



MIGRATION POLICY PRACTICE

Short articles to better connect migration
research, policy and practice worldwide

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Human mobility in times of major global transformations

Marie McAuliffe, Charles Kwenin, Richa Arora and Jenna Blower-Nassiri¹

Key global transformations are affecting migration and displacement in ways we have not seen before. Major geopolitical, environmental and technological transformations are intensifying and impacting transnational conflict in new and dangerous ways, as in the case of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in early 2022, which has had widespread impacts on global food security, energy security and international law. Additionally, recent conflicts in places like Gaza have underscored the rapidly evolving and increasingly perilous geopolitical landscape. Ongoing environmental challenges, including pollution, climate heating and biodiversity collapse, continue to drive migration and displacement. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events and ecological degradation underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to mitigate their impacts on human mobility.

Meanwhile, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are evolving rapidly, transforming our daily lives in so many ways, including our interactions with migration and mobility systems. While AI has the potential to enhance migration management, its uneven adoption risks exacerbating digital divides both between and within countries. Many nations, particularly least developed countries (LDCs), lack the necessary infrastructure and expertise to leverage AI effectively. This digital

divide could further marginalize these countries in global migration governance. Moreover, the *World Migration Report 2024* highlights the broader implications of digitalization on migration, stressing the need for digital equality to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration. The introduction of multilateral frameworks and cooperative measures provides some optimism for addressing these challenges, but significant work remains to ensure that technological advancements benefit all stakeholders in the migration process.

It is in this evolving global context that this issue of *Migration Policy Practice* features a range of articles analysing the latest trends and data in migration to support informed policymaking and implementation. Through these individual articles, the issue zooms in on various aspects of regional challenges owing to migration – for example, migrant integration and its public impact in Latin America and the Caribbean (Muñoz, Luzes and Rodriguez), or different legalities and nuances of migrant protection of Filipino workers in the maritime industry (Dacanay, Galam and Pia). In the wake of increasing climate shocks, this issue emphasizes the need for countries to take into account climate factors while developing or implementing their labour migration policies (Huckstep and Clemens) and brings forward a case study of the Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change (KDMECC) as a regional framework for addressing climate-induced migration at the regional level (Lim Ah Ken, Jäntti, Makela and

¹ Marie McAuliffe, IOM; Charles Kwenin, University of Ghana; Richa Arora, GIZ; and Jenna Blower, IOM and York University.

Kobusinge). This issue also examines the impact of migration on local society through a couple of case studies, specifically on the role of foreign doctors in Seychelles (Shields and Walton-Roberts) and on the food systems of migrants in an urban city of South Africa (Matamanda and Bhanye).

The *Migration Policy Practice* Editorial Team would like to extend its gratitude to the 2022–2023 peer reviewers (see details in text box), as well as the Editorial Advisory Committee (see details on the last page of this issue) for their critical contributions to supporting research and analysis in migration policy and practice.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Marie, Charles, Richa and Jenna

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World Migration Report 2024: Introduction and overview

Marie McAuliffe and Linda Oucho¹

Introduction

It has been more than two years since the release of the *World Migration Report 2022*, which provided an overview of the global transformations intensely affecting migration and displacement around the world. While acknowledging ongoing changes related to demographic transitions, as well as economic and social transformations, the 2022 report outlined the major geopolitical, environmental and technological transformations that shape migration and mobility, sometimes profoundly. The impacts of these systemic global shifts have only intensified further in the last two-year period. For example, hardening geopolitics has seen us witness previously unthinkable conflict in terms of both scale and nature. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in early 2022 signalled a pivotal shift for the world, with some arguing that it “marked an abrupt end to 30 years of globalization and all the international cooperation that made that possible”.² The immediate impacts on Ukraine and Europe continue to be felt by millions of people, while the global affects have touched many more, as the war ripples through

food security, energy security, international law, multilateralism, military strategy and alliances.³

More recently, and notwithstanding devastating conflicts in many places around the world in the last two years (such as in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen), the conflict in Gaza is profoundly shocking for even the most seasoned geopolitical analysts, as well as long-serving humanitarians.⁴ The regional and global consequences are potentially severe, highlighting how geopolitics are changing quickly and in dangerous ways.⁵ At the time of writing (November 2023), the number of deaths and displacements are already very high, and the humanitarian response intensely difficult and complex.⁶

It is fair to say that the intensification of ecologically negative human activity, an issue raised in the previous *World Migration Report* (i.e. the 2022 edition), has only intensified: Overconsumption and overproduction linked to unsustainable economic growth, resource

¹ Marie McAuliffe is the Head of the Migration Research and Publications Division of IOM. Linda Oucho is the Executive Director of the Africa Migration and Development Policy Centre. This short article is an extract of the Overview chapter of the *World Migration Report 2024*.

² Bronwen Maddox, *The Director’s Annual Lecture 2023*, video recording, Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs (10 January 2023).

³ Stuart Coles, Lisa Rellstab, Pepin Bergsen, John Kampfner, Ben Bland, Alex Vines, Sanam Vakil, Alice Billon-Galland, Jamie Shea, Kataryna Wolczuk, Yu Jie, Magdalene Karalis, Keir Giles, Patricia Lewis, Antony Froggatt, John Lough, Laura Wellesley, Tim Benton, James Nixey, Joanna Szostek, Orysia Lutsevych, Rashmin Sagoo and Timothy Ash, “Seven ways Russia’s war on Ukraine has changed the world”, blog post. Chatham House (20 February 2023).

⁴ Robin Wright, “The five global dangers from the Gaza war”, blog post. Wilson Center (31 October 2023).

⁵ Nabeel A. Khoury, “Gaza and the harbingers of future conflict”, blog post. Arab Center Washington, D.C. (30 October 2023).

⁶ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), ““We need an immediate humanitarian ceasefire”, statement by principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, on the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, article. IASC (5 November 2023).

depletion and biodiversity collapse, as well as ongoing climate change (including global heating), are continuing to grip the world. We are more aware than ever before of the extremely negative consequences of human activities that are not preserving the planet's ecological systems. The potential consequences for human migration and mobility are high in terms of global consciousness as climate records continue to be broken,⁷ even as the specific future impacts and scenarios continue to be contested, discussed and debated.⁸ At any rate, there is a strong sense that major impacts will occur without adequate preventative actions related to carbon emissions and green technology uptake, as well as more granular preparedness actions, such as disaster risk reduction work underpinned by climate finance.⁹

In the previous edition of the *World Migration Report*, we presented a chapter analysing the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in migration systems, while also pointing to the ongoing impacts of technological change across wide areas of social, political and economic life globally. Since then, we have witnessed major advances in AI, especially generative AI tools that have burst onto the world stage, impacting

a wide range of sectors and occupations, with calls from some to embrace such tools¹⁰ while others (most notably the creators of the latest generative AI tools themselves) caution against the increasing proliferation of AI technologies throughout our societies.¹¹

The highly uneven, sustained use of AI in only some migration systems points to the heightened risk that AI technologies in migration and mobility systems are on track to exacerbating digital divides, both between and within States.¹² A prerequisite to AI uptake is digital capability in information and communications technology (ICT), particularly the digital data capture of processes and applicants' identity data. These actions require access to ICT infrastructure and electricity, as well as skilled ICT staff – critical necessities lacking in many countries around the world, but most especially least developed countries (LDCs).¹³ This is yet another domain in which differential capacities and resources widen the gap between States, adding to the digital divide and the structural disadvantages experienced by LDCs in migration management. This “asymmetry of power” in AI for migration is an ongoing problem globally, likely to be exacerbated with every new advance.¹⁴

⁷ Such as the worst wildfire season (Canada) and the hottest summer (global), as well as the driest September (Australia), on record.

⁸ United Nations Security Council, “With climate crisis generating growing threats to global peace, security council must ramp up efforts, lessen risk of conflicts, speakers stress in open debate”, meeting coverage (SC/15318 of 13 June 2023).

⁹ John Birkmann, Emma Liwenga, Rajiv Pandey, Emily Boyd, Riyanti Djalante, François Gemenne, Walter Leal Filho, Patricia Fernanda Pinho, Lindsay Stringer and David Wrathall, “Poverty, livelihoods and sustainable development”, in *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, contribution of Working Group II to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegria, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Löschke, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)) (Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2022).

¹⁰ Justin Doubleday, “New HHS research agency ‘fully embracing’ generative AI”, *Federal News Network* (21 November 2023).

¹¹ James Vincent, “Top AI researchers and CEOs warn against ‘risk of extinction’ in 22-word statement”, *The Verge* (30 May 2023).

¹² Marie McAuliffe, “AI in migration is fuelling global inequality: How can we bridge the gap?” *The Agenda Weekly* (of the World Economic Forum) (25 January 2023).

¹³ Ratnakar Adhikari and Taffere Tesfachew, “Technology is the key to transforming least developed countries. Here’s how”, *The Agenda Weekly* (of the World Economic Forum) (13 January 2022).

¹⁴ Ana Beduschi and Marie McAuliffe, “Artificial intelligence, migration and mobility: implications for policy and practice” in *World Migration Report 2022* (M. McAuliffe and A. Triandafyllidou, eds.) (Geneva, IOM, 2021).



However, it is not just inequality between States that will impact migrants. The move towards greater digitalization of migration management and increased use of AI, including for visa services, border processing and identity management, will increasingly require potential migrants to be able to engage with authorities via digital channels. This poses obstacles for many people around the world who do not have access to ICT.¹⁵ Supporting access to safe, orderly and regular migration requires that digital equality is actively supported.

Migration continues to be part of the solution for many economies, societies and families around the world

Despite some of the toxicity of political narratives that rely on hate and division, migration has long served many millions of people around the world well – whether in origin, transit or destination countries – providing opportunities and enriching their lives. However, barely a day goes by without multiple media reports – whether in traditional or newer forms of media – focusing on negative aspects of migration. While this may reflect the changing nature of migration in some parts of the world, it is important to recognize that media reporting continues to place greater emphasis on “bad” news.¹⁶ In addition, disinformation tactics are increasingly being used by nefarious actors, with negative impacts on public, political and social media discourse on migration.¹⁷

“Normalizing” the migration narrative is a critical factor in being able to realize the benefits of migration.

In the face of negatively skewed discussions, it can be easy to lose sight of the fact that international migration remains relatively uncommon, with a mere 3.6 per cent (or 281 million) of the world being international migrants. The vast majority of people do not move across borders to live.

Long-term research and analysis also tells us unequivocally that migration is a driver of human development and can generate significant benefits for migrants, their families and countries of origin. The wages that migrants earn abroad can be many multiples of what they could earn doing similar jobs back home. International remittances have grown from an estimated USD 128 billion in 2000 to USD 831 billion in 2022 and now far outstrip official development assistance to developing countries and foreign direct investment.

Migration can also provide an important skills boost, which can be critically important for destination countries experiencing population declines. In addition to enhancing national income and average living standards, immigration can have a positive effect on the labour market by increasing labour supply in sectors and occupations suffering from shortages of workers, as well as helping address mismatches in the job market. These positive labour market effects are not just evident in high-skilled sectors but can also occur in lower-skilled occupations. Immigration increases both the supply of and the demand for labour, which means that labour immigration (including of lower-skilled workers) can generate additional employment opportunities for existing workers.

¹⁵ International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2020* (Geneva, ITU, 2020).

¹⁶ William Allen, Scott Blinder and Robert McNeil, “Media reporting of migrants and migration”, in *World Migration Report 2018* (M. McAuliffe and M. Ruhs, eds.) (Geneva, IOM, 2017).

¹⁷ Eileen Culloty, Jane Suiter, Itayi Viriri and Sara Creta, “Disinformation about migration: an age-old issue with new tech dimensions”, in *World Migration Report 2022* (M. McAuliffe and A. Triandafyllidou, eds.) (Geneva, IOM, 2021).

Research also shows that migrants provide a source of dynamism globally and are overrepresented in innovation and patents, art and science awards, start-ups and successful companies. The immigration of young workers can also help with easing pressures on the pension systems of high-income countries with rapidly ageing populations. While immigration can have adverse labour market effects (e.g. on wages and employment of nationals), most of the research literature finds that these negative impacts tend to be quite small, at least on average.¹⁸

Regular migration pathways boost public confidence in migration systems while also protecting migrants. International migration and mobility occurring within regional and global economic, social, political and security environments increasingly reflect migration policy settings. Where, how, when and with whom people migrate often depend on the options available to them, with many of these options being determined or shaped by national-level policies, as well as regional integration.¹⁹

Humanitarian crises due to displacement remain the exception, but they are also on the rise. Forced displacement is the highest on record in the modern era (see Table 3 in the WMR 2024). The situation is further exacerbated by environmental impacts and climate change, which some scientists are predicting will force more than 216 million people across the six

inhabited continents to be on the move within their countries by 2050.²⁰

Meanwhile, humanitarian needs are outpacing funding support. As humanitarian needs rise and domestic fiscal pressures grow, many donor countries are under pressure to reduce their development budgets, placing development support to LDCs at risk.²¹ Meanwhile, the risk of further conflict has not been higher in decades, as military spending reached a new record high of USD 2,240 billion in 2022, reflecting an ongoing reduction in peace globally, as well as rising geopolitical tensions.²² Humanitarian response will remain, for the foreseeable future, a major undertaking to support some of the most vulnerable people in the world.

World Migration Report 2024

Part I, on “key data and information on migration”, includes chapters on global migration trends and patterns, and regional dimensions and developments. These two chapters were produced institutionally by IOM, drawing primarily on analyses by IOM experts, practitioners and officials around the world. The six chapters in Part II are authored by applied and academic researchers working on migration, including those at IOM. These chapters cover a range of “complex and emerging migration issues”, including:

- Narrowing of mobility options for people from developing countries since 1995;

¹⁸ Ian Goldin, Andrew Pitt, Benjamin Nabarro and Kathleen Boyle, “Migration and the economy: economic realities, social impacts and political Choices”, Citi Global Perspectives and Solutions and Oxford Martin School report (New York, Citigroup, 2018).

¹⁹ Marie McAuliffe, Adrian Kitimbo, Alexandra M. Goossens and A.K.M. Ahsan Ullah, “Understanding migration journeys from migrants’ perspectives” in *World Migration Report 2018* (M. McAuliffe and M. Ruhs, eds.) (Geneva, IOM, 2017).

²⁰ Viviane Clement, Kanta Kumari Rigaud, Alex de Sherbinin, Bryan Jones, Susana Adamo, Jacob Schewe, Nian Sadiq and Elham Shabahat, *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2021).

²¹ Development Initiatives, “Key trends in humanitarian need and funding: 2022” in *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2023* (Bristol, United Kingdom, Development Initiatives, 2023).

²² Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “World military expenditure reaches new record high as European spending surges”, press release (24 April 2023).



- Human security in migration;
- Gender dimensions of migration;
- Climate change, food insecurity and migration;
- Global governance of migration;
- Migration and mobility in a post-COVID world.

Part I

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the latest available global data and trends on international migrants (stocks) and international migration (flows). It also provides a discussion of particular migrant groups – migrant workers, international students, refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons – as well as of international remittances. In addition, the chapter refers to the existing body of IOM programmatic data, particularly on missing migrants, assisted voluntary returns and reintegration, resettlement and displacement tracking.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of key regional dimensions of and developments in migration. The discussion focuses on six world regions, as identified by the United Nations: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America, and Oceania. For each of these regions, the analysis includes: (a) an overview and brief discussion of key population-related statistics, and (b) succinct descriptions of “key features and developments” in migration in the region, based on a wide range of data, information and analyses.

Part II

Chapter 4: Growing migration inequality: What do the global data actually show?²³

This chapter first appeared in the *World Migration Report 2022* and has been included in this edition due to the demand for presentations of its analysis. It examines the questions, “Who migrates internationally?” and “Where do they go?” It analyses diverse statistical data and draws upon some of the existing body of research on migration determinants and decision-making.

Analysis of the international migrant stock and Human Development Index data shows that between 1995 and 2020, migration from low- and medium-development countries increased, but only slightly, reconfirming existing macroeconomic analyses showing that international migration from low-income countries has historically been limited.

Contrary to previous understandings of international migration, the analysis indicates that there has been a “polarizing” effect, with migration activity increasingly being associated with highly developed countries. This raises the key issue of migration aspirations held by potential migrants from developing countries around the world who may wish to realize opportunities through international migration but are unable to do so, as regular pathways are unavailable to them.

²³ Chapter authors: Marie McAuliffe, Guy Abel, Linda Adhiambo Oucho and Adam Sawyer.

Chapter 5: Migration and human security: unpacking myths and examining new realities and responses²⁴

This chapter examines the interactions between migration, mobility and human security in contemporary settings at a time when misinformation and disinformation about migration and migrants are both increasing and increasingly effective.

The most significant link between migration and security relates to the human security of migrants themselves, rather than the national security of States. The vulnerability of migrants throughout the migration cycle is evident at all stages – pre-departure, transit, entry, stay and return – and in a wide variety of manifestations. However, it is important to note that not all international migration is connected to, or caused by, human insecurity.

Policies can potentially improve human security for migrants and communities, addressing international, regional, national and subnational policy considerations, as shown in the six short case studies presented in this chapter. There is no one-size-fits-all policy approach to improving human security, as it depends on specific challenges and how they manifest. Therefore, authorities at multiple levels and non-State actors need to actively develop, implement and measure policies that facilitate a human security approach to migration and mobility.

Chapter 6: Gender and migration: trends, gaps and urgent action²⁵

This chapter provides an overview of the interactions between migration and gender across diverse geographies worldwide. It covers family migration, marriage migration and displacement, with a particular focus on labour migration, one of the main – and highly gendered – types of migration.

The chapter explores how gender influences migration experiences, including displacement, throughout the migration cycle – from pre-departure to entry and stay in destination countries and, if applicable, return to the country of origin. The showcased examples illustrate how gender may trigger diverse opportunities, as well as vulnerabilities and risks for migrants.

Drawing from the analysis of the existing gender dimensions throughout the migration cycle, four cross-cutting gender challenges are identified, complemented by promising practices or innovative interventions from different countries. These are related to stereotypes, access to information, the digital divide and regular migration pathways. The chapter highlights the urgency of adopting a gender-responsive approach to migration governance to empower migrants of all genders and promote gender equality more generally as a “prerequisite for a better world”.

²⁴ Chapter authors: Marie McAuliffe, Pablo Rojas Coppari, Md Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi and Ottilia Maunganidze.

²⁵ Chapter authors: Celine Bauloz, Margaret Walton-Roberts, Rose Jaji and Taehoon Lee.



Chapter 7: Climate change, food insecurity and human mobility: interlinkages, evidence and action²⁶

This chapter explores the interlinkages between climate change, food insecurity and human mobility, highlighting the complexities of their relationships in multiple scenarios across the globe. The analysis is nuanced and goes beyond the simplistic view of human mobility as a natural consequence of climate change impacts and food insecurity.

Evidence shows that climate change plays an important part in adding further pressure on existing systems and communities. However, it cannot be considered the sole driver of food insecurity or migration, given prevailing power dynamics, fragilities in governance, structures of globalized food production and other social factors.

Migration appears as a coping or adaptation strategy to reduce the adverse effects of climate change. Nonetheless, in some contexts, it can be maladaptive. The outcomes of migration as an adaptation tool depend on the particular circumstances of the individual or household engaging in human mobility, as well as on the involvement and agency of the migrant.

The chapter also showcases the need for highly contextual interventions that address inequality and power dynamics, including a gender perspective of migration, leveraging local and indigenous knowledge, and carefully assessing possible maladaptive consequences for vulnerable populations.

Chapter 8: Towards a global governance of migration? From the 2005 Global Commission on International Migration to the 2022 International Migration Review Forum and beyond²⁷

This chapter explores the implications of global migration governance as a multi-stakeholder regime under the guidance of the United Nations, building on chapters from the two previous World Migration Reports. It traces the evolution of international cooperation on migration, from the Global Commission for International Migration (2005) to the 2022 International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), delving into the historical dimension and examining the influence of past recommendations.

The chapter analyses the outcomes of the IMRF, shedding light on key tensions and contentious issues in policy discussions surrounding global migration governance. By providing a comprehensive view of the developments between 2003 and the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018, it explores the impact of systemic crises and geopolitical changes, emphasizing the role played by the Global Forum on Migration and Development.

Chapter 9: A post-pandemic rebound? Migration and mobility globally after COVID-19²⁸

This chapter examines the transformative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on global migration and mobility, providing an update to the chapter

²⁶ Chapter authors: Pablo Escribano and Diego Pons Gandini.

²⁷ Chapter authors: Andrea Milan, Amanda Bisong and Paddy Siyanga Knudsen.

²⁸ Chapter authors: Alan Gamlen, Marie McAuliffe and S. Irudaya Rajan.

on COVID-19 in the *World Migration Report 2022*. It addresses the following questions: How have travel and movement restrictions changed since the last Report? How have migration and mobility patterns evolved across the same period? What are the most important long-term implications of these trends?

Human migration and mobility have rebounded significantly since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after three years, much of the world is still less mobile than it was in 2019. The harshest restrictions have receded, but they have left behind a more complex and restrictive migration policy landscape.

COVID-19 has catalysed or accelerated social transformations, both temporary and structural, across regions. These transformations include: changes in consumption patterns in developed and developing countries; high inflation and global economic slowdowns; demographic changes; the ongoing importance of remittances sent by migrant workers to their families and communities; automation; digital outsourcing; and the changing role of labour mobility in the global economy.

The full *World Migration Report 2024* is available in web (HTML) and PDF formats from the *World Migration Report* website: <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int>. The website includes the report, along with interactive data visualizations and a range of digital tools.



Shifting perceptions on migration: insights and strategies from Latin America and the Caribbean

Felipe Muñoz Gómez, Marta Luzes and Lucina Rodríguez¹

Introduction

Over the past two decades, migration has risen in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region. In 2000, the migrant population in the region numbered around 7 million people.² However, by 2020, this number had surged to 15 million people. This increase in migration is primarily attributed to the ongoing and substantial displacement of Venezuelans to neighbouring countries due to the political, economic and humanitarian challenges prevailing in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. As of March 2023, the number of Venezuelans who had left their country exceeded 7 million.³ Nonetheless, other noteworthy intraregional migration patterns have gained significance. These include historical and amplified movements from Haiti to Chile and the Dominican Republic, the heightened migration through the Darién Gap as a route towards the United States, the continual migration from Nicaragua to Costa Rica, and the growing flows of individuals from Northern Central America en route to the United States or Mexico.⁴

These dynamic flows present important challenges to host countries in terms of, among others, reception efforts, providing access to essential services, integrating migrants into financial frameworks and ensuring their inclusion in the labour market. Among these integration challenges, social cohesion between migrants and host communities and acceptance of migrants have become increasingly prominent issues. The role of public opinion is central to achieving social cohesion, as it is increasingly important in shaping public policy and facilitating the successful integration of migrants in host communities.

Negative public sentiments about migration can create obstacles to social cohesion, leading to detrimental costs and outcomes for host nations. In the last several years, migration has gained prominence in political discourse in the region, compelling governments to consider local attitudes and preferences of local communities in relation to migration matters. Comprehending public sentiment and perceptions of local populations towards migrants becomes imperative for crafting well-informed public policies and interventions that effectively facilitate integration within host countries.

Several factors contribute to the development of individuals' opinions about migrants. These factors encompass both economic considerations and non-economic elements, including cultural or racial biases, personal and social identity, cultural values and convictions, and interactions within

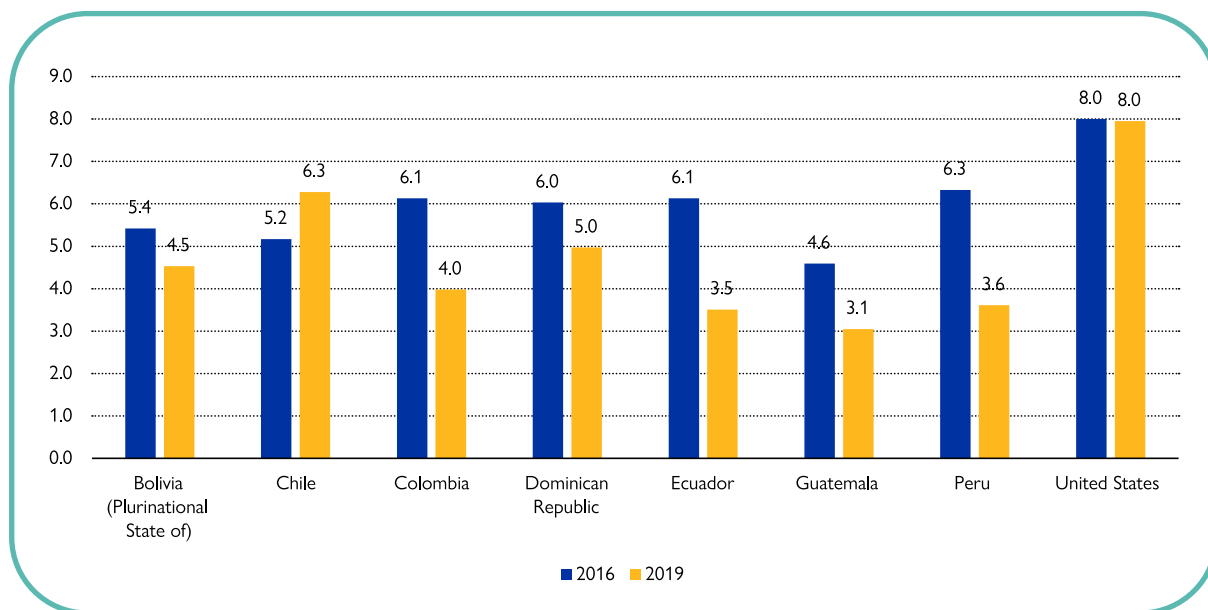
¹ Felipe Muñoz Gómez, Inter-American Development Bank; Marta Luzes, Inter-American Development Bank; Lucina Rodríguez, Vancouver School of Economics, University of British Columbia.

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), *International Migrant Stock 2020*, database (2021).

³ Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela (R4V), *Homepage* (accessed 1 August 2023).

⁴ For updated information on crossings through the Darién Gap, refer to: ACAPS, "Panama: Increase in migrant traffic through the Darién Gap", briefing note (19 April 2023).

Figure 1. LAC region countries' Gallup's Migrant Acceptance Index scores, 2016–2019



Source: Migrant Acceptance Index data obtained by the authors directly from Gallup.

society, among other influences.⁵ To design successful policies, governments need a thorough understanding of the primary worries and fears held by the local population. This awareness is crucial when crafting messages that resonate effectively with the public.

The growing presence of migrants in the region has led to new narratives about migration. Views about the influence of migration on crime rates, its impacts on labour markets and unemployment, and the perception that this population might undermine the culture of the host country have become central themes in the

discussion.⁶ This article delves into the trends in public opinion across the LAC region over the past five years. It contemplates strategies that can foster acceptance and build trust towards migrants. The article also calls upon policymakers to take action in crafting more constructive narratives and encourages governments to invest in cost-effective measures to address these issues effectively.

Tendencies of public opinion towards migration in the region

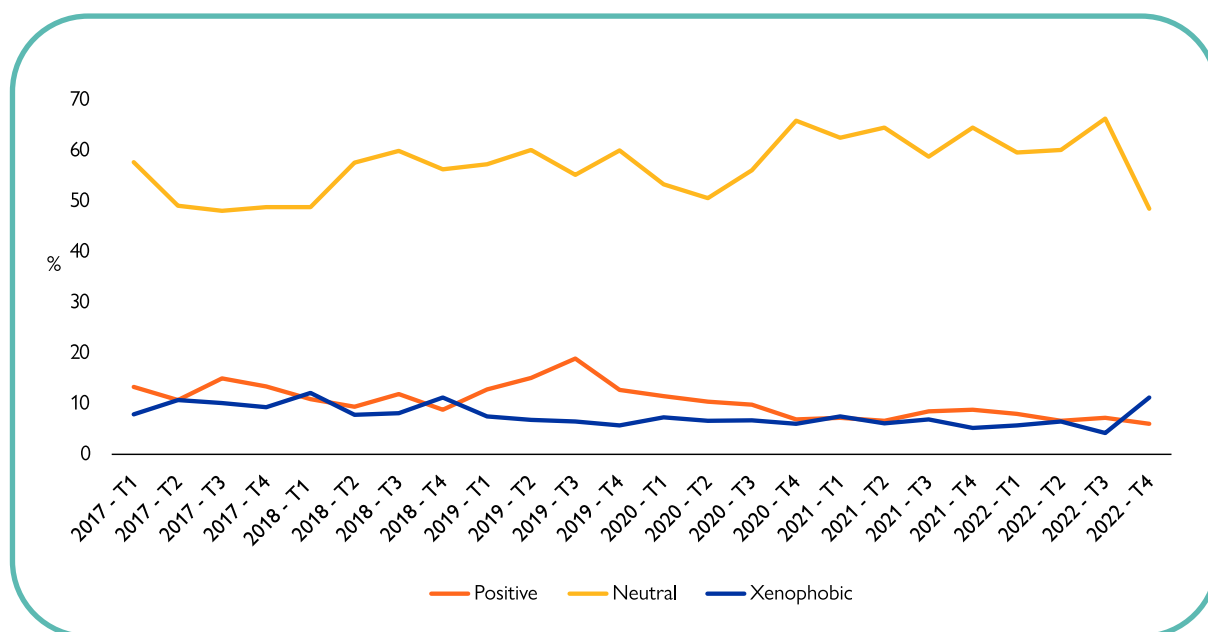
Prejudices and deteriorating public opinion towards the migrant population are increasing in the LAC region. According to Gallup's Migrant

⁵ Anna Maria Mayda, "Who is against immigration? A cross-country investigation of individual attitudes toward immigrants", *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 88(3):510–530 (2006); Justin Allen Berg, "Explaining attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policy: a review of the theoretical literature", *Sociology Compass*, 9:23–34 (2015).

⁶ Dany Bahar, Meagan Dooley and Andrew Selee, "Inmigrantes venezolanos, crimen y percepciones falsas: Un análisis de los datos en Colombia, Perú y Chile" [Venezuelan immigrants, crime and false perceptions: An analysis of the data in Colombia, Peru and Chile], policy brief (Washington, D.C., Migration Policy Institute, 2020) (in Spanish); Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, "From fear to solidarity: The difficulty in shifting public narratives about refugees", report (Washington, D.C., Migration Policy Institute, 2022).



Figure 2. Sentiment analysis of Twitter conversations on migration in the LAC region, 2017–2022



Source: Public Perceptions Laboratory on Migration, *Reacción a tweets de cuentas migratorias institucionales* [Reaction to Tweets from Institutional Immigration Accounts], data set (in Spanish).

Acceptance Index, levels of migrant acceptance declined significantly in most countries in the region between 2016 and 2019, with Peru, Ecuador and Colombia also experiencing the most significant declines worldwide (Figure 1).⁷ These results are consistent with those of regional public opinion surveys that show lower acceptance of migrant populations.

Data from social media between 2017 and 2022 points to a similar trend. Analysis of Twitter data in the region regarding the online conversation on migration shows that messages with xenophobic content are increasing. Findings from the Public Perceptions Laboratory on Migration

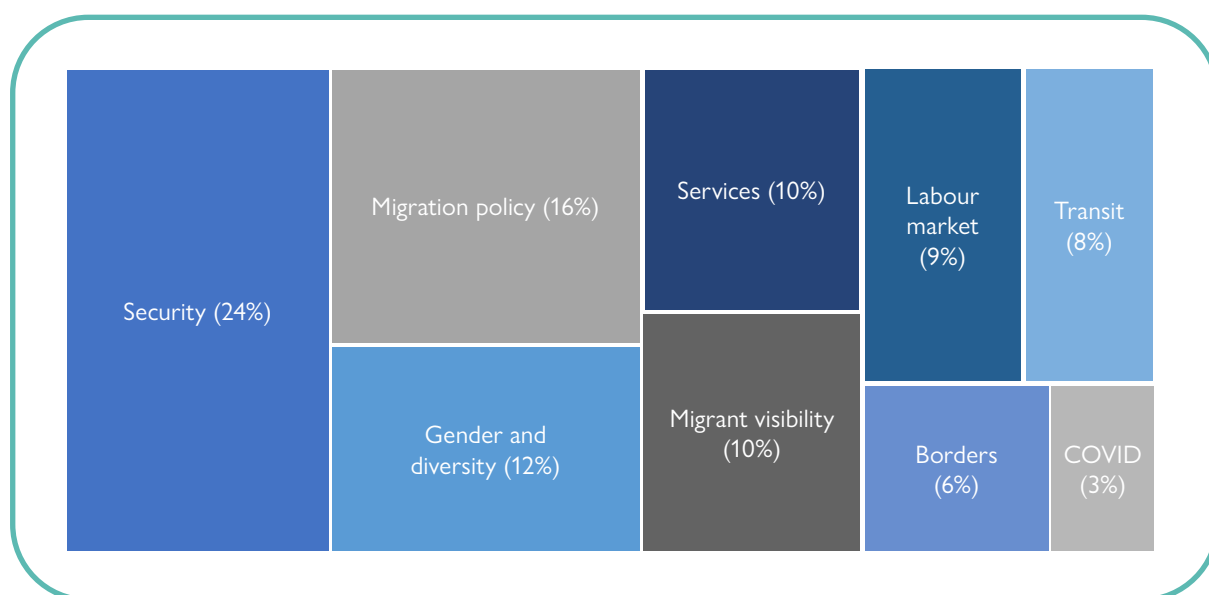
demonstrate that, whereas xenophobic tweets constituted merely 4 per cent of the migration discourse at the outset of 2017, this proportion surged to 23 per cent by the end of 2022. Nevertheless, certain subjects appear to hold greater significance than others.⁸

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in the predominant subjects within discussions about migration. In 2018, the migration discourse on Twitter primarily revolved around migration policy (21.5%), migration visibility (19%) and security (18.2%). During this period, most of the conversations centred on migration patterns and the policies implemented by various governments.

⁷ Neli Espipova, Julie Ray and Anita Pugliese, “World grows less accepting of migrants”, news article on the Gallup website (23 September 2020).

⁸ The [Public Perceptions Laboratory on Migration](#) is an initiative of the Migration Unit at the Inter-American Development Bank. The Laboratory monitors and analysis public opinion data on migration and offers insights on the best approaches to promote social cohesion in host communities.

Figure 3. Main topics of conversation on Twitter in the LAC region, 2022



Source: Public Perceptions Laboratory on Migration, *Reacción a tweets de cuentas migratorias institucionales* [Reaction to Tweets from Institutional Immigration Accounts], data set (in Spanish).

However, by 2022, the prevalent topics had evolved to encompass security (23.8%), migration policy (15.9%) and the labour market (9.3%). This shift highlights an amplified focus on security and migratory policy due to heightened concerns regarding irregular migration movements and the impact of migration on crime rates.⁹

These themes also hold significance in both regional and national public opinion surveys. Data from the seventh round of the World Values Survey in the region indicates that 46 per cent of participants believe that migration leads to increased crime. Notably, there are two countries where over 70 per cent of respondents

share this viewpoint: Colombia (75%) and Peru (73%).¹⁰

Similarly, in communities experiencing sudden and substantial waves of migration, a commonly held belief is that the influx of migrants leads to higher unemployment rates and increased competition within the job market. Data from the non-profit Latinobarómetro (2015 and 2020) illustrates this concern.¹¹ While 45 per cent of LAC respondents in 2015 agreed that immigrants competed for jobs with the native population, 60 per cent did so in 2020. These findings align with global trends observed in other regions that have also faced significant migration inflows,

⁹ Public Perceptions Laboratory on Migration, *Latin America and the Caribbean – Conversación* section (accessed on 1 August 2023).

¹⁰ Public Perceptions Laboratory on Migration, *Latin America and the Caribbean – Encuestas* section (accessed on 1 August 2023).

¹¹ Latinobarómetro, *Latinobarómetro 2015*, data set (n.d.); Latinobarómetro, *Latinobarómetro 2020*, data set (n.d.).



where issues such as economic instability, concerns about safety and challenges to national identity have been prominent.¹²

Social media analysis reveals that online conversation follows patterns related to national or regional events involving migrants. Furthermore, it also demonstrates that even though xenophobia is on the rise, the majority of the population does not hold unequivocal strong negative or positive opinions of migration. This finding holds growing significance as governments and policymakers consider strategies to mould the narrative and shape public opinion and behaviour regarding migrants in the region.

What can we do to change the narrative?

Despite the increasing importance of designing effective policies for shaping attitudes towards migrants, there remains a scarcity of evidence regarding which low-cost interventions are effective in improving public opinion of migrants. Interventions that facilitate interaction between opposing groups can encourage inclusive behaviours, but their implementation on a larger scale is often costly. Conversely, perspective-taking interventions that prompt individuals to adopt the perspective of a migrant have demonstrated success in inducing changes in attitude across various contexts. A recent study conducted in Colombia showed that such perspective-taking interventions, where individuals mentally put themselves “in the shoes

of a migrant”, can lead to increased prosocial behaviour and trust towards migrants.¹³

On the other hand, interventions centred around providing accurate information can effectively rectify misconceptions about immigrant populations’ size and characteristics without incurring high costs. However, their impact on policy attitudes and behaviours yields mixed results. An illustrative example is a recent study carried out across nine countries in the LAC region.¹⁴ This project involved the use of informative and emotive video interventions that aimed to improve acceptance and perception of migrants and were cost-effective and easily implementable. Overall, the results revealed that both videos significantly improved perceptions, promoted altruism and fostered trust of the migrant population among the native population.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that these interventions come with limitations that require careful consideration. For instance, many interventions aimed at altering perceptions tend to produce short-term effects and might yield fewer enduring shifts in attitudes. This challenge is also applicable when contemplating how changes in perceptions translate into changes in behaviour. While interventions can influence perceptions, effectively transforming these shifts into tangible actions can be a more formidable task.

¹² Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, Haim Malka and Shelly Culbertson, “How we talk about migration: The link between migration narratives, policy and power”, report (Washington, D.C., Migration Policy Institute, 2021).

¹³ Marisol Rodríguez Chatruc and Sandra V. Rozo, “How does it feel to be part of the minority? Impacts of perspective-taking on prosocial behaviors”, IZA Working Paper Series, No. 14303 (Bonn, Institute of Labour Economics (IZA), 2021).

¹⁴ Guillermo Cruces, Johanna Fajardo-Gonzalez, Pablo Hernández, Ana Ibáñez, Marta Luzes, Marcela Meléndez, Felipe Muñoz Gómez, Lucina Rodríguez Guillén and Laura Tenjo, *Un Mundo Mejor para la Población Migrante de América Latina y el Caribe [A Better World for Migrants in Latin America and the Caribbean]* (Washington, D.C. and New York, Inter-American Development Bank and United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

Conversely, individuals frequently harbour deep-rooted beliefs and biases, making it arduous for interventions to fully reverse these outlooks. Certain individuals, particularly those with strong convictions, might oppose the shift in perspective and persist in holding negative or prejudiced viewpoints. This predicament is particularly pronounced among adults and older individuals. Additionally, people might selectively interpret information that aligns with their existing beliefs. Lastly, interventions aimed at changing perceptions might assume a universalist approach, overlooking the diverse range of attitudes towards migrants that can be influenced by other factors.

Some practical ideas for communicating about migration

Governments should have information on the population's responses and reactions to migration issues. This entails identifying the specific messages and subjects that tend to spark xenophobic discussions, as well as discerning which segments of the population are inclined towards issues related to migration. This knowledge enables governments to act more effectively and to employ tools that promote a better environment for migration. Although achieving this is neither straightforward nor rapid, various communication tools are available to achieve this goal.

Having an adverse public opinion on migration makes it politically difficult for governments to make decisions about integrating the migrant population. Indeed, research indicates that a negative stance towards migration can not only result in policies that impose restrictions on migration and migrants but can also lead to problems of coexistence and cohesion that have

effects on the general well-being of the host society.

Public opinion displays differing reactions contingent upon many factors, including the type of migration, the pace of arrival and cultural proximity to the receiving country. Therefore, a universal solution does not exist that would work in all countries. This is true even more so in Latin America and the Caribbean, where in most countries, issues of public opinion and perceptions are only recently starting to undergo analysis.

A recent study conducted in the region aligns with existing literature and reflects the results of different experiments conducted in other parts of the world. The study offers some ideas on communication about migration that can help improve public perception of migration.¹⁵ It is noteworthy to highlight a few of the study's key messages: Efforts and campaigns that aim to improve perceptions and show the benefits of migration should not only come from the government. The involvement of migrants themselves is crucial. Recognized public figures such as artists, singers and influencers have proven effective in conveying messages about these benefits. An additional point is that this works best when there is an organized voice from the government on these issues and even when a minimum agreement on messaging is reached with civil society actors and United Nations agencies. This was exemplified during the challenging phase of Venezuelan migration (2018–2021) in Colombia and the efforts

¹⁵ Ibid.



undertaken by the Government of Colombia to coordinate communications and messaging regarding migration.

Furthermore, the study highlights the crucial role the media plays in shaping public opinion on migration due to its influence on how migration information is disseminated. It is not the denial of complex issues but, rather, establishing some minimum standards for information dissemination that contributes to constructive public sentiment. The use of words like *invasion*, *human tide* and *crisis* to refer to migratory movements generates reactions of anguish among the native population. Along the same lines, it is vital to identify the channels through which migrants communicate. Traditional media is often not the best avenue for reaching the migrant population and contributing to better interaction.

Finally, the issue of information should often be focused on segments of the population that do not have very well-formed ideas about migration. Research studies in many countries, including some in Latin America and the Caribbean, agree that the “movable middle” can be influenced, at least in the short term, by appropriate information mechanisms and messages. People who are on the very extreme edge, with pro- or anti-migration positions, already find it very difficult to change their respective positions.

Conclusion

The migration landscape in the LAC region has undergone significant changes. The new migration realities have brought with them challenges for receiving countries. Today, public perception of migration has changed in almost all countries, and its deterioration is more or less the general trend. This is reflected in regional surveys, national surveys, social networks and in media reporting on migration. In-depth study of this topic is still incipient in the region, but initiatives like the Public Opinion and Migration Laboratory are generating more information that can facilitate a thorough analysis of public opinion and the factors influencing it.

Demonstrating the many positive benefits of migration is a communication challenge. There are some experimental and proven mechanisms that work in the short term, along with communication tools that governments can employ to enhance well-informed discussions on migration. Some of these have been outlined in this review.

The challenge lies in fostering not only a generally welcoming and positive attitude towards migration, but also in creating a supportive public opinion environment. This is crucial for maximizing the benefits of migration across all sectors of host societies. It is our hope that contributions like this one will contribute to this purpose.



The protection of the welfare of Filipino seafarers working on foreign-flagged ships

Jabeth Dacanay, Roderick Galam and Jean Pia¹

Introduction

The Philippines is seen by other countries and international organizations as a model in terms of regulating international labour migration.² Its migration policy has expanded its scope beyond labour export to adopt a comprehensive, rights-based framework that covers the entire migration process – from the regulation of recruitment agencies to the provision of pre-departure training, insurance systems, consular assistance, overseas voting rights, support for family members of migrants and programmes for the reintegration of returned migrants.³ However, the mandate of the newly created Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), which absorbed the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), the agency that hitherto administered the country's international labour migration programme, centres on two conflicting primary functions: (a) the promotion of maximum employment of Filipinos overseas and (b) the protection of their right to fair and

equitable labour practices.⁴ This tension has had negative consequences on the provision and protection of the welfare of Filipino migrant workers, as demonstrated by the experiences of Filipino seafarers, whose welfare protection and provision has been affected by the occurrence of regulatory capture whereby private interests have come to be seen as public interests.

Globalized shipping and the challenge of protecting Filipino seafarers on foreign ships

The Philippines is the world's biggest source of seafarers, supplying at least 25 per cent of the global seafarer workforce, estimated at 1.9 million. Seafaring labour migration is an important component of the Philippine labour migration programme, contributing significantly to the national economy. In 2022, Filipino seafarers on board ocean-going vessels, who comprise about 5 per cent of the 10.2 million Filipinos living and working overseas, remitted about USD 6.71 billion.⁵ This amount was 18.56 per cent of the total overseas Filipinos' remittances of about USD 36.14 billion and accounted for 8.9 per cent

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² Jenina Joy Chavez and Nicola Piper, "The reluctant leader: the Philippine journey from labour export to championing a rights-based approach to overseas employment", in: *Asian Leadership in Policy and Governance* (E. Berman and M.S. Hague, eds.) (Bingley, United Kingdom, Emerald Publishers, 2015), pp. 305–344.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁴ Aniceto C. Orbeta, Jr, Michael R. Cabalfin and Michael Ralph M. Abrigo, "Institutions serving Philippine international labour migrants", PIDS Discussion Paper Series, No. 2009-31 (Makati City, Philippines, Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), 2009); Jorge V. Tigno, "At the mercy of the market?: State-enabled, market-oriented labour migration and women migrants from the Philippines", *Philippine Political Science Journal*, 35(1):19–36 (2014).

⁵ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, "Overseas Filipinos' cash remittances by country, by source", data set (accessed 30 November 2023).



and 8.4 per cent of the country's GDP and gross national income, respectively.⁶

When Filipinos leave for work overseas, they are “transported to the legal system of another country”, making the protection and welfare policies of the Philippines “not only inadequate but, in most cases, even inapplicable.”⁷ Working on board foreign-flagged ships is the equivalent of working in another country. However, unlike in the case of land-based work, where, for instance, jurisdiction and compliance to regulations governing living, working, occupational health and safety conditions could be contained and enforced within the State where employers and their workers are located, several States may simultaneously assume jurisdiction and enforcement in the shipping industry. This is because shipping is very globalized; State responsibility for matters relating to ship ownership, vessel registration and labour recruitment does not neatly overlap.⁸ The shipping industry's regulatory regime, which allows only recognized enforcement bodies to board ships, makes it extremely difficult (if not impossible) for a representative of the Government of the Philippines to check on on-board working conditions and worksites.

Finally, international seafarers' living and working conditions are governed by health and safety standards, which are developed and implemented through international rules and regulations by flag States (the ship's country of registration), port States and shipowners. The ship's flag of registration “determines the environmental, safety, labour, and taxation regulations governing the vessel and its owner in the first instance”; port States that have ratified relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization exercise enforcement of regulations through the inspection of ships calling at their ports.⁹ How, then, does the Philippines extend protection to Filipino seafarers working outside of its territorial and legal jurisdictions?

Extending the Philippines' regulatory reach

As a labour-supplying State, the Philippines' primary strategy is to create legal mechanisms that give it the power and jurisdiction to protect Filipino seafarers' welfare from within its borders.

Establishing rights and liabilities through licensing and accreditation

To ensure that a foreign shipowner or principal, or its authorized manning agency, can be held liable for obligations that Filipino seafarers are due, the POEA (which is now part of the newly created DMW) imposes a number of qualification requirements for the licensing of manning agencies, accreditation of foreign principals and enrolment of ships prior to any engagement of Filipino seafarers. For instance, manning agencies,

⁶ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), “Personal remittances reach a new record high in December 2022; full-year level of US\$36.1 billion highest to date”, press release (15 February 2023).

⁷ Julyn S. Ambito and Melissa Suzette L. Banzon, “Review of Philippine migration laws and regulations: gains, gaps, prospects” PIDS Discussion Paper Series, No. 2011-37 (Makati City, Philippine Institute of Development Studies (PIDS), 2011).

⁸ Helen Sampson, “Beyond borders: The regulation of the living and working conditions of international seafarers”, in *Global Labour Migration: New Directions* (E. Boris, H. Gottfried, J. Greene and J. Tham, eds.) (Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 2023), p. 225.

⁹ Ibid.

which supply seafarers to ship operators around the world, must comply with nationality requirements for ownership and capitalization and the submission of documentary evidence to support their application for accreditation. In addition, the foreign principal or shipowner is required to execute a special power of attorney authorizing a manning agency to sign for and on its behalf – allowing itself to sue or be sued on employment contracts in the Philippines through the manning agency.

It is through manning agencies that the Government exerts pressure on foreign shipowners who are, after all, beyond the jurisdiction of the Philippine legal and migration management systems. This, in a way, benefits Filipino seafarers who would otherwise find difficulty pursuing legal claims against foreign shipowners or, in the worst cases, would be left without due recourse for the abuses and unfair treatment perpetrated on them. Philippine private manning agencies are therefore considered to be integral tools of government control, tying down not only seafarers with foreign shipowners but also foreign shipowners with the Government of the Philippines. As part of an agreement, manning agencies: (a) assume full responsibility for all claims and liabilities that may arise in connection with the use of their licence; (b) assume joint and several liabilities with the shipowner for all claims and liabilities arising out of a seafarer's employment agreement (under which either of the responsible parties can be compelled to pay the entire obligation); and (c) guarantee compliance with Philippine and flag State labour laws, as well as relevant international laws. Under this scheme, the Philippines therefore effectively shifts to private agencies its obligations as a labour-supplying State to the shipping community under internationally agreed conventions.

Extending protection by contract

The Philippines has extended its sovereign and regulatory reach to cover the employment of its seafarer nationals by stipulating that Philippine laws and administrative and judicial courts govern contracts concluded between foreign shipowners and Filipino seafarers. The Philippines accomplished this by adopting the first iteration of the POEA Standard Employment Contract (POEA-SEC), a piece of government regulation with 33 provisions designed to protect seafarers. It lists the rules and regulations governing the relationship between seafarers and shipowners, to which both parties must adhere for the duration of employment. It defines the seafarer's duties; specifies working hours and overtime; lays down the procedures for the termination of employment, filing of grievances and repatriation; and provides a schedule of benefits for injuries or illnesses suffered during employment. The schedule of benefits establishes a definable amount to compensate a seafarer in the event of an accident that results in disability. The POEA-SEC protects Filipino seafarers by providing a framework guaranteeing that a certain set of minimum standards of employment are met.¹⁰

The adoption of the POEA-SEC as a condition for seafarers' employment is significant in several ways. First, in theory, it reflects the intention of the Government to represent the interest of seafarers, who may be at a disadvantage in negotiating contracts with their employers. Second, when the manning agency signs a contract on behalf of a foreign shipping company,

¹⁰ William C. Terry, "Working on the water: on legal space and seafarer protection in the cruise industry", *Economic Geography*, 85(4):463–482 (2009).



there is assurance that the latter voluntarily subjects itself to Philippine laws and jurisdiction. Third, the POEA-SEC is concerned with public interest and is designed (supposedly) to protect and benefit Filipino international seafarers. Since there is no nationally consistent regulatory framework set out in Philippine legislation, it is the POEA-SEC that governs the welfare, health and safety of Filipino international seafarers. Fourth, the POEA-SEC has an international binding effect. It was formulated in accordance with and, in theory, adheres to international standards, including labour standards, and maritime practices.

Since its implementation in 1983, the POEA-SEC has undergone substantial changes. During its mandatory periodic review in May 2008, amendments to the POEA-SEC were renegotiated through a tripartite consultation process involving maritime unions representing seafarer worker groups (e.g. the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP-ITF), the largest of these unions and an affiliate of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)), shipowners and manning agency associations, and government regulators.¹¹ A technical working group was formed to consult with various industry stakeholders. After more than two years of work, the POEA, through its Governing Board, issued a resolution on 4 October 2010 approving amendments to the POEA-SEC (thereby issued as the 2010 POEA-SEC,¹² to be

later superseded by the POEA-SEC of 2013). The amendments had prospective application, covering seafarers whose employment contracts were processed on 12 November 2010 or later.¹³

The POEA-SEC is composed of two parts. The first is the single-page "contract of employment" between the seafarer (employee) and the manning agency representing the principal or shipowner (employer), executed in triplicate.¹⁴ The second part, 40 pages long, contains the 33 sections of standard terms and conditions that govern the employment of Filipino seafarers on board ocean-going vessels. The Government of the Philippines prescribes a template for the standard employment contract to pre-empt complaints commonly lodged against contracts in general – such as fraud, the use of force or coercion, or breach of contract. The POEA requirement that every employment contract be processed and approved by the POEA is an additional measure to ensure that the contract is beneficial to persons signing it, especially the seafarer. The tripartite consultation process aims to ensure that the employment contract reflects the consensus of all stakeholders.

Extending protection but restricting Filipino seafarers' legal protection space

The Philippine provision for protection by contract restricts the legal protection space for seafarers' claims. First, due to the lobbying of the manning industry,¹⁵ the POEA-SEC stipulates that judicial and administrative bodies in the Philippines

¹¹ Ruben del Rosario, "An overview of the amendments to the POEA standard employment contract", article. Del Rosario & Del Rosario Law (11 November 2010).

¹² POEA, "Amended standard terms and conditions governing the overseas employment of Filipino seafarers on-board ocean-going ships", memorandum circular no. 10, series of 2010.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ The contract of employment was revised in 2013 by virtue of POEA memorandum circular no. 04, series of 2013 ("Revision of the one-page covering employment contract").

¹⁵ Terry, 2009.

have exclusive jurisdiction over Filipino seafarers' and their families' claims for compensation for injury, disability and death. Actions for tort ("seeking redress [to] ask for damages in the form of monetary compensation")¹⁶ or negligence can no longer be pursued against a foreign shipowner once a seafarer accepts the compensation benefits that they are entitled to under the schedule of payment prescribed by the Government of the Philippines for injury, death or illness sustained while on board a ship. The express waiver in the POEA-SEC of foreign jurisdiction on cases of compensation claims for death, illness and personal injury diminishes or derogates Filipino seafarers' rights and benefits. The imposition of a blanket and all-encompassing quitclaim and release deed restricts the human right of seafarers to seek redress of grievance from appropriate foreign courts that may award Filipino seafarers more generous compensations. In view of this provision in the POEA-SEC, compensation claims by or in behalf of Filipino seafarers brought to foreign jurisdiction are now being dismissed in those courts.

The Philippines has also restricted the grounds that may be used as basis for compensation claims. Although the POEA-SEC provides extensively for the receipt of compensation benefits in the case of injury, illness or death of a seafarer, its 2010 version, as amended in 2013, shows that not all kinds of injuries or illnesses are compensable, and that certain conditions have to be met: The injury, illness or death must occur during the term of the contract; it must be work-related or arise in the course of

employment; and the conditions under Section 32-A of the POEA-SEC, among others, must be satisfied. These requirements show that the burden has been shifted to the seafarer claiming compensation, which introduces a built-in "harm factor" to the compensation system. More complicated and litigious compensation procedures, with their numerous additional conditions, tend to stigmatize workers and prevent receipt of compensation.¹⁷

Legislation on Filipino seafarers' welfare and the influence of private sector actors

As indicated in the previous section, an influential private sector – the manning industry, composed of more than 400 agencies that supply seafarers to ship operators worldwide – has played an important role in shaping the Philippines' provision of protection for seafarers' welfare. The influence of the manning industry can be seen in the following landmark legislation and court decisions.

Supreme Court decision declaring seafarers as contractual employees

On 14 March 2000, the Philippine Supreme Court ruled that Filipino seafarers were regular employees and ordered a shipowner to reinstate two Filipino seafarers who had rendered 20 years of service on successive one-year contracts. This decision prompted the Filipino Association for Mariners' Employment (FAME), an association of manning agencies, to file a motion for intervention with the Supreme Court to reconsider its

¹⁶ Legal Information Institute, "Tort", definition. Cornell Law School (2023).

¹⁷ Katherine Lippel, "The private policing of injured workers in Canada: legitimate management practices or human rights violations?", *Policy and Practice in Health and Safety*, 1(2):97–118 (2003).



ruling, citing adverse effects on the Philippine manning industry. On 29 July 2002, the Supreme Court reversed its earlier ruling and declared Filipino seafarers to be contractual, not regular, employees whose employment was terminated every time their contract of employment expired. The Supreme Court further explained that, since it was an accepted maritime industry practice for employment to be for a fixed term, Filipino seafarers were therefore an exception to the provisions of the Philippine Labour Code on regular employment.

Republic Act 10022 (amending the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, Republic Act 8042)

Republic Act 10022 seeks to improve standards of protection and promotion of the welfare of migrant workers, their families and overseas Filipinos in distress. However, the final version of the bill was watered down due to the lobbying of the Joint Manning Group (JMG), the umbrella organization of Philippine manning industry associations. The JMG emphasized to legislators the supposed negative impacts of the proposed law on the manning industry. As a result, the approved version of Republic Act 10022 decriminalizes the appointment of specific medical clinics for seafarers, as long as the cost of pre-employment medical examination is borne by the principal; decriminalizes the designation of specific training centres for seafarers, provided that the cost of training is paid for by the principal; and allows manning agencies to submit to POEA certificates or any other proof of insurance coverage (if under a foreign insurance company) as evidence to show that seafarers are provided with the minimum benefits under the law.

Republic Act 10706: The Seafarers Protection Act

This law is touted as protecting seafarers from lawyers who charge excessive sums of money in exchange for legal representation in court cases. These cases cover compensation claims arising from accident, illness or death suffered in the course of their seafaring employment. Critics, however, see Republic Act 10706 as “anti-seafarer” because this law makes it more difficult for seafarers to find willing and competent lawyers to defend them against moneyed employers. What is remarkable about the law is its provenance, with industry insiders saying it was initiated by the private sector. Specifically, so-called “protection and indemnity clubs” (the insurance providers of the shipping industry) prepared the draft of the bill and forwarded it to the Angkla Party-list congressman, who represented seafarers in the House of Representatives. It was this party-list representative who then sponsored the bill that eventually became the Seafarers’ Protection Act.

The escrow provision of the Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers

On 27 September 2023, the Philippine Senate approved Senate Bill 2221, the “Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers”. The House of Representatives had earlier passed, on 6 March 2023, House Bill 7235, its version of the Magna Carta. The Magna Carta is a landmark piece of legislation that seeks to:

...provide seafarers with comprehensive protection before, during and after employment, especially in the event of maritime accidents, epidemics or pandemics, or other natural or man-made crises. It codifies the rights of seafarers into a single reference law, seeks to secure their rights

to decent, just and humane conditions of employment, and set[s] a guide for their training and education, overseas employment and ultimately retirement.¹⁸

The Magna Carta represents the Philippines’ effort to adopt and transform the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 into national (domestic) legislation (see Table).

Our discussion of the Magna Carta focuses on the escrow provision (linked to the crew compensation claims covered in the Seafarers’ Protection Act, discussed previously) that was eventually defeated and excluded from the approved Senate bill. Foreign shipowners and/or employers are required by Philippine law to pay Filipino seafarers’ full compensation for injury, illness or death, even if the decision could still be later appealed. These employers see this

law as flawed, as they unfairly and unnecessarily lose money in cases where they win the appeals process but can no longer recover the money they had already paid out (because it has been spent by the seafarer claimants). Through the powerful lobby of the manning industry, this escrow proposal was introduced and would amend, through legislative fiat, Section 223 of the Philippine Labour Code. This proposed revision recognizes escrow as a mode of executing the judgement award of the National Labour Relations Commission to delay the payment of a monetary award until final judgement by the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court. Even if the escrow provision did not make it into the final Senate version of the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, its inclusion in the bill deliberated by the Senate of the Philippines demonstrates the reach of the influence of the manning industry and foreign shipowners.

Table 1 . Analysis of the regulatory framework governing Filipino seafarers’ welfare

Legislation/Regulation	Salient features or provisions
The Philippine Labour Code of 1974 (Presidential Decree No. 442)	The Labour Code provides for regulations concerning the overseas employment of workers, including the hiring and employment of seafarers, and the operations of crewing agencies; the creation of the National Seamen Board (NSB); unionism, dispute settlement, the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike; and related matters that have implications on seafarers. Further, it sets legal provisions on occupational health and safety promotion and enforcement. Article 18 of the Labour Code prohibits direct hiring, except when the hiring entity is authorized by the Secretary of Labour, as is the case with the POEA and accredited private employment/recruitment agencies.
Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995 (Republic Act 8042)	The Act provides for the guarantee of migrant workers’ rights; deregulation or phaseout of regulatory functions of specific government agencies; stricter rules on illegal recruitment and corresponding penalties for such activities; selective deployment; repatriation of workers; and reintegration for return migrants. Republic Act 8042 likewise declares that the “State shall deploy overseas Filipino workers only in countries where the rights of Filipino workers are protected.”

¹⁸ Ina Alleco R. Silverio. “Lawyers say escrow provision in proposed magna carta of Filipino seafarers is unconstitutional”, news article. Maritime Fairtrade (12 May 2023).



Legislation/Regulation	Salient features or provisions
Act Amending the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act (Republic Act 10022)	<p>Section 1(h) of Republic Act 10022 explicitly mentions the role of manning agencies: The State recognizes non-governmental organizations, trade unions, workers' associations, stakeholders, and their similar entities duly recognized as legitimate, are partners of the State in the protection of Filipino migrant workers and in the promotion of their welfare. The State shall cooperate with them in a spirit of trust and mutual respect. The significant contribution of recruitment and manning agencies shall form part this partnership.</p> <p>This law is also an essential source of certain legal rights of seafarers.</p>
Seafarers Protection Act of 2015 (Republic Act 10706)	<p>Republic Act 10706 criminalizes “ambulance-chasing” and punishes those found guilty with a monetary penalty or prison sentence. It imposes a 10-per-cent limit on what lawyers can claim or charge on the total compensation awarded to seafarer claimants or their heirs, thus making it much less lucrative for them to represent claimants. The Seafarer Protection Act is seen as “anti-seafarer” because it discourages seafarers from making legitimate claims for injury or illness, or families from pursuing compensation for the death of their seafarer family member, by making legal representation so much more inaccessible.</p>
POEA Memorandum Circular No. 10, (series of 2010): Amended Standard Terms and Conditions Governing the Overseas Employment of Filipino Seafarers On-board Ocean-going Ships	<p>The memorandum circular is the second most important source of seafarers' legal rights. It embodies and, in effect, codifies the whole body of ILO and IMO conventions and Philippine laws, rules and regulations. It was agreed upon by a tripartite body representing the Government, employers and seafarer representatives. It is widely seen as ameliorating the working conditions of seafarers. It contains minimum standards that can be subject to further negotiation by collective bargaining.</p>
Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers (legislative bill)	<p>The bill seeks to protect the rights of Filipino seafarers before, throughout and even after their employment aboard internationally operating ships. It promotes rights in respect of workplace safety and security; fair employment; information and communication; organizing and assembly; legal representation; and health, welfare and medical care. It details the responsibilities of recruitment agencies, ship owners, maritime education institutions, licensing and certification bodies, and government agencies. Further, it lays down protocols for settling disputes.</p>
The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) of 2006	<p>The MLC provides for comprehensive rights to decent conditions and protection at work for the world's seafarers, including those pertaining to minimum requirements for seafarers to work on ships and the conditions of their employment; accommodation, recreational facilities, and food and catering; medical care and health, welfare and social security protection; and for the enforcement of these rights and employers' compliance with them. More specifically, Title 2 (on conditions of employment) mandates that a seafarer must have a lawful seafarer's employment agreement that specifies the terms and conditions of employment. More specifically, Standard A2.1, (in para. 1) enumerates the basic conditions for the seafarer's employment agreement to be considered a “fair agreement”, among others. It requires both the seafarer and the shipowner, or the representative of the shipowner, to sign the agreement. It also requires that the seafarer be given the opportunity to examine and seek advice on the agreement before signing it, and that they be provided with a signed original copy of the agreement and other similar requirements. Section A.2.4 outlines the specific contents of a standard employment agreement.</p>

Note: The analysis presented in this table is the authors' own.

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown the significant role that the manning industry has played in shaping Philippine case law and legislation pertaining to the country's regulation of international labour migration, specifically the employment of Filipino seafarers. The manning industry, which represents foreign shipowners' interests, has influenced the formulation and enactment of laws and regulations to its favour, consequently shaping the country's judicial, legislative and regulatory infrastructure. Because the Philippines wishes to remain the global maritime industry's favoured source of seafaring labour, so as to keep overseas Filipinos' remittances flowing into the country, it must ensure the employability and competitiveness of its seafarers by reducing the financial risks faced by shipowners in contracting labour.¹⁹ These shipowners, which are foreign and international, are assisted by other foreign and international entities, such as protection and indemnity clubs and shipowners' associations.

Laws that are presented as protecting seafarers – indeed, legislated in their name – ultimately protect and advance the interests of foreign shipowners and the manning industry. Our analysis reveals the occurrence of regulatory capture²⁰ – “the result or process by which regulation, in law or application, is consistently or repeatedly directed away from the public

interest and toward the interests of the regulated industry, by the intent and action of the industry itself.”²¹

The Philippines has a chance to genuinely protect the welfare of its seafarers. In translating the MLC into national legislation through the Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers, the Philippines must institute regulatory changes to incorporate provisions that are beneficial to its seafaring workforce to comply with the requirements of the Convention. Existing regulations that are inconsistent with the MLC must be repealed, including those that specifically provide for a waiver of foreign jurisdiction and filing of torts and negligence cases in the event of death, personal injury and ill-health arising from occupational health and safety risks. The ILO Model for Release and Quitclaim does not include these waivers.

¹⁹ Roderick Galam, “The Philippines and seafaring labour export: State, non-state and international actors in the assembly and employability of Filipino seafarers” *International Migration*, 2022:1–15 (2022).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Daniel Carpenter and David A. Moss, “Introduction”, in *Preventing Regulatory Capture: Special Interest Influence and How to Limit It* (D. Carpenter and D. Moss, eds.) (Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 13.



Capitalizing on the climate adaptation potential of labour migration: new institutions or continued incoherence?

Sam Huckstep and Michael Clemens¹

Introduction

Two key facts are not sufficiently considered in dialogue by policymakers. First, climate change disproportionately affects the poorest. Second, migration is perhaps the best tool the development community has for reducing household poverty. This article considers possible migration policy responses to climate change, arguing that labour migration is uniquely useful. It focuses particularly on the usefulness of temporary labour migration as a means of climate change adaptation.

International labour migration has outsized potential to support adaptation to climate shocks. Given this fact, we argue that policymakers should better prioritize maximizing the climate change adaptation impacts of migration policy. Achieving this requires two institutional adjustments. First, countries would benefit from the work of independent, apolitical, specialized research agencies empowered to consider the effects of potential migration partnerships: namely, their potential contributions to development and to climate change adaptation. Second, countries would benefit from new mechanisms that improve the current, fragmented system and ensure coherence in migration policy planning. To this end, we propose the creation of two new specific national institutional bodies: (a) a national migration research agency and (b) a national

commissioner for migration policy, empowered to advise, negotiate and conclude partnership agreements.

Migration policy options in response to climate change

Discussions on the climate–migration nexus have typically focused on preparations for the movement of “climate migrants”. A range of policy solutions – from a new “climate refugee” status and “climate humanitarian visas”, to expanded temporary protection options – have been proposed.²

These policy proposals frequently face large challenges. Temporary protection is impermanent, often prone to political whims, and typically targets only those who are already in the country of destination when a disaster occurs in the country of origin. It, therefore, cannot be proactive and is of limited use for responding to slow-onset shocks.³

Other policy options – such as establishing a climate-targeted, quasi-refugee status and humanitarian visas – require untangling a definitional knot. Any government providing

¹ Sam Huckstep, Center for Global Development; Michael Clemens, George Mason University.

² See, for example, Ian Fry, *Providing legal options to protect the human rights of persons displaced across international borders due to climate change* – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change of 27 June 2023 (A/HRC/53/34); Jane McAdam, “Creating new norms on climate change, natural disasters and displacement: international developments 2010–2013”, *Refuge*, 29(2):11–26 (2014).

³ Jane McAdam, *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law* (Oxford, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, 2012).

specific protections to a “climate migrant” demographic must be able to establish criteria for assessing claims and distinguish those who fulfil them from those who do not. Almost any migration decision, however, is multicausal, and identifying the primary reason for movement is typically impossible.⁴ Any State attempt to determine whether and when a given person’s place of origin is or will become “uninhabitable” (except in some narrow circumstances, such as those of submerged atolls) will also be both highly subjective and often political.⁵ In fact, even among members of the same community, perceptions of uninhabitability can vary sharply.⁶ In addition, the current system of humanitarian migration, established in 1951, relies on migrants’ ability to prove, on an individual basis, that they satisfy objective criteria to establish that they are facing violent persecution.⁷ Likewise, a “climate migrant” would be required to objectively prove that they are moving due to climate change, a task that is conceptually and administratively unfeasible except in rare cases. Most importantly, there is no political willingness to reform the

post-1951 system to protect a large number of “climate migrants”, however defined. Indeed, current protections can be walked back on if the issue is reopened.⁸

Instead, it would be better to recognize that the current system of international humanitarian migration does not protect those endangered by climate change and cannot feasibly be reworked to do so. A better approach is to make alternative pathways coherent with climate considerations. In addition to the humanitarian migration regime, the current institutional landscape provides for four other principal migration regimes: labour migration; family reunification; ad hoc programmes, such as those for the provision of parole or temporary protected status; and free movement zones. The family reunification regime is unlikely to offer sufficient scope; ad hoc approaches are reactive, unpredictable and often temporary; and free movement zones are valuable but limited in geographic scope. We propose that integrating climate considerations into international labour migration pathways is most likely to offer adaptive opportunities to those affected by climate change, and that this should be managed through a vulnerability-oriented approach, proactively directing access to migration opportunities to those assessed to be most at risk of climate shocks.

The role of migration in climate change adaptation

Incorporating climate considerations into labour migration policy can allow for permanent

⁴ Ingrid Boas, Carol Farbotko, Helen Adams, Harald Sterly, Simon Bush, Kees van der Geest, Hanne Wiegel, Hasan Ashraf, Andrew Baldwin, Giovanni Bettini, Suzy Blondin, Mirjam de Bruijn, David Durand-Delacre, Christiane Fröhlich, Giovanna Gioli, Lucia Guaita, Elodie Hut, Francis X. Jarawura, Machiel Lamers, Samuel Lietaer, Sarah L. Nash, Etienne Piguet, Delf Rothe, Patrick Sakdapolrak, Lothar Smith, Basundhara Tripathy Furlong, Ethemcan Turhan, Jeroen Warner, Caroline Zickgraf, Richard Black and Mike Hulme, “Climate migration myths”, *Nature Climate Change*, 9:901–903 (2019).

⁵ Radley M. Horton, Alex de Sherbinin, David Wrathall and Michael Oppenheimer, “Assessing human habitability and migration”, *Science*, 372(6548):1279–1283 (2021).

⁶ Sonja Ayeb-Karlsson, Dominic Kniveton, Terry Cannon, Kees van der Geest, Istiak Ahmed, Erin M. Derrington, Ebenezer Florano and Denis Opiyo Opondo, “I will not go, I cannot go: cultural and social limitations of disaster preparedness in Asia, Africa, and Oceania”, *Disasters*, 43(4):752–770 (2019); Hanne Weigel, Jeroen Warner, Ingrid Boas and Machiel Lamers, “Safe from what? Understanding environmental non-migration in Chilean Patagonia through ontological security and risk perceptions”, *Regional Environmental Change*, 21(43) (2021).

⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters”, *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 33(1):151–165 (2021).

⁸ Dina Ionesco, “Let’s talk about climate migrants, not climate refugees”, blog post. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (6 June 2019).



migration from climate-vulnerable communities, as well as shorter-term migration that generates increased remittance flows towards vulnerable areas. The latter, short-term approach is more likely to be politically feasible than efforts to provide permanent relocation. “Migration as adaptation” is an increasingly recognized paradigm in the research and policy communities but has not yet been widely translated into practice.⁹ For climate-vulnerable households, migration can serve as a form of insurance: A family member can travel to an economy unaffected by the conditions in the place of origin in order to then send money back home. These remittances, sent following migration, can be transformative. Remittances can allow households to pay off debts, reducing the risk of spiralling into vulnerability; rebuild dwellings after a disaster or proactively strengthen them even before shocks; relocate to avoid sudden-onset disasters; maintain consumption when it would otherwise be impossible; and invest in resilient livelihoods.¹⁰

Most “adaptive migration” does not cross borders, but where migrants travel internationally, from low-income countries to higher-income countries, the impacts can be greater still. In the Philippines, international remittances are found to serve as insurance against rainfall shocks, making up for as much as 60 per cent of declines in household income. In surveys in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Senegal and

the United Republic of Tanzania, households not receiving remittances are unanimously agreed by researchers to be those that are most insecure in the face of climate shocks.¹¹

Remittances are intra- or interhousehold transfers, and their uses depend on the needs and choices of the receiving household. They are not always used for “direct adaptation”, but given their role in reducing vulnerability-enhancing poverty, most uses can be considered as supporting resilience. In this regard, remittances are analogous to unconditional cash transfers, which are known to be impactful in reducing vulnerability. One study, for example, finds that World Food Programme transfers provided before floods to households in Bangladesh allow for far better consumption levels (36% less likely to go a day without eating), lower asset losses, less likelihood of costly borrowing and higher earning potential post-disaster than among non-recipients.¹²

The benefits of remittances, although predominantly confined to the household level, can also have positive spillover effects. Remittances have been pooled at the community or project level to support local public good, sometimes with explicit climate adaptation goals. In Mauritania, for example, communities have

⁹ Sam Huckstep and Helen Dempster, “Climate migration at the 2022 International Migration Review Forum”, blog post. Center for Global Development (24 May 2022).

¹⁰ Sam Huckstep and Michael Clemens, “Climate change and migration: an omnibus overview for policymakers and development practitioners”, CGD policy paper no. 292 (Washington, D.C., Center for Global Development (CGD), 2023).

¹¹ Dean Yang and Hwajung Choi, “Are remittances insurance? Evidence from rainfall shocks in the Philippines”, *The World Bank Economic Review*, 21(2):219–248 (2007); Cecilia Tacoli, “Not only climate change: mobility, vulnerability and socio-economic transformations in environmentally fragile areas of Bolivia, Senegal and Tanzania”, Rural-Urban Interactions and Livelihood Strategies, working paper no. 28 (London, International Institute for Environment and Development, 2011).

¹² Ashley Pople, Ruth Hill, Stefan Dercon and Ben Brunckhorst, “Anticipatory cash transfers in climate disaster response”, CSAE working paper no. 2021-07 (Oxford, United Kingdom, Centre for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), 2021).

used remittances to install solar-powered wells.¹³ Elsewhere, remittances may also be deliberately channelled towards collective uses through institutions such as hometown development organizations and churches. At the meso-level, remittances can have large, cumulative effects that spill beyond tighter household networks through the purchase of goods or labour.

The need for coherence in migration programming to support development

“Policy coherence for development” is a long-standing, sector-wide goal, and migration is one of the greatest tools in the development toolbox. One review of studies examining the impacts of migration finds that “the gain in income from moving is immediate and huge...at least an order of magnitude larger than the income gains from any other development program that has been rigorously evaluated.”¹⁴ Despite this, coherence between migration policy and development goals is far from the norm. Migration policy is typically the result of competing actors, both within and outside government, at multiple levels, acting on information that is often limited and in a decision-making environment constrained by political pressures.¹⁵ For this reason, its development benefits are almost always “an

inadvertent product of other, mostly domestic, policy goals.”¹⁶

The enormous potential for development and climate adaptation offered by migration policy is, therefore, often overlooked. Climate finance goals for adaptation support are so far unmet, and, thus, supplementary funding sources should be embraced. Climate-conscious migration policy could play a major role in complementing anaemic funding flows.¹⁷ A coherent government approach to climate adaptation should see policymakers targeting migration pathways that involve populations that would most benefit: those who are poor, receive limited in situ support and are increasingly exposed to climate hazards.

Current national migration policy systems are generally inadequate for this task. New approaches will be needed if policy is to integrate climate considerations. Migration is broadly demand-driven and often undertaken through processes made crude by inadequate labour market data.¹⁸ There is still less consideration of how migration policy decisions impact migrant-sending States. Until this changes, the full development potential of migration policy remains locked away.

¹³ Jürgen Scheffran, Elina Marmer and Papa Sow, “Migration as a contribution to resilience and innovation in climate adaptation: Social networks and co-development in Northwest Africa”, *Applied Geography*, 33:119–127 (2012).

¹⁴ David McKenzie, “Poverty, inequality, and international migration: insights from 10 years of Migration and Development Conference”, *Revue d'économie du développement*, 25(3-4):13–28 (2017).

¹⁵ Stephen Castles, “The factors that make and unmake migration policies”, *International Migration Review*, 38(3):852–884 (2004); Andrew Geddes, “Migration governance”, in *Introduction to Migration Studies* (P. Scholten, ed.) (Cham, Switzerland, Springer, 2022), pp. 311–323; Linn Axelsson, Charlotta Hedberg, Nils Pettersson and Qian Zhang, “Re-visiting the ‘black box’ of migration: state-intermediary co-production of regulatory spaces of labour migration”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(3):594–612 (2022).

¹⁶ Kathy Newland, “Leveraging the links between migration and development: US Government policy, practice, and potential”, CGD policy paper no. 112 (Washington, D.C., Center for Global Development (CGD), 2017)

¹⁷ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Adaptation Gap Report 2023* (Nairobi, UNEP, 2023).

¹⁸ Geddes, 2022.



Ex ante external migration policy effects and the migration research agency

To maximize the potential of migration for climate adaptation, countries of destination must make migration policy after considering not only domestic labour market requirements, but also the possible impacts of external migration on the migrant-sending country. Partnership options should be assessed for their expected benefits to both sending and destination countries.

No countries currently do these institutionally. The closest that any have come is by mounting ad hoc collaborations, through various government departments, to organize development-conscious migration partnerships. Where these have so far been attempted – as in the partnership between Colombia and Spain, and the short-lived Haiti–United States seasonal work programme – they have largely been limited to pilot programmes constrained in scope and time.¹⁹

We propose that, to make the most of migration’s adaptation potential, ex ante evaluation of migration policy decisions be institutionalized. This requires the development of in-house capability, which could be accomplished through the creation of a national research agency tasked with:

- (a) Assessing potential partner countries’ vulnerability to climate change;

- (b) Advising on the establishment of migration partnerships based on information from (a).

The research agency would not only evaluate structural characteristics of the country of origin, including domestic unemployment patterns and GDP, but also integrate anticipatory considerations of exposure to shock risk and post-shock reconstruction needs. The agency would, for example, consider the extent to which a possible partner country is dependent on agriculture; its exposure to macroeconomic shocks and climate shocks; and its inflows of foreign direct investment, official development assistance and remittances, and propose prioritizing countries with the greatest overall score based on these criteria.

The migration research agency would also be responsible for:

- (a) Modelling existing and projected domestic labour market needs, or working closely with the agency already responsible for this task, if any;
- (b) Modelling the impacts of migration agreements upon partner countries’ development and climate adaptation capacity;
- (c) Advising relevant bodies on migration policy options, taking development and adaptation benefits into account.

In order to have the legitimacy to provide advice, the research agency will need to be independent, apolitical and specialized in its scope, with sufficient staff and resources to allow it to conduct the necessary research. In establishing their national migration research agencies,

¹⁹ Nicole de Moor, “Labour migration for vulnerable communities: a strategy to adapt to a changing environment”, COMCAD Arbeitspapiere working paper no. 101 (Bielefeld, Germany, Centre on Migration, Citizenship and Development (COMCAD), 2011); Michael A. Clemens and Hannah Postel, “Temporary work visas as US–Haiti development cooperation: a preliminary impact evaluation”, *IZA Journal of Labor and Development*, 6, 4 (2017).

countries can learn from trade as a policy area: A number of countries, including the United States, have trade commissions tasked with providing ex ante political and development advice on trade agreements.

Increasing coherence through a Commissioner for Migration

The second institutional shift concerns administrations' capacity to act coherently towards meeting migration goals. Migration policy has historically been fragmented; many countries' policy approaches consist largely of "bolt-ons" responding in limited ways to unforeseen or temporary labour market fluctuations. These are often reactive, unpredictable and politically short-term.

Climate-conscious migration pathways, targeted at serving vulnerable populations, must be planned and agreed within and – possibly – between governments. This could conceivably be undertaken through considerably improved cooperation between government departments but is more likely to be successful if a single actor is empowered to oversee policy strategy. We therefore propose the creation of the post of Migration Commissioner, responsible for advising on, negotiating and agreeing to migration partnerships on the basis of domestic needs and upon the advice of the national migration research agency.

In this area, migration policy can again learn from trade and, more directly, from a shift recently undertaken by Germany. As regards the former, many countries have appointed trade commissioners to advise on and manage trade policy, and, indeed, targeted trade policy is broadly accepted as a viable instrument to

assist international development. Currently, 133 countries have national trade facilitation committees, empowered to advise their governments on trade priorities; monitor technical assistance programmes; and negotiate, promote and monitor trade agreements.²⁰ In the United States, trade policy is overseen by the Office of the United States Trade Representative, which is responsible for coordinating international trade, commodity and investment policy.²¹ This concentration of responsibility is likely to yield better coordination than a fragmented approach.

This central coordination approach has, in fact, already been trialled in the migration policy sphere. An example is Germany's creation of the new post of Special Commissioner for Migration Agreements following the election of the coalition government in 2021, with the first Special Commissioner taking office in February 2023. The office is intended to "draw up practical [migration] agreements with key countries of origin" based on or involving economic cooperation, training programmes, qualification recognition and technology transfer, among other considerations.²² The Special Commissioner's office is expected to be well-staffed and to contribute to coherent migration policy. Among aspects currently being considered, climate change could increasingly be a factor for allowing migration to be targeted towards serving more vulnerable populations.

²⁰ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Aggregated sdata on National Trade Facilitation Committees", data set (accessed 14 November 2023).

²¹ Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), *Mission of the USTR* section (2023).

²² Germany, Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI), "Special Commissioner for Migration Agreements", article. BMI (August 2023).



The Office of the Migration Commissioner would require a legal mandate to negotiate migration agreements that consider both domestic labour needs and development impacts. It would need certain capacities, with adequate financial and technical resources, to fulfil this mandate. The Office would be responsible for:

- (a) Consulting actively with the private sector to understand labour market needs; with civil society to ensure that migrant workers' rights are respected; and with the diaspora regarding development and resilience-building;
- (b) Liaising with the national migration policy research agency to assess development impacts before agreeing to a partnership;
- (c) Approaching potential partner countries to negotiate and to agree to partnerships;
- (d) Advising the executive branch and the legislature on migration-related policy issues.

Conclusion

Migration can support adaptation to climate change, but current governance regimes do not seek to harness its potential. The situation will not improve without new approaches to migration policy. Labour migration is likely to become the primary option for international migration beyond the region surrounding the country of origin, given that family reunification and ad hoc measures are unreliable and subject to quotas, and that humanitarian pathways are conceptually, politically and administratively challenging.

This article has primarily focused on the adaptation benefits of increased access to labour migration. These benefits can be transformative, considerably outstripping alternative development interventions and allowing crucial access to capital for impoverished and vulnerable populations. These benefits will not be realized, however, unless migration policy takes the supply side into account, in addition to the demand side.

Policy coherence between migration, climate and development policy must be institutionalized. This requires providing policymakers with access to information about the impacts of migration policies even before they are created – which necessitates the creation of a bureau tasked with undertaking ex ante evaluations of impacts of external migration policy. It also requires improved coordination between government departments, which is most likely to be achieved through the creation of a new office in which responsibility for migration partnerships is concentrated. In this respect, countries can learn from the trade sector as a policy area and the example of Germany.

The challenges of climate change adaptation are immense. Innovative approaches are needed, and governments should leap at low-hanging fruit. Targeting migration towards the climate-vulnerable is a fruit that is both low-hanging and juicy. The potential benefits are enormous: governments must now embrace the institutional reforms necessary to realize them.



Developing regional migration, environment and climate change policy frameworks for action: the case of the Kampala Ministerial Declaration

Lisa Lim Ah Ken, Jyri J. Jantti, Noora K. Makela and Rose Kobusinge¹

Introduction

The East and Horn of Africa is one of the regions least responsible for, yet among the worst affected, by climate change, with its impacts already strongly influencing human mobility patterns. Action is needed urgently to stabilize vulnerable communities, prevent forced migration, facilitate regular migration for those who need and want to move, and protect people who are already on the move. However, the intertwined and pervasive nature of climate change and its influence on human mobility raises unique challenges for policy development and implementation.

Recent studies indicate that data gaps, policy incoherence and poor coordination hinder the effective implementation of existing instruments and policies relevant to human mobility and climate change. These issues raise questions about whether there is a need to develop new policy frameworks, strengthen existing frameworks, or, rather, focus on implementation and on the vertical alignment between global, regional and national solutions.

This article looks into the case of the Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change (KDMECC), which was developed and signed by 15 African States in July 2022. The Kampala Declaration sets the foundation for addressing the migration, environment and climate change (MECC) nexus and concretely articulates both the challenges and the solutions for addressing climate and environmentally induced human mobility in a regional setting, while demonstrating potential for scalability. As mobility in relation to climate change is becoming a norm for youth in the region, the process engaged youth in meaningful participation. This article looks particularly into the context and rationale that led to the development of this regional policy framework.

Migration, environment and climate change in the East and Horn of Africa region

Global climate change threatens livelihoods, habitability of territories and food security in the region, where investment in adaptation is lower, and dependence on natural resources is higher. In a region where roughly 80 per cent of livelihoods are related to agriculture, mostly rainfed, and where extreme weather events are increasing and precipitation patterns are changing, the influence of climate change on mobility decisions is significant.

The decision to migrate in the context of climate change can be made over a long period, such as in the case of slow-onset environmental degradation

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that reduces crop yields and erodes incomes over several consecutive seasons. In other instances, sudden-onset events force immediate decisions to flee, such as in cases of displacement due to floods. Due to gaps in data and the complexity behind migration decisions, particularly in the context of slow-onset environmental changes, it is difficult to estimate the actual number of people moving in the region due to climate change and environmental reasons. In instances of disaster displacement however, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre calculates over 3 million internal displacements in the region in 2022 due to weather-related events.

Rural–urban migration is a growing trend, as the impact of climate change in rural areas is intensified by existing socioeconomic inequalities relating to income levels and quality of education, health care and infrastructure, thereby attracting movement to urban areas. The divide between rural and urban development and the unequal impact on livelihoods escalates the urbanization trend, putting the existing infrastructure in urban centres under pressure. This concern is well documented in the national adaptation plans (NAPs) submitted from the region, which highlights this key climate mobility trend in the region.

Climate change affects different social groups in various ways; it can deepen pre-existing social divides, worsen existing vulnerabilities and expose new ones. While there is a lack of gender- and age-disaggregated data in relation to climate change, it is known that these factors influence the decisions and means to

migrate, as well as migration experiences.^{2,3} The population in the East and Horn of Africa region is young⁴ and often faces disadvantages related to sustainable income and accessing health and education systems, as well as opportunities that would enhance their ability to withstand climate change impacts. In addition, when youth are on the move, they typically move on their own and are at risk of losing their social networks and access to protection services. Despite these challenges, youth play crucial roles as change agents in advocating for climate action, disaster risk reduction and resilience-building. Likewise, when managed well, human mobility can bring about positive results to poverty reduction, lowering unemployment rates and enhancing sustainable development in both places of origin and destination.

Policy frameworks on migration, environment and climate change in the East and Horn of Africa region

Governments in the region have a keen awareness of human mobility, as demonstrated through the various policy frameworks that exist, such as free movement agreements, and the inclusion of some elements of human mobility in national climate change adaptation strategies. However, the strategies suffer from a limited conceptualization of human mobility in the climate change context, lack of concrete action plans and lack of funding for implementation. Although mobility has been

² UN Women, "Ensuring safe and regular migration for women and girls in the context of climate change", policy brief (New York, UN Women, 2023).

³ UNICEF, *Guiding Principles for Children on the Move in the Context of Climate Change* (New York, UNICEF, 2022).

⁴ African Union, *African Youth Charter*, adopted on 2 July 2006. (The African Youth Charter defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years.)

a traditional adaptation mechanism to weather-related disasters in the region and a viable adaptation strategy to the wider impacts of climate change, it remains an underdeveloped area in national and regional plans and strategies.

Although aspects of human mobility are prominent in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) submissions from the region, they are often partial, reflecting the fragmented inclusion of the topic in global climate change discussions.⁵ This can also be seen in the resources available for implementing action addressing climate change-related human mobility being scattered to small pools and considered difficult to access by governments,⁶ leading to a funding gap on a global level.

The transnational phenomenon of human mobility in the context of climate change affects the country of origin of the people on the move – and often the whole region. Incomplete global, continental and regional policy frameworks to address this often leads to difficulties with implementing solutions effectively and leverage support to those most in need.

The case of the Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment and Climate Change

Finding global consensus on climate action has often not moved at the urgency many of the most affected countries have hoped for. For example, the “loss and damage” conversation, mostly prioritized by developing countries, was first introduced to the United Nations in 1991 by Vanuatu, with the first concrete steps only agreed at the Twenty-seventh Conference of Parties (COP27) in 2022. Finding consensus on human mobility topics globally has been equally challenging.

With slow global progress on the perceived priority areas of developing countries, governments are either limited to unilateral plans and strategies that are not efficient at addressing transnational phenomena such as human mobility or climate change, or they can work with other governments with aligning interests for faster action. The Kampala Declaration showcases the latter approach by taking action regionally on a topic perceived as lacking global leadership and progress but considered an urgent priority area for the highly impacted countries in the region.

The Kampala Declaration provides a framework for action through the 12 commitments for addressing climate change and human mobility nexus in the region. Additionally, it indicates gaps in the global governance of climate change through its requests to the UNFCCC parties, relating to the lack of resources and support available to implement work related to human mobility in the context of climate change and the lack of possibilities for the youth to participate in climate resilience and adaptation-building activities.

⁵ IOM Regional Office for East and Horn of Africa and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – East African Development Bank Regional Collaboration Centre (RCC) Kampala, “Integration of human mobility in green economy and related policies in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region”, summary report (Nairobi, IOM, 2022).

⁶ Murenga, K and J.J. Jantti, “Planning considerations for a financing mechanism to address climate mobility in Africa”, KDMECC implementation report (Nairobi, IOM, 2024).



Through commitments and requests, the Kampala Declaration addresses fragmentation in the human mobility and climate change space by providing information on country priorities, giving the mandate for collaborative action, and identifying gaps and barriers in implementing commitments. As such, the Kampala Declaration is building UNFCCC submissions, such as NAPs, by developing a regional collaborative framework for implementation and trying to leverage global multilateral support in achieving climate action ambitions in the East and Horn of Africa.

The underimplementation of existing frameworks related to climate change and human mobility agreements, due to any of various reasons, raises the question of the feasibility of developing additional layer of frameworks and agreements to address issues related to human mobility and climate change. As such, the case of the Kampala Declaration shows an innovative example of leveraging collaborative action to renegotiate the climate action discourse to better integrate African priorities, in the spirit of the Paris Agreement's common but differentiated responsibilities.

Following its launch in 2022, several African member States demonstrated a keen interest in expanding the Kampala Declaration continentally, resulting in the development of a "Continental Addendum" to the declaration (also known as "KDMECC-AFRICA"), which was prepared and finalized by 48 African States during a high-level, technical conference of States in August 2023 in Nairobi. The addendum was then signed by ministers at a signing ceremony during the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi in September 2023. KDMECC-AFRICA elaborates an additional 25 commitments that address the challenges

and opportunities of climate-induced mobility across the continent. While 32 member States have signed the Kampala Declaration and its Continental Addendum to date, the process is still ongoing in 2023, with additional member States continuing to express their interest to also append their signatures.

Meaningful youth engagement in policymaking

Youth are often excluded from the decision-making processes due to age-related biases and sometimes they lack necessary capacities and capabilities to meaningfully participate in policy processes.⁷ To address the implications of climate change effectively, it is essential to ensure their right to active and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Youth consultations were held ahead of the Kampala Declaration conference and again ahead of the African youth forum, "Strengthening Africa Youth Voices on Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change", facilitated by IOM in August 2023. The youth emphasized the following needs and priorities:

- (a) To include young people from diverse backgrounds in decision-making processes at all levels, structures and systems. Whereas it is often said that "if you are not on the table, then you are on the menu", meaningful youth engagement goes beyond youth being in decision-making rooms and tables only. It rather

⁷ United Nations, "Meaningful youth engagement in policy and decision-making processes", Our Common Agenda policy brief 3 (New York, United Nations, 2023).

means youth having access to meaningful and non-tokenistic roles and spaces while ensuring continuous capacity development for them to effectively contribute to the discussion and decisions.

- (b) Youth capacities can be strengthened through mainstreaming youth participation through fairly paid internships and job opportunities, youth-led research opportunities, and engaging youth in decision-making processes and bodies. In addition, fostering intergenerational collaboration to bridge the knowledge gap and enhance knowledge exchange through mentorship and peer support at various levels can help to develop necessary skills.
- (c) To provide opportunities for youth leadership and implementation of youth-led initiatives at local communities and other levels, mobilizing collective action through finance allocation tailored for youth initiatives and eliminating barriers to the access to finance.

Indeed, meaningful youth engagement⁸ refers to the active involvement of young individuals throughout all levels of decision-making and policymaking processes that count. The United Nations has established a set of guiding core principles to enhance this.⁹

The Kampala Declaration process adhered to these principles. IOM, in partnership with the UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre for Eastern and Southern Africa, the UNFCCC official youth constituency (YOUNGO) and Chatham House strengthened capacities of youth advocates from across the East and Horn of Africa region and supported organizing youth consultations for them to develop a set of key messages¹⁰ that were integrated into the Kampala Declaration in July 2022. During the conference, the inclusion of youth advocates allowed them the platform to communicate their main areas of concern and commitments, in conjunction with government officials.

Notably, the COP27 witnessed the inauguration of the African Youth Declaration for Climate Mobility,¹¹ developed by African youth and supported by the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative (ACMI), to which IOM and others are partners. The African Youth Declaration for Climate Mobility integrated the youth messages articulated by the youth during the Kampala Declaration Conference. Consequently, both the KDMECC and African Youth Declaration for Climate Mobility contributed prompting the concrete mentions of human mobility within the outcome documents of COP27, which had not been witnessed before.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The core principles being as follows: (a) rights-based and safe, (b) institutionally mandated, (c) designated, (d) resourced, (e) transparent, (f) accessible, (g) voluntary, (h) informative, (i) reciprocal accountability, (j) diversity and inclusion and (k) youth as partners.

¹⁰ “Youth Key Messages for the Regional Conference on Migration and Climate Change” from the Regional Inter-Ministerial Conference on Migration, Environment and Climate Change, Kampala, 27 July 2022.

¹¹ The full text of the declaration is available at <https://au.int/en/documents/20230822/african-youth-declaration-climate-mobility>.



Furthermore, the youth forum, which was facilitated in Nairobi in August 2023, developed and validated a continental youth statement¹² on human mobility in the context of climate change. The key messages from the youth statement developed by 72 young persons representing 36 African States, were incorporated to KDMECC-AFRICA, and some of them were incorporated into the Youth Nairobi Declaration presented by the [Africa Youth Climate Assembly \(AYCA\)](#) at the 2023 Official Regional Conference of Youth (RCOY) Africa, ahead of the Africa Climate Summit.

To ensure the fulfillment of commitments by signatory States to the Kampala Declaration, as well as to provide them with essential support in addressing their requirements, active involvement of youth is imperative across the relevant implementation processes and stages for advancing it. An expert working group, to which youth representatives are included, has been established to develop an action plan for the implementation of the declaration. This will contribute to addressing the challenges in recognition, capacities and capabilities which United Nations agencies can support enhancing.

Conclusion

The East and Horn of Africa region is facing severe impacts of climate change, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities, including youth. Sustainable solutions and action are needed for adaptation and resilience-building, preventing forced displacement, protecting people already moving, and providing safe, orderly and regular migration opportunities. As the complex interplay between climate change and human mobility poses challenges for policy development and effective implementation, the Kampala Declaration presents an innovative approach to addressing these issues at the regional level. Its case provides a framework for collaborative action to address the priorities of human mobility in the context of a changing climate. It addresses the need for meaningful youth engagement, which is crucial in this context, as youth are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and their participation in decision-making processes is essential for effective policy implementation and resilience-building. Overall, the declaration demonstrates the potential for regional cooperation and cross-border solutions to address the challenges and opportunities of human mobility in the East and Horn of Africa region.

¹² The full text of the statement is available at <https://eastandhornofafrica.ion.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1701/files/documents/2023-09/youth-key-messages-for-kdmecc-expansion.pdf>.



Foreign-trained doctors in Seychelles: cooperation, capacity-building and migration diplomacy

Kendra Shields and Margaret Walton-Roberts¹

Abstract

This report analyses the sustainability of the Seychellois health workforce and the role of foreign-trained doctors. As a small island nation with its entire supply of medical doctors being trained abroad, Seychelles exemplifies a case study in externally dependent health workforce capacity-building. Examining the Government of Seychelles' support of Seychellois nationals' training abroad and its international collaboration efforts to retain foreign-born doctors, this report illustrates how health-care capacity is dependent on government policies that facilitate worker mobility. The country's increased use of historically linked bilateral engagements for the international recruitment of doctors indicates that its health-care system remains heavily reliant on foreign-born medical professionals to maintain required health workforce densities. An analysis of existing bilateral engagements shows that this process is highly dependent on migration diplomacy: The sustainability of worker mobility and capacity-building in Seychelles' health-care sector is contingent upon a successful foreign affairs policy agenda that caters to collaboration with other nations. This relationship has broader geopolitical implications beyond migration.

Introduction

The impact of global health worker shortages has driven the demand for international collaboration on the ethical recruitment of migrant health-care workers. Recognizing the growing trends in the movement of health-care professionals across borders, the World Health Organization (WHO) established the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel in 2010 to promote a non-binding set of best practices and principles for the ethical international recruitment of migrant health personnel into national workforces.² In 2016, the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030 (the "2030 Global Strategy") was also published, as part of efforts to strengthen health workforce capacities and sustainability in health-care systems worldwide.

It is as part of the 2030 Global Strategy that WHO created the National Health Workforce Accounts (NHWA). The NHWA is a database that collates country reporting on a set of key indicators for human resources for health to standardize and improve data collection on health workforce realities around the world, including data on the percentage of health professionals operating within the workforce who have been foreign trained.³

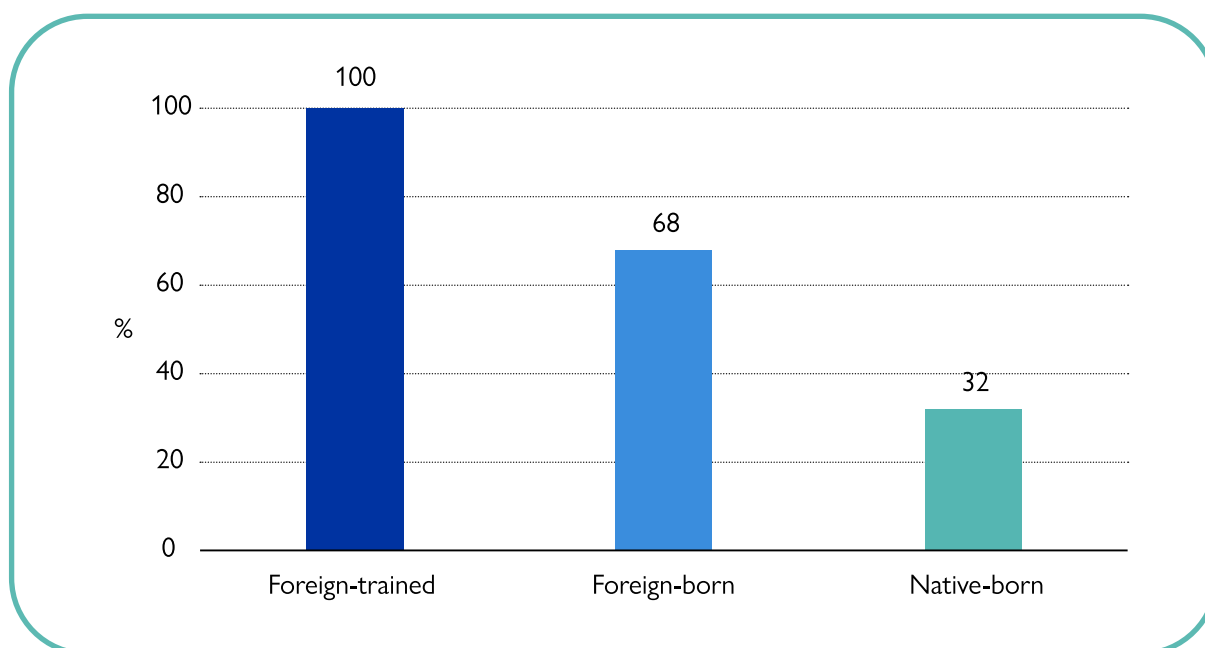
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² WHO, Human resources for health: WHO, Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel: fourth round of national reporting, Seventy-Fifth World Health Assembly, 3 May 2022 (A75/14).

³ World Health Organization (WHO), National Health Workforce Accounts Data Portal, database (accessed 10 April 2023).



Figure 1. Foreign-trained doctors in Seychelles, by place of birth



Source: WHO, National Health Workforce Accounts Data Portal, database (accessed 10 April 2023).

One country identified by the NHWA as having over half of its doctors trained overseas is Seychelles, a small island nation comprising an archipelago off the east coast of Africa in the middle of the Indian Ocean, with just over 100,000 residents.⁴ Data from the NHWA indicates that as of 2018, 100 per cent of doctors practising in the country were foreign trained.⁵ Based on the most recent Ministry of Health year-end reports on health resources, this number remains accurate as of 2021, with all 243 doctors active in the Seychellois workforce completing training overseas.⁶ The country is an interesting and important case for analysing the migration

and employment of foreign-trained health-care workers and the various infrastructure that support this mobility.

Examining Seychelles' data further uncovers a set of complex dynamics embedded within the migration of an entire country's health workforce for training: While all doctors practising in Seychelles are foreign trained, only two thirds are foreign born. In the context of Seychellois labour force dynamics, migration becomes a significant pillar of the training process for both locally and internationally recruited human resources.

Local capacity-building: Seychellois nationals training abroad

The largest consideration for local training in Seychelles is a functional issue: There are currently no programmes in the country for people looking to obtain medical training to study locally.

⁴ World Bank, Population estimates and projections 2022, database (accessed 12 April 2023).

⁵ WHO, 2023.

⁶ Seychelles, Ministry of Health, Annual Health-sector Performance Report 2022 (Victoria, Ministry of Health, 2023).

Seychelles' institutional health training capacity is low: The only health education and training institution on the islands is the National Institute for Health and Social Studies (NIHSS). In a wider set of national strategic reforms that recognized the need to increase health and educational development, the NIHSS was created in 2011 through the Tertiary Education Act to direct the provision of education and training for both health and social sector professionals.⁷ The scope of training provided by the NIHSS is limited, training up to the advanced diploma level in selected professions in the health and social fields. While nursing and allied health professionals can undergo basic training in-country, all doctors, dentists and pharmacists are trained overseas for both basic medical degrees and any further specialization.

Educational capacities provide a rationale for the differences in mobility for different cadres of health-care workers in the Seychelles workforce: Medical students requiring training abroad are facilitated by funding and partnership agreements with international partner institutions through the NIHSS, while international mobility for those who can otherwise receive training in-country is limited. In comparison to all doctors, only 6.8 per cent of nurses are trained outside of Seychelles – a percentage closely correlated to the number of foreign-born nurses practising in the country.⁸

One of the key facets of migration-based health training mobility for Seychellois nationals is the model of partner institutions. These academic partnerships come in two forms:

internal partnership programmes and external scholarships. Seychellois nationals who train overseas through partner programmes are accredited upon return by the Seychelles Qualifications Authority. For advanced non-medical training, such as dental therapy and pediatric nursing specializations, the NIHSS facilitates private university-to-university partnerships in countries like Australia, South Africa and the United States, where students receive their degrees through the NIHSS by attending courses and programmes.⁹

Most medical degrees pursued by Seychellois nationals are facilitated through external scholarship and funding initiatives. Under funding legislation enacted in 2013 through the Agency for National Human Resource Development, scholarships for medicine were identified as a “level 1 priority” of higher education, creating avenues for Seychellois nationals to apply for full government funding for their studies abroad. Bonding agreements required by the Government of Seychelles prior to the administration of funds stipulate a return to Seychelles for employment upon completion of their studies, which allows the Government the ability to revoke scholarships and impose monetary sanctions in cases of non-return. The duration of required employment in Seychelles is based upon the total cost of training funded by the Government, in a strategy created to ensure return migration to the labour market in key sectors such as medicine.¹⁰

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ WHO, 2023.

⁹ Seychelles, Ministry of Health, 2023.

¹⁰ Seychelles, Agency for National Human Resource Development (ANHRD), “The Government of Seychelles Scholarship Scheme”, programme document (Victoria, ANHRD, 2013).



Outside of national funding, the Ministry of Health of Seychelles also negotiates with other national governments and private institutions for scholarships for Seychellois nationals under Official Development Assistance programmes. One such example is the Seychelles–Hungary memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in 2020 under Hungary’s Stipendium Hungaricum foreign scholarship programme. Through the MOU, the Government of Hungary provided ten fully funded scholarships for Seychellois nationals studying medicine in Hungary, as well as a general fee reduction for training in family medicine programmes at one Hungarian university.¹¹ Through these channels, Seychellois nationals are aided and facilitated in their migration for education by both national investment and international government collaboration efforts.

Hierarchical, cadre-based mobility agreements emphasize the importance of leveraging technical capacity for smaller nation States attempting to bolster their own human resources for health. In prioritizing local educational and training on the cadres of health that constitute the largest percentage of their health system – nurses and allied health professionals make up 39.8 per cent and 39 per cent of Seychellois health-care workers, respectively – the government looks to maintain shorter-term sustainable investment into their system to meet their commitment to the 2030 Global Strategy.¹² By capitalizing on partnerships and MOUs abroad for higher cadres of health workers, Seychelles increases the mobility of its population to secure

training and education in areas outside of the local training capacity, scaling up the health workforce and adhering to commitments made by the Government in the Country Cooperation Strategy 2016–2021, with WHO to improve workforce sustainability and “reduce dependence on imported workers”¹³

Foreign-born doctors in Seychelles

Although Seychelles has made significant investments in facilitating local human resources for health, the country is still largely dependent on foreign-born medical professionals in order to maintain a healthy workforce density: 68 per cent of doctors currently practising in the islands are not from Seychelles.¹⁴ Recognizing this deficit, and the difficulty of maintaining a permanent expatriate medical staff in an isolated geographic region, the Government of Seychelles relies on international collaboration rather than recruitment strategies as its main policy avenue for retaining foreign doctors in the country’s health system. Seychelles’ set of negotiated bilateral agreements on health workers has continued to expand under recent years, indicating an increasing reliance on such agreements.¹⁵ Within this international dynamic, two types of this foreign-born health-care migration stand out: short-term and medium-term temporary migration.

¹¹ *Seychelles Nation*, “Seychelles–Hungary agreement: 10 Seychellois to benefit from scholarships in Hungary annually up to 2023” (22 October 2020).

¹² Seychelles, Ministry of Health, 2023.

¹³ WHO Seychelles Country Office, *Country Cooperation Strategy 2016–2021* (Victoria, WHO, 2016).

¹⁴ WHO, 2023.

¹⁵ Seychelles, Ministry of Health, *Health of our Nation: Annual Health Sector Performance Report 2020* (Victoria, Ministry of Health, 2021).

Short-term temporary migration

Due to a lack of comprehensive specialty care for many streams of medicine in the islands, Seychelles sees the temporary onboarding of medical personnel for specific required health-care initiatives. For patients who cannot be sent overseas, and the required care is outside the scope of practice for doctors within the workforce, Seychelles coordinates the arrival and participation of foreign doctors to facilitate such specialized care.¹⁶ Such types of medical missions are not captured in the statistics on foreign-trained health workers through the NHWA indicators; as such, these workers are not being registered for full practice in the country. However, short-term visiting health migration does temporarily impact the overall supply of the health workforce, which is an important dimension of workforce mobility for remote island nations such as Seychelles, and this may be missed in standardized data-reporting.

Cases of visiting health professionals come in various forms, with different levels of coordination and duration. One example of this is the Government of China's Peace Ark mission in 2010, when it sent a ship full of medical supplies and personnel to act as a temporary medical centre or field hospital in the region, through which a group of 11- and 12-year-old schoolchildren on one of Seychelles' remotest islands were treated over a week-long stay.¹⁷ Another high-profile example of this occurred during the pandemic, when Seychelles saw

significant strain on their health-care system. Under an MOU signed with the Ministry of Health of Kenya for the temporary recruitment of health workers, 45 Kenyan nurses were brought in to assist with the pandemic response, staying for the last eight months of 2020 before returning to their home country.¹⁸

These cases are an important illustration of international partnerships in health mediated through health worker mobility. Although they are not captured in the statistics for labour dynamics of the health workforce, the cooperation of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles on these temporary missions highlights the types of policies pursued as part of the government strategy to facilitate the specific health needs of their population in times of health workforce fluctuation. When considering the 2030 Global Strategy, the elements of very short-term health personnel visits utilized by small island States such as Seychelles uncover a new regional consideration for future policy focus on health workforce capacity-building.

Medium-term temporary migration

A significant source for Seychelles labour supply of doctors comes in the form of medium-term bilateral agreements for medical personnel with other countries. Over a third of Seychellois practising clinical doctors are working there under technical cooperation agreements from just three countries: Cuba, China and Morocco. Cuba's programme alone accounts for 27.5 per cent of all doctors in the country, a

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Glen Diehl and Solomon Major, "White hull or white elephant? Soft power and the Chinese hospital ship, the Peace Ark", *Defense & Security Analysis*, 31(4):276–292 (2015).

¹⁸ Seychelles, Ministry of Health, 2021.



number that is expected to grow over the next few years.¹⁹

The partners that Seychelles has chosen to engage with on these agreements fit into a larger global context of health-based international aid and international affairs, with such countries engaged in significant histories of employing medical labour migration as part of a larger foreign policy agenda around the world. China's referenced Peace Ark mission, for example – deployed in Seychelles – was used across many strategic maritime partners in the 2010s as part of a larger security and trade agenda: A trade analysis of China–Seychelles economic conducted after China's Harmonious MISSION 2010 strategy indicated a notable expansion of Chinese exports to and overall trade with Seychelles following the hospital ship's stay.²⁰ Cuba's long history of medical outsourcing as a function of diplomacy has framed a large part of their foreign policy agenda since the Cuban Revolution, particularly in the Global South.²¹

By entering into bilateral cooperation agreements for the supply of medical doctors with these countries, the Government of Seychelles engages in a complex notion of health-centred migration diplomacy: a foreign policy agenda that leverages a State's diplomatic tools and procedures in efforts to manage cross-border mobility, in this case focusing on health-care workers.²²

An examination of grey literature, including government announcements and diplomatic personnel interviews regarding the creation of these bilateral technical cooperation agreements, clearly illustrates the impact of migration diplomacy in Seychelles health-care system. Seychelles' rich maintenance of their health-care-based ties and continued political support with both Cuba and China across their histories is cited by diplomats from all three countries as the basis for their eager continued support and cooperation in improving Seychelles' health-care capacity.^{23,24}

However, a review of the details of these agreements reveals important dynamics in the migration of doctors under bilateral cooperation. Both China and Cuba have engaged in economic and technical cooperation agreements with Seychelles, which involves the creation of MOUs with the Ministry of Health of Seychelles that provide medical personnel to work in the public health sector on a temporary touring basis.²⁵ The Government of Seychelles recognized the possible effects of reliance on such temporary bilateral agreements in a yearly health sector review, reporting this heavy reliance on expatriates is not ideal for their long-term health-care goals, due to levels of turnover and disruption to continuous care for the islands' residents.²⁶

¹⁹ Seychelles, Ministry of Health, 2023.

²⁰ Diehl and Major, 2015:282.

²¹ Julie M. Feinsilver, "Fifty years of Cuba's medical diplomacy: from idealism to pragmatism", *Cuban Studies*, 2010:41:85–104 (2010).

²² Fiona B. Adamson and Gerasimos Tsourapas, "Migration diplomacy in world politics", *International Studies Perspectives*, 20(2):113–128 (2019).

²³ Seychelles Nation, "Seychelles–China cooperation – New group of Chinese doctors arrive this week" (19 September 2016).

²⁴ Seychelles Nation, "Cuba and Seychelles" (13 April 2022).

²⁵ Seychelles, Ministry of Health, 2023.

²⁶ Ibid.

As Seychelles seeks to increase domestic human resources for health through the aforementioned channels for local capacity-building, foreign-born doctors will continue to fill the remaining gaps in the labour market. The policy solutions chosen by Seychelles could be considered as important examples in the renewed focus of WHO in forthcoming reports on bilateral agreements on health worker mobility, in light of the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel.²⁷

Policy recommendations and considerations

Seychelles provides an interesting case study of a small island State that is externally dependent for health training and workforce provision. As the only African State to be classified as a high-income nation, Seychelles has invested significant resources into mobilizing opportunities for training their local health sector capacity. However, the percentage of foreign-trained doctors practising in Seychelles reflects the realities of their geographic isolation and small population, which creates limitations on the country's ability to maintain a sustainable health workforce due to training capacity constraints in medical specialties. Policies designed to ease the circular migration of Seychellois health workers for educational and training purposes, such as expanding university partnerships and scholarship programmes with institutions abroad, are one avenue to pursue balancing the current dependency on foreign workers with local workforce capacity-building.

The increased use of historically linked bilateral engagements indicates that Seychelles' health workforce is highly dependent on migration diplomacy, and the sustainability of worker mobility for both foreign-trained and citizen medical professionals is contingent upon a successful foreign affairs policy agenda based on collaboration with other nations. Seychelles should look towards diversifying their bilateral engagement initiatives to reduce dependency on a small set of nation States and continue to ensure that their recruitment of foreign-trained health workers does not undermine the health-care systems of its partners.

For small island nations like Seychelles, bidirectional health worker migration flows promote the upskilling of their health workforce and indicates the potential of migration processes to be a positive element of health workforce sustainability.

²⁷ WHO, 2022.



Surviving food deserts: migrants, refugees and urban food systems in Bloemfontein, South Africa

Abraham R. Matamanda and Johannes I. Bhanye¹

Abstract

South Africa is a major destination for migrants and refugees from various African countries seeking better economic opportunities, safety and stability. Migrants often face numerous challenges, including poor working conditions, limited access to social services and food insecurity. Access to adequate and nutritious food is a fundamental human right, yet migrants are often excluded from mainstream food systems and are forced to rely on alternative food sources. This study explores the food systems of migrants and the role of migrants in the local food system, with a specific focus on Bloemfontein, a secondary city in South Africa, with a particular focus on their access to food, sustainability and the implications for their health and well-being. The study found that migrants face numerous challenges in accessing adequate and nutritious food, including limited access to mainstream food systems and reliance on alternative food sources. Specifically, we argue that migrants have weak access to cultural foods, thereby depicting cultural food insecurity. The study also explored migrant coping mechanisms such as importation of food from back home, reliance on fellow migrants and dedicated cultural food shops, and adaptation to locally available

foods. The study concludes by highlighting the implications of cultural food insecurity on the health and well-being of migrants and calls for policy interventions to improve their access to adequate and nutritious food.

Introduction

Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon holding significant implications for sending and receiving countries.² Recently, South Africa has emerged as a prominent destination for migrants from various African countries seeking improved economic opportunities, safety and stability. South Africa's reputation as a destination for migrants stems from its relatively advanced economy and political stability in the region. The allure of economic prospects, coupled with the perception of safety, attracts migrants from various African and Asian countries such as Ghana, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, all seeking to escape political turmoil, economic hardships, and limited prospects for personal growth. The diversity of migrant origins contributes to the complex tapestry of South African society, creating an environment where cross-cultural interactions and integration are paramount.

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² Jonathan Crush, Godfrey Tawodzera, Abel Chikanda, Sujata Ramachandran and Daniel Tevera, "South Africa case study: The double crisis – mass migration from Zimbabwe and xenophobic violence in South Africa", Migrants in Countries in Crisis report (Vienna, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2017).

However, the journey towards integration is fraught with challenges that impede the holistic well-being of migrants and refugees. Among these challenges are limited access to social services, inadequate housing and discrimination in various forms.³ While these difficulties are well recognized, the issue of food security often remains in the shadows, even though it has profound implications for migrants' health, social cohesion and overall quality of life. Understanding the intricate interplay between migration, urbanization and food systems is essential to formulating effective policy responses. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security exists "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."⁴ This definition shows that dietary needs and preferences are at the heart of food systems and security. It is revealed that the availability of cultural foods significantly contributes towards food security, as they ameliorate food deserts. This is critical considering that the confluence of migration and food security presents a critical lens through which to examine the well-being and integration of these migrants.

Access to sufficient and nutritious food is not merely a convenience but a fundamental human right enshrined in national and international conventions. Specifically, the South African National Policy on Food and Nutrition provides

a policy framework and goals for ameliorating food insecurity and improving food access to all. Therefore, ensuring the fulfilment of this right for migrants is not only ethically imperative, but also contributes to the social and economic fabric of the host country. Paradoxically, individuals contributing to the host country's development often find themselves marginalized within its food systems, as they encounter barriers that limit their access to mainstream food sources. This exclusion stems from a range of factors, including cultural differences, language barriers and economic disparities. The resulting reliance on alternative food sources not only affects migrants' nutrition, but also shapes their sense of belonging and integration.

This policy paper centres its investigation on Bloemfontein, a secondary city within the South African urban landscape. The choice of Bloemfontein allowed us to examine migration dynamics and their effects in a context that might differ from larger metropolises. At the core of this study lies an exploration of the food systems that migrants and refugees navigate in Bloemfontein. This exploration encompasses not only the accessibility and availability of food, but also the sustainability of these systems, and analyses the adaptive strategies that offer insights into the broader challenges of integrating migrants into urban environments.

³ Abraham R. Matamanda, Mischka Dunn and Verna Nel, "Broken bridges over troubled waters: COVID-19 and the urban poor residing in Dinaweng informal settlement, Bloemfontein, South Africa", *South African Geographical Journal*, 104(3):309–327 (2022).

⁴ FAO statement at the World Food Summit, Rome, 13–17 November 1996.



The nexus between migration and urban food systems

Migration is a phenomenon intertwined with various dimensions that influence the well-being of individuals and societies.⁵ The connection between migration and access to food is intricate and multifaceted. Migration can improve economic conditions and thereby enhance the purchasing power of migrants, potentially leading to improved access to food.⁶ Yet the process of migration itself can disrupt food security for migrants who are often forced to leave behind familiar food sources and traditions. Moreover, migrants may encounter barriers that limit their ability to access mainstream food systems in their host countries, thereby creating so-called “food deserts”. These are areas characterized by limited access to affordable and nutritious food, often resulting from the absence of grocery stores and markets in proximity.⁷ For example, a study of Cape Town found that supermarkets were poorly distributed in low-income neighbourhoods, where many migrants and refugees reside.⁸ The term demonstrates the challenge of obtaining wholesome food in these regions, perpetuating disparities in health and well-being. The concept of food deserts is particularly relevant to urban environments, where migration often leads to food insecurity. While cities offer diverse food options and markets, they can also engender disparities in access, leading to the emergence of

food deserts in urban settings.⁹ Urban growth may prioritize commercial development over essential services, resulting in neighbourhoods lacking grocery stores or fresh produce markets. While supermarkets are great investments, the informal sector, consisting of street vendors, outdoor markets and informal grocery shops, play a critical role in addressing the food deserts, as they cater to the needs of migrants. This urban context shapes the experience of migrants, exacerbating their food security challenges.

Methodology

To gain a comprehensive understanding of food security dynamics surrounding migrants in Bloemfontein, South Africa (Figure 1), a qualitative research approach was adopted to explore the nuanced experiences, perceptions and coping mechanisms of migrants in the context of urban food systems. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants’ narratives, shedding light on the complex interplay between migration, food security and urban living. A combination of data collection methods was utilized to capture a comprehensive picture of the subject matter. In-depth interviews were conducted between June and July 2023 with 30 selected migrants from countries like Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, India, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, to elicit their personal experiences, challenges and strategies related to food security. Additionally, participant observation was carried out in selected neighbourhoods to understand the physical availability of food resources and the dynamics of food access for migrants and refugees.

⁵ Johannes Bhanye, ““Lydiate is now our home of a sort”: perceptions of place amongst ageing first-generation Malawian migrants in Zimbabwe”, *Anthropology Southern Africa*, 45(3):180–194 (2022).

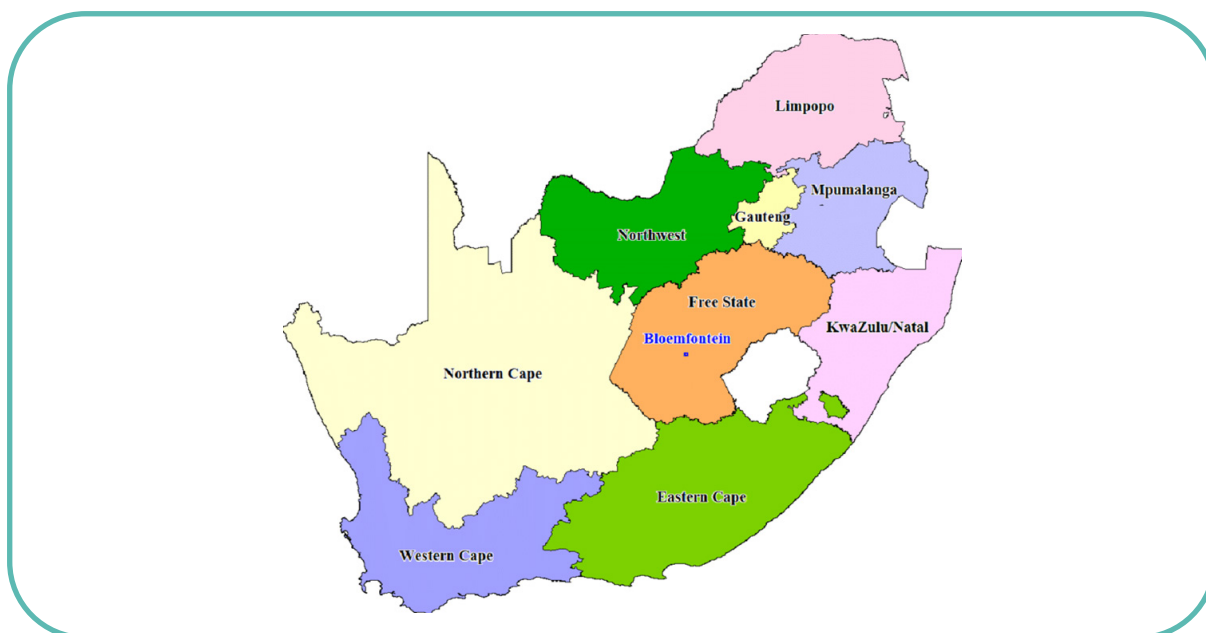
⁶ Jørgen Carling and Francis Collins, “Aspiration, desire and drivers of migration”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(6):909–926 (2018).

⁷ Jonathan Crush and Jane Battersby, “The making of urban food deserts”, in *Rapid Urbanisation, Urban Food Deserts and Food Security in Africa* (J. Crush and J. Battersby, eds.) (Cham, Switzerland, Springer Nature, 2016), pp.1–18.

⁸ Jane Battersby and Stephen Peyton, “The spatial logic of supermarket expansion and food access”, in *Rapid Urbanisation, Urban Food Deserts and Food Security in Africa* (J. Crush and J. Battersby, eds.) (Cham, Switzerland, Springer Nature, 2016), pp. 33–46.

⁹ Jerry Shannon, “Food deserts: Governing obesity in the neoliberal city”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(2):248–266 (2014).

Figure 1. Map showing the provinces of South Africa and the location of Bloemfontein



Source: Authors' rendition based on [Google Maps](#).

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Challenges in accessing adequate and nutritious food

The findings of this study reveal complex challenges faced by migrants in accessing adequate and nutritious food in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Limited access to culturally preferable food in mainstream food outlets

One of the prominent challenges highlighted by the participants was limited accessibility to mainstream food outlets. Many migrants resided in neighbourhoods characterized by an absence of grocery stores and fresh produce markets that sell their locally preferable foods. This physical distance from food sources not only impeded convenience, but also impose financial and time-related barriers.



Foods culturally preferred by Zimbabwean migrants: top – cattle offal (intestines) and *pap* (a type of corn meal); below – goat trotters (heels/feet). © 2023 IOM / Abraham R. MATAMANDA and Johannes I. BHANYE



Demonstrating limited access to culturally preferable food in Bloemfontein, Olayemi from Nigeria narrates:

“In my neighbourhood, there’s no proper grocery store nearby that sell[s] my preferable Nigerian foods – *iyan* (pounded yam), jollof rice, beef *suya* (thin strips of seasoned, grilled beef), *dodo* (fried plantain), etc. I must take a taxi to get to town were, again, it is not guaranteed that I will get those foods. It’s expensive and time-consuming, so I often end up buying whatever I can find at the local convenience store, even if it’s not very nutritious.”

Tafadzwa from Zimbabwe shares:

“Fresh fruits and vegetables are so hard to find around here. The lack of my Zimbabwean culturally preferable food in the South African grocery stores nearby means we must rely on what is available, which is usually unhealthy canned and processed food.”

However, unlike migrants from West and North Africa, we also found that there are some foods widely consumed in South Africa and other Southern African countries, illustrating how some migrants may have access to some cultural foods while others may not. Such differences bring in some interesting perspectives and dimensions of food deserts.

Dependence on alternative food sources

Faced with barriers to access to culturally preferable foods, which are often not available in mainstream food outlets, migrants often turn to alternative food sources. These sources include informal markets, street vendors and smaller convenience stores.



Alternative food market in the popular “Small Street” area in Bloemfontein. © 2023 IOM / Abraham R. MATAMANDA and Johannes I. BHANYE

While these alternatives provide options, they often lack the variety and quality necessary for a balanced and nutritious diet, leading to concerns about dietary health. Abigail from Cameroon explains:

“I often buy vegetables from street vendors because they are more accessible, but the options are limited, and the quality is not always the best. It is frustrating because back home, we had more choices for a balanced diet.”

Vihaan from India states:

“In India, we had a wide variety of spices and ingredients to cook with. Here, I have to rely on a few small stores that have limited stocks. It is difficult to recreate our traditional meals, so we end up eating less diverse food.”

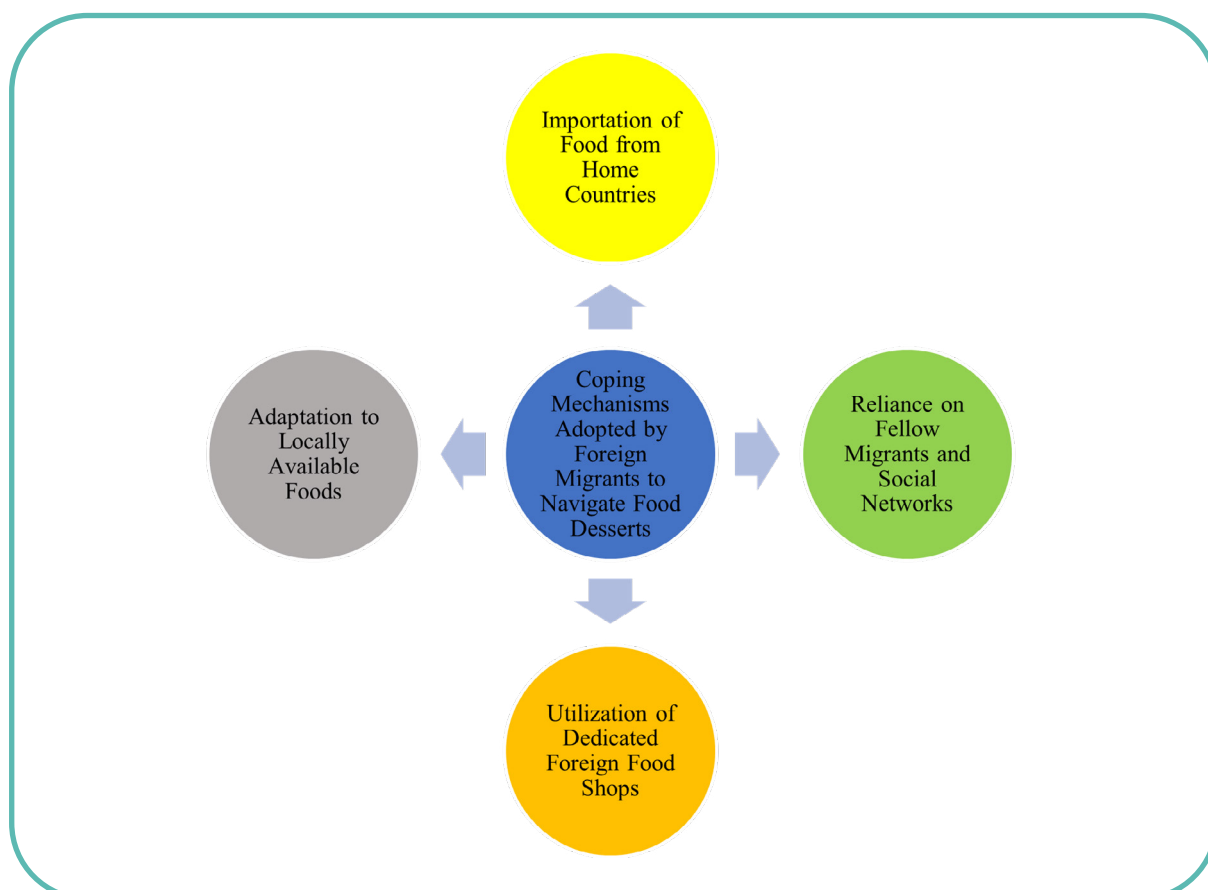


Locally adapted food (*pap*, sausage, fish and roasted maize).
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Coping mechanisms adopted by migrants and refugees

Migrants and refugees in Bloemfontein employ several coping mechanisms to navigate food deserts, including the importation of food from home countries, reliance on fellow migrants and social networks, utilization of dedicated ethnic or indigenous food shops, and adaptation to locally available foods (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Coping mechanisms adopted by migrants and refugees to navigate food deserts



Source: Authors' visualization.



Importation of food from home countries

To preserve their cultural dietary preferences and bridge the gap created by limited local options, many migrants engage in the importation of food items from their home countries. This practice provides a sense of continuity and comfort amid the challenges of adjusting to a new environment. However, the importation of food from the home country is only much easier for migrants from neighbouring countries like Lesotho, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Chipo from Zimbabwe, for example explains:

“I make sure to bring a suitcase full of mopane worms (*madora/macimbi* (see photo), *mutakura* (mixed pulses), *mufushwa* (dried vegetables), and *matemba* (or *kapenta*, a type of sardine), whenever I visit home. It is not easy to find those here, and having a taste of familiar food brings me comfort and reminds me of where I come from – Zimbabwe.”



Mopane worms from Zimbabwe. © 2023 IOM / Abraham R. MATAMANDA and Johannes I. BHANYE

Interestingly, migrants from far away countries, like India, also try to bring their culturally preferable foods. Daksh from India shares:

“Spices and lentils are essential in our cuisine. When I visited home, I brought a package of these ingredients. Cooking with these spices makes me feel connected to my roots, even though I am far away.”

Reliance on fellow migrants and social networks
 Social networks among migrants play a crucial role in food security. Participants highlighted the importance of sharing resources, knowledge and even meals within their communities. These networks facilitate the exchange of information about affordable food sources and support the establishment of informal sharing mechanisms. Dodzi from Ghana mentions:

“We have formed community here taking turns hosting dinners, where everyone brings a dish from our home country. It not only helps us feel less alone, but also helps us to connect with our home country.”

Livinus from Cameroon says:

“We have a WhatsApp group where we share information about where to find affordable ingredients and good deals. It is like a lifeline for us to navigate the food challenges in this city together.”

Utilization of dedicated cultural food shops

Dedicated cultural food shops emerged as essential resources for migrants seeking culturally familiar ingredients. These specialty shops offer a range of products that cater to migrants’ preferences, enabling them to maintain a connection to their culinary heritage. (The photo on the next page shows an injera meal served in a dedicated restaurant in the Bloemfontein downtown area. Injera is a sour, fermented pancake-like flatbread, slightly spongy in texture, and is a staple in Ethiopia, Eritrea and parts of the Sudan.)



Injera, a traditional flatbread, is an integral part of Ethiopian cuisine. It is shown here served with rice, vegetables and other items. © 2023 IOM / Abraham R. MATAMANDA and Johannes I. BHANYE

Adewale from Nigeria states:

“Few stores in the downtown import Nigerian food products. It is a relief to find familiar spices and snacks there. These shops are a blessing for us to maintain our connection to our traditional foods.”

Hassan from Pakistan explains:

“I was relieved when I found a shop selling halal meat and Pakistani spices. It is a small reminder of home, and it helps me prepare meals that I used to enjoy back in Pakistan while also allowing me to consume halal¹⁰ meat that I am comfortable consuming.”

Adaptation to locally available foods

Some migrants demonstrated adaptability by integrating locally available foods into their diets. They explore new ingredients and cooking

methods to accommodate the constraints of their environment. Jastina from the United Republic of Tanzania shares:

“Back home, we had different types of vegetables, but here, I have learned to use what is available. I started incorporating local leafy greens into our dishes, and now my family enjoys them.”

Peter from the Democratic Republic of the Congo says:

“I have started experimenting with local ingredients in my Congolese recipes. It has been a journey of discovering new flavors and adapting our traditional dishes to the resources around us.”

Spinach is a popular vegetable in South Africa that migrants have adapted to. This adaptation not only showcases resilience, but also reflects a willingness to engage with the local culture.



Spinach, commonly grown in South Africa, is a popular type of vegetable that migrants have adapted to. © 2023 IOM / Abraham R. MATAMANDA and Johannes I. BHANYE

¹⁰ “Halal” is an Arabic word that means “lawful” and is used to refer to food that is permissible to be consumed by Muslims.



The intersection of challenges and coping mechanisms paints a comprehensive picture of the ways in which migrants in Bloemfontein navigate the complex landscape of urban food systems. These findings demonstrate the resourcefulness and determination of migrants to ensure their food security, while also shedding light on the food limitations that persist within the broader urban environment.

Implications of food deserts for health and well-being

The intricate relationship between food security and the health and well-being of migrants in Bloemfontein reveals a range of consequences that extend beyond mere sustenance. This section presents the health implications of food insecurity and the psychological and social dimensions that contribute to the holistic well-being of migrants in urban environments.

Table 1. Health consequences of food insecurity

Health consequences of food insecurity	Discussion
Malnutrition and related health issues	Food insecurity exposes migrants to the risk of malnutrition, as their diets often lack the necessary nutrients for optimal health. Inadequate intake of essential vitamins, minerals, and proteins can lead to a range of health issues, including stunted growth, weakened immune systems and increased susceptibility to diseases.
Impact on overall well-being and productivity	Chronic food insecurity takes a toll on migrants' overall well-being, affecting their energy levels, concentration and ability to engage effectively in work and daily activities. Malnourishment diminishes migrants' capacity to pursue economic opportunities, exacerbating the challenges they face in a new environment.

Table 2. Psychological and social dimensions

Psychological and social dimensions	Discussion
Stress and mental health implications	The uncertainties surrounding food availability contribute to heightened stress levels among migrants. Anxiety about finding affordable and nutritious meals can lead to chronic stress, which, in turn, may have negative implications for mental health. The constant worry about food can affect migrants' self-esteem and emotional resilience.
Community and social cohesion among migrants	On a positive note, the shared experiences of food insecurity often foster a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among migrants. The reliance on social networks and community support mechanisms builds bonds that transcend cultural backgrounds. These connections provide not only practical assistance, but also emotional support, contributing to the migrants' overall sense of belonging.

Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate the intricate relationship between food security and migrants' health, well-being and overall integration into the host society. The repercussions of food insecurity extend beyond physical health, shaping the migrants' psychological and social experiences within their new urban contexts. Recognizing the complex dimensions of this issue is pivotal in formulating effective policy interventions that address not only the immediate challenges to food access, but also the broader implications for migrants' quality of life.

Conclusion

The exploration of food security dynamics among migrants in Bloemfontein revealed a complex tapestry of challenges, coping mechanisms and implications that extend beyond the realm of nutrition. Limited access to mainstream food outlets and dependence on alternative food sources are pivotal issues. The coping mechanisms adopted by migrants, including importing foods from home, relying on social networks, utilizing cultural food shops and adapting to local resources, highlight their resilience and adaptability within a hostile urban food landscape. Food insecurity also has profound implications for the health, well-being and integration of migrants and refugees. Malnutrition, diminished productivity, stress and social isolation are among the important consequences that undermine migrants' ability to thrive in their new environment. Recognizing the interconnectedness of food security with various aspects of migrants' lives demonstrates its centrality in fostering their overall well-being and contributing to their successful integration in host societies.

Addressing food insecurity among migrants requires a nuanced understanding of their diverse food experiences and circumstances. Policy interventions should be holistic, adaptable and culturally sensitive; recognizing the interplay between migration, urbanization and food systems will yield more effective outcomes. Specifically, municipalities can create enabling environments that support small informal food businesses that play a critical role in addressing food insecurity among the migrants and refugees. Spaces can be allocated where such businesses operate, thereby reducing the costs and time spent by the migrants trying to access cultural food. By fostering collaboration, supporting alternative food sources and strengthening social networks, governments and stakeholders can facilitate positive change that not only improves migrants' well-being, but also contributes to the vibrancy and diversity of urban communities.

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