mobility comprehensive, ongoing development and adaptation planning process could explore opportunities to mobilize remittances to enhance adaptive capacity in origin communities located in environmentally fragile

areas. For a better integration of development, adaptation and migration agendas, there is a fundamental need for the various narratives on these themes to converge. An example of how such integration could be achieved is the process adopted by the Government of Nepal to produce the Climate Change and Migration Strategy Paper. A start can be made by identifying potential multi-stakeholder forums at the national level to discuss the approaches for such integration.

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## Endnotes

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2. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu, Nepal.
3. For a definition of environmental migrants, refer to [www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/about\\_iom/en/council/94/MC\\_INF\\_288.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/about_iom/en/council/94/MC_INF_288.pdf)
4. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10>
5. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg2>
6. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10>
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# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN THE PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION OF DISPLACEMENT



Anne-Sophie Christensen



## Introduction

Conflicts and disasters are key drivers of displacement. There are 65 million people currently being forcibly displaced from their homes because of conflict. Another 25 million people are displaced annually by disasters.

The level of displacement is higher than at any other time in recorded history. The scope and intensity of conflicts are on the rise, as are the accumulated effects of environmental degradation, climate change and extreme weather movements, all of which can generate movement. Even after adjusting for population growth, the risk of disaster-related displacement is now 60 per cent higher than it was four decades ago.<sup>1</sup>

Faced with an unprecedented number of crises, the challenge for the international community is not only in how to deal with the new displacements but also how to support the increasingly growing number of long-term displaced persons: the average duration of conflict-related displacement is 17–23 years, meaning generations of children have never known what it is to have a settled existence. The longer the displacement, the higher the humanitarian, social and economic costs for individuals and host communities, and the more challenging it is for individuals and communities to recover.

Population displacement requires both humanitarian and development responses. Not only are there needs that require both types of intervention, but what is done in one field can positively or negatively affect the activities and achievements in the other. Both fields have a vested interest in mobilizing the State and/or the local community to address drivers of displacement, to minimize the impacts of displacement on host communities and to ensure returns and recovery from crisis contribute to sustainable development and minimize future risks and shock.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the interlinkages between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the mobility dimensions of crisis. It will focus on the humanitarian development nexus and suggest ways in which action across these two areas of intervention can be coordinated to achieve more productive and more sustainable outcomes.

## Sustainable Development Goals and displacement

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development broke new ground by incorporating key peace and security issues within a universal development agenda.<sup>2</sup> While the Millennium Declaration made only limited reference to victims of humanitarian crisis, the 2030 Agenda identifies forced displacement as a factor that threatens to reverse much of the progress on development made in recent years.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, progress towards the achievement of the SDGs plays a key role in addressing many of the drivers of displacement, notably the various factors linked to poverty, food insecurity, marginalization, weak governance, social or cultural intolerances, economic imbalances and lack of opportunities, among others. This is particularly significant given that by 2030, the share of global poor living in fragile and conflict-affected situations is projected to reach 46 per cent.<sup>4</sup> The SDGs also include specific goals and targets related to building resilience to “reduce exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters”, the importance of which cannot be understated with respect to the linkages between disaster and displacement, given the rapid and poorly planned urban growth that is largely characteristic of many developing countries. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, in 2014, lower-middle-income countries with 36 per cent of the world’s population accounted for 61 per cent of disaster-related displacement.<sup>5</sup>

Efforts to address drivers focus on vulnerable and at-risk populations and communities regardless of their potential migration status. Likewise, successful and sustained crisis recovery requires that returning populations,

as well as communities of return, are not faced again with the same conditions that drove their displacement in the first place. The SDGs and the mobility dimensions of crisis thus have much bigger mutual significance than may be apparent at first sight.

## Dimensions of displacement

Contemporary natural or man-made disasters give rise to large and long-lasting population displacements, but the political will to deal with displacements is in short supply. The fact that 65 million people are currently displaced is a patent demonstration of the ongoing inability of the international community to respond to such crises, whether by tackling root causes and mitigating drivers of migration or finding solutions for the displaced.

### **Impacts on migrants**

The impact of displacement on families or individuals will depend on whether they are displaced within their country or have crossed into another country, with the latter potentially falling under the scope of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Regardless of the distinction, saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining and protecting the dignity of vulnerable men, women and children are paramount in all displacement contexts. And yet, generations of displaced children may miss out on adequate education. Frustrated youth with few employment prospects may be unable to acquire livelihoods and achieve financial independence. And men and women may become dependent on aid and be unable to support their families. Often displaced populations are malnourished, medical conditions go largely untreated, and reduced vaccination levels, as well as insufficient water and sanitation conditions give rise to wider public health concerns. Internally displaced persons, especially women and children, are also disproportionately at risk of gross abuses of their human rights, and vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence.

### **Impacts on the host community**

For host communities, a large or sudden influx of displaced persons can amplify a host country or community's pre-existing political, economic or social tensions, if they exist. The highest volume of conflict-related displacement is found in countries with the weakest coping capacity and the most uneven patterns of development.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, developing countries were hosting 99 per cent of all internally displaced persons and 89 per cent of all refugees.<sup>7</sup> The economic, social and human costs of caring for displaced populations are felt particularly strongly at the local community level. There is often significant pressure on local goods and services, disrupting

the community's progress towards sustainable development goals. Local and displaced populations compete for jobs and resources, public services are overwhelmed, and the costs of living, including rental fees, often soar.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly of concern, as a clear majority of displaced persons are increasingly dispersed in urban settings,<sup>9</sup> making displacement a key consideration for urban-related sustainable development goals.

### **Impacts on the community of origin**

For communities of origin, the sudden or large outflow of migrants can lead to significant shortages in local goods, services and much-needed skills. In agricultural settings, farmers may lose the labour required to plant or harvest crops, or may themselves be displaced during planting or harvesting season, with serious consequences for food security and local, national or regional commerce.<sup>10</sup> Crisis also affects the pre-existing mobility patterns of persons and goods essential for economies. For instance, pastoralists may be unable to access their traditional corridors of travel or grazing areas, and their relocation from an area can negatively affect the availability of meat and its by-products.<sup>11</sup>

### **Making the best of opportunities**

While the narrative of displacement typically focuses on the burden and challenges of displacement, host communities may benefit from, for instance, arrival of new skills in the labour market, increased consumption of local food and other commodities or the purchase of building materials; all of which can stimulate economic growth. Host communities may also benefit from assistance programmes targeting infrastructure and welfare services provided by agencies responding to the needs of displaced populations.<sup>12</sup> Understanding and building upon these secondary effects can provide a positive and meaningful base for the development of policies and responses that reduce the negative impact of displacement on host societies and populations themselves. Guided by the SDGs, mobility principles can also help progressively resolve displacement in a manner that promotes sustainable development through the following: (a) promoting self-reliance and resilience; (b) establishing circular or temporary migration strategies based on demographic needs; and (c) promoting income-generating projects to enable displaced populations to be agents of their own recovery.<sup>13</sup>

## ■ The humanitarian development nexus

Displacement is often an unavoidable life-saving or coping mechanism. Thus, not all displacement can or should be prevented and when it is impossible to do so, responses should focus on minimizing the duration of displacement and finding durable solutions to the displacement. The humanitarian system was designed to assist States, or provide direct assistance in such circumstances. However, the protracted nature of certain crises has severely stretched – or, in some cases, overwhelmed – the capacities of the humanitarian system, calling for renewed efforts in responsibility sharing.

Efforts to enhance coherence between humanitarian assistance and development aid are not new. The concept of linking relief, rehabilitation and development emerged in the 1990s when practitioners identified funding gaps between humanitarian assistance, relief and development activities.<sup>14</sup> Since then, agencies, academics and practitioners have attempted to find ways to establish a bridge between effective humanitarian relief, and sustainable medium- and long-term development action.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, it is not as simple as developing interim programmes to fill the gaps left between the respective winding down and scaling up of humanitarian assistance and development programming, respectively. Especially in complex and/or protracted contexts, humanitarian and development aid often run concurrently, not sequentially. Moreover, both fields have clearly defined but distinct working principles, mandates, administrative procedures and institutional cultures that enable each to provide the most effective and efficient assistance necessary in a given context. For instance, while humanitarian aid often involves direct delivery of assistance, development aid is primarily delivered through governments and in keeping with national strategies.

The World Humanitarian Summit (2016) produced several outcomes that have provided fresh impetus to enhance coordination and cooperation between the two fields. The Grand Bargain on Humanitarian Financing, launched at the Summit, sets forth a series of commitments, among them to enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors. The Summit also led to the adoption of a Commitment to Action signed by the UN Secretary-General and leading UN actors, and endorsed by the World Bank and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which launched a New Way of Working Initiative. The initiative's goals are as follows (a) meet humanitarian needs; (b) reduce needs, risks and vulnerability over time; (c) use resources and capabilities more productively; (d) improve SDG outcomes for people in situations of risk, vulnerability and crisis; (e) better pool data, analysis and information; (f) bridge planning and programming

processes; and (g) work towards collective outcomes with better financing modalities.<sup>16</sup>

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the heads of UNICEF, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organization, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Development Programme, with the endorsement of the World Bank and IOM, signed at the World Humanitarian Summit a Commitment to Action document, in which they agreed on a New Way of Working in crises.

It is further noteworthy that several recently negotiated global agreements also offer platforms of action that are broad enough and solid enough to sustain plans of action combining humanitarian and development endeavours, including those that address mobility dimensions of crisis. These include notably the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Nansen Initiative and its Protection Agenda and the Migrants in Country in Crisis Initiative.<sup>17</sup> Habitat III's New Urban Agenda is of special interest because its purpose is to contribute to the SDGs by improving the way in which cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed.

It is thus evident that there can and should be multiple entry points, where humanitarian and development actors work in partnership, and in a mutually supportive manner. This can be done, for instance, through the following: (a) incorporating mobility-related prevention, preparedness and resilience programming into national development programming – especially in fragile or at-risk States; (b) helping host States to regularly adjust their development strategies to take account of displacement impacts; (c) promoting planning for the progressive resolution of displacement; and (d) supporting programmes that help establish the pre-conditions for recovery and sustainable development.

## Conclusion

Crises – whether arising from man-made or sudden/slow-onset disasters – are a major threat to development. They unsettle communities, divide families, upset economies and disrupt traditional mobility patterns while producing forced displacement. They also stall, if not reverse progress, in achieving the SDGs. That can be the start of a vicious cycle as, in turn, setbacks in development and increased poverty, increase risks of tensions and lay foundations for new conflicts and a new crop of humanitarian consequences that follow. Displacement and other mobility dimensions of a crisis are inextricable from this equation.

When disaster strikes, communities of origin typically suffer from the loss of skilled and unskilled labour, and altered mobility patterns disrupt commerce and trade. For their part, localities or countries of destination are faced with the challenge of having to stretch their resources to provide essential services to newcomers. In both cases, progress towards the SDGs can be jeopardized if remedial measures are not introduced. It follows that there is a strong argument for the mobility dimensions of crisis to be fully considered in SDG implementation. Such an approach will help bridge the humanitarian/development divide by promoting actions that address the causes and consequences of displacement; provide support to persons and communities displaced by a crisis; encourage populations to become self-reliant and be agents of their own recovery; build resilience to disaster; and, in general terms, provide more sustainable and innovative solutions for people and communities affected by crisis. Likewise, better planned and coordinated humanitarian assistance can lay the foundation for stronger recovery and longer-term sustainable development.<sup>18</sup>



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11. IOM, 2014, op cit.
12. Amidst discussions on the economic burden of refugees, the Lebanese economy has been growing beyond expectations over the past two years, and Turkey and Jordan have also demonstrated economic resilience with their respective economies growing consistently throughout the refugees' inflow. Likewise, a micro-economic study of Dadaab refugee camp calculated the positive economic impact of the camps for the host community was USD 14 million – about 25 per cent of the per capita income of the province (M. Cali and S. Sekkarie, "Much ado about nothing? The economic impact of refugee 'invasions'", Brookings blog, 16 September 2015, available from [www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/09/16-economic-impact-refugees-cali](http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/future-development/posts/2015/09/16-economic-impact-refugees-cali) and R. Zetter, Are refugees an economic burden or benefit? *Forced Migration Review*, 41:50–52 (2012), available from [www.fmreview.org/preventing/zetter#sthash.BbfG5vt7.dpuf](http://www.fmreview.org/preventing/zetter#sthash.BbfG5vt7.dpuf)
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18. The author, Anne-Sophie Christensen, is a recent graduate of the University of Geneva, where she completed her Masters in Environmental Sciences.



# CHILDREN AND MIGRATION IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Gina Starfield<sup>1</sup>



## Introduction

Children make up a substantial share of migrants and refugees worldwide. Of the 244 international migrants identified by UN agencies in 2015, 31 million were children, 11 million of whom were child refugees and asylum seekers (UNICEF, 2016). This means that one in every eight migrants is a child, and roughly half of the world's refugee population is made up of children (ibid.).

Child migration is not confined to any particular region, but a global phenomenon. While the United States of America hosts the largest number of child migrants (3.7 million), the Americas are home to 21 per cent of the global total. The largest proportion of international child migrants (39% of the global total) lives in Asia, and the greatest share of children among migrants is found in Africa. Nearly one in every three African migrants is a child, more than twice the global average (ibid.).

The following article highlights current challenges child migrants face along migratory routes and upon arrival in transit and host countries. It puts child migration in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were adopted by the UN General Assembly on 27 September 2015. The goals underscore the determination of the international community to protect all vulnerable persons and to “leave no one behind”. Underage and away from home, child migrants often find themselves in extremely vulnerable situations. While international law affords them certain rights and safeguards,

most States have not fully implemented these rights and often overlook child migrants as distinct rights holders when developing migration laws and policies. It is, therefore, imperative to address the gaps in international child migrant protection by achieving the SDGs and relevant targets related to the overall well-being of child migrants.

## Context

There is no one homogenous profile of the migrant child. Like their adult counterparts, child migrants leave their home communities for a complex range of reasons. Some are forced from their homes due to war, conflict, natural disasters, human rights violations, abuse, forced marriage, forced labour and sexual exploitation. Others leave their home due to a lack of educational and vocational opportunities in their countries of origin. Many leave home due to a combination of these factors. Although the risks they face – i.e. recruitment by armed forces or gender-based violence – differ on the basis of gender, girls and boys are equally represented among refugees registered worldwide (ibid.).

Migrant children may be accompanied by their parents or guardians, by other adults (separated children) or alone (unaccompanied children). The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines *separated children* as those who have been separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary caregiver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members. *Unaccompanied children*, as defined by the CRC, are those who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so.

The incidence of children travelling alone has spiked in recent years. In 2015, unaccompanied and separated children, mainly from Afghanistan, Eritrea, the Syrian Arab Republic and Somalia, lodged over 98,400 asylum applications in various countries across the globe (UNHCR, 2016). In North America and Europe, there has been a sharp increase in the number of unaccompanied or separated children seeking entry. In 2014, 60,000 unaccompanied or separated children crossed the south-west border of the United States, migrating from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Mexico (United States Customs and Border Protection, 2016). In 2015, more than 250,000 child migrants crossed irregularly into Italy and Greece. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that roughly 10 per cent of children arriving in Greece were without parents or guardians and, notably, 72 per cent of the child migrants arriving in Italy

have been officially registered as unaccompanied (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2016).

These child migrants are extremely disadvantaged. While leaving one's home, whether by force or by choice, is psychologically and physically draining for all; it is often more so for children. As this article details, child migrants are extremely susceptible to smuggling, human trafficking and other forms of exploitation when migrating; and they face additional barriers in accessing protection upon arrival in transit countries and countries of destination.

## ■ Dangers along migratory routes

Children face considerable risk in migrating. Young children and babies born along migratory routes are particularly vulnerable to the harshness of their travel circumstances, and many do not survive the journey. In October 2015 alone, at least 90 children died in the Eastern Mediterranean en route to Europe, with nearly one in five under the age of 2 years (IOM and UNICEF, 2015). Children are likely to be separated from their families or primary caregivers, and many are exposed to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

The dangers associated with migrating are often most grave for unaccompanied child migrants (Bhabha, 2014:138–142). In some regional contexts, such as in Europe and Latin America, children have increasingly begun to migrate alone for a multitude of reasons. Many wish to unite with family members abroad, while others seek better lives and economic opportunities. Others flee out of a desperate need to escape violence and abuse; and some may migrate alone because they have a better chance of accessing State services, protection, education and job opportunities when unaccompanied.

Children, whether accompanied or alone, are subject to exploitation, as they often rely on the help of smugglers when undertaking the dangerous journey to reach their countries of destination. Children migrating from Central America to the United States face such perils. Many travel aboard freight trains colloquially known as *La Bestia*, or The Beast, to reach the United States. As these trains do not have passenger railcars, migrants ride atop the moving trains, facing physical dangers that range from amputation to death if they fall or are pushed. Beyond the risks associated with the mode of transport, these child migrants are also subject to extortion and violence at the hands of the gangs and organized-crime groups that control routes north (Villegas, 2014).

Migrant children are also highly susceptible to human trafficking. Children account for roughly one third of all detected trafficking victims worldwide, the majority of whom are girls under 18 years of age (UNODC, 2014). Working to counter the trafficking in persons since 1994, IOM has noticed an increase in the number of child victims assisted in the last few years (specifically 27% from 2008 to 2011 (IOM, 2011)). Of the 7,000 trafficked persons assisted by IOM in 2015, 13 per cent were children (IOM United Kingdom, 2016). In Europe, it is believed that a rise in trafficking has accompanied the recent increase in irregular migration. As of January 2016, it is estimated that at least 10,000 unaccompanied child refugees have disappeared after arriving in Europe, many of whom are feared to have fallen into the hands of traffickers, according to Europol (Townsend, 2016).

## Risks in transit and host countries

When they reach countries of transit or destination, child migrants face immense barriers in receiving State protection. Irregular child migrants are often detained, leading to serious restrictions on their human rights and access to education, housing and health care. Despite strong international norms prohibiting detention, unless it is in the “best interest of the child” – which it rarely or ever is – over 100 countries worldwide detain children for immigration reasons (Corlett et al., 2012).

Child migrants are also subject to invasive and inaccurate age assessment tests. In many countries in Europe, age assessment tests determine access to care. While border authorities in some States immediately refer unaccompanied migrant children to childcare authorities without confirmation of their age (e.g. Austria, Finland, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Norway), nine Member States conduct age assessments on arrival (IOM, 2016). Six ask for age assessments before referring unaccompanied migrant children to child protection authorities in cases where age is disputed or undocumented (Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Malta, Slovakia and Spain; IOM, 2016). Methods for determining age vary. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) recommends that, for age assessment to appropriately consider the “best interests” of the child under the CRC, consideration must be given first to documentary and other available sources of evidence before resorting to medical examination (EASO, 2013). In practice, however, medical examinations are often carried out at the outset (AIDA, 2015). Medical assessments are systematically ordered for unaccompanied migrants in Austria (as of July 2015), Cyprus (as of May 2015) and Sweden (as of November 2015), among other countries (ibid.). States that use medical examinations rely on different techniques, such as dental examinations and X-rays of various bones of the body like the wrist

to determine bone maturity. There are significant doubts, however, about the ethics and accuracy of radiological techniques; many find it violates the bioethics principle of non-maleficence (Noll, 2016; Aynsley-Green et al., 2012).

Even with proper registration, children have difficulty accessing education, health services or psychosocial support without official regularization of their status. Applying for asylum and other legal forms of State protection is difficult for children, especially when unaccompanied or separated, as the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol do not directly acknowledge child vulnerability, nor provide instructions for how underage persons can formally and legally represent and advocate for one's self and their interests before a State institution. Child migrants seeking asylum have more difficulty recounting traumatizing events and establishing qualified asylum claims than their adult counterparts (Bhabha, 2014:205). They are likely less resilient in the face of the instability that typifies the refugee/asylum seeker experience and more likely to develop psychopathology (Lavik et al., 1996; Ying, 1999). They do not have someone to provide emotional support to help them overcome the adversities present in their uncertain, unstable environment. They are, thus, even more psychologically vulnerable (Ressler et al., 1988:285). As indicated by empirical studies of the emotional well-being of unaccompanied refugee minors, they are more likely to develop and exhibit several emotional, developmental and behavioural problems, such as depression, withdrawal, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse and violent behaviour (ibid.). According to a 2008 Belgian study, because they are unaccompanied asylum seeker children, they are five times more likely than their accompanied counterparts to have severe symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD (Derluyn et al., 2008). They are acutely prone to long-term mental health effects, particularly if they are detained and/or denied adequate care in the host country (Ressler et al., 1988:223–261).

Some international guidelines, such as the Guidelines on the Protection and Care of Refugee Children (1993) and Procedures in Dealing with Unaccompanied Minors Seeking Asylum (1997) published by the UNHCR, have attempted to address this gap for refugee children. Nonetheless most State-protective institutions are designed for adults, including the international refugee regime. Children have difficulty accessing protection, education and other basic needs and services once they arrive in host countries. Moreover, while these guidelines work to remedy a significant gap in protection schemes, many migrant children travelling alone without qualified refugee claims do not fall under the protection of the international refugee regime. They have fewer resources and recourses for regularizing



their status in host countries and achieving protection. *The Inter-agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children* (2004) – published by the International Committee of the Red Cross, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children/United Kingdom, UNICEF, UNHCR and World Vision International – is one such attempt to fill these gaps for child migrants.

An absence of data regarding children on the move complicates this picture and hinders the humanitarian assistance and migrant protection both along migratory routes and in transit and host countries. Gaps in data are particularly prevalent regarding the detention and return of those who arrived as unaccompanied minors and have since reached 18 years of age (IOM, 2016). There are also many instances of “double-counting” children. This occurs when disjointed recording mechanisms aggregate, rather than consolidate their data (ibid.). In the European migration crisis, double counting has been a particularly serious issue, as data is aggregated at local, national and European levels. The dearth of comparable, consistent data makes administering care, raising funds and holding governments accountable to international obligations even more challenging.



Murat, one of the IOM field staff and a Syrian national, overlooking the school transportation programme. © IOM 2016 (Photo: Muse Mohammed)



## ■ Opportunities, solutions and the SDGs

IOM conducts numerous projects for the benefit of child migrants, both alone and in partnership with UNICEF and other relevant actors. Through research, advocacy and publications, such as IOM's *Children on the Move* (2013), IOM highlights and addresses the pressing gaps in international protection and services available for migrant children. The Organization also facilitates the delivery of health and education services to child migrants, and incorporates child-specific actions in community stabilization, resettlement, integration and assisted voluntary return and reintegration projects. IOM also works to help unaccompanied migrants, as explained in the 2011 report, *Unaccompanied Children on the Move*. IOM specifically seeks to organize legal guardianships when arranging for the assisted voluntary return and reintegration of unaccompanied migrants, and IOM assists with family tracing and family reintegration. This work and the work of other relevant actors will increase with the implementation and follow-up and review of the SDGs.

By directly and indirectly addressing migrants and migration in a variety of targets, the SDGs provide a unique opportunity to incorporate migrants and migration in global, regional and national policies and strategies. The 2030 Agenda promises to promote international cooperation with a view to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants, including those who are under legal age. This demonstrates a strong international commitment to change the current status quo regarding the rights and vulnerabilities of migrants.

With multiple migration-specific and child-specific targets, the SDGs tackle several of the issues that have been explored in this article. Targets also underline the importance of reducing the number of children living in poverty (1.2) and improving the quality of and access to education and vocational training for all children (4A, 4.2 and 4.5), which in turn are means of improving living standards for children all over the world. Addressing educational and vocational disparities in countries of origin will increase the opportunities available to children and perhaps decrease the level of child migration. At the same time, providing special support and access to education health services and labour markets in host countries – particularly for unaccompanied migrants – will allow migrant children to cope better with the challenges they are confronted with. Such programmes help mitigate the aforementioned adverse psychological effects associated with migrating and integrating into a host society. Migrant children are extremely resilient and have great potential to contribute positively to their new communities if given the opportunity to do so.

To fully realize targets 4A, 4.2 and 4.5, host country governments must partner with international and national organizations to pursue programmes that facilitate and administer education for child migrants. IOM's special education programme in Greece provides an instructive example. With funding from the European Commission's Emergency Support Instrument, IOM has helped 2,500 refugee and migrant children get back to school in Greece. The project assists the Greek authorities in administering education by co-financing the transport of children to schools and the distribution of school kits (European Commission, 2017).

Targets promoting human rights and access to justice for all (16.3) also call for programmes addressing issues of abuse, detention and denial of basic services that child migrants face upon arrival in many host countries. Targets aimed at reducing death of newborns (3.2), eliminating violence against girls (5.2), eradicating human trafficking and child labour (8.7) and, most notably, ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children (16.2) envisage greater protection and safety for child migrants along migratory routes. Programmes that monitor, assist and protect child migrants in transit can help achieve these goals. In response to the European migration crisis, IOM has begun the IOM Migration Portal ([migration.iom.int/europe/](http://migration.iom.int/europe/)) and Missing Migrants Project ([missingmigrants.iom.int](http://missingmigrants.iom.int)). Both projects compile data and information on key trends in child migration to Europe. Biweekly reports are issued, publishing data of arrivals by country of transit, providing information on nationalities, routes, as well as locations and numbers of stranded migrants by nationality. By producing and streamlining data, these projects help resolve the difficulties of data collection, a first step in providing adequate support to children on the move.

Significantly, target 10.7 calls upon States to "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration". Facilitating "orderly, safe, and regular" migration means, among other things, partnering with other countries and with international organizations to provide safe and regular migration pathways for children who choose to or are forced to leave their homes. This will decrease the criminal activity, exploitation, abuse and child mortality faced along migratory routes and in transit and host countries.

The Central American Minors (CAM) Refugee/Parole Program administered by the Obama administration in the United States provides one example of a State programme designed to enhance safe and regular migration. While the programme has since been closed, lessons can be drawn from its overall goals. CAM was exemplary in its attempts to bypass the dangers associated with irregular migration by allowing children from three Central American

countries to fly to the United States, be admitted and receive various State benefits.

The United Kingdom also provides rich examples. Recent United Kingdom partnerships with international agencies and transit countries highlight positive developments towards achieving the target on safe and orderly migration, although the success of their implementation is contested and still uncertain at this stage. The currently contested Dubs Amendment (Section 67 of the United Kingdom Immigration Act 2016, enforced from 31 May 2016), for example, seeks to provide safe and legal pathways to protection for children in precarious situations across Europe. The amendment requires the United Kingdom's Home Secretary to resettle unaccompanied children who had registered in Greece, Italy or France before 20 March 2016, in consultation with local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UNHCR. In January 2016, the United Kingdom also announced a "children at risk" resettlement scheme, whereby it would partner with UNHCR and IOM to accept vulnerable children in the Middle East and North Africa region for resettlement (Goodwill, 2017). The scheme will provide a route for up to 3,000 children at risk in conflict situations to resettle, where UNHCR determines that resettlement is in their "best interests".

## Conclusion

Children will continue to be key contributors to human mobility. They will migrate, out of need and want for years to come and, as globalization increases, so too will child migration. The SDGs aim to guide international action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for the planet and humanity, with a commitment to addressing the need of the most vulnerable. As migrants and children, many child migrants experience extreme vulnerability. Mitigating the adversity faced by child migrants and providing for their care and safety at all stages of migration is imperative. To improve their lives and livelihood, foster resilience, and fulfil children's rights and abilities to contribute to development, strategies for managing child migration and addressing children in international and national policies, strategies and planning must be developed.



Children are among the main beneficiaries of IOM's programmes for IDPs in Quibdo, Choc.  
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## Endnotes

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# MIGRATION IN THE 2030 AGENDA



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