

## **CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR ACHIEVING THE MIGRATION-RELATED TARGETS**

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International migration has become a major force shaping international reality: A powerful force of economic progress, social change and cultural interaction in implied countries. However, this movement of people is taking place in a limited and fragmented international regulatory context, leaving ample room for recipient countries to impose restrictive policies. Control efforts by States, however, have been highly costly not only for the immigrants, but also for the social cohesion and the democratic climate of the recipient society. Furthermore, this policy has also been little effective, as the massive quantities of undocumented migration attests.

The fact that people can more freely choose their own place of residence and work is, in principle, desirable, because this widens the range of human freedoms. Moreover, when suitably regulated, migration can potentially improve the efficiency and well-being of the overall international economic system, as both theoretical and empirical studies have confirmed. Aside from this global effect, migration is also an effective (although notably selective) means of increasing the possibilities for individuals to better themselves. It is therefore an important development factor, especially if we believe that people (and not just countries) matter.

Obviously, migration can also entail costs, both for the countries of origin (due to the breaking of family structures or the loss of human capital, for example), and for the recipient countries (increasing the cost of social policy or reducing social cohesion, for example). All these costs reveal that a policy of “open borders” is not a reasonable

option. In any case, the restrictive tone adopted towards immigration contrasts with the increasing liberalisation of other economic flows, serving as obstacle to a more complete exploitation of the benefits of migration.

Furthermore, the restrictive attitude with which immigration is regulated runs contrary to the need for migrant labour in developed countries, given those countries' stagnant demographics and ageing populations; and it conflicts with the pressure placed on young persons from developing countries to search for personal progress in a world where global media disseminate idealized images of the rich lifestyles available elsewhere. In the face of these tendencies, the imposition of tighter restrictions to migration does not seem a reasonable nor an effective response.

The importance of migration and the aggravation of the conditions from which it is produced in the last years suggest the need for nations to manage migratory flows in an orderly and realistic way. That is what has been assumed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As there is well known the Agenda includes a target (10.7) oriented to "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies". This is an important step in the good direction. Besides that, other goals and targets are also connected with migration. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) remind us targets related to migration in areas such as health (3.8), labour rights (8.8), trafficking (5.2, 8.7 and 16.2) or remittances (10.c), among others. But, additionally, in a more comprehensive way, migration is affected by the principle that inspires the 2030 Agenda of "leaving no one behind". The UN's approach to 'leaving no one behind' is not only about reaching the poorest of the poor, but also combating discrimination, exclusion and rising inequalities within and among countries and their

root causes. Even if not all migrants are necessarily part of the disadvantage groups, they frequently are among the social sectors affected by discrimination and exclusion.

In spite of its importance, there is no single convention or framework presenting a coherent and balanced approach to migration governance which is also practical and concrete. In order to face with this absence, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) prepared a Migration Governance Framework that sets out some essential elements to support well managed migration. That framework is based on existing norms (it does not create new standards) and does not refer to global governance issues, but to those that can be adopted from the point of view of the State as the primary actor. Undoubtedly, it is a good step in the right direction, but it is, in my view, an insufficient response.

Coherently regulation of the phenomenon is also needed at the international level. Failures of national policies are exacerbated by the absence of appropriate global rules and governance on migration. We know that international initiatives undertaken to date in this field have seen very limited success. The reasons for this failure stem from two well-known asymmetries. Firstly, the existing asymmetries of power between sending and recipient countries, being the later those who are in better conditions for regulating migration. Secondly, the asymmetric way in which the benefits and the costs of the migratory process are distributed. While the former are mainly private (and basically captured by migrants that are not voters in host country), the later are mainly social (affecting voters in host countries). In any case, ample consensus exists that more adequate international governance of migratory processes could increase the positive effects (and reduce the negative ones) of migration, sharing its benefits more fairly and guaranteeing the rights of those involved more effectively. Migration is a global phenomenon requiring cooperative solutions at international level too.

In order to overcome national resistances a two track process might be put in place, combining the definition of a framework of minimum standards at global level, on the one hand, with a dynamic of more committed agreements bilateral and regionally, on the other. In line with the Migration Governance Framework, the minimum standards should be based on the principles of previous Conventions. They should be a floor of principles and purposes oriented to guarantee both migrants' rights protection and collaborative attitudes by countries implied. However, given countries are in different states, those minimum standards should allow countries to move towards a more orderly regulation with a pace adapted to the circumstances of each one.

On the other hand, regional agreements on migration should be encouraged, in some cases taking advantage of the existing regional integration mechanisms. The fact that there is a greater similarity between economies in regional frameworks means that deals on migration would more easily be negotiated. Bilateral and regional dialogues might not immediately yield concrete policy results, but they are critical in developing the cooperative spirit that lays the groundwork for better governance. More practical, gradualist and organic steps can achieve effective and multi-layered cooperation in this field. That could facilitate the path to global governance even if this happens through denser and more diffuse structures and with a set of agreements that would not necessarily be uniform.

Countries need to move forward through this dual path, designing coherent migratory policies. This last task requires, at least, four complementary actions relating to building capacities: i) first, putting in place monitoring systems to collect evidence about the reality and the diverse effects of policies; ii) two, developing analytical capacity to make sense of the data collected; iii) three, institutional mechanisms for implementing actions and coordinate actors and policy domains; and iv) four, establishing systems for

reporting back to representative bodies and the public. Countries require building capacities in all these four areas. Let me mention them briefly:

*a) Statistical capacities:*

Firstly, a key element for a coherent migratory policy is informed decision making. It is impossible that countries can define good migratory policies if they do not have good empirical information about the phenomenon. It is needed to collect reliable data about migratory trends, future flows, need of jobs in labor markets, social profiles of migrants, future demand of social services, etc. The ability to easily access and utilize up-to-date quantitative and qualitative information about migration is crucial for accountability, learning and effective decision-making. Although international statistics have improved in the last years, the situation is far from satisfactory. Countries need timely and reliable data about migration what are not always available, particularly in poor countries. Therefore, countries should strengthen their statistical apparatus and donors should back this effort trough development cooperation initiatives and through sharing experiences and policies.

*b) Analytical capacities*

Second, analytical capacity is needed to inform decision-making and manage gaps and potential trade-offs and tensions between policies and actions at different levels and fields. Policy makers need analysis to know what their realistic options are, what inconsistencies might result from their decisions in different sectors for achieving the targets. Diverse type of interactions may occur between migration-related targets and other SDGs and policies. At the same time, it is useful to build models that estimate in advance the effects (benefits and costs) of decisions, in order to allow governments to

anticipate future scenarios. This is a field in which countries have to strengthen their capacities, working more tightly with academic and research institutions.

*c) Institutional capacities*

Three, migration is a complex phenomenon that requires responses from diverse administrative levels and policy domains. A safe and orderly migration will not be the result of separate responses by fragmented institutions and policies, rather it demands a whole-of-government (and almost a whole-of-society) approach. Many actors at different levels and within and outside the government can be crucial for a coherent and evidence-base decision-making in migratory policies. This demands governments to be able to work across policy domains and adopt more integrated approaches.

Besides that, countries need institutional capacities at different levels of government for properly implementing the migratory policy. For example, that involves to prepare those administrative bodies in charge of registering and processing migratory demands, to create institutions oriented to inform and train migrants in order to their better access to job opportunities, to strengthen local and regional bodies in charge of provisioning social services to migrants or to back those security bodies that guard the frontiers and crack down on migratory mafias and smugglers. Certainly, there are many government bodies implied in applying a coherent migratory policy.

Additionally, countries need to strengthen their institutional capacity for actively participate in international processes of dialogue and agreements about migratory policy. As a consequence there should be civil servants that can participate in international networks, looking for practical solutions to migratory problems, based on constant exchange of information, addressing issues and formulation of non-binding

codes of conduct among related countries. These networks might facilitate the environment for more formal supranational agreements.

*d) Political capacities for building social awareness*

Finally, building a sound migratory policy involves trade-offs among different social sectors, each of which with their purposes and visions. It cannot be determined by governments alone. A good policy on this sensitive field needs to be supported by ample groups of society, through a process of dialogue, understanding and social participation. Governments should have enough political capacity for promoting and steering this process. For that, they would have to map which actors have to be involved and influenced; and what is the role of each one in the process, taking into account the private sector, civil society organizations, migrant communities and other stakeholders. The purpose is to transform the migratory policy in a well understood response to country challenges and opportunities. Collecting wide-ranging social support for the migratory policy is needed if we want to eradicate the threats of anti-migratory and xenophobic reactions in our societies.