

FOSTERING KNOWLEDGE, DIALOGUE AND COORDINATION ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

The work of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in the field of international migration is designed to support global processes of dialogue and sharing of ideas and practices initiated at the General Assembly's 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and continued through the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). The year 2009 has been marked by UNITAR's increased engagement in advancing interagency collaboration and coordination within the United Nations and with other stakeholders, including the Institute's assumption of the chairmanship of the Global Migration Group (GMG) in June 2009. UNITAR's ongoing training activities in the migration field fall within the Institute's broader mandate to strengthen the United Nations system through appropriate training focusing on social and economic development as well as peace and security issues of particular relevance to United Nations Member States.

A. UNITAR CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE GLOBAL MIGRATION GROUP

UNITAR assumed the chairmanship of the GMG on 1 June 2009 for a period of seven months. The Group's overall objective under UNITAR's tenure was to foster timely and coherent analysis and guidance by the United Nations and other GMG members, namely the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank, to the pressing challenges of migration governance at a time of global economic downturn.

In close collaboration with the next GMG chair, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNITAR proposed a first-ever annual workplan for the GMG with a view to guaranteeing consistency in strategic direction and thematic focus over the course of the two

Finally, in order to strengthen GMG's visibility, UNITAR took the lead in coordinating the development of joint outputs that provided Governments with policy recommendations and timely data and analysis, enabling them to adequately respond to the challenges posed by the global economic crisis for migrants and their families.

A joint GMG statement delivered by the Executive Director of UNITAR, Mr. Carlos Lopes, at the opening session of the third meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, in Athens, Greece, on 4 November 2009, reaffirmed the commitment of GMG members to work together to ensure that (a) development gains of migration were recognized and leveraged; (b) migrants' rights were protected, and (c) more robust data were collected to provide a solid evidence base for policy-making. Furthermore, 14 fact-sheets on the impact of the crisis on migration, initiated by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and compiled by GMG members, were made available to participants of the Athens Global Forum. Available on the GMG website, the fact-sheets, together with other resources from GMG members, form an online inventory of data and analysis on international migration that is easily accessible for public use.¹

The joint statement of the GMG and a joint GMG press conference at the third Global Forum were examples of how a mobilized and united GMG can be an effective advocate for enhanced international migration governance and protection of migrants. The GMG technical symposium, proposed by UNITAR for early 2010, would be another step forward in raising public awareness about the development implications of international migration and for promoting the adoption and wider application of key instruments and norms relating to migration.

B. UNITAR "MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT" SEMINAR SERIES
ORGANIZED IN COLLABORATION WITH IOM, UNFPA AND THE MACARTHUR FOUNDATION

Since 2005, UNITAR, as the main training arm of the United Nations system, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNFPA and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, has organized the "Migration and Development Seminar Series" at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The Series' role is to inform, educate and stimulate policy-thinking on migration-related topics among New York's diplomatic community. It brings together various stakeholders involved in migration and development issues — Governments, United Nations entities and other international organizations, the private sector and civil society, including migrant associati

contemporary migration patterns, in particular global inequalities and demographic imbalances, would remain.

With declining birth rates, many developed countries rely on migrant workers from abroad to support their ageing populations. For these countries, low labour mobility can inhibit economic growth, create fiscal imbalance and undermine the welfare of the elderly. Accelerated mobility, on the other hand, can lead to emigration of highly-skilled people and related labour shortages in migrant origin countries. The World Bank has suggested inter-regional cooperation on human resource development as a solution to this problem, including reforms and investments in the education sectors of countries of origin, better integration of migrants at destination and improved portability of pensions and benefits among countries. Such a regime would ultimately be global in order to avoid competition among regions and to ensure that all beneficiaries contribute to the development of the human resources they require.

Indeed, the necessity of establishing a multilateral framework to enable and regulate labour migration was a recurrent theme throughout the Series. Experiences from Asia, for example, showed that bilateral labour migration agreements often left countries of origin in a relatively weak bargaining position because of the intense competition among them. A common regulatory framework would improve this situation and thereby the protection and working conditions of migrant workers. Bilateral agreements were deemed insufficient to address the problem of the emigration of health workers, because regulating emigration from one particular country of origin often created emigration pressures in neighbouring countries.

The proposed World Health Organization (WHO) Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel was welcomed as a first step in the right direction. Non-binding in nature, the code aimed to encourage the development of bilateral and multilateral agreements as well as national policies, for the ethical recruitment of health workers. One way of strengthening the code would be to include the private sector in ethical recruitment agreements, which to date are mostly limited to the public health care system, as for example in the United Kingdom.

b. Migration and the MDGs

The discussions of the Migration and Development Series in 2009 illustrated how migration intersects with the development challenges included in the MDGs. Particular attention was given to the effects of health care worker migration on the achievement of MDG 6, which committed the international community to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases and would also be the focus of the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2010.

The global imbalance of health professionals was seen as one of the main obstacles for achieving MDG 6, as a low density of health care workers was observed to correlate with high mortality rates. Both the number of professional caregivers and the amount of public spending on health care systems were lowest in those areas that have the highest prevalence rates of HIV. Thus, sub-Saharan Africa, where in certain countries over 20 per cent of the population was HIV positive, received less than one per cent of the world's total health care spending, and only

by ageing populations in the industrialized societies, the right to health in developed countries and the right to health in developing countries were bound to be opposing at times. Similarly, the individual health worker's right to search for a better life abroad and countries' desire to provide functioning health care systems bore potential conflicts of interest. There were also gender-specific implications since care-giving professions were dominated by female workers and HIV infection rates in Southern Africa were markedly higher among women than men.

Governments were called upon to invest in the health sector and to increase job satisfaction and performance among caregivers through a strategy of "treat, train and retain." This approach, advocated by the Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA), aimed to (a) improve access to HIV services for health care workers ("treat"), who were often exposed to a higher risk of infection; (b) recruit more health care workers and provide specialized, HIV/AIDS relevant care training ("train"), and (c) improve the work environment, offer professional development opportunities and financial incentives to reduce the push factors of migration ("retain"). In addition, the more effective use of existing capacities could enhance access to health care in countries facing high emigration rates. Task-shifting from one health care profession to another, such as from doctors to nurses and from nurses or midwives to community health workers, had been relatively successful. Ministries of health could formulate and implement policies to facilitate the return of health care workers who had gone abroad. Governments of destination countries could complement such efforts through measures to promote circular migration, for example by limiting visas provided to people attending temporary training programmes. However, the decision to return would be more sustainable, if it would be voluntary rather than the result of legal enforcement.

Violent conflict proved to be an obstacle to realizing the MDGs, with countries in conflict and post-conflict situations often ranking at the bottom of development indices. In order to address this challenge in a comprehensive manner, United Nations Member States established the new United Nations peacebuilding architecture following the 2005 World Summit. Reaching out to the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and its support office, PBSO, the Series discussed the role that transnational communities, including refugees and displaced persons, could play as contributors to peacebuilding and development processes in war-torn home countries.

As the example of Sierra Leone illustrated, some Governments started to recognize the potential and resources of transnational communities and to build dedicated institutional capacities to reach out to overseas communities. It was recommended that an office, solely concerned with transnational communities be centrally placed within the Government, above inter-departmental rivalries. It would also be part of national development planning processes and operate in close coordination with other ministries. Countries emerging from conflict could capitalize on others' experiences and share good practices, as was currently happening between Liberia and Sierra Leone.

International organizations could play an important facilitator role between countries of origin, destination and transnational communities, as in the case of the IOM's and UNDP's temporary return programmes for expatriate experts and professionals. They could help build trust between Governments and expatriate communities, and work towards the creation of enabling conditions for the engagement of transnational communities in both their country of origin and destination. Expatriate communities could contribute to international assistance in post-conflict situations in many ways. Asset inventories could be used early on, during the humanitarian phase of peacebuilding efforts to identify the resources and potential contributions of transnational communities. They should also be included in discussions on expert rosters and

However, the crisis was also seen as an opportunity to change course and to review a development model that was built on the export of manpower and the inflow of remittances. Criticizing such an approach as unsustainable, a representative from civil society called for a “fundamental change in development model and the migration and development paradigm” in a “rights-based, people-centred, sustainable, social justice-oriented, gender-fair” manner.

C. UNITAR’S MIGRATION PROGRAMME IN COLLABORATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN AND THE IOM

In 2009, with the support of the Government of Spain, UNITAR and the IOM started to implement a multi-year joint project on the strengthening of capacities in the field of international migration and development.

The project involved different capacity development activities, such as: (a) expanding the migration policy series to other United Nations locations and the regional commissions; (b) following-up to the recommendations and actionable outcomes of the GFMD; (c) facilitating dialogue among regional and international migration policy processes, including regional consultative processes; (d) strengthening the development dimension in these discussions, and (e) providing capacity-building at country-level for both national and local stakeholders.

In 2009, a policy seminar away from United Nations Headquarters entitled “Africa-EU 7th Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment: Moving Forward involving Non-State Actors,” was held in Brussels, Belgium, on 7 June 2009, which discussed the status of the partnership and conditions for migration and mobility in the context thereof.³ Particular