



Side Event Draft Concept Note

Title: “MIGRATION, POPULATION DISPLACEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA”

Sponsor/ Co-Sponsor: IOM, UNHCR, ECA, UNDP

Date: 22 September 2008

Time: 3:00- 5:00 pm

Venue: Conference Room C

Potential Moderator/Chair, Panelists/Resource persons [this information can be provides as it becomes available]

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Context

Population movement, be it in the form of migration, or in the form of forced displacement, has been a defining characteristic of much of Africa. Africa’s population is one of the most mobile in the world, both within and outside the continent. Whether it is in search of a better future or for purpose of basic survival, population movement in Africa is increasingly responding to globalisation with individuals moving beyond traditional countries of destination, including outside the continent itself. Many take to the high seas in an irregular way, some across the Mediterranean to countries in Europe and some, across the Gulf of Aden, to the Middle East, at times with disastrous consequences. Population movements within and out of Africa have implications for sustainable development of the continent. It is important to explore in greater depth the potential contribution of migrants to the development of their countries of origin and to identify how solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) can be connected to sustainable development efforts in the many African countries that have been affected by conflict or natural disasters.

Many continue to be forcibly displaced: At the end of 2007, countries in Africa (not including North Africa) play host to some 20% of the world's roughly 11 million refugees, almost all of whom originate from within the Africa. Movements are not only one way out of countries of origin; population movements have also taken place in "reversed" fashion, such as the voluntary repatriation over the past years, of large numbers of refugees back to their countries of origin including Sudan, DRC, Liberia and Burundi, with consequences for the sustainability of development in countries emerging from conflict. Capitalising on nation-building founded on rule of law, and lasting peace and security, is an important issue to be examined in the context of sustainable development.

Included in this area are issues relating to access to land and natural resources. In many African countries, disputes and competition over land and natural resources lie at the basis of armed conflict and displacement. In other cases, armed conflict and internal displacement have themselves caused serious disputes over land and natural resources to arise. In both situations, durable resolution of forced displacement and the sustainable development of the country require addressing and resolving those disputes in a manner that fosters peace and prosperity for the population as a whole. Tackling these two issues together is an urgent task for national and international policy makers alike.

Human beings are an important resource of Africa. Their migration or displacement may have negative consequences for the countries concerned, but as an important resource, the positive outcomes of such movements could be exploited to bring long term benefits for Africa. In searching for innovative ways to overcome the many challenges faced in sustainable development in Africa, it is important to explore the potential contribution of those who migrate or who are displaced, to the development of their countries of origin and their countries of destination. It is also a challenge to harness the positive effects of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons so that their integration or reintegration can help contribute to sustainable development in Africa.

In relation to migratory movements, while often viewed as a threat to development of countries of origin (e.g. "brain drain"), it is increasingly acknowledged that well-managed migration can also present a major opportunity for socio-economic development in the country of origin. In this regard, the following elements represent key contributing factors:

- **Circular Migration:** Migrants' movements are not necessarily unidirectional, nor permanent. While some migrants look to settle permanently in countries of destination, others have short-term ambitions, looking for seasonal or temporary work to supplement existing incomes. This work might follow a pattern, with migrants moving between countries of origin or destination on a regular, repetitive basis. The result is higher remittances as well as skill development and transfer not only among the highly-skilled, but also among lower-skilled workers.
- **Diasporas:** Migrant communities abroad "can help foster innovation, trigger learning processes or facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology to their

countries of origin.”¹ The skills and knowledge that migrants can acquire during their time abroad can be transferred to the country of origin through temporary and managed return processes, while they can also act as promoters of trade and investors in countries of origin.

- **Gender:** Women are increasingly migrating independently, to the point that around half of the migrants in the world today are women. The increased skills and heightened self-esteem of women acquired through migration can empower women in their communities of origin, a process which is further enhanced by the remittances they provide.
- **Remittances:** The money that migrants send back to their families and communities in their countries of origin now represents a flow of US\$ 20 billion to Sub-Saharan Africa, with much more believed to be remitted informally. As these flows are person-to-person, they are often targeted specifically to the needs of the recipient and can have dramatic effects on the lifestyles of the poorest.²

Governments are beginning to take these factors into account in their poverty reduction strategies. Ethiopia’s Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), for example, is being supported by IOM’s Migration for Development in Ethiopia plan, which aids human resource development through the return of highly-skilled migrants in selected sectors.

This was expressed at the Global Forum on Migration and Development that was held in Brussels in 2007, in which governments noted the potential for migration to work for development, but also recognized that this process required coherent policy-making and partnerships between governments in countries of origin and destination.³ A further meeting to continue this dialogue is scheduled to take place in Manila in October 2008.

Main issues and challenges

- What are the various types of population movements and what are their root causes
- What is the impact of the different types of population movements on sustainable development of African countries
- What are the negative aspects of population movements; how could the negative aspects be overcome; what policies or plans of action could be put in place to address concerns and negative outcomes; what role can governments, civil society, international community play to address these aspects

¹ Erica Usher, *The Millennium Development Goals and Migration* (IOM Migration Research Series No. 20)

² Macha Farrant, Anna MacDonald and Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah (2006) *Migration and Development: Opportunities and Challenges for Policymakers* (IOM Migration Research Series No. 22)

³ “Final Conclusions and Recommendations of the Chair, Ambassador Regine de Clerq”, http://www.gfmd-fmmd.org/en/system/files/Summary+Conclusions+July+12_1.pdf

- What are the positive aspects; how could these be enhanced; what role can governments, civil society, international community play to foster the positive aspects
- How could circular migration and the positive contribution of migrant “diasporas” be better promoted in countries of destination and in countries of origin?
- The specific risks faced and potential contribution which could be made by women migrants and displaced persons, including those “left behind” by migrants is a challenge; addressing gender specific aspects of migration/displacement in countries of origin and in countries of destination would be important
- Remittances represent a tremendous potential fund for investment and poverty reduction by migrants. There are, however, still serious challenges that prevent this potential from being fully realized. These challenges include high transfer costs, which significantly reduce the development potential of this money and often force migrants into using informal systems of cash transfer, lack of access to formal economic systems for investment, especially among female recipients; sustainability of remittances over time; dependency among recipients on remittances.
- Access to land and natural resources has often led to armed conflict, and population displacement. Challenges include lack of adequate traditional, administrative and judicial mechanisms to fairly and peacefully resolve disputes over land and natural resources; existence of competing and/or inadequate formal and traditional legal regimes governing the rights over land and natural resources; lack of access to land and natural resources for important parts of the population, often affecting women and female-led households disproportionately; absence of opportunities to invest in the economic exploitation of land and natural resources especially in the rural areas; and lack of thinking about how diasporas and returning refugees/IDPs relate and impact on the question of access to land and natural resources in their country of origin.

Possible Questions to guide an interactive discussion

- Can forced population movements be reconciled with sustainable development?
- What impact does conflict and displacement have on sustainable development in the continent?
- What partnerships can be put in place to develop effective schemes for better management of migration?
- What are the roles of different actors within these partnerships?
- How could durable solutions for refugees and IDPs be managed to promote sustainable development?
- How can the benefits from remittances be maximized for development in Africa?

- What policies have been effective in engaging diasporas in country of origin development, and are they applicable elsewhere?
- What partnerships can be put in place between countries of origin and countries of destination to ensure that diasporas can engage with their countries of origin without losing rights and privileges earned in the country of destination?
- How can we effectively tackle women migrants'/displaced persons vulnerability in countries of origin, en route, and in the country of destination?
- What are the effects of different kinds of migration/displacement on communities left behind?