

CHAPTER

10

**United Nations
regional commissions**



United Nations

United Nations regional commissions

The United Nations regional commissions¹ are the regional outposts of the United Nations in their respective regions. Stationed in five regions of the world, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) share key objectives to foster economic integration at the regional and subregional levels; promote the regional implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; and support regional sustainable development by contributing to bridging economic, social and environmental gaps among their member countries and subregions.

To achieve these objectives, the five regional commissions promote multilateral dialogue, knowledge-sharing and networking at the regional level, and work together to promote intraregional and interregional cooperation, both among themselves and through collaboration with other regional organizations, including, and increasingly, on migration and development issues.

1. Migration and development activities since the 2006 High-level Dialogue

All regional commissions have undertaken migration and development-related activities since the HLD in 2006. This work aimed to build the capacities of policymakers in each region to understand the specific features of migration in their region, and manage it in order to maximize its development benefits and minimize its negative effects.

Joint regional commissions projects²

Between 2009 and 2012, the regional commissions undertook a joint project entitled “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact,” led by ECLAC. The project engaged all five regional commissions and the Population Division of UN DESA. It aimed to improve data quality and availability on migration and its impacts; increase human and institutional capacities to design and implement policies to maximize the benefits of migration for development; and build networks within and between regions to exchange information, experiences and best practices.

¹ The five UN regional commissions are the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, hereafter ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, hereafter ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, hereafter ESCAP), and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

² For more information about the project, visit the official project website at www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/celade/noticias/paginas/2/38752/P38752.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom_dam.xsl.

With a positive view of migration for development and an emphasis on the protection of the human rights of all migrants, the project offered a comprehensive overview of the growing complexity of international migration. This included intraregional movements, return migration, irregular migration, forced population movements and asylum-seeking, as well as temporary migration, skilled migration, remittance flows and the presence of diasporas in countries of destination.

In the framework of this project, seven regional workshops were held for government officials in different regions. The workshops focused on different themes, depending on the specific situation of the region. For example, the workshops of ECE dealt with building capacities in migration statistics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, while the workshop of the ESCWA focused on regional dialogue. ECLAC discussed “Looking towards the future: New trends, issues and approaches.” ESCAP organized a regional workshop entitled “Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impact,” which assessed migration trends, data gaps on international migration, integrating migration into development strategies and planning and good practices related to migration management.

These workshops aimed to increase the knowledge and capacities of those responsible for designing policies and programmes on international migration in order to integrate this issue into national development strategies in a practical way, that is, optimizing the gains and minimizing the negative impacts of migration. The workshops provided an opportunity to introduce countries to key concepts around migration and development and apply them to their own situations, and served as platforms to exchange good practices and share information on ongoing initiatives. The workshops also helped establish and strengthen existing networks, encouraging the exchange of data and information both between and within countries.

In preparation for the workshops, a number of studies were produced which yielded new data on migration and development-related challenges in each region:

- (a) ECA coordinated the preparation of the study, “International Migration: Trends and Institutional Frameworks from the African perspective.”
- (b) ECE developed a toolkit entitled *Statistics on international migration – A practical guide*, which offers theoretical and practical information and suggestions for various categories of producers and users of migration data, such as government officials, statisticians, scholars and journalists. Based on best practices and international recommendations, this tool aims to stimulate interest and support better comprehension of migration statistics and data, including their sources and peculiarities.

- (c) ECLAC undertook a study entitled *Migración internacional en América Latina y el Caribe. Nuevas tendencias, nuevos enfoques* (“International Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean: New trends, new approaches”), which comprised two components. The first focused on emerging and innovative aspects of international migration and development in selected countries, including gender relations, remittances, labour insertion, health conditions, networking and rights of migrants, and the impacts of the global economic crisis on international migration and migrants. The second covered the regulatory and institutional framework of international migration, using a rights-based approach to address integration, discrimination, trafficking and smuggling, among other country-specific themes.
- (d) ESCAP prepared and published electronically two regional studies, “Linking Migration and Development in Asia” and “Migration in the Pacific.” Both studies assessed existing institutional arrangements, national policies and key issues in international migration, such as gender, protection of migrants’ rights, remittances and migration of skilled workers and brain drain (especially in the Pacific).
- (e) ESCWA produced the report, “International Migration and Development in the ESCWA Region: Challenges and Opportunities,” whose five chapters focused on the scale and impact of labour migration, remittances, brain drain and diaspora engagement in the Western Asian region, while looking at the legal framework within which migration took place.

In addition to regional workshops, two interregional events took place in 2011: an interregional workshop organized by ESCAP and ESCWA entitled “Strengthening Dialogue Between ESCWA and ESCAP Countries on International Migration and Development”; and a workshop organized by ECLAC, ECE and ECA on “Strengthening capacities to deal with international migration: Examining development, institutional and policy aspects of migration between Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.”³ These workshops aimed to promote the exchange of national and regional experiences and good practices, facilitate discussion and build capacity on issues of common concern across regions. The papers from the ECLAC–ECE–ECA interregional workshop have been published by ECLAC as a project document entitled “Development, institutional and policy aspects of international migration between Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean.”⁴ The ESCWA–ESCAP Interregional Report on Labour Migration and Social Protection will be published in 2013.

The regional commissions also jointly produced a publication entitled “International migration from a regional and interregional perspective. Main conclusions, messages

³ More information about the workshop is available at www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/celade/agenda/9/44329/P44329.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl-i/p3f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom_mig.xslt.

⁴ J. Martínez Pizarro and L. Reboiras Finardi (eds.), “Development, institutional and policy aspects of international migration between Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean” (LC/W.461), ECLAC project document (Santiago, 2012), available from www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/publicaciones/xml/8/46188/P46188.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl/p9f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom.xsl.

and recommendations from the United Nations Development Account Project (Sixth Tranche), ‘Strengthening national capacities to deal with international migration: Maximizing development benefits and minimizing negative impact,’”⁵ to draw out the main lessons learned and ways forward identified in this unique interregional collaborative project. The document was presented at the final meeting of the project as a side event at the forty-fifth session of the UN Commission on Population and Development organized by the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE), which serves as the Population Division of ECLAC, in coordination with the other four regional commissions and the Regional Commissions New York Office.

The regional commissions developed information systems to improve the availability and quality of migration and development-related data in their respective regions. ECE developed Migratory, an online inventory of sources on migration in Europe, Central Asia and North America,⁶ while ESCWA worked with its partner, the Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies at the American University in Cairo, to create a module for the latter’s database on contact information of researchers and research centres on migration in and/or focusing on the Arab region.⁷ ECLAC also developed an “Inventario Migratorio” on migration sources in the LAC region.⁸ Finally, ESCAP is implementing the Migration Information System in Asia project, in collaboration with the Scalabrini Migration Center in the Philippines, on the collection, updating, reporting and sharing of international migration data in the region through a common web-based portal.⁹

In addition to these activities, the regional commissions have been members of the GMG since 2008, serving as Chair for the first time in 2013 when ESCAP, on behalf of the all five regional commissions, assumed the chairmanship for the first half of 2013. In this role the regional commissions contributed to joint GMG publications, such as *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*, for publication in 2013. During its chairmanship, ESCAP focused on implementing the outcomes of the internal review of the challenges and achievements of the GMG, as endorsed at the GMG Principals’ Meeting in November 2012. The purpose of these outcomes is to position the GMG as a more effective and coherent coordination mechanism and a unified voice on international migration, in the lead up to the 2013 HLD on International Migration and Development, and for the subsequent implementation of its outcomes.

Regional commissions also contributed to the UNGA Informal Thematic Debate on International Migration and Development in 2008 by assisting in the organization and chairing of the round table entitled “Enhancing Development through International Cooperation.”

⁵ The publication is available from www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/8/46578/wDAPProject_final.pdf

⁶ The project website is www.unece.org/stats/migratory/index.html.

⁷ For further details see: www.cmrsdb.aucegypt.edu/index.php/eng.

⁸ The project website is www.cepal.org/cgi-bin/getprod.asp?xml=/celade/noticias/paginas/6/38936/P38936.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl/p18f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom_dam.xsl.

⁹ The center’s official website is www.smc.org.ph.

Individual regional commission projects

In addition to the joint activities, the regional commissions have undertaken specific activities within their respective regions, among them:

Economic Commission for Africa). Since the 2006 HLD, research activities on international migration and development in Africa have been based on the commission's two strategic pillars:

- (a) Promoting regional integration in support of the African Union vision and priorities;
- (b) Meeting Africa's special needs and emerging global challenges.

Under the first strategic pillar, UNECA considered international migration an important factor in implementing the regional integration agenda, including the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Thus, ECA research activities focused on promoting cooperation and policy dialogue on international migration to support regional development, enhance economic growth and maximize the human and financial resources for development in Africa as a whole. The *African Social Development Review*, published by ECA in 2010 and 2011, called for a stronger role of the regional economic communities (RECs) in the management of migration for development in Africa. ECA activities on international migration also led to partnerships with the African Union Commission, RECs, IOM, research networks and development partners.

With regard to the second strategic pillar, ECA researched the developmental role of international migration in areas such as financing for development (remittances), poverty alleviation, gender inequality and climate change. The multiple roles of migration in remittances, addressing poverty and providing cash flows through formal and informal channels to health, education, housing and other social needs are recognized in the policy research undertaken by ECA. This research also highlights the importance of mainstreaming the concerns of women and youth, as well as addressing social and gender inequalities to support the progress of Member States in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

ECA undertook the following activities on international migration:

- (a) Integration of international migration in the strategic frameworks for 2008–2009, 2010–2011 and 2012–2013. During this period, ECA prepared and published five reports on international migration and development under four thematic areas: (i) implication for development in Africa; (ii) financial crisis, human rights and regional integration; (iii) the migration–climate nexus; (iv) cooperation and policy dialogue to promote regional integration and mainstreaming migration in development plans and strategies. These reports are major reference documents

for planners, policymakers and researchers, and support them in addressing migration and development concerns at country and regional levels.

- (b) Participation in the GMG and GMG working group meetings, and contribution to the GFMD.
- (c) Organization of the Africa Regional Policy Dialogue on International Migration (ARDIM), with the theme “Cooperation and Policy Dialogue to Promote Regional Integration.”

In October 2011 ECA initiated a regional policy platform for discussion on international migration and development in Africa, to pull together Africa’s common position on the international policy agenda on migration, and to start the process of Africa’s preparations for the 2013 HLD. ARDIM emphasized cooperation, African policy dialogue at regional and multilateral levels, implementation of policies and protocols on international migration, and frequent updates of migration policies in light of development cooperation among countries. Based on these recommendations, ECA will continue the dialogue on international migration and development leading to the 2013 HLD.

The regional dialogue will be structured around an “e-network” of scholars, policymakers and organizations, among others, and offer a platform for policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and documentation of best practices in social development, including migration. Selected Member States are participating in a training workshop to review the e-network platform and its user-friendliness.

In preparation for the 2013 HLD, ECA will consolidate the outcomes of above-mentioned activities in one document to support Africa’s contribution to this event. It will organize a regional expert group meeting and convene policy dialogue on international migration and development in Africa. The commission will launch its fifth report, mentioned above, at the 2013 HLD.

Economic Commission for Europe

Since 2006 ECE has conducted a number of task forces and workshops to promote the collection and comparability of international migration data. Its work has included the measurement of emigration using data collected by receiving countries, analysis of international migration estimates using different definitions of “length of stay,” improving migration data using household surveys and assessing the socioeconomic conditions of migrants.

The Task Force on the Analysis of International Migration Estimates Using Different Length of Stay Definitions assessed the impact on international migration estimates of the use of different duration thresholds to define “usual residence,” assessed the

availability and accuracy of data on short-term migration and considered alternative definitions of short-term migration. The Task Force on Improving Migration and Migrant Data Using Household Surveys and Other Sources provided practical guidance on how to best use household surveys to measure levels and outcomes of international migration and the characteristics of migrant populations. Finally, the Task Force on Measurement of the Socio-economic Conditions of Migrants is studying the socioeconomic dimensions most relevant to better understanding the situation of different migrant groups.

One result of these task forces was the publication *Guidelines for exchanging data to improve emigration statistics*,¹⁰ which addresses the use of immigration data in countries of destination to improve emigration data in countries of origin.

One outcome of the workshops held under the Development Account project was the Clearing House on Migration Statistics, developed by ECE to facilitate the collection, dissemination and sharing of basic migration data, initially from twelve countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus region and Central Asia.¹¹ It is available in English and Russian, has a user-friendly interface, and is intended to improve the availability and comparability of data through a flexible tool for collecting, disseminating and sharing basic migration data between the countries. The establishment of a centralized location to store and disseminate migration data improves their accessibility to outside users. In the past, many of these data were not publically accessible or presented in a standardized manner using internationally agreed definitions of international migration. The data repository increases the potential for regional comparability of migration data and improving estimates of regional emigration by utilizing immigration data in the region.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

ECLAC, through its Population Division, CELADE, recently published the report “*Viejos y nuevos asuntos en las estimaciones de la migración internacional en América Latina y el Caribe*” (Old and new inputs in the estimations of international migration in Latin America and the Caribbean)¹² as part of its *Población y Desarrollo* series (2011). Among other publications, the book *Latin America and the Caribbean: International Migration, Human Rights and Development* (2008) emphasizes the human rights dimension of international migration and its relationship with the development process in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In addition to its activities as lead agency in the Development Account project, ECLAC worked closely with the Organization of American States on implementing the

¹⁰ This document may be downloaded from www.unece.org/index.php?id=17456.

¹¹ To access the database, visit: w3.unece.org/pxweb/database/STAT/89-MCH/01-MCH_1/?lang=1.

¹² The documents (in Spanish) is available at www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/publicaciones/xml/8/42708/P42708.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl/p9f.xsl.

Continuous Labour Migration Reporting System for the Americas and drafting the first annual report, presented in Washington, D.C. in July 2011.

In the framework of cooperation with the Ibero-American General Secretariat and IOM, ECLAC provided support for the organization of the sixteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Governments in 2006 in Montevideo, Uruguay, with the central topic of international migration and development. The Montevideo Commitment on Migration and Development was approved by the Heads of State and Government of the 22 Member States at the summit.

ECLAC also supported the organization of the Ibero-American Forum on Migration and Development in Cuenca, Ecuador, in 2008, which resulted in the launch of a migration plan known as the “Cuenca Plan.” At this event, the commission’s proposal to place human rights at the core of the discussions on international migration among origin, transit and destination countries was highlighted. The proposal recognizes the positive contribution of migrants to development, promotes full respect for migrants’ human rights and advocates for the humanization of migration processes. It also calls for the identification and dissemination of best practices in the field of international migration.¹³

In July 2010 ECLAC played an active role in the second Ibero-American Meeting on Migration and Development in San Salvador, submitting the framework paper “*Impactos de la crisis económica en migración y desarrollo: respuestas de políticas y programas en Iberoamérica*” (Impacts of the economic crisis on migration and development: Policy and programme responses in Ibero-America).¹⁴

Between 2008 and 2010, CELADE executed a project entitled “Gender Equality, Reproductive Rights, and Respect for Cultural Diversity in Latin America and the Caribbean: Promotion of the sexual and reproductive health, including gender-based violence (GBV) and HIV/AIDS, of mobile populations, particularly youth and women, in five vulnerable border areas,” as part of a regional initiative by the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).¹⁵ Six reports were prepared on the situation of migrant populations on the borders between Argentina and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, Guatemala and Mexico, and the Dominican Republic and Haiti, including a comparative perspective on the five border areas.

More recently, ECLAC collaborated actively with the Government of Chile (pro tempore Chair of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, or CELAC) to prepare the first statistical compendium on international migration between CELAC countries and the EU region. The compendium was presented by Chile at the first EU-CELAC

¹³ The “Conclusions” document of the forum is available from www.segib.org/upload/FIBEMYD-EDIT%20ENGLISH.pdf.

¹⁴ More information about the meeting is available at www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/celade/noticias/noticias/0/40240/P40240.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl-i/p1f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom.xsl.

¹⁵ For more information about the project, visit www.eclac.org/cgi-bin/getProd.asp?xml=/celade/noticias/noticias/0/36310/P36310.xml&xsl=/celade/tpl/p1f.xsl&base=/celade/tpl/top-bottom.xsl.

Summit of Heads of State and Government, in Santiago, Chile in January 2013. The document describes the migration exchanges and characteristics of migrants in both regions, particularly between 2000 and 2010. It also analyses initiatives for dialogue between the two regions and proposals made as part of the overall approach of the European Union, along with those recently adopted by CELAC, which represent its Member States' position on intra- and extraregional migration¹⁶.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The Asia–Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking,¹⁷ co-chaired by ESCAP and the IOM Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, conducted an analysis of subregional international migration dynamics and published the Situation Report on International Migration in East and South-east Asia (2008)¹⁸ and the Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-west Asia (2012).¹⁹ The two reports provide a unique, comprehensive overview of migration trends in 26 countries of the Asia-Pacific region and an analysis of thematic issues of concern to the region, such as labour migration, remittances, gender, health and the protection of the rights of migrant workers.

ESCAP has also led the preparation of several research papers on migration and development, covering the social implications of international migration in Asia (2008), the impact of remittances in Central Asia (2010) and strengthening of capacities to make migration work for development in the ESCAP and ESCWA regions (2011). A database on labour migration outflows from selected countries in the region will also be made available online in 2013.

Through workshops and meetings with partners such as IOM and UN DESA, ESCAP has facilitated discussion on the multidimensional aspects of international migration and its linkages with development. These include a policy dialogue on international migration in East and South-east Asia (2007); an expert group meeting on international migration and development in Asia and the Pacific (2008); a policy dialogue on the impacts of the global economic crisis on international migration (2009); activities under the UN Development Account project and round table discussions following the launch of the *Situation Report on International Migration in South and South-west Asia* (2012).

Regarding advocacy, the *Saphan Siang* (“Bridge of Voices”) campaign of the Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Trafficking aimed to promote

¹⁶ The situation report may be downloaded from www.unescap.org/publications/detail.asp?id=1528.

¹⁷ The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking comprises the following 15 UN and UN-related entities: ESCAP (co-Chair), IOM (co-Chair), ILO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Women, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UN Inter-agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP), UNICEF, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), WHO and the World Bank.

¹⁸ The report was a collaboration among IOM, ILO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the UN Fund for Women.

¹⁹ The report was a collaboration among IOM, ILO, OHCHR, WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC and UN WOMEN.

better understanding between citizens of the host country, Thailand, and its migrant workers, and put forward a more positive image of migrants in line with their contributions to the Thai economy and society. The campaign was launched in mid-2011 with the support of a number of organizations, including ILO, IOM, ESCAP and World Vision International. The campaign aired a commercial on Thai television and hosts a website and Facebook community page where migrants and Thais share videos about their views and experiences, including the positive contribution that migrants make to Thailand.²⁰

In July 2012 the campaign included a photo competition and exhibition at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre showing 50 photos of the positive contributions and experiences migrant workers can have in Thailand. The Saphan Siang campaign will also be featured as a side event at the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 2013 HLD in October 2013.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The third issue of the ESCWA Population and Development Report in 2011 focused on the theme “International Migration and Development in the ESCWA Region.”²¹ In addition, ESCWA has published “social development bulletins” entitled “Migration Policies in the ESCWA Region” and “The Impact of the Financial Crisis on International Migration in the Arab Region,” as well as a social policy brief on “International Migration of Youth in Arab Countries.”

ESCWA has also worked on developing a training kit entitled “International Migration Statistics: Meeting the International Recommendations” and a “Compendium of Social Statistics and Indicators: International Migration in the ESCWA Region.”²² The commission also held the Regional Workshop on International Migration Statistics in Cairo in 2009, to enhance and upgrade Arab countries’ knowledge of international recommendations, concepts and definitions regarding international migration statistics.²³

Finally, ESCWA also participated in the first Senior Officials’ Meeting of the 21-member Abu Dhabi Dialogue in Dubai in January 2012. The meeting focused on the Technical Report, which serves as the discussion paper for Abu Dhabi Dialogue II.

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²⁰ Visit the campaign website at www.saphansiang.com.

²¹ The report is available at www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/E_ESCWA_SDD_11_Technical%20Paper-5_e.pdf.

²² For more information, see: www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/sd-09-TP3.pdf and www.escwa.un.org/information/publications/edit/upload/sd-09-12.pdf.

²³ Documents from the workshop are available from www.escwa.un.org/information/meetingdetails.asp?referenceNum=1017E.

2. Support provided to the Global Forum on Migration and Development

The activities of ECE support the GFMD goal to improve the measurement of migration and its use in evidence-based policymaking. ECE works towards improving the quality and availability of statistics on international migration by developing common definitions, methods and practices, and promoting them across the ECE region. It also develops capacities in Eastern and South-eastern Europe, the Caucasus region and Central Asia to improve migration statistics. Since 2000, biannual work sessions on migration statistics have provided a platform for the exchange of good practices.

ECA supports the GFMD primarily by promoting Member States' understanding and mainstreaming of international migration in development plans and strategies at the national and regional levels. It also contributes to the GFMD through statutory bodies, namely, the Ministerial Conference, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, and divisional committees such as the Human and Social Development Committee and the Committee on Women and Development.²⁴

ECA also supports the GFMD through the African Development Forum (ADF) and the Big Table.²⁵ The ADF is a major intellectual gathering for discussion and consensus-building on emerging issues. It is designed to share knowledge and generate outcomes and actions by Member States. International migration has featured in various ADF themes, such as youth migration, climate change and sustainable development.

ECA particularly supported the Government of Mauritius, the Chair-in-Office of the sixth GFMD in 2012. The Commission participated in and contributed to three workshops organized by Mauritius and other partners: (a) a brainstorming meeting entitled "Enhancing Intra-African Cooperation on Migration and Development Policy and Practice"; (b) a workshop on mainstreaming migration into development planning; and (c) the High-level Forum on Harnessing Diaspora Resources for Development in Africa, organized by the African Union Commission and the World Bank. ECA supported the participation of four regional economic communities (the South African Development Community, the Economic Community of West African States, the Common Market for

²⁴ The annual meeting of the African Ministers of Development Planning and Finance is organized jointly by the African Union Commission and the UN Economic Commission for Africa. These issues are often on the agenda of the Intergovernmental Committees of Development Bank, and ECA frequently discusses the economic and social dimensions of international migration through the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts, the governing body of ECA subregional offices in Cameroon, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda and Zambia. They are also included in Member States' preparations for climate change negotiations and in the review of the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in the continent.

²⁵ The Big Table is an initiative designed by ECA to promote the dialogue between African Finance Ministers and their OECD counterparts. The meeting is organized every year with a unique format and agenda designed for maximum interactive dialogue, without formal statements. The first Big Table was held at the ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa and discussed pro-poor growth policies and the international development goals, lessons learned from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process and emerging capacity-building needs.

Eastern and Southern Africa and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development) in these workshops.

ECLAC was invited by the Government of Mexico to participate in the fourth meeting of the GFMD in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, in 2010, at both the Civil Society Days and the Government Days, where the head of CELADE made a statement at one of the opening sessions.

ESCAP held the Asia-Pacific High-level Meeting on International Migration and Development in September 2008, which provided a forum for its members and associate members to exchange experiences on migration management and promote a dialogue on the nexus between migration and development. This served as a regional preparatory meeting for the second GFMD in Manila.

As co-Chair of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on International Migration including Human Trafficking, ESCAP also jointly organized the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the GFMD in September 2010. This provided a forum for dialogue on the multidimensional aspects of international migration and formulated a common regional position and recommendations on international migration in Asia and the Pacific for the GFMD in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. The meeting concluded with the Bangkok Statement on International Migration and Development.²⁶

3. Identified good practices

Taking a regional approach to migration and development enables a focus on the particular characteristics of migration in the respective region. The convening power of regional commissions in this regard is important, as they can leverage their relations with governments in their respective regions to promote engagement on the topic of migration. This has been especially important in the ESCWA region, where intraregional migration is large-scale and extremely important for the concerned labour markets, and countries of origin and destination are both represented.

Where significant interregional migration occurs, collaboration between the regional commissions has also been extremely productive and rewarding, thanks to the capabilities, experience and knowledge of each Commission in the field of international migration. The experiences with the framework of the Development Account project showed that discussions among the commissions are enriching, as each can present its specific experience while learning from the others. Despite regional differences, they have been able to identify common concerns and best practices. Combining the convening powers of multiple regional commissions to discuss migration and development issues common to the regions can facilitate dialogue which goes beyond

²⁶ For details of the outcomes document, refer to www.unescap.org/publications/detail.asp?id=1419.

regional boundaries. The dialogue is thus more inclusive of both countries of origin and destination, and at the same time targets particular migration corridors.

Cooperation, networks and synergies created with the leading actors in migration, namely governments, civil society organizations, research centres, academic institutions, regional networks and international organizations are important for the success of any project in the field of international migration.

Regarding good practices at country level encountered by the regional commissions in the course of their work, ESCAP has noted that many countries have enacted laws and established institutions to better protect their citizens at home and abroad. These include: (a) setting up dedicated agencies to manage migration flows and provide services to migrants and their families, including pre-departure training; (b) licensing and regulating private recruitment agencies; establishing state corporations to compete with private recruitment agencies; (c) screening employment contracts for departing migrants; and (d) posting labour attachés or welfare officers in countries of destination to provide services to migrants.

There have also been successes in increasing formal channels for sending and investing remittances. Partnerships between government, financial institutions and money transfer operators have been created to enhance competition. New remittance technologies, such as mobile banking, and partnerships with mobile phone companies have improved access to formal transfer channels. Some governments have also entered into bilateral negotiations to reduce transfer costs by improving access to financial institutions in countries of destination. However, a large proportion of remittances are still transferred through informal channels. Increased use of formal channels and increased financial literacy of migrants and remittance receivers are also still needed.

Countries of origin and destination are increasingly entering into bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding on temporary labour migration, in order to provide a regulatory framework for temporary labour migration between countries. The effect is a reduction in irregular migration through the establishment of formal migration channels that are clear and regulated. For example, the Republic of Korea's Employment Permit System (EPS), begun in 2004, establishes quotas for foreign workers per industry and also foresees pre-departure training of the foreign workers, including language training. Under the EPS, the Republic of Korea has concluded memorandums of understanding with 15 other Asian countries.²⁷

²⁷ These 15 countries are as follows: Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam.

Greater regional cooperation among countries through existing subregional economic communities has produced commitments and strategies such as the ASEAN²⁸ Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrants Workers (2007); the SAARC²⁹ Regional Strategy on HIV and AIDS (2006–2010); and the Agreement on the Establishment of the Council of the Leaders of Migration Agencies of the Member States of the CIS (2007).³⁰ ASEAN foresees a free flow of skilled labour by 2020 and is working to facilitate the issuance of visas and employment passes for ASEAN professionals and skilled labour. As a first step, ASEAN has already agreed on the Mutual Recognition Agreement for Nurses, Dental and Medical Practitioners, engineering and architectural services, surveying professionals and accountancy services. This agreement, however, does not extend to unskilled workers.

Inter-State fora on migrant issues enable discussion of concrete activities for the development of a comprehensive framework to manage migration. Examples include the Colombo Process, a regional consultative body of Asian countries of origin for the management of overseas employment and contractual labour, and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, which brings together the Colombo Process countries with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries of destination, as well as Malaysia, Singapore and Yemen.

4. Challenges identified in carrying out the regional commissions' work

For many countries, particularly countries of destination, migration is still an extremely controversial subject, as it touches on sovereignty and human rights, as well as economic, social and cultural questions. For example, in some countries in the ESCWA region, migrants make up the majority of the labour force and, sometimes, even the population. Although these countries recognize the importance of migration (referred to as “temporary contractual labour” or “expatriate labour”), their economies are built on a particular vision of temporary labour migration which is not consistent with global best practice and has perverse effects on the employment prospects of their own nationals. Given the controversial nature of these practices and the criticism they have attracted, ESCWA countries are reluctant to engage in free-ranging debates on the subject, especially where migrants' rights are involved.

There are often divergent positions between countries of destination and origin: while countries of destination pursue policies aimed at shaping immigration according to their interests, countries of origin would prefer that these countries open their labour

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²⁸ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a geopolitical and economic organization of 10 countries in South-east Asia, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

²⁹ The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is an economic and political organization of eight countries in Southern Asia, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

³⁰ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional organization comprising participating countries from the former Soviet Republic.

markets to their citizens and increase their protection. However, these differences occur under unequal power dynamics, as countries of origin are often not able to assert themselves effectively and suffer from a lack of dialogue that could break down confrontational relationships and build trust.

In many regions there are weaknesses in the capacity of regional organizations, such as the League of Arab States and the Arab Labour Organization, to implement commitments on migration and development agreed to by their Member States. For example, agreements on the movement of Arab manpower and social insurance in other Arab countries exist, but their implementation is weak.³¹

There is still a low level of ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Ratification has been mostly supported by countries of origin, and the lack of interest of countries of destination increases the difficulty for international organizations to work on migrant rights issues within an internationally recognized framework.

With some exceptions, reliable, up-to-date and publicly accessible data in line with international standards on migration and migration-related policies are still scarce, making it difficult to assess the true impacts of migration on development and the policies undertaken in this area to inform public debate on the issue. The important element of irregular migration is also a factor in this.

5. Gaps evident within the migration and development sphere

There is a lack of broad understanding of the issues around migration and development by many governments. Although the importance of remittances is acknowledged, there is often little deep engagement on how these could be optimized for development. Also, despite the rhetoric about the importance of diasporas, the actual engagement of diasporas as development partners is often not systematized. In countries of destination, the high level of reliance on migration for labour can create a certain momentum which renders the implementation of a more development-friendly management of migration difficult. Migration is therefore often not fully mainstreamed into countries' development strategies, including those that aim for poverty reduction.

Migration management frameworks across regions are not human rights-centred. Human rights abuses of low-skilled migrant workers, such as in the GCC countries and South-east Asia, are often facilitated by legal and regulatory systems which place migrants in situations of vulnerability. This, *inter alia*, reduces the development impact of migration. Also, bilateral cooperation on migration management provides few protections for migrant workers in many cases. Discussions between countries of origin and destination have been largely confined to regulating the movement of workers,

³¹ A copy of the declaration is available at www.poplas.org/uploads/publication/pdf/mig_dec_en.pdf.

and have privileged less formal, non-binding memorandums of understanding, which are easier to negotiate, implement and modify according to changing economic and labour market conditions than formal bilateral agreements. However, many of these memorandums of understanding do not specify minimum standards for conditions of work, and their monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are also weak.

Migration policies are often not gender-sensitive, as they do not acknowledge how gender conditions migrants' experiences at home and abroad. Instead, as a response to vulnerability, exploitation and abuse, the labour migration of women – particularly young women – from many Asian countries has been subject to government restrictions by both countries of origin and destination. Government bans on the migration of young women often encourage many to migrate through irregular channels, placing them at greater risk of abuse and exploitation than if regular channels for migration had been available to them.

The right to social protection for labour migrants is widely accepted and recognized as one of the most important factors for the well-being of migrant workers, their families and communities as a whole. However, through the Development Account project the lack of unemployment benefits, protection against injury and sickness, maternity benefits, health care and portability of pensions has become evident, for example, in the case of migrants from the ESCAP region working in the ESCWA region.

Current migration management systems do not effectively address irregular migration. For example, increases in irregular migration in the Asia-Pacific region have been linked to the high cost of migration through regular channels. The high demand for employment abroad often leads to higher transaction costs, despite official policies to limit such fees. The high costs and burdensome bureaucratic requirements of the migration process in many instances lead to migrants resorting to irregular migration channels.

The limited role of governments in migrant recruitment has led to the widespread commercialization of the management of migrant labour flows, and has given rise to irregularities and abuses throughout the migration process, imposing costs on migrants and their families.

Almost all countries of destination have made efforts to limit, and even in some cases avoid, permanent settlement by labour migrants through migration regulations that make residence time-bound, temporary and tied to the primary migrant only. Countries of destination tend not to be open to the permanent settlement of migrant workers, except for those who are highly qualified and family members of citizens.

In many regions, there is a shortage of training and research institutions to assist governments to develop the technical expertise to formulate and implement migration and development-related policies, and negotiate and cooperate on migration issues in bilateral and multilateral fora.

6. Recommendations for the 2013 High-level Dialogue

The regional commissions propose the following possible recommendations and outputs for the 2013 HLD:

Recommendations

- (a) Effective protection and promotion of human rights of all migrants, regardless of their status, must be at the core of all migration and development-related policies. Migration policies must be sensitive to local factors, such as inequities, discrimination and poverty, which make migrants vulnerable, especially in border areas. Countries of destination should share the responsibility of protecting migrants with countries of origin; thus, all relevant stakeholders need to be included in this process.
- (b) Due to gender-specific vulnerabilities and the nature of their work, the protection of migrant women should be a priority for specific policy interventions. This should also be the case with migrant youth and children affected by migration.
- (c) Countries should promote the understanding and consider the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and other relevant conventions and protocols. Those that have already ratified them should ensure their full implementation and adopt a comprehensive, rather than security-oriented, approach to irregular migration, while targeting those engaged in human trafficking.
- (d) Countries should mainstream migration into their national development strategies using the framework provided by the GMG handbook, *Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners*, to ensure policy coherence in migration and development, as well as in development-friendly migration policies. This would require coherence and coordination between national authorities working on, inter alia, migration, social affairs, security, development planning and international relations.
- (e) Investment in data collection, documentation of best practices and establishment of networks for knowledge-sharing are important for promoting international migration and development at the regional level. At a minimum, all countries should review and implement the five steps described in *Migrants Count: Five Steps Toward Better Migration Data*, a report by the Center for Global Development.³² In addition, information on the characteristics of migrants, and the impacts of migration on migrants and the places they move to and leave, should be improved. Concerted efforts are needed to collect, standardize and publish time-series data

³² The report is available at www.cgdev.org/publication/migrants-count-five-steps-toward-better-migration-data.

and qualitative information on such topics as emigration of nationals; irregular migration; remittances; integration of immigrants in destination countries; return, repeat and circular migration; and environmental migration.

Member States and development partners should invest in gender-disaggregated data and statistical analyses, to generate new knowledge and support development plans and policies. Research findings on the contribution of migrants to the socioeconomic development of countries of origin and destination should be widely disseminated.

- (f) Countries should cooperate at the bilateral, regional and international levels, to ensure the portability of social benefits between countries of origin and destination. This is particularly important where a circular migration model is adopted.
- (g) Countries should work to harness remittances and diaspora resources for development. There is a need for managerial and financial measures to facilitate the flow of resources. These should consider issues such as the facilitation of trade and investment and low-cost money transfers, and should be based on the “partnership with diasporas” principle.
- (h) Countries of origin and destination should cooperate throughout the migration cycle to ensure the protection of migrant workers from the pre-departure stage, through to their travel, their time in the country of destination, and, where relevant, their return to the country of origin.
- (i) More attention should be given to preparing migrants for their return to their country of origin and ensuring their successful reintegration. The principle of voluntary return should be reinforced.
- (j) Countries should consider the possibility of allowing family unification, as labour shortages driving temporary labour migration are unlikely to be temporary, and family unification policies can allow better integration of migrants into the societies of countries of destination.
- (k) Countries should consider and address the root causes of irregular migration, such as restrictive migration policies; poverty and unemployment; and large, informal labour market sectors in countries of destination. A comprehensive policy needs to include coordination between both origin and destination countries and address the costs and barriers to regular migration in order to curtail irregular migration, including trafficking.
- (l) Labour migrant-sending and -receiving countries should work together to reduce the costs and requirements involved in the migration process through existing platforms such as the Colombo Process and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. This includes

measures to ensure the transparency of the recruitment process and the protection of migrants by effectively regulating and monitoring recruitment agencies in both countries of origin and destination.

- (m) Given the significance of migration within regions, regional migration frameworks which promote coherent responses and cooperation between countries of origin and destination, such as the African Union's Migration Policy Framework for Africa, should be established. These should develop standards to protect the rights of migrants, including basic labour standards for migrant workers. Countries should develop migration policies that reflect national concerns as well as regional interests and commitments.
- (n) UN and other international, regional and non-governmental organizations should help develop governments' capacities to implement migration policies, strategies and frameworks at all levels.
- (o) Governments, UN, other international and regional agencies and organizations and academia should undertake in-depth policy research on international migration at all levels to provide baseline information which would inform new policy. Possible research foci include the socioeconomic contributions of migrants to their countries of origin and destination; the gender and social dimensions of international migration; the role of international migration in social protection and poverty alleviation; the role of international migration in demographic and social change; and the impacts of international migration on social institutions.
- (p) An assessment of the progress made since the United Nations Recommendations on International Migration Statistics in 1998 should be undertaken to evaluate the current state of international migration statistics to see how migration statistics have progressed since the recommendations and to determine future actions still needed.
- (q) The GMG should be strengthened through the creation of a secretariat and a multi-year workplan, in order to support its work in promoting policy coherence of migration within the UN system.
- (r) Interregional, regional and subregional coordination and cooperation on migration issues should be enhanced through, inter alia, regional and subregional networks of migration stakeholders, including the regional consultative processes on migration.
- (s) Regional commissions should take the lead in adapting the global migration and development agenda to the specificities of different regional contexts. The regional coordination mechanism could be an appropriate means to achieve this

by ensuring common, coherent and appropriate regional responses to migration and development issues from the UN system, in the context of “Delivering as One.”

Suggested outputs

- (a) A commitment to a strengthened GMG with a secretariat and a multi-year funding plan;
- (b) A mandate for greater regional commission engagement in migration issues, including by hosting regional dialogues on migration and development-related issues, where relevant;
- (c) A commitment to the ratification and strict fulfilment of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families;
- (d) A commitment to work towards the creation of a Permanent Forum on Migration and Development, to provide expert, independent advice on migration and development-related issues, raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to migration and development within the UN system, and prepare and disseminate information on migration and development-related issues. The Permanent Forum would work in close collaboration with the GMG, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on International Migration and Development and the UNHRC on special procedures on the rights of migrants;
- (e) A UN Declaration on International Migration and Development underlining the importance of linking migration and development and defining the principles underlying work in this area, for example, a rights-based approach, the mainstreaming of migration and inter-State dialogue and cooperation).