



## SUMMARY REPORT FOR THE GFMD

**"From Evidence to Action:  
Facilitating South – South Labor Migration for Development"**  
Abuja, 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October 2011

*Organized and hosted by:*

*In Collaboration with:*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nigeria

Ministry of Labor and Productivity, Nigeria / Nigerian

Immigration Service / Swiss GFMD Chair / IOM / ACP

Observatory on Migrations / ECOWAS Commission

Swiss Development Agency, Federal Department of

Foreign Affairs / Federal Office of Migration, Federal

Department of Justice and Police



GFMD 2011 Cluster one theme of *Labor Mobility and Development*. The GFMD Accra meeting explored policies and practices governments have adopted, or can adopt, to protect migrant domestic workers at all stages of migration. A thematic meeting in Dhaka discussed bilateral labor agreements as an instrument to frame labor mobility in a legal setting.

### B. Key issues and outcomes of the Workshop

Addressing specifically south – south labor migration raised initially the concern of defining the “Global South” in the absence of a universally accepted concept. Three definitions are currently used:

- The UN System identifies five regions of the “Global South” – Africa, The Americas (excluding Northern America), Asia (excluding Japan), Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and the Caribbean;
- The UNDP proposes to use the Human Development Index (HDI) categorized into four groups (low, medium, high and very high);
- The World Bank uses a definition based on income, defining low and middle-income countries as “developing”. This would exclude for example the Gulf countries – an important region of destination – which are counted by the UN as being part of the “Global South”.

Independently of the definition chosen to frame south – south labor migration, the meeting also clearly showed that the realities, challenges and opportunities of such mobility vary from region to region in the south. Factors such as existing legal mobility frameworks, accessibility, cultural ties between neighboring countries, existing history of mobility, level of governance, disparities of income within a specific region etc. heavily influence the possibility for a person to migrate within a region. In West Africa – as an example – a free movement framework exists it is however poorly implemented and mostly unknown to the general public. On the other hand, there are strong cultural and historical ties between neighboring countries which leads to a high mobility rate within ECOWAS. Countries such as Mali has a population of 12mio out of them 4mio are migrants. 3,5mio of the migrants remained in Africa mostly in Côte d'Ivoire (2mio). This example, which is repeated several times throughout the “Global South”, clearly shows an important fact – migrants from Africa are not invading the “Global North” but remain predominantly within their region, this is particularly true for migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa.

The meeting in Abuja gathered important material on a topic which has received little attention at the global level. The rich and active discussions can be summarized in five core outcomes:

1. South – south migration and in particular south – south labor mobility has received insufficient attention;
2. Political and policy challenges and priorities hamper the facilitation of better managed south – south labor mobility;
3. South – south labor mobility yields an important development impact which has not yet been fully grasped or exploited;
4. South – south migration raises important social protection issues as well as challenges to the protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families;
5. To effectively facilitate and manage south – south labor migration strong and proactive partnerships of governmental and non-governmental actors (civil society, academia, private sector) have to be established.

The five points will be developed further below.

#### 1. South – south migration and in particular south – south labor mobility has received insufficient attention;

The meeting clearly showed that there is little available and reliable data on south – south labor mobility and that the data which exists could be better managed and used to inform policy



choices. Also the research capacities, particularly within the “Global South”, are quite limited to produce the necessary evidence for coherent and comprehensive policies. Research initiatives by the ACP Observatory on Migration may address to some extent this gap in the coming years. Additionally a limited number of countries in the south have developed Migration Profiles. An example would be a project funded by the EU, Belgium and Switzerland for the development of profiles for ten countries in West and Central Africa with the assistance of IOM. Although the project has yielded important outcomes such as the drafting of migration policies in Nigeria and Ghana based on the profiles, it also showed some challenges notably the risk of limited ownership by key stakeholders in the countries, the lack of appropriate mechanisms and capacities to regularly update the profiles and the possible absence of political will and resources to take full advantage of the Migration Profiles. As demonstrated by the thematic meeting in Abuja, more sharing of knowledge, best practices and lessons learnt between various regions of world will lead to a better understanding of the challenges and the opportunities of south – south labor migration. In Africa a more systematized exchange between Regional Economic Communities, interested in developing free movement frameworks could cross-fertilize the various initiatives under the umbrella of the African Union. Bringing south – south mobility to the attention of all relevant stakeholders will become even more important as all indicators – demographic growth in the south, presence of emerging markets such as Brazil, India and South Africa attracting more labor forces – point to the fact that south – south mobility will further grow in importance in the years to come.

*Recommendations*

- a) Research capacities need to be strengthened and more networks of researchers such as NOMRA established in the south to specifically address south – south labor mobility;
- b) The capacities of government agencies need to be enhanced to better collect and manage relevant data;
- c) Migration Profiles should systematically include a specific focus on south – south labor migration and mechanisms need to be set up for regular updates of these profiles;
- d) More systematized exchanges between relevant stakeholders in the “Global South” need to be promoted.

**2. Political and policy challenges hamper the facilitation of better managed south – south labor mobility:**

For the participants it was quite apparent that south – south labor migration is not yet perceived as particularly relevant at the political level of governments. This is partially due to the lack of evidence, as outlined above, which could show in a concise way the important contribution better managed labor mobility could make to national and regional development and integration processes. This is reflected for example by the fact that only few national development plans recognize the specific role of migrant workers. A UNDP – IOM project on mainstreaming migration into development planning funded by Switzerland will specifically address this issue in several pilot countries. A further challenge is also the lack of political will to implement policies and legal frameworks. Several examples of free movement frameworks within Africa were presented and with all of them the lack of leadership by governments to fully apply the provisions of the frameworks remained a problem. A number of presentations and interventions pointed to the fact that countries in the south also apply restrictive immigration policies notably for migrant workers. It is particularly difficult for doctors, architects and lawyers for example. Often no facilitation is foreseen for them to access the labor market in a third country, even in cases where there is a shortage of qualified labor force in these sectors. This highlights an often encountered reality that migration policies – if they exist at all – are not necessarily coherent with labor market needs.

*Recommendations*

- a) A Pan-African Advisory Board on Migration should be created to assist Governments in formulating and implementing migration policies;



- b) Recognition of university diplomas and facilitating access for doctors, architects and lawyers, among others, should be encouraged;
- c) The capacities of Governments to formulate and implement labor migration policies need to be strengthened through sustainable multi-year partnership programs.

**3. South – south mobility yields an important development impact which has not yet been fully grasped;**

Studies made inter alia by The World Bank have started gathering evidence of the development impact inherent also to south – south mobility. However, here as well the available knowledge and data is still sketchy but certain tendencies can be identified. Sending remittances within the “Global South” is often more expensive than north – south transfers. Additionally, due to the lack of proper channels, the rate of informal transfers is much higher. The challenge of brain-drain is also a reality for south – south labor mobility. Stopping migration through even more restrictive policies would however be the wrong way to address it. What is needed is more skills development in developing countries, which would compensate for emigrating highly skilled migrant workers. The diaspora has been recognized as a development factor in the context of south – north mobility. Governments should also start recognizing the development role of the diaspora within the south. Instruments such as diaspora bonds, diaspora investment banks (Burundi has opened such a bank and Kenya is in the process of it) or RemitPlus offered by AFFORD in Sierra Leone to address business support and financial literacy gaps have to be promoted also among the diaspora in the south. Particular attention should be given to policies which address the converging point of common interest between local investors, foreign investors and the diaspora – such “sweet spots” facilitate the implementation of investment projects and enhance the private sector development impact thereof. Finally circular migration schemes, such as the scheme between Mauritius and the Seychelles, which fill labor gaps in the tourism and construction industries, can become models for other African countries, if they are embedded in a strong social protection framework.

*Recommendations*

- a) Initiatives to reduce the costs of sending remittances between developing countries should be introduced and utilize the banking sector, postal offices and other institutions. Available technology such as cell phones can be useful tools for implementation;
- b) More circular migration schemes, such as between Mauritius and the Seychelles, should be facilitated;
- c) Governments need to reduce the costs, risks and red tape that the diaspora may face when wanting to return;

**4. South – south labor migration raises important social protection issues as well as challenges to the protection of the rights of migrants**

While the question of protecting the rights of migrant workers and their families as well as the access to appropriate social protection is most relevant all over the world it seems particularly challenging for migrants within the “Global South”. Firstly, within south – south labor mobility flows there are high numbers of undocumented migrants who face greater difficulty in accessing social protection systems. Secondly, developing countries struggle to extend a network of protection to their nationals on their territory and foreign migrants often fall outside this network if it at all exists. Thirdly, there is a lack of political will and readiness to protect migrant workers to the same degree as citizens. Several countries have ratified the UN Convention on the rights of migrant workers and their families, thinking of their own migrants abroad and not of the obligations enshrined in the document they would need to fulfill towards migrant workers in their country.

South – south labor migration poses similar integration challenges as mobility to the north. They may be attenuated to some extent by the cultural and ethical proximities. But migrants, independently of whether they travelled far or only crossed to a neighboring country, have needs such as housing, education for their children, access to health care facilities, and rights including



economic, social and cultural rights. Particularly in times of emergencies, such as natural catastrophes or internal conflicts, migrant workers and their families tend to be discriminated against. The conflict in Libya made this very apparent, when hundreds of thousand migrant workers from Sub Saharan Africa lost their jobs and had to flee the war zone.

*Recommendations*

- a) Bilateral agreements on south – south labor mobility including important aspects such as social protection and the portability of social rights should be encouraged;
- b) Developing countries should make easy accessible and financially affordable identification and travel documents available;
- c) Amnesty programs for undocumented migrants should be applied to better integrate and thereby better protect migrant workers and their families;

**5. To effectively facilitate and manage south – south labor migration a strong and proactive partnership of governmental and non-governmental actors (civil society, academia, private sector) has to be established.**

The challenges to better facilitate south – south labor mobility are manifold. To overcome them in an effective, coherent and comprehensive way, thereby increasing the inherent development impact thereof, all stakeholders – both governmental and non-governmental – need to work closely together. Labor migration policies cannot be implemented without a strong and proactive partnership with the private sector and National Employment Agencies. Civil Society Organizations should receive an institutionalized and recognized role according to their added value (social protection, awareness raising, facilitating integration etc.). International Organizations can have a normative role in assisting to set frameworks and formulate instruments with a rights based approach; they may also give logistical support to set up data management systems etc. Academic institutions and researchers have a key role in collecting and analyzing evidence on which policies can be built. They can also assist in evaluating and monitoring the implementation of policies. The international donor community will need to be sensitized to the importance of more effectively addressing the issue of south – south labor migration. Many donor countries, in other words developed countries from the north, have the reflex to think only of south – north migration. This perception has to be expanded to include mobility within the south. Finally also the local communities need to be recognized as vital partners – formally immigration is into a country but practically it is into a community. This may raise questions of social cohesion.

*Recommendations*

- a) Developing partners from the north need to pay greater attention to south – south mobility and in particular south – south labor migration. This could also match their interest in the following ways: Enhanced development impact of south – south mobility; increased sustainable livelihoods in the south thereby the reducing pressure of irregular onward migration to the north; strengthened labor markets in the south will facilitate regular labor migration of qualified workers to the north.
- b) The model of Costa Rica where the Civil Society is an integral member of the National Council of Migration – an advisory board of the Government – should be replicated in other countries.
- c) Tripartite Steering Committees (Government, Civil Society (including Employers and Employees Associations) and International Partners) of Labor Migration Policies, like in the case of Sri Lanka, should also be replicated in other countries;

**C. Conclusion**

South – south labor migration has received little attention in the past and it became apparent that even among experts more data, more evidence and more knowledge has to be gathered to better address this very relevant reality of today's global migration flows. From Abuja therefore comes a strong message to keep south – south migration on the agenda. Furthermore, by starting to facilitate south – south labor mobility we not only achieve an enhanced impact for development



but also contribute to reducing the costs of migration. The GFMD 2012 under the Mauritian chair could be an important opportunity to further advance this important debate and close the policy and technology gap that exists between south and north and within the "Global South".

#### D. Guiding Questions for future Discussions

- Can labor migration systems based on south-north and north-north migration patterns apply to South-South contexts with their high degree of informality in the labor market?
- How can youth unemployment and underemployment be addressed through labor mobility?
- What are best practices for promoting gender-sensitive labor migration schemes?
- How can demand and supply within regions and between two countries be better linked?
- Do regional integration and the facilitation of the freedom of movement of persons lead to a lesser ability to assess labor migration as nationals do not need to register when moving?
- Is circular migration a concept more fitting to intra-regional migration in the south than south-north mobility due to less (effective) barriers?
- Should intra-regional labor mobility be promoted through regional or bilateral initiatives? What are the opportunities and challenges of both?
- How can the mobility of lower skilled migrants be enhanced? Which destination countries in the South are facing shortages and demographic decline?
- How can foreign domestic workers be effectively protected? What good practices exist?
- How can competition between local and foreign workers be addressed, in particular related social protests and policies aiming to restrict the labor force to nationals?

(21.10.2011)