

## Strengthening partnerships and cooperation on International Migration

By Ambassador Eva Åkerman Börje, Head of the Swedish Chairmanship of the Global Forum on Migration and Development 2013-2014.

*There is an increasing need for governments and other development actors to plan for and act upon the opportunities and challenges that migration brings. Through the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development we should therefore call for improved policy coherence between migration and development through the integration of migration into the post-2015 development agenda; an improvement in multilateral coordination through the Global Migration Group and a commitment to continued inter-governmental cooperation in the Global Forum on Migration and Development.*

Migration forms a natural part of the human condition. It is one of mankind's oldest strategies for reducing poverty and, at an individual level, it has proven to be one of the most direct and effective ways of improving one's wellbeing. The 2009 UNDP Human Development Report highlighted how people migrating from low-income countries to higher income countries on average could gain a 15-fold increase in income, a doubling of education enrolment rate and a 16-fold reduction in child mortality.

Migration also affects many more than the nearly one billion, or one seventh of the world's population, who are migrants today, whether as internal migrants (740 million) or international migrants (214 million). Both of these groups bring benefits to societies' development. Most directly through the hundreds of billions of dollars remitted each year, but also through filling needs on the labour market, encouraging trade and investment between countries as well as transferring skills and ideas between urban and rural areas and across countries. While in no way amounting to the benefits, migration also brings about challenges. Large out-migration from some countries or communities with limited human resources may exacerbate an already dire situation in specific sectors, or sub-sectors, e.g. within health or education. Some migrants end up in extremely vulnerable situations, whether as victims of trafficking, through smuggling or in abusive and exploitative working conditions. Countries of destination can also face challenges of integration and handling irregular migration.

These linkages suggest an increasing need for governments and other development actors to plan for and act upon the opportunities and challenges that migration brings. This points towards the importance of closer intergovernmental cooperation, enhanced multilateral coordination and improved policy coherence for development nationally, regionally and globally.

As we build our visions for the future at the UN High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in October 2013, we should consider the progress made in terms of partnerships and cooperation on international migration in previous international fora.

The *Programme of Action* adopted at the *International Conference on Population and Development* in Cairo in 1994 encouraged more cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination. Following this, the 2005 report from the *Global Commission on International Migration* (GCIM) underlined “the paramount importance of interstate consultation and cooperation as a basis for the formulation and implementation of migration policies” as well as the “need for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the different multilateral international organizations working in the field of migration”. Further, a set of principles for action were presented, including that “such efforts must be based on a better appreciation of the close linkages [...] between international migration and development...”.

The following year, the Secretary General established the *Global Migration Group* (GMG) as a response to the issue of multilateral coordination and cooperation.<sup>1</sup> The *2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development* acknowledged the recently established GMG and highlighted that “national strategies to address the impact of international migration on development should be complemented by strengthened bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation.” In view of the overwhelming interest in the continuation of global dialogue on international migration and development, the Secretary-General also proposed the creation a global forum as a venue for discussing such issues in a systematic and comprehensive way. In response, Belgium offered to host the first meeting of the *Global Forum on Migration and Development* (GFMD) the following year. Since its inception, dialogue and trust have emerged in a domain that used to be characterized by polarization and lack of trust.

Over the years, states have engaged in constructive discussion around issues like *labour migration and mobility; diasporas; remittances; strategies for addressing irregular migration and enabling regular migration; the rights of migrants; policy coherence and mainstreaming; as well as data and research; governance of migration and coordination of dialogue.*

Looking at more concrete outcomes, we have seen documentation of good practice of bilateral labour arrangements; benchmarks, monitoring and licensing systems for recruiters and other intermediaries; sharing of legal frameworks that enable mobility and skills circulation; and sharing of practices to facilitate productive investments and spending on health and education through remittances.

When dealing with rights, the discussions in the GFMD have not only focused on international conventions, but also engaged with what measures are in place for migrants to access social and economic rights. Examples of issues that have been discussed include portability of pensions as well as national examples of cost-effective health care models.

This is a very positive development. By sharing experiences and lessons learnt in the GFMD, the Forum paves way for improvements in policy, programmes and practice. Ultimately this will bring benefit for countries of origin, destination and migrants themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> This inter-agency group (ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNCTAD, UN-DESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, UNODC, UN Regional Commissions, UN Women, the World Bank and WHO) aims to promote wider application of international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches to the issue of international migration. It stopped short of the GCIM proposal to establish an Inter-agency Global Migration Facility, which would have included a permanent secretariat with staff seconded by institutions and a funding mechanism.

In a recent assessment of the GFMD an overwhelming majority of states confirmed that the Forum and its working methods bring value added compared to other international fora. Indeed, the ever increasing number of governments that engage with the process testifies to this success.

In my mind, the success of the Forum largely stems from its voluntary and state-led nature. Governments set the agenda and thus feel a strong ownership for the issues being discussed. Interested states gather in government teams set up around shared policy priorities and challenges in relation to migration and development. This working method allows Governments to systematically interact and exchange experiences with each other and other stakeholders, over extended periods of time, to identify relevant practices and learn from each other.

Sweden has had the privilege of assuming the Chairmanship of the GFMD following an assessment process. In our programme for the 2013-2014 GFMD, Sweden has interpreted the results of the assessment as a call for three mutually reinforcing objectives. First, on substance, we are intensifying the efforts to *strengthen the development dimension* of the Forum. Second, on the process, we want to make the Forum *more dynamic* by reenergizing the involvement and ownership by states and seek better outreach to other stakeholders, including the Global Migration Group and other observers, civil society and the private sector. Third, we hope that the Forum can become *more durable* and achieve sustainable impact by developing a multiannual work plan and achieving more stable and predictable funding, and by ensuring that the accumulated knowledge and good practice is shared more systematically and thus, hopefully, implemented more broadly.

The development dimension of the GFMD is primarily promoted through the focus on policy coherence between migration and development for making migration a driver of inclusive social and economic development. Efforts are also made to encourage more development actors to take part in the Forum.

In view of the strong recognition given to the enabling role of migration for development, the Swedish Chairmanship has made it a priority to consider the integration of migration in the post-2015 development agenda. In practical terms, migration first needs to be recognized as an *enabler of relevant development goals*, e.g. related to poverty reduction, health and education. Second, there needs to be *partnerships forged* around migration to facilitate international migration that is safe for migrants, operates within the laws of states, is less costly both in human and financial terms, and is more productive for stakeholders: migrants, their families, their employers, and their countries and communities of origin and destination. Migration-related partnerships should be supported by clear targets and indicators that can be monitored, e.g. related to reducing transaction costs of remittances, lowering the cost of recruitment born by migrants as well as concrete steps to eliminate discrimination against migrants who are legally present in their territories and to ensure that migrants can work at their highest skill level.

Drawing on the recommendations from past events, the inclusion of migration in the post-2015 development agenda would go a long way towards *supporting national strategies to enhance the development effect of migration* and *better appreciating the linkages between migration and development*, as suggested in the 2006 High-level Dialogue and the principles of action from the GCIM respectively.

This would send a strong signal to governments and development actors, be they national planning commissions, bilateral development cooperation agencies or multilateral development agencies, to take migration into consideration in their development analysis, plans and monitoring efforts. As these actors combine efforts to collect data as well as monitor and report on progress, enhanced coordination among actors around migration and development could be expected at the country level as well as the global level. Ultimately, therefore, by including migration in the post-2015 development agenda, we would be 1) encouraging improved institutional and policy coherence at the national level, 2) prompt the multilateral organizations to coordinate their work more effectively and 3) foster closer inter-governmental cooperation on the issue of migration and development.

As the current Chair of the GFMD, Sweden would encourage stakeholders to nurture the constructive approach to migration and development that has emerged over the years, especially in the GFMD, as we go into the 2013 High-level Dialogue. In that spirit, the High-level Dialogue would allow us to advocate forcefully for making advances on all of the three fronts listed above, by:

- i) Calling for the integration of migration into the post-2015 development agenda;
- ii) Sending clear signals to the GMG that we want to see it improve its responsiveness to governments and enhance its capacity to coordinate its work at headquarters and country level; and finally,
- iii) Clearly recognising the success of the GFMD as a constructive trust-building and knowledge-sharing platform among all UN members, but outside the formal UN structures.

In conclusion, we need to continue *strengthening intergovernmental cooperation and coordination through the GFMD, enhance multilateral coordination through an improved Global Migration Group and encourage policy coherence between migration and development by ensuring that migration is integrated in the post-2015 development agenda.*