



## Pursuing policy coherence in migration and development policy agendas

### Workshop discussion paper

Policy coherence for development implies that countries pursue policies that support, and do not undermine, specific efforts they are making to help and sustain the development process.<sup>1</sup> Policy coherence is intended to avoid conflicting policies which may result from diverging interests of different stakeholders, indirect effects of other policies or simply from a lack of information.<sup>2</sup> It ultimately aims at achieving development objectives in the broadest human, social and economic sense.

One aspect of the policy coherence for development debate is the pursuit of policy coherence between migration and development policies. Policy makers from both fields are increasingly cognizant that the objective of effective development can also serve the objective of better managing the positive effects of migration on development and vice versa. At the centre of this approach, the migrant appears as a potential trans-national development partner for both home and host countries.

**There has been a recent shift in focus with respect to the link between migration and development.** Previously, the focus of the debate was on addressing the root causes of migration linked to underdevelopment, such as poverty, socio-economic instability, population pressures and conflict. The focus was on reducing out-migration pressure through improved development, and, in turn, reducing negative effects of migration related to development, namely ‘brain drain,’ depletion of the labour force and rural exodus.

Today, while still mindful of root causes and negative effects, migration is recognized as a potential tool for development. Individual migrants, as well as diasporas’ organizations, are seen as agents for development that can strengthen cooperation between home and host societies and can contribute to their home countries through transfer of skills and knowledge, as well as investment, trade and remittances.

Policy coherence is essential to maximize the positive impact of migration on development, as well as to minimize negative effects. A number of countries have been making progress in their approach to integrating their development and migration policies. For example:

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<sup>1</sup> OECD 2002, p.1

<sup>2</sup> GDI 2002, p.3



- A recent report by the UK House of Commons argues for policy coherence in order to ensure taking into account all possible impacts of migration management in other policy areas.<sup>3</sup> It encourages the exploration of potential development benefits from circular migration, and how temporary returns of migrants can be encouraged, such as through leave arrangements from employment in the host country. Reintegration, employment opportunities and suitable structures for migrants in their countries of origin upon return are vital for sustainable returns and are best addressed jointly by governments of developing and donor countries.<sup>4</sup>
- In June 2004, the Belgian Senate adopted policy recommendations linking migration, integration and development.<sup>5</sup>
- A recent policy memorandum of the Government of the Netherlands looks at points of convergence between migration and development policy and the need to increase synergy and convergence between the two.<sup>6</sup>
- The Government of Greece is working to integrate development concerns into its migration agenda concerning the admissions of foreigners for studies and training,<sup>7</sup> recognizing that student migration can have a negative impact on the development process of developing countries if graduates fail to return home with their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

Policy coherence can mean adjusting different government policy areas to each other, facilitating cooperation between countries of origin and host countries, as well as developing policies and programmes consistent with regional and international development strategies and standards. It needs to be approached at different levels and involve different stakeholders in order to avoid direct and indirect negative effects of competing policy agendas on development.

First, coherence between **government policies of countries of destination and host countries can be particularly effective**, as evidenced in collaborative efforts of Mexico and the United States to reduce transaction costs of remittances. In addition, support by both home and host countries to migrant networks and associations and efforts to engage diasporas are producing positive results.

Second, coherence among **policy sectors within governments**, i.e. inter-institutional cooperation between respective ministries, can help to create ‘integrated’ policy agendas

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<sup>3</sup> UK House of Commons International Development Committee 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Id. at 45-48.

<sup>5</sup> Sénat de Belgique 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Netherlands House of Representatives 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Law 1910/2001, implementation of migration policy in Greece (articles 10-18, 25-27, 28-32, 34-36 and 39-41).



that take into account the linkages between migration and development.<sup>8</sup> Efforts by Bangladesh and a number of Caribbean countries to direct remittances to long-term development goals are notable in this regard. Similarly, coordinated action is required among different policy sectors within government to ensure a conducive environment that allows migrants to both develop needed new skills and knowledge while abroad, and successfully apply them upon return.

Third, coherent policies involve coordination with relevant **international actors**, such as the United Nations, regional bodies and others. National level policies need to take into account international development objectives, such as those reflected in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, country and regional assistance strategies, as well as global standards, including those found in international human rights instruments. IOM's Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programme demonstrates the positive catalytic role that international actors can play, working with the countries directly affected.

For further deliberation:

- *What are examples of **effective practices** for achieving coherence in migration and development?*
- *How can **development agendas** of developed and developing countries incorporate the complexities of the migration phenomenon more effectively?*
- *How can **development policies** address some major root causes of migration?*
- *How can **migration policies** take development strategies better into consideration?*
- *Where can **migration policy** contribute to enhancing development? How can migration feature more consistently in development strategies?*

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<sup>8</sup>The Dutch 'integrated foreign policy' model suggested in the Government Policy Memorandum could serve as an example.



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