

**Working Group B:
DATA ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Migration and development are interdependent processes which have played decisive roles in the progress of human civilization. Migration and development have influenced the evolution of states, societies, economies and institutions. In fact, the forces of migration have guided the nature of the production system and the development process for centuries.

The linkages between migration and development are complex. Previously, the international community focussed primarily on the negative elements: the lack of opportunities and economic prospects in the home country (root causes) which act as a catalyst for emigration, and the adverse affect on development this loss of essential human resources (“brain drain”) could have. Increasingly, however, the international community is focussing on a third significant linkage: if properly managed, international migration could have important benefits for home country development.

Migration, if properly managed can have a positive impact on labour surplus in developing countries by providing job opportunities abroad. If not properly managed, however, out-migration can itself produce a labour shortage especially of skilled professionals in certain sectors of the economy. Accurate data is needed to understand labour needs and prepare an appropriate human resource development plan to address these needs.

Many migrants acquire new skills in their host country through higher education and training not readily available at home. Such skills may be relevant to the development needs of their countries of origin. Data and information are essential in order for governments to take advantage of these skills. Similarly, better management of programmes for foreign students could also lead to skills transfer advantageous to development.

While being abroad, migrants acquire not only skills and experience, but also earnings, which are often partly sent to their families back home. Worldwide, the officially registered flow of migrants’ remittances exceeds USD 70 billion per year, with more than 60 percent going to developing countries. This number does not include funds sent through unofficial channels which, according to certain reports, could raise the aggregate estimate by 2 to 3 times.

Some data already exists on the extent of official remittances. This needs to be better understood, and complemented by research on the impact on development of migrant remittances. Some work is underway on how to encourage more migrants to remit through official channels and invest in home country development. Data is required to ascertain what efforts would be necessary to make this work – for example by reducing the high transfer fees, designing incentive schemes, developing a sense of trust in the administration.

The valuable contribution of diaspora to home country development is being increasingly acknowledged. The African Union has recently adopted a new Constitution in which diasporas are mentioned for the first time. More and more countries are beginning to actively mobilize their diasporas in a variety of ways. Diaspora are being encouraged to return to their home countries either permanently or temporarily to share their skills. Diaspora networks are being created to facilitate contact between the diaspora and their home country and diaspora investment in the economies of the home countries is being encouraged and facilitated.

Several regional meetings among governments have recognized in their deliberations and Plans of Action the importance of the migration-development nexus. For established regional consultative processes such as the Regional Conference on Migration (Puebla Process), the Western Mediterranean Cooperation Process (5+5 Process), the Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA), and the Migration Dialogue for Western Africa (MIDWA), migration and development is a key theme in their agendas.

To support the efforts currently underway, there currently exist certain limited data sets on migration (maintained, for example, by OECD, EUROSTAT, UN Population Division) as well as certain limited data sets relevant to development (such as those developed by the World Bank, IMF, UNDP and others). More work is needed to aggregate existing data and to fill the gaps with essential new data in order to properly understand and make use of the migration-development nexus.

SOME KEY CHALLENGES FOR POLICY-MAKERS

- Knowing which data are relevant to understanding the relationship between migration and development and what these data mean (certain of these data sets may be country or region-specific).
- Developing a systematic way of obtaining data on diaspora communities (using key fields which may include size/gender/occupation/status/academic level, and others), as well as on returning migrants.
- Developing definitions, categories, and sources of worker remittances (including migrants' transfers, compensation of employees and other) and concrete measures to capture remittance flows through informal channels.
- Understanding existing data on the current use of remittances toward poverty reduction at the family and community level and using this understanding to promote contributions of remittances through formal channels in order to maximize benefits toward productive investment and sustainable development.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What tools or mechanisms could be used to collect appropriate data in both the country of origin and the host country? Do any such mechanisms currently exist? Could mechanisms be created without significant incremental resource requirements?
2. What information related to diaspora would be useful (size, gender, education, skills...)? How can such information be obtained and maintained in a systematic fashion? Are there any data collected on the number/nature of permanent and temporary return migrants? Do countries of origin have policies or a structure dedicated to this work?
3. How is data on remittances captured? How could data be captured on the amount of remittances sent through unofficial channels?
4. What data is collected on the use of remittances (urban, rural, household consumption, investment)? How can estimates be made of the current use of remittances for development purposes (number of registered community projects)?
5. What effective practices can be identified with regard to the collection, exchange and sharing of data related to migration and development?
6. What are the constraints preventing data collection?
7. What are the data priorities with the limited available resources?
8. Is there a need for international dialogue to help build a better appreciation for and commitment to the need for enhancing and prioritizing the data collection?
9. What roles can regional and international organizations play in facilitating data collection and management on migration and development?