



Bangladeshi textile workers in Mauritius. © IOM 2008

## MAINSTREAMING HEALTH INTO THE MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUE

### BACKGROUND

During the 2010 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, governments expressed the need to identify cost-effective health care models for various types of migration scenarios, that reduce costs and enhance migration outcomes. Countries of migrant origin and destination increasingly look for workable models that enhance social protection in health for migrants, their families, and host communities.

Addressing the health needs of migrants is a good choice on all levels: individual, community and national. At individual and community levels, it improves migrants' health, protects the health of the public, and facilitates integration, while at the national level, such efforts have shown to contribute significantly to social and economic development in both origin and destination countries. Globally, the Millennium Development Goals clearly recognize that **health is a fundamental prerequisite and an outcome of development**: three of the eight MDGs relate to health.

However, health of migrants has not featured prominently on the agendas of major global debates on migration and development, most significantly the High Level Dialogue (HLD) on Migration and Development (2006) and the subsequent annual GFMD meetings. In addition, the topic has received relatively little attention in the discussions of the Global Migration Group (GMG) and in Regional Consultative Processes on Migration. Yet, linking health to the migration and development debate is both necessary and cost-effective. **Health is a migrant's main asset** and the leading factor for determining whether the migration experience for the migrant, their family, and the countries of origin and destination will be positive or negative.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines human development as *"a process of enlarging people's choices and enhancing human capabilities (the range of things people can be and do) and freedoms, enabling them to: live a long and healthy life, have access to knowledge and a decent standard of living, and participate in the life of their community and decisions affecting their lives"* (UNDP 2012).

**Social progress, economic growth, environmental sustainability, equity, human security, participation and democratic freedoms are some of the key issues in the current development debate. All these issues are linked to migration and health.**

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ADDRESSING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MIGRANTS IS KEY FOR ENSURING THAT MIGRATION CONTRIBUTES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. THEREFORE, HEALTH SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT DIALOGUES.

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)



Farmworkers chatting to an IOM trained peer educator on gender and health issues at a farm in Hoedspruit, South Africa.  
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Today it is widely agreed that migration carries a **development potential**, fuelled by migrants' intellectual, cultural, social and financial capital and their active participation in societies of origin and destination. This interlinks with health in several ways. For instance, a significant amount of monetary remittances is spent on health services and medication.

In addition, there is increased recognition that in order for migrants to fulfil their potential, earn money and children to learn, they need to be and remain healthy. Addressing migrant health is thus a **prerequisite for enabling migrants to contribute to development and reduce poverty** – for themselves, their families and the wider communities in both origin and destination country.

#### WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

IOM advocates for providing adequate living and working conditions for migrants, and granting them access to social protection in health, including health insurance, to facilitate integration, economic growth, and generally positive development outcomes. Actions to achieve this, to be taken at regional and global level, include the following:

- **Facilitate dialogue between** countries of origin and destination, creating platforms for shared responsibility in addressing social protection in health for migrants and their dependent family members.
- Integrate social protection in health in **bilateral agreements** between countries of origin and destination that cover a wide range of health issues including pre-departure migrant friendly health assessments and health promotion for labour migrants, ensuring

adherence to occupation health and safety standards for migrant workers in countries of destination, access to health services and portability and access to health insurance, just to name a few.

- Identify and describe **good models** to address the health of migrants throughout the migration cycle.
- Facilitate **inter-sectoral collaboration** at national level between Ministries of Labour, Immigration and Health inter alia to ensure an enabling **policy coherence**.
- Promote migrants' and communities' **participation**.

#### INCLUDE MIGRANT HEALTH IN THE MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

IOM supports the implementation of these actions in the framework of the Migration and Development dialogue. With joint efforts of member states, civil society and international organizations, this could be achieved through the following upcoming initiatives and fora:

- The annual **GFMD** roundtables would be an excellent forum for addressing migrant health in dialogue with origin and destination countries.
- The UN will be holding the second **High Level Dialogue** on International Migration and Development in September 2013; it is essential that health is included in this high level meeting.
- The Millennium Development Goals are currently being revised to set a **post-2015 UN development framework**. This is a good opportunity to include migrants' health in different thematic discussions.

For further information on the topic  
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