



**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

## **REPORT**

### **WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION: INTEGRATING INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION INTO DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES BEIRUT, 19-22 JULY 2010**

#### **Summary**

The Population and Social Development Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, organized the Workshop on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies, which took place in Beirut from 19 to 22 July 2010. The workshop is part of a two-year development account project on Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impacts. In order to maximize benefits, the workshop brought together policymakers and statisticians. This report includes a summary of the papers presented and discussed during the workshop, the results of the hands-on session, the main deliberations and points raised by the participants in addition to the conclusions and recommendations of the workshop.

The workshop was organized around four components which focused on: (i) advocating the importance of integrating the dynamics of international migration into development frameworks; (ii) highlighting the importance of generating accurate and comparable data to inform policymakers; (iii) promoting regional cooperation on migration issues and emphasizing the usefulness of regional consultative processes; and (iv) training member countries, by means of a hands-on session, on integrating migration into development strategies.

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## **Introduction**

1. In collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the Population and Social Development Section of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) organized the four-day Workshop on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies, which took place in Beirut from 19 to 22 July 2010.

2. ESCWA held the workshop as part of its two-year development account project on Strengthening National Capacities to Deal with International Migration: Maximizing Development Benefits and Minimizing Negative Impacts. In line with the objectives of the project, the workshop aimed to achieve the following goals:

(a) To enhance national skills and capacities to design and implement policies and programmes which maximize the gains and minimize the challenges of international migration for development;

(b) To contribute to increasing the availability of data and information on international migration.

3. The workshop therefore addressed issues of migration and development, migration data and regional cooperation. It provided participants with an opportunity to understand the current regional situation in relation to migration and development, discuss common definitions and activities in the framework of global best practices, and to actively consider how migration can be mainstreamed into development strategies in a practical way.

4. In particular, the workshop focused on national experiences and discussed ways forward in terms of:

(a) Identifying the areas where migration has an impact on development and integrating those considerations into development strategies;

(b) Improving the definition of international migration and the gathering and dissemination of data;

(c) Discussing potential forms of regional cooperation in the field of migration and development.

## **I. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5. Working papers, presentations, and discussions pointed to a number of positive as well as negative aspects of migration for ESCWA member countries. There was a consensus among participants on the following conclusions and recommendations.

### **A. CONCLUSIONS**

6. There is a fundamental problem in ESCWA member countries with respect to migration data, definitions, and the classification of migrants according to such factors as, inter alia, age, sex, occupation, educational attainment, skills and experience, in both countries of origin and destination.

7. There is a need to further enhance links between migrants from ESCWA countries and their countries of origin, especially for those migrants outside the ESCWA region.

8. There is a lack of coordination and cooperation on migration issues between countries of origin and destination in the ESCWA region. Where agreements have been concluded between them in this regard, they are not as operational as they should be. This is due at least in part to the absence of clear frameworks for dialogue between those countries to ensure maximum benefit for all parties.

9. Although, at an individual level, migration could provide a safety valve against the problem of unemployment in countries of origin, it could also deny countries of origin from being able to benefit from skilled labour in certain professions and specializations. At the same time, the current literature on international migration suggests that migration could be a means for developing countries of origin to open up to the outside world, acting as a catalyst for innovation, creativity and the transfer of modern technologies and expertise through the return of migrants to their countries, especially where countries have put in place policies and programmes to re-integrate them.

10. Remittances, whether formal or informal, form an important source of national income to countries of origin and strengthen their balances of payments. However, remittances have been criticized for being mostly used to finance consumption activities, with only small amounts being directed to productive activities and investment.

11. Numerous countries of origin and destination have not attempted to integrate migration into development in order to maximize the benefits deriving from this process.

12. Coordination between all ministries and institutions concerned is important in order to formulate migration policies and laws that are integrated with and linked to national development efforts.

13. The participation of the private sector and civil society in the process of formulating, implementing and evaluating migration policies should be enhanced.

14. Migration policies in countries of origin should respond to national development requirements and should link to educational outputs, employment policies and labour market demands in order to limit the brain-drain phenomenon.

#### B. RECOMMENDATIONS

15. Recommendations addressed to ESCWA member States:

(a) In the area of data and statistics:

(i) To establish national observatories on migration in member countries, in order to develop an integrated information system on migration, including a database on migration flows and patterns, both regular and irregular, classified according to demographic, social and economic characteristics, and a database on laws and procedures governing the affairs and interests of migrants. The observatory could be based in the ministry of expatriates, the ministry of labour, or a new institution if necessary, and should be supported with appropriate legislation to ensure the cooperation of all such relevant entities as ministries of interior affairs, social security institutions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders;

(ii) To strengthen the role of national statistical offices to enable them to provide relevant data and statistics on migration issues of concern to the observatories and in support of migration and development policies.

(b) In the area of policy formulation:

(i) To formulate policies that better recognize the linkages between migration and development by integrating the developmental dimensions of migration in such national development plans as poverty reduction strategies, strategies to fight unemployment and strategies for workforce development, among others. The ministry of planning and international cooperation could be the appropriate body to coordinate those efforts;

- (ii) To develop policies aimed at strengthening the ties between migrants and their homelands, and to institutionalize those ties to reap the maximum benefits possible from migration. The ministry of expatriates or the ministry of labour could promote this objective, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders;
- (iii) To regulate and facilitate the transfer of remittances to countries of origin through promoting the use of official channels so as to maximize the benefit of these flows, manage their size and movement and channel them into investments to the extent possible. The ministry of finance in cooperation with the central bank and the banking sector could play an important role in this regard, as could institutions that promote investment in various countries.

(c) In the area of regional dialogue:

To launch initiatives aimed at promoting regional dialogue between member countries to ensure the activation of existing agreements, and to help forge more bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries of origin and destination in order to regulate migration flows between those countries, and to balance the interest of all parties so as to maximize benefits and minimize negative impacts for all concerned. Such initiatives would become an essential component of development for both countries of origin and destination, and would emphasize the fundamental human rights of migrants. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) could take the initiative to promote regional dialogue.

16. Recommendations addressed to ESCWA:

- (a) To establish a regional information system on migration supported by ESCWA in cooperation with member countries and/or migration observatories in those countries;
- (b) To facilitate dialogue at the regional, intraregional and interregional levels;
- (c) To organize regional workshops aimed at strengthening the capacities of member countries in the collection, classification and analysis of migration data and statistics to support and inform policymakers;
- (d) To provide technical support to member countries in developing and implementing integrated migration and development strategies.

## **II. ISSUES CONSIDERED**

17. The agenda of the workshop comprised five sessions. Background papers presented covered the international migration experience of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and GCC States.

### **A. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB MASHREQ AND THE GCC COUNTRIES: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

18. Mr. Magdi Abdelkader Ibrahim, Advisor at the Cairo Demographic Centre, presented a paper on The Core Issues of International Migration and Development in the Arab Mashreq and the Countries of the GCC - Labour Migration. The paper referred to the increase in the volume of labour migration in recent years and predicted that this increase would continue in the future in light of globalization, which has helped to produce new migration patterns, and determined migration corridors and the types of skills in demand in different regions of the world. Mr. Ibrahim highlighted that the imbalance in the current and future demographic composition between developed countries, which are undergoing population decline and population ageing as a result of the continuously decreasing fertility rates, and developing countries, characterized by a young age distribution and a large labour force supply, in part explains the increase in

migration flows from developing countries, including Arab countries, to the developed industrialized countries.

19. Mr. Ibrahim noted the importance of promoting a complementary regional labour market by encouraging intraregional labour migration to meet labour market demand. He explored successful approaches to benefit from labour migration and the possible impact on development in the countries of the region. He considered that maximizing the benefits of migration and development would require countries to formulate effective policies to manage migration, preserve the rights of migrants and meet the needs of the labour market, and to open up channels of communication with skilled migrants to benefit from their knowledge and have them contribute to the development efforts in their countries of origin.

20. The discussant, Mr. Ibrahim Awad, Professor at the American University of Cairo, commended the paper and touched on five main issues in connection with migration and development: (i) the nature of the relationship between migration and development, which is still not clear; (ii) countries of destination experiencing a decrease in productivity and an increase in unemployment among youth, which leads them to limit the number of migrant workers entering per year, increase investment in technology and introduce measures to attract local youth workers; (iii) the increase, since 2005, in the migration of highly skilled Iraqis to Syria and Jordan, which constitutes an opportunity for these countries; (iv) the tendency to criminalize irregular migrants when they only meet pre-existing demands in countries of destination, which calls upon countries of destination to take responsibility in curbing the factors that promote irregular migration; and (v) countries of origin being required to put in place economic policies to improve productivity, policies to protect their emigrants in collaboration with countries of destination, and to open up investment channels and reduce the cost of transfer of remittances.

21. Mr. Mohammed Khachani, Professor of Political Economy at the Mohamed V University, and President of the Moroccan Association for Studies and Education on Migration, presented a paper on Remittances and their Impact on Development in Four Arab Mashreq Countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Mr. Khachani argued that Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic are among the top countries of origin for migrants, and that large migrant communities should be regarded as part of the relations of countries of origin with countries of destination, especially since the status of most migrants has changed from temporary to permanent. Despite this change, however, he notes that migrant communities have maintained strong social, cultural and especially economic ties with their countries of origin, with the economic ties having an important impact on the development of countries of origin.

22. Mr. Khachani noted that effective management of migration necessitates the adoption of a new approach towards the relationship between migration and development. The different dimensions that should be taken into consideration when analysing this relationship, in particular in connection with remittances, include the following key points: (i) volume of remittances (incoming and outgoing); (ii) nature of remittances and whether they constitute formal or informal transfers; (iii) cost of transfers; (iv) economic impact of remittances; and (v) future prospects for remittances. According to Mr. Khachani, remittances are a major source of hard currency to the four abovementioned countries and are vital for their development, as are investments. Thus, to encourage migrants to invest in different sectors in their countries of origin, economic incentives and a favourable environment for investment need to be created, and existing perceptions of the role of migrants need to be revisited so as to regard them as key actors and partners in the development process.

23. The discussant, Mr. Munther Shar'ee, Senior Population Affairs Officer at the Social Development Division ESCWA, discussed the paper and raised the question of the nature of the casual relationship between remittances and development. He touched on the possibility of building an econometric model to identify the role of remittances, which would include them as an explanatory variable for the gross domestic product (GDP) and compare them to the income generated from the import and export of goods and tourism to determine their importance. Mr. Shar'ee also noted the expansion of the middle class due to migration, which led to an increase in the demand for durable consumer goods that are not produced locally, thereby

adding to imbalances of trade. Mr. Shar'e also stressed that the simple replication of experiences is not useful and that countries should be innovative and creative in formulating migration policies and adapting them to national contexts.

24. Mr. Boutros Labaki, President of the Lebanese Institute for Economic and Social Development, presented a paper on Key Issues on International Migration and Development: Transnational Communities and Development. Mr. Labaki pointed to the role of migrants in maintaining ties with their countries of origin through return migration, sending remittances to their families or through investments, thereby forming what is referred to as transnational communities. He shed light on the role that such communities play in advancing social development in the countries of origin through supporting education, cultural activities, and vocational training. Moreover, they contribute to strengthening the health sector, the development of infrastructure in rural areas, the funding of social welfare institutions, the development of cultural and historical sites, and the support of environmental projects.

25. Mr. Labaki added that transnational communities also play a role in the transfer of knowledge to their countries of origin. Examples include the programmes on the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOTKEN) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the efforts of different institutions to bring back skilled expatriates to work in such fields as higher education, medicine, engineering, and finance so that their home countries can benefit from the skills they have gained in countries of destination. Mr. Labaki noted that the practices of such countries of origin as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Yemen differ somewhat. What characterizes the Lebanese experience of emigration, for example, is its diversity, long standing nature, and the extent of civil society participation.

26. The author concluded by presenting the positive and negative aspects of migration. On the one hand, migration could provide a safety valve in cases of overpopulation, while remittances could support the consumer spending of families, the formation of their human and economic capital, and the creation of social services institutions. On the other hand, countries of origin could suffer from brain drain and a reduction of the population in rural areas. Furthermore, migration contributes to the ageing of the population and the distortion of the population pyramid.

27. Mr. Haitham Jumaa, Director General of the General Directorate of Migrants, Lebanon, commented on the paper highlighting that migration has gained importance globally and that, while developed countries are dealing with it properly to maximize the benefits and minimize the challenges it presents, developing countries are not. He pointed out that brain drain represents a major challenge to developing countries, and that there is a great need to study labour market demand both within the country and abroad in order to match educational outputs with the requirements of those markets, and to inform potential migrants on where to go, what they need, and what role they could play in the economic development of their country of origin. He concluded by emphasizing that developing countries should devote more time and effort to the management of migration.

28. Mr. Salam al Kawakibi, Head Researcher at the Arab Reform Initiative in Paris, presented a paper on Brain Drain in the Arab Mashreq Countries. The paper included the results of a field study undertaken by the researcher in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which he interviewed figures involved in migration generally and in brain drain particularly.

29. Mr. Al Kawakibi reviewed the most important economic, social and political factors behind the brain drain. He touched on the positive impacts of brain drain, especially in terms of contributing to the reduction in unemployment among university graduates, the positive impact of remittances sent by migrants to their families, and the transfer of know-how and knowledge through return migration or practical and scientific visits to the countries of origin. However, Mr. Al Kawakibi also outlined the economic costs, represented in the amounts spent directly or indirectly on the education of migrants or those who are considering migration. This adds to the effect of brain drain on productivity as well as academic and scientific research in home

countries, since the semi-skilled and unskilled take over as a result of the migration of the most-skilled people.

30. The discussant, Ms. Batoool Shakoori, Chief of the Population and Social Development Section in ESCWA, raised two questions, one on the research methodology followed and the other on the research hypothesis. She mentioned that the methodology followed in the paper builds on the human development perspective, which stresses two aspects: (i) the provision of such basic services as health and education to people; and (ii) the right to participation in social, economic and political life. Ms. Shakoori noted that the issue of opportunities is often neglected despite its importance, which is the case in most Arab countries where certain groups are alienated for, inter alia, political or religious reasons, and that the absence of opportunities drives people to migrate.

31. Moreover, Ms. Shakoori noted that the hypothesis of the author limited the causes of brain-drain to socio-political factors at macro level. However, migration is also a matter of personal choice. She also highlighted that the current trend is towards selective migration of the high-skilled and entrepreneurs, and that the benefits of migration sometimes outweigh the costs. Lebanon is a good example, where remittances form 25 per cent of its GDP. The return of skilled nationals could also be of benefit, making improved communication with migrants a priority, although it may be difficult for them to surmount the persistent economic, social and political problems in countries of origin. She suggested that factors other than the loss of skilled labour also lay behind the low competitiveness of the Syrian economy, such as low productivity, which results not only from brain drain but also from the mismatch between educational outputs and labour market demand. Furthermore, Ms. Shakoori underlined the importance of the demographic factors: a demographic window of opportunity could open up to such countries in the region as Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic, which could lead to an increase in the volume of savings and more investments if the right policies are put in place. Thus, it is important to consider all the different aspects when examining the issue of migration and its impact on development.

32. Mr. Ahmed Ghoneim, Assistant Professor of Economics at the Cairo University, presented a paper on Migration Policies in Countries of the ESCWA Region. Mr. Ghoneim addressed migration policies in both countries of origin and countries of destination in the region and their general impact on development, and touched on regional and national policy characteristics with a focus on good practices and existing gaps. He elaborated on the various such channels through which migration impacts development as remittances and the transfer of skills and their influence on the labour market and poverty, and the role they play in the ESCWA countries.

33. According to Mr. Ghoneim, gaps in current migration policies in ESCWA member countries include the weakness of the institutional frameworks governing migration, inappropriate policies to counter irregular migration, ineffective laws on the protection of the rights of migrants, and low levels of commitment to implement international treaties and covenants related to migration. Mr. Ghoneim noted that such successful migration policies as those on the protection of the rights of migrants in some countries of the ESCWA region may be counterbalanced by gaps in the same policies in other countries of the region. Mr. Ghoneim concluded with a number of recommendations including the pressing need to address policy weaknesses; establish extensive databases on migrants; facilitate the formulation of sound policies; activate mechanisms to increase the linkages between migrants and their home country; facilitate the integration of migrants in the countries of destination; and promote greater cooperation between the ESCWA member countries. Mr. Ghoneim underlined the importance of respecting the specificities of each country when formulating migration policies, even in the case of countries with apparently similar economies.

34. The discussant, Ms. Heba Nassar, Vice-President of the University of Cairo, noted that the report highlighted the different dimensions of migration policies. Ms. Nassar pointed out that the migration of skilled labour in ESCWA countries is driven by imbalances in the labour market. As to remittances, Ms. Nassar mentioned that there are a number of countries that succeeded in pooling informal remittances, that policies in this regard should be linked to stakeholders and activated through programmes, and that



“policy mix”, which corresponds to a set of interlinked policies that aim at attracting remittances, is very important. Ms. Nassar also stressed the importance of underlining the relationship between migration policies and trade and investment policies so as to attract foreign investment. Moreover, she emphasized the role of the private sector, civil society organizations and trade unions in managing migration, in addition to enhanced coordination between all the ministries concerned.

## B. MAINSTREAMING MIGRATION INTO DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

35. Ms. Maureen Achieng, Senior Migration Policy Officer at the Migration Policy and Research Department of the International Organization for Migration, delivered a presentation entitled *Mainstreaming Migration into Development: Theories and Practices*. This presentation reviewed the rationale and methodology for mainstreaming migration into development strategies. Migration is neither inherently good nor bad for development; rather, its effects are shaped by the economic, social and political context under which it takes place. Successful policy approaches on migration and development recognize therefore that the two processes are inseparable and interdependent. This recognition has been increasingly made at high level, as reflected by the theme of the 2009 Global Forum on Migration and Development in Athens, where the theme was *Integrating Migration Policies into Development Strategies for the Benefit of All*.

36. Ms. Achieng emphasized the importance of mainstreaming migration into development strategies, as such an approach helps bridge the gap between policy and practice in order to maximize the benefits of migration for development. The process enables the identification of gaps in legislative and policy frameworks; promotes policy coherence through the creation of holistic planning frameworks for assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and can be useful for mobilizing financial and technical assistance. The process of mainstreaming is defined by IOM as “[t]he process of assessing the implications of migration on any action (or goals) planned in a development and poverty reduction strategy”; such a process involves the reviewing of legislation, policies or programmes at local, national and regional levels. Uniquely, the process of mainstreaming involves human beings, and therefore there are such particular implications as taking into account the rights and aspirations of migrants, the particularities of vulnerable groups, and the range of migration situations people may find themselves in.

37. The mainstreaming process should primarily focus on three transfers. Firstly, the transfer of persons themselves, which modifies the populations of countries of origin and destination, can potentially reduce unemployment in countries of origin and potentially fill labour market needs in countries of destination, but can equally create disruption in countries of origin and place strains on services and infrastructure in countries of destination. Secondly, the transfer of know-how and knowledge represents the ideas and knowledge which travel with migrants and through transnational social networks, and, while it can represent a loss to the country of origin through brain drain, can also potentially be a gain if migrants can be enticed to transfer their knowledge to countries of origin. Finally, the transfer of financial assets, the money that migrants send or otherwise flows between countries of destination and origin as a result of migration, can represent a livelihood strategy for migrants, but can also increase inequalities and fuel inflation.

38. Ms. Achieng also presented the inter-agency *Mainstreaming Migration into Development Planning: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners*, a living, practical document for those interested in facilitating a migration mainstreaming process, which is due for release in summer 2010, after which it will be piloted in a number of countries. Following a first mainstreaming experience in Ghana in 2004, this handbook sets forth a step-by-step guide to how a mainstreaming process may be carried out, along with practical examples of activities in this field. In the understanding that each country will have its specificities, it does not prescribe specific actions, but rather provides countries with a framework within which to find their own solutions. Ms. Achieng emphasized that, although this process so far had mostly involved developing countries, mainstreaming migration is also relevant to developed countries.

39. Mr. Jean-Christophe Dumont, Principal Administrator of the International Migration Division in the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD), delivered a presentation on the Update and Extension of the Database on Immigrants in OECD Countries (DIOC). The DIOC can be considered a good practice in data-collection and data-sharing, as it gathers information based on population censuses on the country of origin and nationality, educational profile, age, gender, duration of stay, employment status, occupation, sector of activity and field of study of immigrants to OECD countries. Initially, data came from the 2000 round of censuses in OECD countries; however, the OECD is currently soliciting data from non-OECD countries from their 2000 census round in order to capture a wider picture of international migration. It is also producing DIOC 2005, with information from 26 OECD population censuses, population registers and labour force surveys.

40. Mr. Dumont outlined the progress of and findings from the extension of the OECD database on immigration in relation to the Arab region, noting that a major trend in this area has been the increase in student migration and highly-skilled, selective migration from Arab countries. Around the year 2000, out of a total of 75 million immigrants living in OECD countries, about 5 million were from Arab countries; 80 per cent of those migrants live in the European OECD countries. The 2005 findings show that patterns are generally stable, although there is a significant increase in the number of Moroccan and Jordanian migrants in the OECD. The main countries of destination for those migrants have also remained relatively stable, with France being the main country of destination, although Spain, the Netherlands and the United States of America are gaining in importance. In most cases, migration is still heavily male-dominated and large numbers of migrants have only a primary education.

41. Presenting data on highly-skilled immigration to OECD countries, Mr. Dumont noted that Jordan and Lebanon show high levels of highly-skilled emigration, while the number of doctors trained in the United Arab Emirates working in the United States of America in 2005 was the highest of the Arab countries, followed by those trained in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, he noted that a lack of information on the number of people with tertiary education in Arab countries of origin meant that it is difficult to understand the importance of highly-skilled migration. Data on employment and unemployment showed that some Arab immigrants were better integrated into the labour market than others, with Egyptian, Jordanian and Lebanese migrants showing the highest levels of employment, while almost 20 per cent of migrants from Iraq experienced unemployment. Using data from the World Bank, it seems that remittances from Arab countries are growing although their growth had been negatively affected by the global economic crisis, probably reflecting difficulties in the labour market in countries of destination.

42. Mr. Dumont concluded that reliable, internationally comparable and up-to-date data are essential to understand the impacts and the implications for migration policy in both countries of origin and destination, and that international cooperation in this area is important.

43. Mr. Julien Simon, Programme Manager of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), delivered a presentation on Mainstreaming Migration into Development: Experiences in Regional Consultative Processes from the Region. Experiences of the ICMPD in facilitating regional dialogues within the region and elsewhere had led to the identification of four key stages of dialogue: collecting information; disseminating information; analysing information; and translating information into action.

44. In relation to collecting information, ICMPD dialogues aim to help build routines of information collection rooted in mutual trust. Mr. Simon gave the example of a joint ICMPD-IOM project emerging from the Mediterranean Transit Migration dialogue on Linking Emigrant Communities for More Development – Inventory of Institutional Capacities and Practices as an example of such an information collection exercise. ICMPD dialogues also aim to facilitate the dissemination of information, ensuring that the data is accessible, disseminated, exchanged and compiled for ease of use, with the Inventory providing an example of how this can be achieved.

45. Mr. Simon noted that information analysis would depend on the perspective of the user, noting for example that the different aims of governmental and non-governmental actors would determine the use they make of the data and the conclusions they reach. Experience had shown that countries had very different

sensitivities towards the same data. The final stage of translation of data into action would depend on the preceding stages, with the results of the processes being the formulation and implementation of policies, frameworks, and guidelines. This was illustrated by the outcomes of the Mediterranean Transit Migration dialogue, an informal, technical dialogue based on, feeding into and facilitating the implementation of operational activities.

46. Ms. Maureen Achieng, Senior Migration Policy Officer at the Migration Policy and Research Department of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), delivered a presentation entitled *Mainstreaming Migration into Development: The Nature and Importance of the Regional Consultative Process on Migration*. Noting the absence of a global regime to manage migration and the importance of State sovereignty in this area, but also the need for cooperation inherent in migration issues, many States have come together voluntarily in recent years in regular meetings organized by geographical region or interest in a theme to discuss migration issues in an informal, non-binding atmosphere applying the Chatham House Rule. These Regional Consultative Processes on Migration (RCPs) aim to facilitate information exchange and dialogue in a context of confidentiality in order to build trust, and from this to enhance cooperation between States based on commonly agreed areas of mutual interest.

47. RCPs can take a number of different forms, involving varying mixes of meetings of political leaders and technical experts. The outcomes of RCPs can include the development of networks between participants, and in some cases even lead to the de facto harmonization of policies and positions where agreement exists, as well as the sharing and collation of migration data.

48. The popularity of these RCPs is such that most countries in the world are involved in at least one RCP. However, gaps remain, notably in the Caribbean, Central Africa and the Middle East. Ms. Achieng also noted that there is an increasing trend towards exchange between RCPs in different regions, all while maintaining the separate identities of those RCPs.

49. Mr. Nedhal al-Banaa, Director of the Policy Development Department at the Labour Market Regulatory Authority in Bahrain, delivered a presentation on *Developing Regional Consultative Processes on Labour Migration: The Case of the Gulf Cooperation Council*. The presentation covered the conceptual, institutional and implementation frameworks needed for developing RCPs. In relation to the conceptual framework, he stressed the importance of ensuring that the rights of migrants are preserved and are not affected by downturns in political relations between countries, and of regulating the relationship between countries of origin and destination. As to the institutional framework, he mentioned the need to determine the key actors that should be involved. For the implementation framework, he noted the importance of having a comprehensive view of the policies, procedures, legislations, and mechanisms needed to regulate relations between countries of origin and destination; the extent of coherence of development, economic and social policies between the mentioned countries; and the need to come up with effective tools to regulate relations between the countries.

50. He also presented a brief overview of existing bilateral agreements between countries of the GCC and South-East Asian countries, and the experience of Bahrain in activating coordination with the countries of origin. The labour market reform in Bahrain led to the creation of the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), responsible for the management of all labour issues in the country. In order to enhance communication, a network for data sharing was established to connect LMRA with all Government entities. Moreover, a website was established which serves as a communication tool between LMRA and workers, countries of origin, and employers. Creating this portal helped overcome the problem of lack of data.

51. Mr. al-Banaa touched on the 2008 Abu Dhabi Dialogue, which brought together Asian countries of origin with Gulf countries of destination, and the achievements and challenges of this process. He noted that the dialogue is a positive step towards building confidence and trust between the participating countries, and that it forms a frame of reference for coordination and cooperation between those countries. Moreover, the dialogue succeeded in strengthening the relationship between policymakers and researchers in the field of

labour migration. The challenges according to Mr. al-Banaa are represented in the absence of an implementation mechanism to operationalize recommendations, insufficient coordination between the different international organizations working on the issue of labour migration, the absence of a permanent secretariat to follow up on this initiative, and the weakness in the flow of information in countries of origin and destination.

52. As to the recommendations on the way forward, Mr. al-Banaa noted the importance of: (i) close coordination between ESCWA and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) together with the International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM and the Arab Labour Organization (ALO); (ii) holding a yearly meeting for countries of origin and destination, with the venue of the meeting alternating between the two groups of countries; (iii) establishing a portal for the countries under the auspices of United Nations entities; and (iv) defining practical mechanisms to activate such coordination and cooperation between countries of origin and countries of destination as a short-term (two-year) work plan with indicators to measure progress.

#### C. PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION STATISTICS AND POLICIES

53. All seven ESCWA member countries represented in the workshop presented national reports on migration policies and statistics, focusing on the integration of migration in development strategies and the state of migration data, followed by discussions.

#### D. HANDS-ON SESSION ON INTEGRATING MIGRATION INTO DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

54. The participants were split into two groups, one representing countries of origin and one representing countries of destination. Each group was requested to prepare a strategic plan on integrating labour migration into development strategies, and the data and statistics required for that purpose. Participants were asked to consult the Guide on Migration and Development: Definitions and Modalities, distributed to them during the workshop.

55. The strategic plan prepared by countries of origin included a vision, a situation analysis, strategic goals, an action plan, and sources of funding. The vision is to integrate migration into development strategies. The mission is to maximize benefits from migration, to find means to protect the rights of migrants and to encourage them to invest in their home countries through the best use of their remittances. This will require a situation analysis of the labour market through reviewing data on the demographic characteristics of the population, on economic activity and economic participation; reviewing policies on the management of migration; determining difficulties and challenges; and formulating policies to encourage the investment of remittances, with the participation of such stakeholders as labour unions and civil society organizations. The working group decided on the following strategic goals: the introduction of labour market reforms including the reform and restructuring of the education and vocational training sector to improve the quality of education; the reduction of unemployment rates through the development of programmes with the private sector; and the optimization of the benefits of remittances through investment. The aim is to reach a balanced labour market, and to develop legislation and systems to inspect and monitor recruitment offices dealing with migrant workers.

56. The working group specified three main priorities. The first is to match educational outputs with labour market demand. This will require studying the needs of the labour market; reviewing educational programmes; emphasizing the role of the private sector; and linking training and recruitment. The second is to maximize benefits from migrants abroad, which will require capitalizing on migrant transfers; developing investment laws; benefiting from the skills of return migrants; and providing credit facilities to finance infrastructure projects. The third priority is to facilitate labour migration through signing bilateral agreements with countries of destination to enable the mobility of workers; developing awareness-raising programmes for migrants to inform them of their rights and duties; amending and developing legislation to regulate the emigration process; reinforcing the role of the Government in overseeing and monitoring

recruitment offices dealing with migrant workers; ensuring the social rights of workers in countries of destination; and developing websites to facilitate awareness-raising and communication with migrants. All this should be implemented within a specified timeframe. The required funding could be provided by Government, institutions of the private sector, civil society, development funds and international donors.

57. Countries of destination also prepared a strategic plan including a vision, a situation analysis, strategic goals, an action plan, funding sources, and an implementation plan. The vision for this working group is to ensure that development is integrated and comprehensive. The situation analysis will have to identify labour market needs for the coming 20 years; re-assess existing laws, especially those relating to employment and residency and link them to other relevant laws and social and economic aspects; and review the roles of such institutions concerned as the ministries of health, human rights, social affairs, labour, interior, and justice to avoid duplication. A body could be created to coordinate among all concerned institutions.

58. The following strategic goals were identified by the working group: (i) addressing existing distortions in the composition of the populations of countries of destination; (ii) ensuring the rights of migrant workers; (iii) guaranteeing the full employment of the national labour force; (iv) enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy; (v) meeting the labour market demand; and (vi) eliminating marginal/unproductive employment. A plan of action was also devised. To meet the first goal, the working group identified the need to implement a plan to encourage the natural growth of the population; to follow employment trends that would require fewer migrants; to develop human resources; and to give priority to the employment of Arab labour. To meet the second goal, there is a need to make migrant workers aware of their rights, and make nationals aware of the rights of migrant workers; and coordinate with countries of origin to prepare labour migrants for the culture and norms of the country of destination. To accomplish the third goal, there is a need to reform education to meet the needs of the labour market; to develop training curricula with a focus on vocational training; to make available an integrated database to help students choose relevant specializations; to raise awareness and fight the “shaming culture” to eliminate stigmas around particular kinds of jobs; and to reserve a minimum percentage for the employment of nationals in the private sector. Finally, the group saw a need to determine a certain percentage for skilled expatriate labour that enters the GCC countries per year as the concentration of migrants in Gulf countries is very high; to restructure the economy with a focus on the development sectors; and to reduce the extravagance in services in the GCC countries.

59. The working group suggested presenting the budget to the cabinet for endorsement, and building national capacities in cooperation with relevant regional and international organizations. The working group also suggested adding a timeframe for the implementation of each goal, and to put qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure the progress made. The working group emphasized the importance of coordination with all concerned partners, especially the private sector (which is the main sector for bringing in foreign labour to the countries of the GCC), to organize a national forum to discuss and debate the strategic plan followed by a forum for Gulf countries, and to form a committee, at the ministerial level, to follow up on implementation.

#### E. MAIN ISSUES RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

60. The discussions focused on the following issues:

(a) The controversial nature of the definition of international migration. Participants identified a need to differentiate between the concept of migrant workers and that of temporary contractual workers. There is also a need to define migrants based on nationality and not on the place or country of birth. During the Abu Dhabi Dialogue of January 2008, Governments agreed to refer to labour migrants to the countries of the GCC from Asian countries as temporary contractual workers;

(b) The significance of producing reliable, internationally comparable and timely data for mainstreaming migration issues into development planning to be sure of the impacts;

(c) The necessity of making available and accessible data on migration in countries of origin as currently such data is only available in countries of destination. This is very important for, inter alia, undertaking research;

(d) The need to facilitate coordination between member countries and provide assistance in building integrated information systems with standardized definitions and databases with information on such aspects as job opportunities in countries of destination and migration laws to inform policies;

(e) The usefulness of having a regional consultative process for the ESCWA region, as there is currently no process that brings together all the countries of the region. This will enhance open non-confrontational dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination;

(f) The requirement for countries of origin to better link educational outputs to the needs of the labour market, and to create better job opportunities for skilled labour to curb the brain drain phenomenon. Redirecting investment into productive sectors will help create job opportunities on a wide scale and will contribute to reducing unemployment;

(g) The importance of encouraging migrants to invest remittances, as remittances are more stable than other flows and a more reliable source of income than foreign direct investment and development assistance;

(h) The distinction between the consumptive and productive use of remittances, noting that remittances are mostly used to support the income and improved livelihood of receiving families. Although this can be important where it reduces poverty and encourages investment in health and education, there is also a need to facilitate the flow of remittances and direct them towards productive investment for the benefit of development. This will require improving the overall investment environment and access to formal channels for the transfer of remittances;

(i) The importance of developing regulations and improving conditions to promote the return of skills and entice migrants to come back to their countries of origin, in addition to creating networks of skills and enhancing communication with migrants abroad;

(j) The need to implement economic policies in GCC countries aimed at lowering dependency on foreign labour, increasing productivity and reducing the unemployment of nationals. This is also important due to the fact that the high percentage of non-nationals in the population of the countries of the GCC has impacted the demographic structure in these countries disrupting the gender-balance;

(k) The countries of the GCC emphasizing the fact that the sponsorship system is not responsible for any restrictions on remittances in GCC countries;

(l) The need to complement the achievements of the Abu-Dhabi Dialogue with operational steps to ensure continuity and to create a secretariat for the process;

(m) The cross-cutting nature of the migration issue and its impact on development, which depends to a large extent on Government policies. Thus, there is a need to enhance the institutional framework for formulating and managing integrated migration policies. This requires the building of capacities and engagement of all concerned ministries and the enhancement of coordination between them instead of placing the matter solely under the responsibility of the ministry of labour;

(n) The need to promote public-private partnership and have the private sector and the civil society participate in the management of migration through such measures as the implementation of projects;

(o) The importance of not linking irregular migration to the Palermo Protocols, as these conventions are connected to international criminal law and migrants should not be criminalized. Such protocols do not actually apply to all irregular migrants, as migration can become irregular due to such factors as a change of legislation or job loss, despite the regular entry of a migrant.

### III. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP

#### A. VENUE AND DATE

61. The Workshop on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region: Integrating International Migration into Development Strategies was held at ESCWA Headquarters at the United Nations House in Beirut from 19 to 22 July 2010.

#### B. OPENING

62. Dr. Hassan Ibrahim al-Mohanadi, Vice-President of the Standing Committee on Population in Qatar, delivered his statement on behalf of member countries, emphasizing the importance of international migration and labour mobility to development, and the need to maximize the benefits and minimize the negative impacts of this phenomenon. To face the challenges posed by international migration and labour mobility, continuous follow-up, exchange of experiences and research and analysis of the impacts of migration prove very important. Also important is the development and dissemination of an integrated database on migration, with accurate, comprehensive and timely data to enable follow-up, and to inform the planning and policymaking processes. Dr. al-Mohanadi also underlined the need to undertake comparative studies on migration indicators in the countries of the region, in order to standardize terminology and concepts. Data availability and dissemination will help in adopting policies that aim at integrating migration into development strategies and ensuring that the rights of migrants are protected. Integrating migration and labour mobility issues in the development strategies and policies of countries is highly important and has a positive impact on various levels as it contributes to increased productivity and returns on labour, helps migrants adapt and take care of their social and health needs, and provides them with legal protection. He also stressed the need to pay attention to the rights of the countries of destination and take into account their specificities, as international migration can sometimes bring social, cultural, demographic as well as economic challenges. Dr. al-Mohanadi reaffirmed the importance of adherence to commitments towards migrants and respect of international laws and agreements on migration, and of making available accurate data on migration and labour mobility.

63. Ms. Maureen Achieng, Senior Migration Policy Officer at the Migration Policy and Research Department of the International Organization for Migration, welcomed participants and the cooperation with ESCWA. She explained that the question of migration and development continues to gain in prominence in the Arab world and globally, and that the benefits of labour mobility for the Arab countries are enormous. Around 68 per cent of migrants from Mashreq countries live in other Arab countries. This labour mobility and ensuing remittances contribute to the socio-economic integration in the region. Remittances received from Arab countries are much higher than trade revenues. Ms. Achieng noted that, despite the benefits of labour migration, it has not been fully acknowledged as a contributor to development, while trade liberalization is high on the agenda. She confirmed that the Arab region is a great contributor to global remittance flows (it is the source of 16 per cent of worldwide remittances), and that IOM is committed to helping countries of the region to better manage labour mobility challenges. Labour mobility is key to development as it responds to employment challenges and contributes to the circulation of human and financial capital within and beyond the region. The Arab Economic and Social Development Summit held in Kuwait in January 2009 called for the enhancement of Arab economic integration. Together with the Arab Employment Decade, which ends in 2020, they form a strong justification for activating the role of labour mobility in the region. Such initiative will play a major role in ensuring prosperity and stability. Ms. Achieng presented an overview of IOM activities in the region and support to the Global Migration Group.

64. Ms. Anhar Hegazi, Director of the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division, presented the opening statement on behalf of Mr. Bader Al-Dafa, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA. She noted that international migration and its impact on development continues to gain prominence in international arenas. At the end of the first decade of the third millennium, all countries in the world are affected by international migration. She underlined the fact that international migration from and to Arab countries has evolved. The number of Arab migrants and the countries hosting them has increased. There are approximately 15 million migrants residing in ESCWA countries, including the GCC countries. GCC countries receive a large number of migrants by both regional as well as global standards. They set an important precedent, since the size of the migrant community in some of these countries exceeds that of the native population. Ms. Hegazi noted that despite the increased importance of migration and its impacts, knowledge of the topic is still limited. In most cases, countries of destination do not publish data on the nationality of migrants, and definitions on international migration are not unified or harmonized, which makes it difficult to understand migration flows, especially in the countries of the GCC. Ms. Hegazi emphasized that the current concern for the Arab region has to do with the future of migration and development in light of the economic, social and political challenges caused by globalization where the movement of goods exceeds by far the movement of people, and the global financial crisis and climate change limit national capacities to improve living conditions, provide job opportunities and ensure food security. At the same time, demographic changes are taking place paving the way for changes in the age structure. Such demographic changes will prove positive if met with adequate economic and social policies. This makes it important for Arab countries to coordinate with each other and deal with migration on a collective basis and develop a regional consultative framework to improve the management of migration.

#### C. PARTICIPANTS

65. In addition to experts from ESCWA, the workshop was attended by national experts from relevant Government ministries and departments in seven ESCWA member countries, namely Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates, involved in data-gathering and statistical analysis and in policy formulation. Representatives from such international organizations as the International Organization for Migration, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development also participated in the workshop and provided the perspectives of their organizations on the issue of migration and development. Various United Nations organizations working in the field of migration and development and such regional organizations as the Arab Labour Organization and the Gulf Cooperation Council were represented in the workshop as well.



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