

## Expert Roundtable on Social Aspects of Migration

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Hotel Bloom  
35, Rue Royale 250  
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### Background

The Roundtable on the Social Aspects of Migration and Development, organized by EuropeAid together with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), brought together government representatives, academics, and the policy and practice community at international and non-governmental organizations. The aim of the event was to advance and inform the debate on the non-economic aspects of Migration and Development, which have received little policy and research attention so far. These issues include (I) the social consequences of migration for families and communities back home, (II) the protection of migrants' human rights, (III) the social protection of migrants abroad and (IV) the integration of migration matters in social and development policies. The organizers hope that the roundtable report will prove a useful input to both the forthcoming EC Communication on Migration and Development, and the 2010 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), which will focus on the relationship between migration and human development.<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

#### Keynote Speaker Dr. Rachel Sabates-Wheeler (*Sussex University IDS/DRC*)

Dr. Sabates-Wheeler's overview of the social aspects of migration highlighted the challenges of making migration work for human development and outlined possible future steps in this direction. The presentation focused on three key issues: (1) the **demystification of the negative perceptions** on migrants – especially with respect to migrants as a potential burden on social services, (2) migration as a **risk management strategy** and (3) addressing the **vulnerability** of migrants.

Migrants are often denounced as social welfare tourists. However, research has shown that migrants only turn to their host country's social protection system after several years of stay, when they are better integrated into society and can confidently navigate the public realm. An important reason behind the negative misperceptions is the lack of sufficient data on migration volumes, the reasons why people migrate, and the experience of migrants.

Migration can be seen as a risk management strategy, with new risks attached. Especially for irregular migrants, migration entails entering a situation void of social protection. Aside from complicating access to social and human rights protection, migration can render people more vulnerable by restricting their ability to exercise political voice

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<sup>1</sup> The content of this report does not necessarily represent the views of EuropeAid, the European Commission or ICMPD, and is a general summary of the discussions that took place in this round table.

and representation, and to claim accountability from the state. More research is needed on South-South flows, as people comprising such flows are often the most vulnerable.

Several measures that can be taken by both sending and receiving countries in order to mitigate migrants' vulnerability have been discussed and are integrated into the final recommendations.

## ***Panel I: Social Consequences of Migration for Families and Communities Back Home***

The aim of the session was to look beyond the economic consequences of migration for the families left behind. The participants presented and discussed policies and practices that could be employed to protect vulnerable family relatives remaining in origin countries, with a particular focus on children.

The panellists of this session were Margaret Wachenfeld (UNICEF Brussels), Flavia Piperno (Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale, CeSPI) and César Camilo Vallejo (Colombian Ministry of the Exterior). The session was moderated by Agata Sobiech (European Commission, DG JLS).

**UNICEF** has conducted extensive research on the impact of migration on family members left behind, and notably on children<sup>2</sup> and welcomes the discussion and focus on a fuller set of social impacts of migration which up to now has been dominated by the focus on the positive effects of remittances. The impact of remittances on families back home can be both positive and negative, but they should certainly not be perceived as a panacea. For example, in some contexts remittances can improve children's education; in others this may be impossible due to contextual factors, such as missing infrastructure for schooling. Remittances do not compensate for a lack of parental care and guidance, the absence of which may also be detrimental to educational performance and emotional development. Likewise, they are not a substitute for adequate national social security and social protection systems, and do not remove the responsibility of the state to develop family, youth and education policies and provide adequate services. In countries where there are large populations of in particular women and children left behind, there may be a need to specifically target social services on this group. At the moment, there is especially little research on the impact of parents' migration on the health of children staying behind.

Consideration should also be given to the child protection and psychosocial impacts on children left behind: parents' migration can result in a shortage of educational and emotional support, and can even lead to exploitation by caregivers. Sometimes children are forced to live without a guardian, which can increase their vulnerability to trafficking. Furthermore, family separation can have negative psychological consequences. Stress, anxiety, the feeling of being abandoned and a lack of positive role models can trigger problems such as teenage alcoholism and pregnancy. Children may face the extra burden of having to take over non-traditional roles such as parenting, leaving them little to no time for schooling. They may also endure stigmatization and envy from peers and even from teachers as the remittances they receive improve their access to goods and services.

**The Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, through its Colombia Unites Us Program, aims to strengthen the bonds between Colombian migrants and their country of origin. It is also responding to the need for improving the social status and protection of citizens who work and live abroad, and of those who return to Colombia. The

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g.: UNICEF: Migration, Development and Children left behind: a multidimensional perspective, 2009.

[http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Postscript\\_Formatted\\_Migration\\_Development\\_and\\_Children\\_Left\\_Behind.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Postscript_Formatted_Migration_Development_and_Children_Left_Behind.pdf). See also [http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index\\_43139.html](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/index_43139.html)

comprehensive return programme called 'Positive Return Plan' aims at reaching out to the 3.3 million Colombians currently living outside of their country. The plan aims to recognize the knowledge, skills, experience and know-how that Colombians have gained abroad, and reinvest this human capital in Colombia, in order to generate, with the Government's assistance, domestic social and economic opportunities that contribute to national development. The plan covers all migrants and is sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable, such as forced returnees. It is guided by human rights considerations and is based on a long term national policy vision called Integral Migration Policy.

Under the programme, support to returnees is granted as long as it is necessary. Its main features include: immediate attention to the needs of vulnerable migrants; trainings and courses to facilitate insertion into the labour market; technical courses and instructions so that migrants have access to productive initiatives; return of highly educated migrants and programmed return. Following the presentation of the Colombian initiative, roundtable participants noted that international cooperation remains crucial for the realization of similar programs elsewhere, as many countries lack the financial assets to implement them single-handedly.

**Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CESPI)** advised development cooperation partners to adapt their mindset to the new transnational nature of migrants' families. The latter introduces a demand for innovative social service arrangements that respond to the interrelated needs of separated family members at different stages of the migration process. CESPI presented the concept of a *care diamond*, involving four dimensions: family, community, state and market. From the perspective of development cooperation policy, it is important to cover each dimension, as well as to explore the synergies between them in order to develop flexible and hybrid social care solutions. This calls for a dialogue among actors that may not have been commonplace partners in the past, such as informal community support providers, the private sector, and local administrations.

Informal social services are crucial in many sending countries due to the weakness of state and market equivalents. They are also common among migrant communities in countries of destination. At present, numerous fragmented development cooperation initiatives help reinforce and tailor such services to the concerns of transnational families. At the same time, Diaspora members are increasingly responding to market gaps in their countries of origin by investing remittances into private social service providers. By acting on this business opportunity they contribute to job creation as well as to social protection.

**The panel discussion** centred on the theme of gender and migration. From the perspective of communities back home, government support programs targeting women migrants harbour particular potential for positive outcomes. Research has shown that women are often more prudent with remittance money than men. They are more likely to use it for the benefit of the family, while men may spend a large proportion of the extra income on alcohol, gambling etc. Helping women maintain control over remittance money can therefore contribute to the wellbeing of the family, and may advance the broader goal of gender equality by strengthening women's negotiating position towards male relatives. Participants also underscored the need to address the social consequences of migration for women who stay behind when their husbands move abroad for work. In such cases women often assume a double household burden, taking over the husband's role in addition to their own. On the other hand, it has been noticed that the social consequences triggered by women migration should not be overlooked.

### ***Main Outcomes of the Discussion***

- The extent to which migration can contribute positively to the social dimension of development in countries of origin is contingent on the presence of a supporting national policy context. Remittances alone cannot compensate for insufficient national policies and the negative social impacts of migration. International partnerships for development should therefore focus on promoting favourable policies across the full range of relevant areas.
- Although there is growing concern with the situation of children in left-behind households, there are often no systematic government interventions to buffer the consequences of migration. Coherence between government policies on migration, education, health, child protection and social protection is imperative in order to mitigate the risks born by children as a result of parents' absence, and to harness the potential benefits of remittances for the development of children. At the same time, on the receiving countries' side, access to family reunification schemes for children should be facilitated. Subsequent integration challenges in countries of destination must be monitored and properly addressed.
- The wellbeing of women staying behind while their spouses migrate for work requires targeted development cooperation attention. So do the protection of women migrants and their potential to contribute to the development of their families and communities back home. For all family members staying behind, targeted support services, including psychosocial services, need to be developed.
- Both the challenges and the opportunities stemming from the transnational nature of migrants' families should be better recognized and acted upon. Networking and partnerships among social service providers in countries of origin and destination should be strengthened for this purpose.
- Families back home often use remittances as a substitute for social protection measures, including social security. When there is a lack of adequate health, education and other services in the public domain, the money is spent on alternatives provided by the private and informal sectors. It is therefore important to recognize the potential of such alternatives and to improve their quality<sup>3</sup>. Diaspora and remittance investment in such alternatives should be studied and supported, recognizing that they should not become or be promoted as a substitute or parallel for national systems of social services but integrated within national systems.
- In order to maximize the sustainability of existing initiatives that work on innovative social service provision, more research, mutual learning and consolidation of best practices are necessary.

### ***Panel II: The Rights and Protection of Migrants***

The session highlighted challenges to the protection of migrant workers and explored ways to reinforce protection mechanisms. The specific needs of women migrants and vulnerable groups were at the centre of the discussion.

The panellists were Najla Chadha (Caritas Migration Centre, Lebanon), Dr. Jean d'Cunha (UNIFEM New York) and Guy Morgan (Business for Social Responsibility, BSR). The moderator was Roger de Backer (European Commission, DG AIDCO).

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<sup>3</sup> A good example in this respect comes from India, where the State does not finance non-profit organizations but has created a quality certification system aimed at increasing the Diaspora's trust in these organizations and thus attracting remittances.

**Caritas Lebanon** described the difficulties facing migrants in Lebanon. Foreign workers in the country often find themselves in a situation where they do not receive pay and have no access to redress. They are fully at the mercy of their employer, even as regards to establishing contact with their Embassy. The situation is exasperated by the fact that many important sending countries, such as Nepal, do not have a representation mission in Lebanon. The protection of domestic workers' rights in particular is fully dependent on the attitude of employers and the Lebanese authorities. Some 78% of the migrant workers in the country are estimated to be women, most employed in domestic services. The level of irregularity among migrants in Lebanon is very high. Caritas is the only organization with access to Lebanon's prisons, where it provides medical, social, food and legal assistance to the detained (irregular) migrants. Here it has adopted the innovative practice of hiring migrants as legal aid workers. Lebanese public awareness of migrants' situation and human rights is very low, and is another major area of Caritas' work in the country.

**UNIFEM** provided a different perspective by focusing on the protection of women migrants. In some countries of the world women are even more on the move than men. UNIFEM works on data collection, awareness raising and capacity building, helping women learn about ways to claim their rights. The UN agency emphasized the importance of combining efforts at various levels. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW) is an example of an opportunity to mobilize the international human rights framework. CEDAW recommendation no. 26 on women migrant workers is proving to be a very useful protection instrument, and will continue to increase the visibility of migrant women's rights within UNIFEM's work and elsewhere. Reporting by CSO and governments in signatory countries should be broadly promoted in order to strengthen the monitor of CEDAW recommendations. An example of UNIFEM engaging regional actors is the agency's work to strengthen the gender dimension of the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. UNIFEM has helped numerous countries mainstream gender into national migration-related policy. In Indonesia local legislation was a key aspect of such cooperation, where it was attuned to the decentralized nature of government.

**Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)** has recently completed a pilot project on the protection of the rights of labour migrants in Malaysia as part of its broader work on enhancing the role of business in safeguarding migrants' rights within global supply chains. The aim of the pilot project was to (1) raise the employers' grasp of the national and international human rights landscape pertaining to migrant workers, (2) encourage the development of pre- and post-arrival worker orientation programmes, (3) strengthen the grievance process for migrant workers (4) improve recruitment practices<sup>4</sup>. A migration focus group involving large multi-national companies such as Western Digital, Apple, JC Penney and Nordstrom was set up in the context of the initiative. The project initiated and facilitated a dialogue between employers, labour unions and national employers' associations. Workshops on migrants' rights were organized for middle management.

Challenges encountered by the project include the highly sporadic nature of government involvement; the lack of experience among the various actors in working within a multi-stakeholder setting; the reluctance of business to cover the recruitment fees which at present are paid by the migrants and often lead to debt bondage. Despite the progress booked in raising corporate awareness, abuse continues. As the example of Malaysia shows, the need to tackle issues related to the vulnerability of migrants within corporate supply chains is particularly urgent with respect to South-South labour flows.

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<sup>4</sup> A comprehensive guidance document which can be used by businesses around the world as well as an implementation toolkit for the Malaysian context has been produced by BSR.

**In response to the speakers** several participants referred back to issues introduced earlier during the roundtable. For instance, the call on sending countries to protect their citizens' rights abroad was linked to governments' obligations under CEDAW. A number of new issues surfaced during the discussion. It was noted that well-targeted pre-departure trainings are key to the effectiveness of raising awareness among prospective migrants. In the area of policy coherence, an appeal was made to assess EU regulations on women's rights for possible loopholes and contradictions when it comes to the protection of migrant women. A similar analysis was encouraged on the implications that a neglect of migrants' rights may have for receiving societies, with health risks for the overall population and the pressure on doctors to break the Hippocratic Oath as two possible consequences.

### ***Main Outcomes of the Discussion***

- Development partners should be encouraged to pursue systematic research to understand the mechanisms driving widespread irregular migration in different countries and sectors, including receiving country migration policies, and including situations where bilateral frameworks for legal migration are formally available.
- Migration can empower women and offer them new opportunities. Protecting their rights and strengthening the institutional support mechanisms will provide the grounds for a positive migration experience. For this purpose, it is important to pro-actively support government efforts to integrate gender concerns into migration-related policy.
- The mental health of migrants should be more strongly addressed, including the psychological trauma suffered, in particular, by migrant women who face exploitation as domestic workers. The general absence of a protection framework for overseas domestic worker must be urgently addressed. There is unexplored leeway for consolidating and connecting through networks the many ad-hoc initiatives that already exist in this area.
- There is a need to expand efforts aimed at including business representatives in the dialogue on migrant workers' rights. In order to trigger incentives for the development of company policies safeguarding these rights it is important to frame the economic returns as well as the reputation gains that companies get from enhancing (migrant) workers' wellbeing.
- More attention needs to be paid to recruitment practices: the high numbers of middlemen that characterize the current recruitment processes of migrant workers in many countries and industries increase the likelihood of abuse and exploitation, raise recruitment costs and reduce employer accountability. Greater transparency could be reached by locating human resources staff from companies seeking to hire migrant labour directly in the country of recruitment.
- Measures such as the conclusion of bilateral agreements facilitating legal migration between sending and receiving countries, as well as the signature of work contracts in the premises of the host country consulates in the country of origin can impact significantly on a more effective protection of migrant workers.
- Awareness-raising among prospective migrants on their rights at work, in particular through pre-departure and on-arrival trainings, is crucial. It is important to recognize and tap the central role of CSOs in this area, as they are often the actors most engaged in direct contact with migrants for the protection of their rights.
- The creation of migrant worker committees or any other system which gives migrants a voice vis-à-vis their management is one of the basic prerequisites for protecting migrants' rights in destination countries. Effective representation is crucial for raising the awareness of migrants' concerns at middle management



level. There is also space for more action regarding the formation of migrant workers' unions, in partnership with mainstream labour unions.

- Access to justice for migrants is often hindered by lack of knowledge of the local systems of dispute resolution, insufficient knowledge of the language, fear, as well as cost and complications of proceedings; all these issues merit greater policy attention in host countries.

### ***Panel III: The Social Protection of Migrants Abroad***

The panellists in this session were Helmut Schwarzer (ILO Geneva), Maria Gallotti (ILO Brussels) and Johannes Koettl (World Bank, Washington). The moderator was Ralph Genetzke (ICMPD Brussels).

The session revolved around the different social protection regimes presently in place for migrant workers. Challenges and best practices were discussed, touching on the following matters: access to social services in destination countries; portability of social security entitlements between origin and destination countries; labour market conditions; informal networks.

**The World Bank** outlined the different social protection regimes associated with international migration: 1. Full access to social services and transferability of benefits are granted through a bilateral or multilateral agreement, which provides for non-discrimination between migrants and nationals and establishes coordination between social security institutions; 23% of all migrants profit from this regime, most of them intra- EU and OECD.<sup>5</sup> 2. For around 50% of migrants, access to and exportability of social benefits are regulated at the national level in destination countries only, which usually precludes the portability of entitlements. 3. Under a different regime, access to social security is not granted while migrants are not obliged to contribute to the system, rendering the issue of portability irrelevant; 5% of migrants are affected by this arrangement, primarily in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. 4. 18% of migrants fall under a regime where they have very limited access to social protection and are not entitled to portability; this situation is most common among irregular migrants.

In the case of South to North flows, countries such as Turkey or Morocco are able to protect between 60 and 70% of their migrants through bilateral agreements. There is much room to strengthen such arrangements and to expand them to more countries. In addition, countries could re-design existing social security schemes towards individual account structures, which would enhance portability even in the absence of bilateral arrangements. The challenges related to South-South migration are of a very different nature. In lower-income countries, formal social protection systems are much less developed. Migration itself can be considered a form of social protection. In order to support this risk management function, it is necessary to make migration itself safer. The enforcement of basic labour and social rights (starting with the payment of wages) and access to justice disregarding the status of migrants represent the real priority in many countries of destination in the South.

**The ILO** underscored that migrants need access to decent work in order to derive the economic and social benefits of migration. The protection of the rights of migrant workers is at the core of the agency's mandate. The ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration is an important tool in providing guidance on the matter to governments, trade unions and employers. The ILO and nine other UN agencies recognize social protection as a basic right, and agree on a concept of a social protection floor available to all, including (irregular) migrants.

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<sup>5</sup> Around 90% of intra-OECD migrants benefit from social protection through bilateral agreements

The ILO has many years of experience in supporting national, bilateral and multilateral negotiations on the development of social insurance schemes for migrant workers and their families. ILO has supported the development of a social insurance scheme for a long time. Its Recommendation 167 features a model of social security agreement which includes eligibility clauses, highlights the need of avoiding double taxation, and sets minimum contribution standards. An ongoing ILO project in this area covers thirteen African countries.<sup>6</sup> The initiative facilitates the development of national and regional strategies by governments and social security institutions, in consultation with social partners. It also contributes to consolidate knowledge on existing social protection mechanisms, builds institutional capacity and includes operational measures to strengthen social security provisions.<sup>7</sup>

**During the discussion** the participants expanded on some of the points raised in the presentations. Attention was drawn to the fact that generally migrants in higher-income countries of destination contribute to social security more than they claim. It has also been evoked the fact that lack of political will can significantly hamper a progress on increasing portability agreements. For instance, in the case of the US and Mexico, a bilateral social security arrangement would have negligible costs and may contribute to regularizing migration flows. Negotiations on the issue, however, have been not been resumed so far. Some of the speakers highlighted the potentially damaging consequences of the practice where countries allow a departing migrant to withdraw his/her social security contributions and to drop claims to any future coverage.

### ***Main Outcomes of the Discussion***

- In destination countries where migrants' basic rights are upheld to a greater extent, the policy focus should fall on negotiating further bilateral and regional agreements on social protection. The scope of existing arrangements should be broadened to cover, for example, healthcare.<sup>8</sup>
- In other destination countries, the immediate policy priority would be to strengthen minimum labour and social rights enforcement.
- In a context where remittances are often lost on poor and uninformed investment, migrants should be more effectively supported to channel a proportion of their earnings into formal or informal social protection back home.
- Evidence that migrants' net contribution to social security is in most cases positive, could be explored and acted upon. It is crucial to raise public and political awareness on this matter.

### ***Panel IV: Integrating Migration Issues into Social and Development Policies***

The aim of the panel was to discuss the extent to which migration issues are being integrated into other policy areas - such as health, education, labour policy and social protection – and into country development strategies. Possible avenues for enhancing this mainstreaming process were considered.

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<sup>6</sup> The beneficiary countries are Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia and Mauritius

<sup>7</sup> For more information see: [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain.showPractice?p\\_lang=en&p\\_practice\\_id=62](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain.showPractice?p_lang=en&p_practice_id=62)).

<sup>8</sup> Today the majority of portability agreements cover pension rights only. The bilateral agreements between Germany and Austria and the countries of the former Yugoslavia are the only ones that also cover healthcare.



The panellists of the fourth session were Hussam Daradkeh (Government of Jordan), Michele Klein Salomon (IOM Geneva), David Khoudour (OECD Development Centre Paris) and Francois Decaillet (WHO Europe). The session was moderated by Robertus Rozenburg (European Commission DG Dev).

**The representative of the government of Jordan** explained how the latter has been adjusting the country's education system to the flows of Iraqi Visitors to Jordan<sup>9</sup>. The Government of Jordan has announced a number of measures to ease the burden and improve the living conditions of Iraqis in Jordan, including receiving Iraqi patients in public hospitals and healthcare centres, waving residency fines, approve the return of Iraqis after they exit the borders to Iraq, allowing Iraqi students to register at schools regardless of their legal status. The EC is supporting Jordan to contribute to the stabilisation of the education situation in Jordan following an unexpected influx of displaced persons from Iraq<sup>10</sup>. However, the mass inflow of Iraqi visitors continues to draw heavily on social and economic structures – a major challenge that has led to the stigmatization of Iraqis.

The **IOM**, in cooperation with the Global Migration Group, ILO, UNDP, UNICEF and other development actors, has been supporting developing countries in their work on mainstream migration into national development and poverty reduction strategies. Triggered by a request from the government of Ghana, a general handbook on mainstreaming migration into development planning is in the making and will be published by IOM later this year. The handbook will guide the reader step-by-step through the process of mainstreaming by featuring basic migration and development strategies, identifying national plans, presenting concrete examples from practice and providing a checklist in the annex. The handbook will be piloted in a couple of countries, including a selection of those currently benefitting from the EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI). The pilot phase will be used to update and modify the present version of the handbook.

The **OECD** Development Centre has been addressing the issue of policy coherence on migration by examining the impact of emigration on domestic labour markets, and by studying the developmental potential of South-South governance. An important element of this research is the question of how migration can have a positive influence on social development in countries of origin. Policies that encourage people to return to countries of origin to use the new skills acquired through migration are important in this respect. In the area of education policy, a good example is the Fulbright grant, which requires grantees to return home for a minimum of two years after finishing their studies. Another best practice is found in Sweden: the Swedish government has funded a programme training Ethiopian migrants to become solar technicians while investing into the solar energy sector in Ethiopia.

From the perspective of policy coherence, the risk of migration becoming a poverty trap must be acknowledged. Migration can act as a safety valve in sending countries that cannot offer their people sufficient job opportunities. However, this may imply a lack of incentives for and social pressure on governments to undertake serious labour market and social protection reforms. Likewise, governments that base their education policies on the demand for the labour they 'export' run the risk of investing into the labour market needs of other countries at the expense of domestic priorities. Research has shown a negative correlation between social expenditure and emigration. As a result, channelling development aid into social protection for the whole population in countries of origin might reduce the need for people to look for better opportunities abroad.

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<sup>9</sup> Jordan considers Iraqis as temporary guests. Their voluntary return depends on the security situation in Iraq. No deportation will be exercised on them.

<sup>10</sup> The number of Iraqi students registered in Jordanian schools amounts to almost 27,000.

The **World Health Organisation** identified the health conditions of migrants and mobility of health workers as key issues that require greater policy coherence between migration and healthcare. The health of migrants and their families persists as a major problem in countries of origin and destination. A crucial first step in addressing it would be to upscale the monitoring of people's health status along the entire migration cycle. A common framework for collecting and analyzing data would be highly relevant in this respect. It is also necessary to make health policies more migrant-sensitive. In receiving countries this is a question of training as well as access: in order to reach migrants, care must be delivered in a culturally-sensitive way. This is difficult, as migrants are very diverse and see health differently.

Concerning the recruitment of health personnel, the WHO has recently adopted a code of conduct on the matter.<sup>11</sup> The code states that international migration of health personnel can make a sound contribution to the strengthening of health systems in origin and destination countries. It acknowledges the specific needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to shortages in health workers. However, in accordance with relevant legislation, it also stresses the freedom of health personnel to migrate to countries that wish to admit and employ them.

**The ensuing discussion** revolved in part around the concept of circular migration. The practice may harbour significant positive potential, for example as a structural opportunity for NGOs to invest in training for migrants and the productive use of remittances. Nevertheless, at present circular migration arrangements fall short in considering the repercussions of the instrument for the social development of migrants, their families, and sending communities. For example, migrants that return home for a temporary period of time may find it very difficult to find employment while they wait for their next period abroad. At the same time, they are often unable to access bank credit, unemployment benefits and social protection during this interval. Circular migration also conceals the risk of de-skilling the people involved.

### ***Main Outcomes of the Discussion***

- At the national level migration is usually dealt with by many different state institutions. However, these actors only seldom get together to discuss the issue. Systematic coordination among government offices and inclusive dialogue with other stakeholders is encouraged as they are likely to enhance the coherence of migration policy with other areas.
- Integrating migration into national development strategies is not only an issue that concerns developing countries, donor agencies and host countries too require support in adopting a more coherent approach to linking migration and development.
- Policy coherence is a key issue at national level for countries of emigration and immigration as well as between internal and external dimension of donors' policies, between labour market policies and immigration laws, between migration and development strategies.
- When discussing policy coherence, it is crucial to pay due attention to the fact that migration acts as a safety valve for origin countries. Developing countries and their partners should take care not to encourage migration as a short term response at the expense of building domestic economic opportunities and effective social protection.

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<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization, International recruitment of health personnel: draft global code of practice, 2008.  
[http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB124/B124\\_13-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB124/B124_13-en.pdf)

## Key issues and recommendations

- Migration can be seen as a **risk management strategy** but it also creates new risks for the migrants, communities and social welfare systems in country of origin.
- The impact of **remittances** on families and communities in the country of origin can be both positive and negative. Remittances do not compensate for a lack of parental care and guidance nor for inadequate national policies and social protection systems.
- Remittances can be used for **alternative social protection measures** provided by the private and informal sectors. These alternative systems should be studied and supported, in order to improve their quality, recognizing that they should not be promoted as a substitute for national systems of social services but integrated within national systems.
- Social implications of migration for **families left behind** need more research, more accompanying measures and enhanced policy dialogue.
- Given the transnational nature of migration, its social aspects and consequences should be tackled with a **transnational approach**. Networking and partnerships between social service providers of countries of origin and destination should be promoted.
- More attention should be paid to migrants workers' **recruitment practises** in order to reduce their costs for migrants, increase transparency and employer's accountability.
- **Business** representatives should be more involved in the dialogue and made aware of the need to ensure proper treatment of migrant workers; fair treatment of migrant labour force is an issue of corporate governance.
- Further efforts are needed in order to **raise awareness** among migrants and prospective migrants on their rights. Pre-departure training modules play a crucial role. Migrant workers committees are important for protecting rights in destination country.
- The conclusion of **bilateral agreements** facilitating legal migration as well as, where possible, of social protection agreements should be promoted.
- **Access to justice** for migrants and enforceability of rights is key in the **south-south dimension**.
- Emigration may be a short term response to tensions on domestic labour market but this may result in lack of investment from government of countries of origin to undertake serious labour market and social protection reforms. This risk should be acknowledged by all the stakeholders involved in development strategies.

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