

2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Review of the Implementation  
of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)  
in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Region

8-10 October 2024, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## Background Note

### Thematic Round Table 3: Supporting the Integration of Migrants and Their Contribution to Development

Co-leads: IOM and WHO



## I. Guiding Questions

1. What measures has your government taken to enhance consular protection and assistance for migrants throughout the migration cycle?
2. What successful practices have emerged during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that your government has adopted to provide basic services, including essential health care, to migrants while also safeguarding the public health of the host-country?
3. What strategies has your government implemented to empower migrants and promote their full inclusion and participation in society?
4. How can regional, national, and local governments encourage migrants and diaspora communities to engage with and support development initiatives in countries of origin and destination countries?
5. How can African countries harmonize their regulatory environments to facilitate faster, safer and more affordable cross-border remittances, including mobile payments, without undermining national strategic monetary and fiscal policies?
6. What mechanisms has your government established to ensure the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits for migrant workers?

## II. Introduction

The global and African instruments underpinning the Global Compact objectives discussed in this thematic round table 3, include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>1</sup>, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter)<sup>2</sup>.

Migrants and the African diaspora play a vital role in the economic and social development of their countries of origin, transit, and destination. They often introduce innovative ideas and practices learned abroad, which can enhance productivity and competitiveness in local markets. Their entrepreneurial activities stimulate economic growth by establishing businesses, bringing new skills, and creating jobs. Additionally, migrants facilitate regional integration by fostering cross-border trade, investment, and cooperation. Their mobility can help connect markets, cultures, and communities across African countries, promoting initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCTFA) and regional economic integration. The contribution of migrants and diaspora to the continent's socio-economic growth and development should therefore be recognized and promoted.

A healthy population is a recognized catalyst and enabler of economic and social development. The sustainable development goal (SDG) principle of 'leave no one behind' mandates that healthcare systems globally and in Africa be inclusive of all, regardless of their migration status and locations. This means extending universal health coverage (UHC) to migrant populations, ensuring they have access to essential health services without financial hardship. In addition, social protection mechanisms must be designed to operate across borders safeguarding the health and well-being of migrants and their families throughout the migration cycle. This approach will not only improve health outcomes for migrants but also contribute to the achievement of regional health goals as well as the overall resilience and sustainability of health systems in Africa.

## III. Overview of Progress

The UN Network on Migration is supporting Member States in accelerating GCM implementation. One such example is through the Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund (M-MPTF)<sup>3</sup>, which is the only pooled funding instrument in migration. There are several significant challenges affecting the implementation of the GCM in Africa. These include environmental factors, transnational crime, high remittance costs, the need for protection, and difficulties in receiving assistance, especially in the absence of consular representation.

Progress towards UHC and health financing commitment, as outlined in the Abuja declaration, remains slow. Nevertheless, several countries are demonstrating commitment through Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to enhance social protection for

<sup>1</sup> [Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations](#)

<sup>2</sup> [AFRICAN \(BANJUL\) CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS \(african-court.org\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#)

migrants. Some states have also encouraged diaspora savings facilities through private entities or in the form of provident funds.

### **Objective 14: Enhance consular protection, assistance and cooperation throughout the migration cycle.**

African consular missions within Africa and abroad have a responsibility to provide services to their nationals including appropriate protection measures and assistance during crises and emergencies. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States<sup>4</sup> in 2022, underscored the important role of consular offices in the protection and assistance of migrants during COVID-19.

In Kenya, a GCM National Implementation Plan was developed with the support of the UN Network on Migration via the GCM Capacity Building Mechanism's Demand-Driven Facility<sup>5</sup>. A notable intervention includes enhancing consular protection, assistance, and cooperation throughout the migration cycle through mobile consular services in destination countries. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kenya exemplified this approach by addressing the basic needs of migrants, facilitating their return and negotiating visa period extensions.

Another notable achievement is the 2021 cooperation agreement on migration issues signed between Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau which includes: i) strengthening cooperation and exchange of experience on consular services and management of emigrant communities; ii) promoting the creation of legal frameworks to facilitate the integration and regularization of Cape Verdean and Guinean nationals with irregular migratory status in respective countries, including through flexible requirements and special measures; and iii) ensuring, to the extent possible, the provision of consular assistance and protection to nationals of both countries in territories where only one party has diplomatic or consular representation.

### **Objective 15: Provide access to basic services for migrants.**

The Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action 2018-2030 advocates for the inclusion of migrants into national health plans with clear recommendations for operationalization. Prompted by the first Migration Policy Framework recommendation, the Africa Union Commission (AUC) for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development established the new thematic area on migration and health in 2020. This led to an assessment study to enhance the understanding of migrants' health in different migration contexts in Africa.

Efforts set towards meeting the health needs of migrants demonstrate a commitment to health equity by ensuring that vulnerable populations, who may otherwise be excluded, receive the care they need. This can reduce health disparities and improve overall public health outcomes. African policymakers should consider the opportunity offered by regional integration processes to enhance health and social protection policies, meeting the needs of both nationals as well as migrants, and stepping up efforts towards the realization of UHC for all.

<sup>4</sup> [Member States | SADC](#)

<sup>5</sup> This is funded by the support of the EU under the Building Migration Partnerships programme.

An initiative by Egypt includes migrants in the “100 Million Healthy Lives Initiative for the Early Detection and Treatment of Hepatitis C”. This proactive measure was awarded recognition by the WHO. Another example observed during COVID-19 was the inclusion of migrants into national vaccination deployment plans.

The Migration MPTF Joint Programme in Morocco, “Making Migration Work for All: Improved Social Cohesion and Fair Access to Services for Migrants in Morocco”, is also a demonstrable achievement. The programme, jointly implemented by IOM, UNHCR, UNFPA, and UNICEF, engages a broad range of Government ministry and civil society partners to promote inclusive access to basic services. It facilitates integrated multicultural socio-economic activities and dialogue, supports local protection mechanisms and enhances their capacity to promote the rights of migrants while delivering inclusive services to vulnerable populations.

The “Provision of Essential Services, Protection And Economic Empowerment to Support The Inclusion And Integration of Migrant Street Children, Youth, And Adolescents in Addis Ababa” is another instance of Migration MPTF support. It aims to support the Federal Government, the Addis Ababa City Administration and local organizations in providing reintegration support to returning migrants, focusing on health, housing, social protection, livelihood and employment. The success factor of this intervention relies on the engagement of the City Administration, as well as civil society and partners, adopting a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach throughout its implementation.

### **Objective 16: Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion.**

Inclusion and social cohesion are essential to creating an environment where migrants can successfully integrate into their new communities. This means providing migrants with equal access to social services, employment opportunities, education, and healthcare, as well as promoting cultural understanding and acceptance among host communities.

Although most UN Member States are signatories to conventions, treaties and protocols that oblige them to protect the rights of migrants, irrespective of their status, migrants in destination countries are often excluded from the labour market and essential services. They face entrenched prejudice and must overcome language, cultural and regulatory barriers, or pay high fees to access the services they need. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts were intensified to help return and re-integrate migrants, especially given the loss of jobs of nationals in host countries. Evidence points to the forced return of migrants, particularly those who had been reluctant to voluntarily return<sup>6</sup>.

In 2021, ECOWAS acknowledged the importance of developing pre-departure instructional guides/manuals for migrants ahead of travel to provide them with informed knowledge regarding migration requirements of the intended country of travel (transit and destination)<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> [https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources\\_files/africa\\_gcm\\_regional\\_review\\_report.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources_files/africa_gcm_regional_review_report.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/docs/ECOWAS%20-%20Report%20on%20Regional%20Consultations%20on%20GCM.pdf>

Cabo Verde's "Promotion of the Social Integration of Immigrants", which funds initiatives by immigrant associations and non-governmental organizations that align with the strategic axis of the National Policy on Immigration, guarantees migrants access to income, education and health.

Kenya continues to map and issue citizenship to stateless persons and descendants of migrants through the implementation of the Citizenship and Immigration Act (2011).

The Migration MPTF Joint Programme in South Africa also strengthened integration, social cohesion and positive relations with host communities. It supported ongoing national efforts to reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen the resilience of communities in crisis contexts, including COVID-19 recovery.

### **Objective 19: Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries.**

Migrants' contribution to development in their countries of origin is still not fully acknowledged in most African countries. In 2021, ECOWAS, recognizing that contribution, has emphasized the inclusion of diaspora input into sustainable development plans to harness these critical assets.

In 2022, several Member States in the SADC region reported the implementation of diaspora mapping exercises as part of efforts to understand the location, needs and size of diaspora communities to inform evidence-based diaspora engagement.

Migrants' contribution to development often comes primarily through remittance payments to their home countries. However, the high costs associated with sending remittances from one African country to another often undermine the significant positive impact of those remittances.

Egypt is exemplary in this regard, where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Investment actively highlights available investment opportunities to Egyptians abroad. Likewise, Cabo Verde is a notable country that introduced tax exemptions to attract diaspora investment in 2020.

More interestingly, Egyptians and Cape Verdeans abroad can vote in parliamentary and presidential elections in their country of origin.

The diaspora can partner with their countries of origin to build resilience, for example, by investing in health protection for all, which also offers high potential for employment creation and prioritizing equitable access to healthcare services through tax levies and contribution-based social or national health insurance schemes.

The diaspora also plays a crucial role in addressing healthcare personnel shortages and enhancing access to care. Using technology such as telemedicine and telehealth, diaspora health professionals can offer remote consultations, support diagnostics, and provide continuous medical education, particularly in underserved areas.

### **Objective 20: Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants.**

Africa has been establishing itself as a leader in innovative mobile money transfer applications, which are also helping to drastically reduce remittance costs. Providing such services to migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic was a good practice that should be retained in future migration processes.

Even in times of pandemic, migrants contributed significantly to both their host countries and countries of origin. For example, in the United States of America alone, in 2020, the African diaspora contributed \$36 billion in taxes, while remittances to Africa amounted to \$78.4 billion, a sum three times higher than foreign aid to the continent in that year<sup>8</sup>.

Egypt is among the countries with the lowest remittance costs. The Central Bank monitors and ensures that remittance costs do not exceed 3%. Recognizing the importance of remittances to the stability of Cabo Verde's economy, the government, through banking institutions, has introduced a Special Emigrant Account with subsidized interest rates, to facilitate cheaper remittance transfers.

## **Objective 22: Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits.**

Several African countries have established partnership mechanisms for the portability of social entitlements and earned benefits through the re-examination of BLAs and MoUs with destination countries to reflect the protection of the rights of repatriates to social entitlements and earned benefits. While BLAs and MoUs are encouraging mechanisms to advance the social protection of migrants, observations reveal discrepancies between the actual benefits of migrants and the entitlements indicated in the agreements.

The whole-of-route approach needs to be strengthened for comprehensive programming and response to migrants. A case in point, for instance, is the intercontinental arrangement made between Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

The social security conventions signed by Cabo Verde with multiple countries cover the portability of social security entitlements, including sickness and maternity benefits, old age pensions, and disability benefits.

It is worth noting that ECOWAS (2021) stressed the need to introduce migrant social protection guidelines and assistance, including psycho-social support, as essential elements in migration governance. Some Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Member States like Ethiopia provide essential services, protection and economic empowerment to support the inclusion and integration of migrant street children, youth, and adolescents in Addis Ababa.

## **IV. Recommendations**

<sup>8</sup> [https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources\\_files/africa\\_gcm\\_regional\\_review\\_report.pdf](https://migrationnetwork.un.org/system/files/resources_files/africa_gcm_regional_review_report.pdf)

- Member States need to recognize and continuously promote the immense potential and significant contributions of migrants and the diaspora to the long-term development goals of the continent outlined in global and regional frameworks such as the Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063;
- Governments of respective signatory countries should establish social accountability and governance mechanisms to uphold the entitlements of migrants as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Support migrants so that their families are empowered through training on their rights, life skills and financial literacy at all stages of the migratory continuum in transit and destination countries;
- Ensure that health services are accessible and responsive to the needs of migrant populations using an integrated approach;
- Regularly review and update policies to address the evolving needs of migrant populations, allocate sufficient resources, and foster partnerships with relevant stakeholders to ensure effective and sustained policy implementation;
- Enhance communities' financial literacy and knowledge on various means of building and preserving wealth, such as credit, savings, investment and insurance. This will help maximize the positive impact of diaspora resources on the development of countries of origin;
- Implement mobile transfer and payment platforms across all African countries and leverage their interoperability to reduce transfer times and costs. Promote the use of these platforms to facilitate more efficient and affordable remittances, benefitting migrants, their families and host country economies;
- Member States and regional economic communities should establish well-consulted and mutually agreed upon migration governance mechanisms across the continent to harness the full potential of migrants for national and regional development, including the proper management of the demographic dividend.