



Background Paper for Roundtable Session 1.2

Connectivity and Migration

Principle of Universality that underpins the 2030 Agenda

Globalization has fostered instantaneous and worldwide connectivity while also setting the stage for a new understanding of **international migration and development**. The contemporary world is the product of a deepened connectivity - a concept defined as the multiple forms of exchange and movement (including people, capital, goods, services, knowledge etc.) that link populations and territories through intricate networks of relationships.

Connectivity must be understood simultaneously through both a macro-economic and a micro-economic perspective. Whilst the first approach refers to how connected economies lead to, and are led by, increased movement of people and goods and services, the second is concerned with “people-to-people” relations, which is a particularly relevant topic in the digital age and in an era of the ‘Fourth Industrial Revolution’. International migration is consequently a driver and a product of this connectivity.

Until recently, the definition of migration was focused around ideas of ‘uprootedness’ and absenteeism, both from the countries’ of origin and also the destination countries. Due to the new dynamics created by global connectivity this image is now replaced by the image of ‘**connected migrants**’¹ who, equipped with the internet, a mobile phone, etc., can become the actors of development in their respective countries’ of origin, transit and destination.

This background paper acknowledges that connectivity is a broad concept that must be approached from all angles, whilst placing priority on the “people-to-people” dimension so as to explore the more concrete examples of how connectivity can help foster a positive synergy between migration and development. The paper will focus on two key elements:

Firstly, to what extent is migration a product of connectivity, and what is the impact of connectivity on migration?

While the link between connectivity and economic growth is taken for granted, the tie between migration and connectivity is less readily acknowledged and must encompass economic as well as social and cultural bonds. Connectivity presents considerable potential in terms of attaining the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 10.7 to ‘*facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people*’. Answering this first question will set the ground for understanding how stakeholders can harness connectivity so as to optimize the impact of well-managed migration on development.

¹ Dana Diminescu et al. ‘Les migrants connectés’, *La Découverte*, 2010 (n°159)

Secondly, to what extent does migrant connectivity generate or promote economic growth and development, and therefore enhance the connection between different places?

Development and economic growth are positively related to increased mobility and connectivity: a more developed country facilitates mobility; connectivity has the potential to enhance mobility's positive impact². This question will be answered by providing concrete, successful examples of how a more interconnected migration profile has led to beneficial effects in terms of the socio-economic development in countries' of origin, transit and destination.

I. Connectivity as a driver of migration

Enhanced connectivity, when understood and used productively by stakeholders can have a significant impact on fostering regular migration, preventing irregular migration and trafficking in human beings, promoting internal protection, and maximising the developmental effects of migration. At the same time, connectivity can potentially favour irregular migratory networks, as well as create barriers for migrant integration into a new host society if not adequately managed. In short: it is the role of the migration related stakeholders to ensure that migrants are provided with, and guided towards, the positive effects of connectivity. Doing so will allow migrants to reap the benefits of technology and connectivity.

Fostering regular migration

ICTs can play a role in the fostering and management of secure and orderly migration, most notably through online information systems dealing with legal routes, visa processes and possibilities, and online registration mechanisms to streamline the demands on asylum applications, etc.

Connectivity can also play a role in maximizing the positive economic and social impact of legal migration, e.g. through online skills- matching systems that can, among other things, help secure a balance between demand and supply in the labour market of the respective country of origin. This can help avoid a downgrading in terms of the skills and competences of the migrants that often leads to the negative outlook on their integration. Not only can ICTs be used to better evaluate the competencies and skills of potential migrants (*for example: in dynamics of circular migration*), but given the explosion of the industry for Massive Open Online Courses (*for example: the MOOCs Africa Programme*) there is an increased potential to prepare orderly migration in the countries of origin in terms of skills and education (*e.g. in learning languages*).

Technology can also serve to protect migrant workers during their employment, as new approaches to data management can improve compliance monitoring; for example through the managing of labour inspection data, tracking cases of non-compliance, receiving complaints and monitoring follow-ups using databases, web-based platforms and mobile devices.

² The 2008 World Migration Report explains why:

".... globalization offers almost unlimited awareness of opportunities and networking possibilities. A world that is spanned by fast, real-time communication lines and connected by research webs, where large information databases are available at a click of a mouse, is also one that offers near instant access to information on job market openings. At the same time, globalization gives rise to powerful socio-economic dynamics that play across borders: income disparities, population imbalances and labour market discrepancies combine to produce migratory flows that are increasingly dominated by the search for a better life through improved employment opportunities."

Technology can furthermore be important to the protection and social welfare of migrant domestic workers, especially those employed as “live-in” workers with limited access to their respective communities and support services outside of the household. A Survey conducted³ with migrant domestic workers in Singapore highlighted the importance of ICT in facilitating instantaneous communication with family and friends, and the reduced cost of communication through the use of social media platforms (e.g. Whatsapp, Viber, Facebook).

Preventing irregular migration and the trafficking in human beings

Connectivity can also be misused which could lead to the facilitation of irregular migration and the trafficking of human beings. Highly structured inter-connected networks, supported by ICTs e.g. mobile communication devices are indeed at the centre of the irregular migration and smuggling routes responsible for the thousands of deaths in the Mediterranean Sea and beyond.

It can be argued, for instance, that access to mobile communication devices is a primary enabler of mass movements. The broader point however is the relationship between connectivity and migration, which requires attention if positive outcomes are to be maximized and negative outcomes minimized.

For example: one of the drivers of human smuggling in the Oriental and Central Mediterranean routes could be traced both to the structure of transnational networks, and also to the less connected informal organizations that function through ICT devices e.g. smart phones. Therefore, undermining the business model of smugglers means appropriating these complex, inter-connected networks and harnessing technological connectivity in a productive manner so as to create a reason for legal migration. Measures must also be taken to address the situation of those who are the “least connected” including among undocumented migrants, who are also the most exposed to abuse and the most vulnerable to exploitation.

Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders have a role to play in favouring a constructive and productive connectivity. An example of this involvement is the IOM’s online campaign ‘*Aware Migrants*’ that inform potential migrants about the dangers, violence and exploitations that can be linked to irregular migration and trafficking of human beings⁴.

Promoting international protection and asylum

Connectivity has already demonstrated its potential in terms of promoting international protection and asylum law. The Resettlement Support Centre (RSC) for the Middle East and North Africa (RSCMENA) operated by the IOM in Jordan allows the conducting of resettlement processing for the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) in fifteen countries throughout the MENA region, and is coordinated through its online platform.

A number of private initiatives and social start-ups⁵ have also harnessed connectivity for the better protection of refugees and asylum seekers, optimizing their arrival and

³ <http://www.solutionexchange-un-gen-gym.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Migration-and-ICT-Use.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.awaremigrants.org/>

⁵ For example: various websites and applications provide information and advice on arrival, stay, and integration in Europe: WAYA (developed by Singa France), First-contact.org, Refugeeeinfo.eu, supported by Google, w2eu.info, Refugees Welcome etc.

integration in the host society. High-level digital innovation also has considerable potential in facilitating the protection of victims of forced worldwide displacement. For example, increasing research and activities are being developed on how ‘blockchain technology’, the decentralized and secure digital ledger at the basis of bitcoin, can be used to ensure the correct identification and civil registration of displaced populations. This is a particularly urgent issue due to the influx of refugees coming from Syria for which Cisco, as well as the social startup Bitnation⁶, have taken initiatives to better understand how blockchain technology can ensure the identification and protection of refugee populations.

ICT’s use has also been acknowledged in emergency cases involving civil volunteers, in line institutions and among refugees themselves. Mobile connectivity, for example, has proven to be a lifeline during the dangerous journey some migrants and refugees undertake.

II. The impact of migrant connectivity on development.

Examples as to how well managed connectivity can help facilitate secure and orderly migration have already been mentioned above. Increased migrant connectivity can also have a significant impact on social and economic development, and stakeholders are expected to ensure that migrants are provided with, and guided towards, the positive usage of connectivity. The best example for this is that of the Diasporas - which play a crucial role in newly connected communities by acting as a bridge for the flow of financial, social and cultural assets.

Migrant connectivity, investment and entrepreneurship

More connected migration has the potential to significantly encourage migrant entrepreneurship and investment. Connectivity is particularly relevant to addressing the (next) challenge of diaspora investment and entrepreneurship i.e. the inter-generational dimension, given the wider use of ICT by the younger generation. This is increasingly a key issue in terms of mainstreaming the positive impact of their abilities and use of connectivity tools to socio-economic lives in both countries of origin and destination. ICTs can be explored⁷ as a vector for harnessing the engagement of younger Diasporas in the raising of development aid for the regions’ of origin of their parents and grandparents. Overall, Diasporas have a particular advantage of using connectivity as a tool for investment and entrepreneurship, as they are sometimes in a better position to identify networks and opportunities, and have privileged access to markets, cultures and regulations. When deployed as actors of social and economic development in their countries’ of origin, they are particularly well equipped to mobilize wealth via capital markets, to gather resources to respond to humanitarian emergencies, and to mobilize volunteers who are qualified to provide training and advice to their various countries’ of origin.

Furthermore, remittances are potentially the most tangible form of how connectivity fosters the link between migration and development. It is well evidenced that migrant workers abroad link up with their countries’ of origin through remittance transfer channels. It is equally recognized that these remittances have an impact on the development of their

⁶ See <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-we-need-build-humanized-internet-monique-morrow> and <http://www.wsj.com/articles/can-bitcoin-technology-solve-the-migrant-crisis-1465395474>.

⁷ For example: an NGO ‘Migration and Development’ is developing ‘‘Development and Solidarity’’ platform, with Swiss and French support, to enable countries in the North African region to engage with their Diasporas in Europe in order to facilitate diaspora investment across both regions. Zambia has also put in place ‘One Stop Shops for Business Registration (OSSBR)’ that provide both local and foreign investors with fast, efficient and business-friendly registration services and reduce the cost of doing business.

countries' of origin. High-level digital innovation⁸ is important for the lowering of transfer costs and the opening of financial services to migrants, responding in this way to the requirements formulated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015).

Additionally, Diaspora engagement in investment back home requires specific approaches that surpass traditional financial schemes. It must rely on tripartite partnerships among private and public sectors and the Diaspora themselves. In order for remittance senders, recipients and entrepreneurs to invest, robust financial infrastructure must be in place to allow access to deposit, credit, and insurance services. While there are many investment opportunities for large-scale investors, smaller-scale ones may be harder to identify and assess.

As such, there is a need to identify other models⁹, more innovative and connected, that generate returns and at the same time have broader appeal. Successful examples are those that reflect the connectivity of Diaspora entrepreneurs themselves. Pursuant to that, two main approaches for mobilizing resources of migrants can be distinguished:

On the one hand, there is indirect investment of migrant savings in financial instruments e.g. Diaspora bonds, shared acquisition of mutual funds investing in local MSMEs, transformation of migrant or recipient savings MFI's into loans to finance microenterprises, and crowd-funding platforms acting as third parties between migrants and MFIs or MSMEs.

On the other, direct investment can create, develop or consolidate MSMEs managed by migrant returnees or remittance recipients, by mobilizing migrants or their family members' entrepreneurship and their capital. This approach requires methodologies that combine market information, business development services and financing provided at the local level by third parties (local development agencies).

Transport connectivity

Transport and infrastructure¹⁰ is another, more macro-economic, example of the interaction between connectivity, migration and development. The impact of transport connectivity on economic and social activities is widely recognized - from the opening it provides to markets and employment, the access it affords to essential services, the boost it gives to international trade and the contribution it makes to safe travel.

For instance, the ECOWAS Commission is developing the 'free movement follow-up mechanism of road transporters' with the support of Switzerland and the European Union in order to facilitate mobility. This mechanism facilitates fluidity of movement and connectivity between main urban centres of the region through a network of bus companies.

⁸ For instance: mobile banking, post office projects, etc. More innovative tools include the 'blockchain technology' on which, amongst others, the bitcoin system is based. Increasing research is being produced on the advantages and limits of blockchain technology for the remittances market and for opening banking to migrants; also – to a lesser extent – on how it can change border control. It is an exciting field and its application in the international migration area is just in the beginning. To date, it has remained in private sphere and is yet to be truly appreciated by governments.

⁹ A concrete example of how Diaspora connectivity can link investors and businesses in developing countries: IFAD has been working with the Federal Government of Somalia and the US Department of State's International Diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdeA) that aims to finance innovative Diaspora projects in Somalia and Djibouti.

¹⁰ India for instance has several physical connectivity projects in railroad, border crossing, waterways, coastal shipping and energy cooperation in order to ensure better connectivity in the South-East Asian countries. A notable example is the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project that aims to connect a number of seaports in the India's North-Eastern region with Myanmar.

This more ‘macro’ impression also underlines that regional integration is a stronger global trend. As these initiatives move forward and as relationships mature, their contribution to the mobility dimension becomes essential. Failure to continue on the same direction would come at a high price, since a denial of mobility is bound to lead to economic and social strains and distortions.

Information and communication technologies

More technological instruments are being developed in order to strengthen the linkage between migrants and communities abroad. ICT has seen an exponential growth both for technological innovation and also to the real demands identified in order to facilitate communication between people and places. A number of examples at the national level show how ICTs can ensure that migrants’ investments are matched by governments when supporting social projects in the countries’ of origin.

So called ‘virtual’ fairs¹¹ have proven to be an important tool for fostering participation from migrant communities abroad in the economic development of the countries of origin. Destination countries are also making efforts to create platforms that enable countries of origin to engage with their Diaspora. This helps to generate new enterprises, which in turn leads to job creation. Additionally, some countries have organized fairs and events where governments can connect electronically with their Diasporas to share ideas on investment.

Connectivity as a tool for knowledge and learning

Connectivity can also be used to help or reinforce the educational integration of migrants’ children, in line with the provisions of SDG 4, of the UN Agenda 2030, aiming at inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. For the families who seek refuge, settled in countries of transit or destination, many of them do not know if their children will ever be able to receive quality education, or how their children will cope with the difference in educational systems. Generally, their lack of language skills is a barrier to accessing education and a driver of high dropout rates. More specifically, in the case of irregular migrations or refugees, children are sometimes deprived of access to education, and miss out on months or even years of schooling because of the legal obstacles faced by their parents.

Initiatives using ICTs have been developed, especially in the recent context of the growing movement of refugees, to help these children to stay involved in a learning process by delivering non-formal education in different locations such as refugee camps or community centres. Regaining a sense of normalcy, the children gain skills that will offer them more opportunities and prepare them to enter the school system of the respective country of settlement. Based on small low-cost technology solutions (*e.g. tablet screens and e-learning platforms*) and mobilizing mainly humanitarian actors, CSOs, start-ups or other private sector actors, and foundations, these initiatives¹² foster educational integration through

¹¹ For example: the Guatemalan Ministry of Agriculture has set up a strategy to create a platform to encourage investment, create a productive labour force, employ workers remittances to foster sustainable enterprises, and create a ‘virtual’ fair aimed at building bridges with the Guatemalan diaspora living in California.

¹² For example, UNICEF has educated out-of-school children in Lebanon, using a computer hard drive created by the Raspberry Pi Foundation, complemented by tablet screens and a platform developed by E-learning start-up, “Foundation for Learning Equality”. In Lebanon again, World Vision and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) have implemented digital “E-Learning Programmes” for refugees’ children. Across Kenya, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Vodafone Foundation, on for its part, has created a portable “Instant Classroom” dedicated to child refugees through tablet-based education.

the creation of digital schools. Technology start-ups are also offering online learning solutions¹³ to adult refugees in Europe and the Middle East.

Migrant connectivity and creativity

Finally, it is important to underline that connectivity-driven mobility also generates creativity. Be it in industry, arts, innovation, promotion of entrepreneurship, or social and cultural diversity, all have been identified as possible outcomes of connectivity, depending on contexts and circumstances.

It is almost impossible to overstate the importance of human capital in contemporary value chains. Connected communities have the potential to flourish because they can draw upon a wide range of skills experiences and competencies. However, that potential will be realized only if those coming from different origins and backgrounds are given the opportunity to put their talents to use. In order to make the best use of talents, capacity-building measures for migrants have to be supported. This is due to the fact that those who are in a better economic, social or political position usually benefit more from connected communities than those who have less, such as migrants and other at-risk groups who might be easily exploited. Therefore, the capacity-building element should be highlighted, since skills development is a key factor for healthy and sustainable human mobility and connectivity.

Guiding Questions

*The Round-Table will hold **two (2) panels** to take up a cluster of the guiding questions. Interventions from both governmental and non-governmental team members are encouraged:*

- What kind of government initiatives or public policies can help to foster the positive impact of connectivity on ‘development’?
- How can the responsibility of fostering connectivity between the governments be shared – from the countries of origin, the transit countries and the countries of destination?
- How can existing institutions and processes be made more effective to better support connectivity and mobility?
- How can they take into account the diverse needs existing in migrant and refugee populations (*vis-a-vie age, gender, socio-economic status, country of origin and legal status in the country of destination*)?
- What can the role of CSOs be in making the most use of connectivity for migrants? How can these organizations help/advice/cooperate with public/government initiatives?
- How can the private sector contribute to create/design tools, technologies or online applications that respond to the migrants’ expectations and requirements?

¹³ For example: Kiron Open Higher Education provide Bachelor programs to refugees and asylum seekers worldwide through blending online and traditional education, whilst the ReDi School of Digital integration offers a three-month course on teaching refugees how to code. NaTakallam is an online platform that pairs students through the world who are learning Arabic with Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

- How can adequately connected financial and banking services be provided to the migrants in the countries of origin or countries of destination, notably in accordance with the recommendations of the Addis Ababa Action Plan?
- In what way can connectivity contribute to the fight against discrimination and racism? How can connected initiatives be developed and supported in their use for building bridges between migrants and the native population?
- How can connectivity contribute to the implementation of migration-related SDGs, such as Goal 10, but also Goal 17 on the means of implementation?
- How can existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) advance the mobility of women and men, and their contribution to inclusive growth and sustainable development?

Tentative Recommendations

Access, affordability and usability of Connectivity for migrants is related to the interconnected aspects of its content, infrastructure and regulation. For a productive use of connectivity, the efficient access to a properly regulated content and affordable infrastructure is compulsory.

1) Access

- Ensure that all migrants have access to available mobile and internet connectivity in order to leverage these technologies for protection, communications, education, health, self-reliance, community empowerment and other sustainable solutions for their needs
- Provide more online and affordable services for migrants (e.g. banking, money transfers, administrative/legal information, humanitarian help, public social services,)
- Encourage investments from the telecommunications sector to expand network coverage, especially in locations where migrants have less coverage and less access to networks.
- Increase connectivity initiatives between private sector, institutions, INGOs, UN agencies, CSOs to facilitate migrants' access
- Support to migrant/diaspora entrepreneurship/investment projects in the country of origin or the country of destination that use ICT's as a main mechanism
- Ensure access to open data for developers and researchers in their role of users and producers of data used to the benefits of migration.

2) Affordability

- Make connectivity affordable for migrants by reducing its costs

- Lobby telecommunications regulators, mobile network operators and internet services providers to expand specific plans or discounts for migrants
- Develop mobile broadband to provide free or cheap Wi-Fi through community centres, schools or places where migrants gather
- Include in humanitarian distribution programs cash or e-voucher subsidies and mobile devices to provide migrants with access to mobile communication and internet

3) Usability

- Offer and implement training programs to migrants (digital literacy, web security), available in their own languages, to teach them how to use the internet efficiently and safely
- Promote the systematic use of ICTs in educational trainings offered to migrants/refugees' children
- Develop contents (online platforms and information) accessible to migrants (*solving language barriers, providing information that is easily understandable, providing secure connections*)
- Support online initiatives in the fight against discrimination and racism. Develop applications facilitating better understanding and enhancement of the dialogue between migrants and community of destination countries.
- Create a database on migrants' needs about connectivity (access, use, expectations, etc.).