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## SEMINAR REPORT

### UNITAR MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT SERIES<sup>1</sup>: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

*organized jointly with UNFPA, IOM and the MacArthur Foundation*

7 March 2007, United Nations Headquarters, New York

#### BACKGROUND

On 7 March 2007, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the MacArthur Foundation hosted a seminar on Building Partnerships as part of the “Migration and Development Seminar Series”.

The event was held in Conference room 9 at United Nations (UN) Headquarters.

The attendees included thirty-one delegates from Permanent Missions, sixteen staff from UN Secretariat, agencies and other international organizations; and twenty-two participants from civil society organisations.

#### OBJECTIVES

Catering to the ongoing international policy dialogue on migration and development, this seminar on Building Partnerships brought together development and migration experts to share their views and discuss the migration-development nexus in the context of their respective mandates and policy agendas.

The seminar was intended to increase mutual understanding between migration and development communities; look at how migration is taken into account in development cooperation; identify good practices in increasing the development impact of migration and, in this context, models of successful partnership between different stakeholders. It also served to discuss the way forward for enhanced international cooperation in this field and briefed delegates and other participants on the state of preparations for the first meeting of the Global Forum on International Migration and Development to be held on 9-11 July in Belgium, and on the work of the Global Migration Group (GMG).

Information on the seminar and the Migration and Development Seminar Series is available from [info@unitary.org](mailto:info@unitary.org) or at <http://www.unitary.org/en/migdevseries.html>

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<sup>1</sup> This Series is financially supported by the MacArthur Foundation and UNFPA.



## SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

### APPROACHES

The first part of the seminar was dedicated to exploring different perspectives on the migration-development nexus. While the migration-development nexus was mainly perceived as a circle of loss in the 1960s and 1970s, today positive inter-linkages are highlighted by both the development and the migration 'communities' – notwithstanding the fact that many of these impacts are difficult to evaluate. For example, remittances can provide an important lifeline for poor communities, and 'social remittances', such as skills and attitudes can play an important role in promoting development. The concerns about brain drain and permanent migration have been supplemented by the potentially positive effects of brain circulation and temporary migration. Both are seen as mutually beneficial for the development of both countries of origin and destination, as the return of migrants is associated with the inflow of new skills and investment. Finally, the role of diasporas in supporting development is widely recognized.

One of the challenges for migration and development communities therefore is to more systematically assess and measure these linkages.

Even a traditional approach to development that measures the gross national income per capita will find that the potential impacts of migration depend on a variety of factors, including whether migrants were employed or unemployed in the origin country, and if they move permanently or temporarily. Also, the impact of remittances on income must be assessed both at the household and at the national level. Newer, more comprehensive approaches assess development in terms of basic needs or capabilities, a combination of a person's functions and freedoms. Human-rights based approaches focus on the inclusiveness of development strategies, emphasizing the rights and duties of all stakeholders. The Millennium Development Goals, a set of targets agreed by 191 UN member states, reflect some of these different concepts. In this context, it was suggested that a "balance sheet approach" might be necessary to capture the positive, the ambiguous and the negative linkages between international migration and development. A solid evidence base will allow development actors, like UNDP, to show Governments the effects and implications of their policy choices.

The assessment of the migration-development nexus and policies also depends on political interests. In his remarks on co-development, Mr. Guy Serieys, French Ambassador in charge of this matter stressed the need to overcome demagogic positions that portray this approach as either a concealed return or a new development strategy. The central question of co-development is how to assist migrants who want to contribute to the development of their home countries, whether this involves their return or not. Over the last 20 years, France has developed activities in various areas including: the mobilisation of migrants' savings through improved financial services and access to the banking system; reintegration assistance for returning migrants; and cooperation with diasporas in France. The number of partner countries is continuously expanding, and the co-development approach is currently scaled up to the European level. Thus, the EU acts as co-financer of projects that migrants implement in their countries of origin, with each of the parties contributing one third of the funds required.

Comments from the floor touched upon the terms used in the debate, e.g. "development-friendly migration", and called for more transparency and clarity on how these are shaped and what they imply. It was clarified that this term was meant to refer to a migration process that protects migrants' human rights and well-being.

Questions were raised regarding the possibility to quantify migrants' employment in the informal sector, and the role of demographics in the migration-development dynamic. It was mentioned that the informal labour of migrants in host countries is very relevant to development considerations. However, development agencies tend to focus less on this issue, because their mandate is development abroad.

Participants also wondered how the issues discussed related to the question of citizenship, and if double citizenship will be the model of the future. Speakers saw indeed a trend pointing in this direction.



Progressively, countries allow dual citizenship, mirroring an increasing number of people with a sense of multiple affiliations. It was emphasized, however, that citizenship will continue to be a national prerogative. Both presenters and participants cautioned that migration legislation is still considered a sensitive issue, which is first and foremost shaped by national considerations, including domestic public opinion. Policy coherence in this domain remains challenging. Participants observed that there was a certain ‘migration and development fatigue’ at UN Headquarters, after the High Level Dialogue, as reflected in the decision to consider the item only biannually. At the same time, they also highlighted the existence of political will to further explore and act on “win/win opportunities”, the long term goal being a better and shared understanding of which policies work and why. In addition, better cooperation between development and migration actors was discussed as part of UN efforts for system-wide coherence.

## ISSUES AND PRACTICES

The second session focused on concrete recommendations and actions taken by various stakeholders to address the migration-development nexus.

### The internal-international migration nexus

Development planning should focus more on internal migration and its links with international migration, making human capital a primary concern. For example, circular migration should not only be promoted at the international level, but also internally. Assistance should be given to countries dealing with high rates of internal migration. Recipients of ODA who are increasingly accorded assistance in form of untied, direct budgetary assistance, share primary responsibility to make migration part of national development plans and allocate resources accordingly.

### Skills management

In the context of a global labour market in which people move internationally to work, human capital development is no longer a purely national task. In this context, a number of questions were raised regarding the recruitment of skilled professionals from developing countries. Should host countries pay back the costs of education to countries of origin? Should the burden be spread even further to the actual end users of the services provided by migrants? Investment of the UK in the health sector in Malawi was cited as one example of how countries of destination can assume responsibility. However, it was mentioned that ethical recruitment guidelines, as currently conceived, only bind public actors not the private sector. Given that codes of conduct are voluntary and not well respected, participants pondered on how to make the private sector invest in the training of professionals abroad.

Speakers cautioned against arguments invoking the positive side effects on professionals’ wages in countries of origin. While, for example, the wages of doctors have risen in Ghana as a result of the emigration of many health care professionals, this has also led to new inequalities and provoked claims and strikes of other employees in the health care sector.

The WTO GATS Mode 4 negotiations and lessons learned with temporary worker programmes, which often concern lower-skilled labour were deemed important issues on the development agenda.

### Remittances

Remittances were addressed as a contribution to both private welfare and “public goods”. In this regard, the questions of how to link local actions with national strategies, and private with public actors were discussed. UNDP approaches the issue of remittances as part of a broader agenda of national capacity building, private sector development and ‘banking the unbanked’. Public private partnerships and the development of innovative products and services are key components of this approach, including a current project with insurance companies on health care coverage for migrants. Other innovations were mentioned including the creation of a co-development savings account (*compte d’épargne*)



*codéveloppement*) in France that makes migrants' investments in their home country tax exempt. Also, the French postal service launched a new worldwide money transferring service at half of the current market price. In addition, the Philippines has introduced a so called "electronic wallet", an electronic cash transfer system via cell phone that allows for real-time transfers around the world.

There was some debate about the often voiced need to lower the costs of remittances transfers. Some held that the market should determine this price, not political actors. However, the openness and competitiveness of the remittances market has been compromised after the events of 9/11, when access of non-financial institutions to this market has become more restricted. Speakers also touched on the flipside of encouraging remittances, as for example in the Philippines, where inflows have led to a strong peso that may have detrimental economic effects.

### **Diasporas**

Many speakers highlighted the development contributions that diasporas make. A case study on American-Filipino philanthropy provided insights on the scale and kinds of contributions (cash and in kind), as well as on the wide range of groups involved (hometown associations, registered charities and nonprofits abroad, cultural and sports clubs, Filipino-run enterprises with donation programs, professional groups, alumni associations, Church-based groups, etc.) and the areas of support (churches, education, hometown projects, disaster response etc.). It was highlighted that intermediaries, such as the Ayala Foundation that operate in both countries of origin and residence, can play an important role as facilitators by offering diaspora donors tax benefits and services such as due diligence, grant monitoring, and access to information. A multi-stakeholder partnership between national and local governments, companies, business and professional organizations and Filipinos overseas, has led to the equipment of 1,085 public high schools in the Philippines with computers and internet access, reaching 520,000 underprivileged youths and training about 2,000 teachers.

Questions were raised as to whether there are any systematic differences between the contributions that highly and lower skilled migrants make. It was observed that in the case of diaspora philanthropy from Filipinos in the US, most donors tend to be professionals. Lower-skilled migrants are likely to limit their support to their immediate family or home community. Questions also touched upon the integration of diaspora communities in their countries of residence and assistance that is offered to them. Speakers mentioned that many governments sponsor language and culture acquisition classes. It was suggested that there be greater exchange of research between development agencies especially with regard to the demographic consequences of the feminization of migration.

### **Mainstreaming Migration**

Both donors and developing countries are starting to see migration as an integral part of development planning. For example, in the framework of its co-development policy, the question of migration is included in every cooperation agreement that France signs with developing countries, and more generally, greater resources are channelled into migration related activities.

How migration can be mainstreamed into national poverty reduction strategies was exemplified by the Ghanaian development planning system. In collaboration with the IOM, the issue of migration is channelled into Ghana's second generation growth and poverty reduction strategy (GPRS) through cross-sectoral groups that are part of the implementation process. A number of factors that facilitate this approach were identified, including the growing awareness of the socio-economic impacts of remittances and migration; the existence of political will, some degree of knowledge on migration and development, and experience with mainstreaming cross-cutting issues into the GPRS; IOM's focused attention; and international initiatives such as the Joint Africa-EU Declaration on Migration and Development. However, Mr. Mensa Bonsu, Director of Ghana's National Planning Commission noted that migration should have been included in the development planning from the start, at the policy level. He also mentioned the need for adequate resources, migration and development related data, including on the diaspora, political



attention and commitment, and adequate tools. In the short term, efforts to mainstream migration should target the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages.

UNDP plans to compare different experiences with the mainstreaming of migration into national PRSPs.

## THE PROCESS

The seminar took a look back into the history of the discussions on migration and development at the UN, which culminated last year in the General Assembly's High Level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development. A compromise reached at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 marked a first milestone in this field. It led to the inclusion of international migration in the ICPD outcome document, Chapter X of the Programme of Action, which contributed to the General Assembly considering the issue of international migration and development the following year. Former Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, is regarded as having influenced greater political attention to this issue as well.

Focusing on the follow-up process to the HLD, the seminar included a short briefing on the work of the Global Migration Group (GMG), through which UN agencies, the IOM and the World Bank coordinate their activities. The GMG is also involved in a number of other initiatives, such as the IOM led International Migration and Development Initiative (IMDI) aimed at "matching" the global demand and supply of migrant labour; the launching of a research network by ILO and IOM in partnership with the EU; and the development of a handbook of effective practices.

Ambassador Régine de Clercq, Executive Director of the first Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) that will be held in Belgium from 9-11 July 2007, informed participants about the preparations for this event. In order to determine the meeting's topic, a questionnaire was sent to all UN Member States, asking them to identify their priorities among a list of proposed themes. By 1 March 2007 the Belgian Government had received 119 responses, representing a global balance of developed and developing countries and all world regions. Eighty-seven countries included a list of priorities. Based on these results, and consecutive deliberations of the 'Friends of the Forum', a group of supporting States, the GFMD will discuss the topics "Migration and socio-economic development" and "Best ways in order to strengthen the links between migration policies and development policies". The intention of the Forum is to build on existing knowledge and bring added value to the debate by focusing on concrete deliverables and actions, workable models, pilot programs, and multi-stakeholder partnerships and coalitions.

Questions and comments touched on the role of the IOM and Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) in the Global Forum, and the need to include the development perspective in the work of RCPs. It was suggested to include the conclusions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on women and migration into the proceedings of the Global Forum, and to organise a side event on the gender dimension of international migration and development. Ambassador Régine de Clercq underlined the Forum's intention to mainstream a gender perspective into the discussions. The organization of a one-day civil society meeting during the Forum has been delegated to the King Baudouin Foundation.

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

1 United Nations Plaza, DC1- 603

New York, NY 10017

TEL. 212.963.9196, FAX 212.963.9686

E-mail: [info@unitarny.org](mailto:info@unitarny.org)

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