IOM position on the post-2015 United Nations development agenda

Introduction

IOM strongly advocates that migration be incorporated into the post-2015 UN development agenda. Human mobility within countries and across borders has become an integral part of today’s social, economic and environmental landscape: the new development framework must reflect the reality that one in every seven people is on the move. As such, human mobility has direct and multiple impacts on development prospects for migrants, their families and communities, and on development of both countries of origin and of destination.

It is essential that migration be given due attention in the post-2015 UN development agenda. Well-managed migration can contribute significantly to development outcomes; therefore, it is both possible and desirable to identify migration-specific targets and indicators for human development.

This paper outlines the comprehensive consultative process in place to design the post-2015 UN development agenda, with specific reference to IOM’s role in this process. It explains how migration is linked and contributes to development, and it proposes a number of key, measurable, migration-related elements that can be used in the consultative process to guide the conceptualization of robust development indicators in the new development agenda.

1. Migration in the post-2015 United Nations development agenda

The broad context
As the 2015 deadline for realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approaches,¹ the United Nations has embarked on a process to establish global support for a successor framework.² This process has two phases. The first phase, now in progress, consists of the UN system’s internal and external consultations on the lessons learnt from the MDGs and on emerging challenges.³ The second phase, starting in September 2013 with United Nations Member States’ negotiations, is intended to lead to a United Nations summit on development in 2015.⁴ A number of other migration-related activities and events will feed into this process, including (a) the United Nations General Assembly High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (October 2013), (b) the review of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (2014), and (c) the special post-2015 sessions at the High-level Segments of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
Although there were references to migration in the Millennium Declaration, specific goals or targets for migration were not included in the MDG framework itself. However, as the first phase of the post-2015 process has unfolded, a broad consensus has emerged on the relevance of migration as a key factor affecting the big development questions confronting the international community. These
include how to generate equitable and inclusive growth and create employment for a growing world population; how to continue the MDGs’ push for poverty alleviation for the poorest while generating sustainable management of the world’s resources for today’s population and future generations; how to manage new global risks, such as reducing vulnerability to environmental or economic shocks or natural and human-made crises; and how to mobilize financing for development in a world of decreasing aid budgets. A clear understanding of the role of human mobility in development will help formulate answers to those questions, and identify the benchmarks that could be used to measure how, in what way, and to what extent well-managed migration contributes to development.

In the words of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on International Migration and Development, Peter Sutherland:

“making migration part of the world’s development strategy will have a meaningful impact on the lives of migrants, affording them greater access to rights and to the fruits of their labour. Perhaps even more important, it could change public perceptions of migrants, so that they are viewed as a blessing rather than a scourge.”

IOM’s role in the post-2015 process

- IOM has been invited by the United Nations Secretary-General to take part in the United Nations System Task Team (UNTT), which supports system-wide preparations and brings together over 60 United Nations entities and agencies and international organizations. IOM has contributed directly to the work of UNTT by co-authoring “think pieces” related to human mobility. IOM is also a member of that part of the UNTT that serves as an inter-agency technical support team for the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

- IOM, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and in partnership with the governments of Bangladesh and Switzerland, co-convened the Global Thematic Consultation on Population Dynamics in the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, with topics covering rising fertility and population growth, declining fertility and population aging, and migration and urbanization, among others. The consultation culminated in a High-level Leadership Meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 12–13 March 2013, which was attended by representatives of 51 countries, a number of international and non-governmental organizations, and academics. The Leadership Meeting issued the Dhaka Declaration, which militated strongly in favour of including population and migration issues in the post-2015 UN development agenda.

- IOM has also taken part in more than 20 of the national and regional consultations on the post-2015 UN development agenda that were organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), providing expert advice on how to factor migration into the broader development discourse.
2. Migration and development – the main points of intersection

Three key migration and development policy issues need to be highlighted:

First, it is essential to establish proper working linkages between migration and development. The Rio+20 Outcome document included a commitment to systematically consider population dynamics, including migration, in development strategies and policies. Such considerations are essential to the realization of a range of development objectives, including decent work and access to health, water, food and energy.

However, there needs to be a determined effort on the part of both migration and development stakeholders to establish links between their respective policy domains in order to achieve the full development potential of migration. At this juncture, there is an unprecedented opportunity for the migration and development communities to work together. The positive impact of migration is neither predetermined nor guaranteed. On the contrary, comprehensive and well-managed migration policies are crucial, and ideally these should be developed and implemented through close cooperation between the countries of origin and destination, to ensure orderly mobility with full respect for the human rights of all migrants. Only development initiatives such as these will be able to unleash the development potential of migration and allow migrant diaspora resources to be fully utilized, beginning with the benefits accruing to the migrants themselves.

Growing awareness of these policy requisites is apparent at the demand end of the policy spectrum, as has been seen, for example, in current debates in the European Union and the United States, where migration policy reform looks at how to facilitate the necessary legal avenues for entering labour markets and/or for citizenship. It is equally apparent at the supply end of the spectrum, where developing countries are expressing a keen desire to establish strong relationships with their migrant communities abroad and to encourage them to invest social and financial capital in development endeavours in their countries of origin. At both ends of the spectrum, the considerable efficiency gains brought about by freedom of movement and establishment in the context of regional integration are being closely studied, and are being emulated across the globe.

Second, there is the importance of migrants’ privately-funded contributions to development. In 2012, remittances to developing countries were around USD 401 billion, and these funds had a direct effect on development. UNDP’s Human Development Report 2009 found that migrants who moved from countries with a low human development index (HDI) to a higher-HDI country experienced, on average, a 15-fold increase in income, a doubling in education enrolment rate, and a 16-fold reduction in child mortality. Remittances have been shown to contribute to poverty reduction among the families left behind, by increasing household incomes and enabling them to invest in housing, health and education. Research suggests that internal remittance flows could be even more significant in poverty reduction: internal migrants make up three quarters of the world’s migrants and their remittances typically go to the rural poor.

For a number of countries, remittances are a significant part of GDP and thus represent one of the largest sources of foreign currency, allowing critical imports and access to international capital
markets on a more favourable basis.\textsuperscript{18} Added to these benefits are the less visible intangibles of social remittances that migration brings, including increasing the flow of trade and the transfer of skills, values and innovation.\textsuperscript{19} While there is clearly enormous potential for migrant contributions, much remains to be done to identify innovative strategies and to evaluate, improve and scale up existing approaches.\textsuperscript{20}

It has to be noted that the development gains described take place despite the fact that human mobility remains tightly regulated. Initial research on the effects of lowering barriers to freedom of movement and establishment indicates that even relatively small increases in freedom of movement for migrants from developing countries would bring gains that equal, or exceed, the gains from elimination of all remaining policy barriers to movement of goods and capital.\textsuperscript{21}

Third, managed migration is an essential part of increasing resilience and enhancing effective disaster risk reduction. Two thirds of coastal cities with over 5 million inhabitants are found in areas that will be affected by sea-level rise and adverse weather conditions.\textsuperscript{22} As such, migration needs to be included in disaster risk reduction strategies and in adaptation strategies to environmental change, removing populations from harm’s way, easing pressure on critical infrastructure and service delivery for those who stay behind, and stimulating development through (re)integration measures for displaced populations.

3. Elements to consider when developing targets and indicators for the post-2015 United Nations development agenda

The specific structure of the post-2015 UN development agenda is still undecided; nevertheless, the approach that is finally agreed on is likely to require targets and indicators to help establish and measure the impact of migration on development.\textsuperscript{23} A combination of factors, including social and economic realities, the cross-cutting nature of migratory phenomena, and political sensitivities, make it unlikely that there would be a stand-alone migration goal. Rather, migration is likely to be identified as a key development enabler and therefore a key element in a renewed global partnership for development, building on the current MDG 8.\textsuperscript{24} Moreover, migration should also be included as a cross-cutting issue relevant to the achievement of goals in other key thematic areas, including health, decent work and disaster risk reduction.\textsuperscript{25}

In this context, IOM proposes:

(1) A migration target as part of a global partnership for development, complemented by migration-related development indicators;

(2) Elements to consider in developing indicators suitable for migration as a cross-cutting issue.

\textbf{IOM’s proposed migration target as part of a global partnership for development}

IOM proposes to create cooperative agreements related to human mobility to enable safe, lawful, less costly migration across or within borders, which will ensure the protection of the human rights of migrants and produce positive development outcomes for all stakeholders.\textsuperscript{26}
At the global level, indicators for progress towards such a target could track advances in global migration and development discourse and action. For example, the Global Forum on Migration and Development could use its dialogue mechanisms to explore global standard-setting or to encourage joint action.

At the regional level, it would be useful to track and compare progress on arrangements for freedom of movement and establishment under regional integration frameworks.

At the bilateral level, it would be useful to have indicators of progress in establishing and implementing labour mobility agreements, with recruitment systems that protect the human and labour rights of migrants and that facilitate the recognition of qualifications and portability of pensions and other social benefits.

Elements to consider in developing indicators suitable for migration as a cross-cutting issue

IOM believes that migration should also be incorporated into targets wherever it is relevant to achieving specific development goals, particularly poverty alleviation, disaster risk reduction, and access to quality education, health and decent work. In all these areas, it will be necessary to determine how to factor in essential issues, such as the well-being of migrants, the need to combat inequalities and marginalization, and matters relating to the portability of social rights and earned entitlements and savings. The following, in the relevant areas, should be considered, in order to incorporate migration as a cross-cutting issue in development goals, targets and indicators.

Regarding poverty alleviation it will be important to track remittance transaction costs and increase of proportion of remittances sent through formal channels, as well as the availability of financial services that are adapted to migrants and that are competitive, legal and reliable. On disaster risk reduction it is suggested to track the development of national action plans, with particular reference to actions to reduce exposure to hazard and risk, and the promotion of migration as a voluntary adaptation mechanism rather than a reactive and forced response to disaster. It would furthermore be useful to track the effectiveness of systems of assistance during migration crises and, in particular, the effectiveness of response and preparation measures to assist migrants in vulnerable situations.27

Regarding education relevant will be to track the share of remittances goes towards education, and educational enrolment of both internal and international migrants. Regarding health tracking the share of remittances used for medical expenses, the emigration rate of health professionals, and possible discrepancies between migrant and native populations regarding access to health services will be important. In relation to decent work it is suggested to monitor the development of migrant recruitment integrity systems, migrants’ freedom to change employers, migrant access to complaint mechanisms, and the effectiveness of programmes to reduce the risk of brain drain in key professional labour market sectors.
Conclusion

Migration is integral to the important development questions that are currently being considered by the international community. Migration is a global megatrend: 1 billion of the world’s 7 billion people are migrants, while the actual number of people directly affected by migration is even larger – family members, businesses, labour market sectors and national economies depend on migrants; billions stand to gain from an improved approach to the governance of migration. In order to respond to this reality, the post-2015 UN development agenda needs to incorporate migration into development goals, targets and indicators. Migration would be a leading candidate for, and a key component of, a future global partnership goal, and could also be included in progress indicators for a number of development goals, such as poverty alleviation, disaster risk reduction, education, health and decent work. IOM believes that the proposed targets, indicators and measurements of migrant well-being provide a strong foundation for an effective post-2015 UN development agenda that takes into account human mobility in the globalized world of the 21st century.

Against this backdrop, IOM urges all States – origin, destination and transit countries alike – to opt for a high-road scenario on human mobility in their deliberations on the post-2015 UN development agenda; in particular, to incorporate migration into their development policies, to reduce remittance transfer costs, to make legal migration processes more accessible, simpler, more flexible and more transparent, and to protect the rights of all migrants, particularly the most vulnerable.


3 This process began in 2012 with the United Nations elaborating a series of preliminary suggestions for the way forward and launching a broad-based consultation process at global, regional and national levels, including an on-line discussion forum. In July 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed a High-level Panel, co-chaired by three heads of state, to receive input from the United Nations system consultations – including 11 thematic consultations (one of which was on population dynamics and included migration) and almost 100 national consultations – and to prepare a report for the United Nations Secretary-General, who is due to report to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2013 on his vision for post-2015. Available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/process.shtml (accessed 10 May 2013).

4 This process began in January 2013 with the creation of a 30-member Open Working Group (with the 30 seats currently shared by 70 governments) tasked with preparing a proposal on the sustainable development goals that are to follow on from the Millennium Development Goals. The creation of this group was called for at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio+20). Available from http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1549 (accessed 10 May 2013).


7 UN Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, Realizing the Future We Want for All, Report to the Secretary-General (New York, 2012)


IOM has been active in discussions in Africa: Angola, Ghana, Liberia, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, United Republic of Tanzania; Europe and Central Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Turkey; Asia–Pacific: Bangladesh, Viet Nam; Central and Latin America: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Guatemala; and in regional economic commissions: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA).


IOM is aware of the challenges to consider in the collection of data for comparable worldwide statistics related to migration and migrant well-being, especially where institutional capacity is weak, and it understands that these challenges need to be taken into account when choosing a system of goals, targets and indicators for the post-2015 UN development agenda.

The current MDG 8 indicators for partnerships are trade, aid efficiency, the special situation of land-locked and island states, private sector engagement, and transfer of technology.

