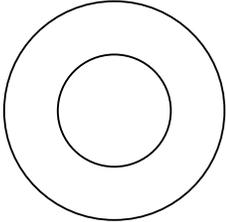


ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)



ESCWA

MIGRATION POLICIES IN ESCWA COUNTRIES

Volume ??

Third Issue

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Introduction

International migration issues have become a source of interest at all levels including governments, international institutions or academics. For instance, the main topic of the 2009 Human Development Report is “Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development”. In 2009, the United Nations adopted a resolution that takes into consideration all factors influencing the migration-development nexus. This resolution confirms the growing interest of the international community in migration and its relation to development. The report of the Global Commission on International Migration highlighted the failure of countries to make migration conducive to development both in sending countries and receiving countries.

The Arab region is considered as one of the top destinations for migration in the world. In 2005, it received more than 20 million migrants which account for 10 per cent of global migrants. Besides, the Arab region has a high concentration of migrants, as six out of ten migrants are located in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Some ESCWA countries are both sending countries and receiving countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon which send migrants – particularly skilled labour, and receive less-skilled migrants.

This bulletin highlights migration policies, the migration-development nexus in ESCWA countries, and the relation of migration policies to labour markets, brain drain, migrant remittances, returning migrants and their re-integration, good practice as well as gaps in policies and systems related to migration management.

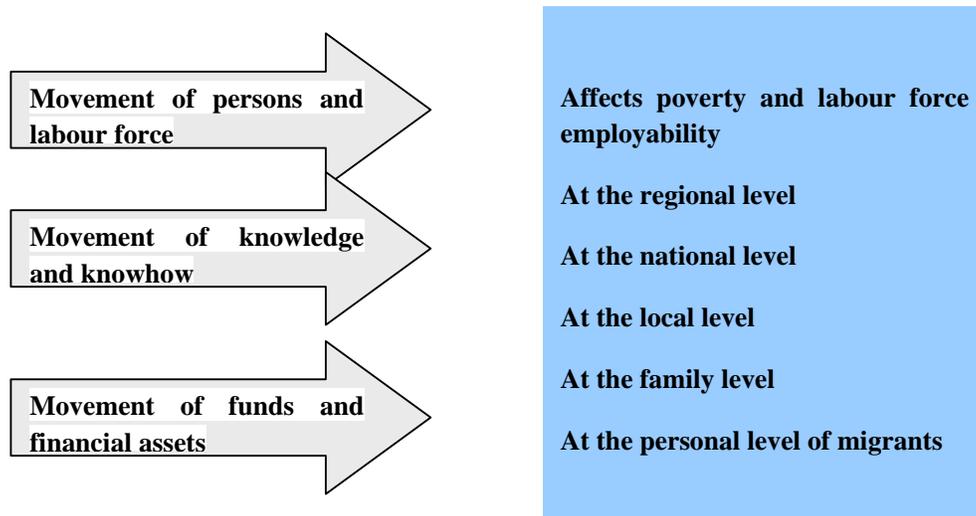
1. Migration policies and the migration-development nexus

The migration-development nexus is intertwined and multidimensional. In fact, economic theories and applied evidence could not identify a single trend of the migration impact on development. It is clear, however, that migration and development in the ESCWA region are strongly interlinked, both in sending countries and receiving countries which are equally welcoming and showing their interest in integrating international migration into their development efforts. In this context, the interlinked policies on migration and development should be integrated to maximize migration benefits. International migration involves three movements, as follows:

(1) Movement of migrant workers inducing changes in population and labour force sizes and in demographic structure. In this case, foreign workers reduce unemployment in sending countries and bridge the labour force deficit in receiving countries. However, this movement may disintegrate families in the sending countries on the one hand, and exert pressure on basic services and infrastructure in receiving countries due to demographic increase on the other hand;

(2) Movement of expertise and knowledge brought by migrant individuals who also acquire new skills and thoughts from abroad. As such, the movement of migrants implicitly involves a “cognitive capital” movement especially upon the return of migrants to their countries of origin. However, in some cases, this movement may deprive sending countries of key expertise and skills, thereby adversely affecting their competitiveness. This negative impact can be reduced by maintaining linkages with sending countries and benefiting from acquired techniques;

(3) Movement of funds whereby remittances of migrants play a significant role in the life of their relatives staying in their countries. Besides, remittances may sometimes have an investment role although they may aggravate inflation and deepen disparities between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) will issue an “introductory guide” on integrating migration and development, targeting stakeholders responsible for incorporating migration into strategic plans in developing countries.

2. Labour market and labour movement policies

Migration is considered as a social phenomenon bearing demographic, economic and political dimensions that are closely linked to development. As a component of demographic growth, migration has an upward or downward impact on population size in several countries and regions, and it affects population

profile in sending countries and receiving countries due to its selective approach. Besides, labour migration has a significant impact on labour force size, growth and profile and an impact on economic activities both in sending countries and receiving countries. As a result, labour migration has acquired an influential developmental aspect. Moreover, migration has social and behavioural effects both on migrants and on populations of sending countries and receiving countries, in addition to political effects such as political and security stability as well as racial equilibrium, which are all highly important to achieve development and well-being in society.

Migration has varied over the years and among regions in terms of size, patterns and trends in the light of increasing disparities among peoples, communities and demographic groups in society at the demographic, social and political levels. Recently, new paradigms of migration emerged as a result of globalization which also redefined migration currents and the quality of workers migrating to receiving countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States of America, and European countries. In fact, globalization focused on attracting and employing workers with scientific and technical skills and expertise from all over the world. Meanwhile, the aforementioned receiving countries increased their policies and laws to counter the immigration of ordinary and traditional labour force.

The most significant effects of migration on development are reflected in labour market structure, particularly unemployment which may emerge in host countries. However, the negative impact of migration on labour market structure, especially unemployment, is not corroborated by theoretical and applied evidence. In ESCWA countries, the foreign labour force is always viewed as having an adverse impact on unemployment in host countries, notably GCC countries following the Second Gulf War in 1990-1991, and in sending countries which have recently turned into migration transit countries. Furthermore, due to socio-political changes over the past twenty years, many ESCWA countries, which are traditionally sending countries, witnessed an inflow of refugees, such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic where unemployment was aggravated by such immigration. In the post-Second Gulf War period, the negative impact on unemployment increased in ESCWA sending countries due to the return of migrant workers. In Jordan, for instance, unemployment grew to 25 per cent in the aftermath of the Second Gulf War. Moreover, countries all over the world began adopting selective migration policies towards foreign workers.

Migration may have another impact on sending countries by causing a salary appreciation due to a supply-demand imbalance in the labour market. This is not the case in some ESCWA countries, such as Egypt where the surplus in labour force did not produce a salary impact; however, this impact started to be felt in the labour markets of Jordan and Lebanon.

Generally speaking, the role of migration policies is mainly to regulate labour markets for contractual foreign workers in host countries by establishing a ceiling for foreign manpower based on a generic or sectoral approach, as implemented by some ESCWA countries such as Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic, or by preventing the access of foreigners to specific positions. Most migration policies often overlap with labour market policies, and tend to be more related to labour markets than migration. Although the economic outcome of migration policies is often negative (due to the lost opportunity of hiring cheaper labour force), the social, political and sometimes economic factors (in terms of unemployment prevention) often urge governments to adopt such policies.

3. Brain drain reduction policies

The term “brain drain” designates “the international transfer of resources in the form of human capital and mainly applies to the migration of relatively highly educated individuals from developing to developed countries. In the non-academic literature, the term is generally used in a narrower sense and relates more specifically to the migration of engineers, physicians, scientists and other very highly skilled professionals

with university training”.¹ This is a global phenomenon affecting both poor and rich countries although it is typically oriented from southern developing countries to northern developed countries and from less developed to more developed countries which have embarked on competition to attract this selective type of migration.

Globalization stimulated brain drain from third world countries to Western industrialized countries by offering tempting financial offers as well as residence and visa facilities, among other incentives. Nevertheless, applied evidence did not produce decisive results establishing that brain drain in the ESCWA region reached the point of exhausting intellectual potential due to migration. One of the reasons is the lack of information and data that enable researchers to define the migrant profile. Available data do not indicate whether all countries are sending skilled labour only, such as the case of Egypt which sends high-skilled but also low-skilled migrants. Brain drain is also dependent on the situation and nature of the labour market in sending countries where migration may not necessarily imply brain drain. Evidence shows different patterns of migration. Jordan and Lebanon, for instance, send skilled labour. According to sources from the League of Arab States, the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as well as some international and regional organizations concerned with migration, Arab countries account for a third of brain drain in developing countries; 50 per cent of physicians, 23 per cent of engineers and 15 per cent of scientists of the total Arab skilled graduates migrate to Canada, Europe and the United States of America in particular; and 54 per cent of Arab students who study abroad do not return to their countries. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data, around 26,962 Arab physicians work only in four OECD countries and are distributed as follows: the United States of America (14,496), the United Kingdom (6,537), France (5,545) and Canada (384) as shown in the table below.

ARAB MIGRANT PHYSICIANS WORKING IN SOME OECD COUNTRIES - 2005

	The United States of America	Canada	France	The United Kingdom	Total
Algeria	106	24	3 273	53	3 456
Egypt	655	--	148	2 741	3 544
Iraq	1 100	82	21	2 123	3 326
Jordan	881	--	5	205	1 091
Kuwait	85	--	--	16	101
Lebanon	3 022	136	233	54	3 445
Morocco	76	5	805	4	890
Oman	7	--	--	20	27
Saudi Arabia	196	32	--	618	846
The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	123	79	3	659	864
The Syrian Arab Republic	3 657	26	881	--	4 564
The United Arab Emirates	4 549	--	--	28	4 577
Tunisia	39	--	176	16	231
Total	14 496	384	5 545	6 537	26 962

Source: OECD Database on immigrants in OECD countries 2005 (DIOC-2005), forthcoming.

Even if the intellectual potential of the region is exhausted as a result of brain drain, it will be attributed not only to salary disparities between sending countries and receiving countries but also to discrepancies in the institutional system regulating work environment and labour market. If that system collapses in sending countries, it will hamper the professional mobility and progress of skilled labour. As such, reducing brain drain largely relies on the capacity of sending countries to adopt relevant reduction policies. There are two kinds of policies aimed at reducing brain drain: First, creating an environment

¹ F. Docquier and H. Rapoport, “The Brain Drain”, Institut de Recherches Économiques et Sociales, Département des Sciences Économiques, Université Catholique de Louvain, Octobre 2006.

conducive to brain drain reduction by encouraging highly skilled workers to remain in their countries of origin. These policies are linked to the level of economic development in the country but some short-term policies can be adopted such as increasing the salaries of scientists, university professors and other specialized skills. The second kind is the set of policies adopted by many countries around the world to bring migrant skills back to their countries of origin for short and regular periods to let them contribute to their country development. To achieve that purpose, special incentive programmes can be implemented to motivate migrants. For instance, the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin serves as a real model of volunteering by migrant physicians who travel, for short periods, to poor areas in India to provide medical services.² Besides, Taiwan called upon migrants to return to their country in order to benefit from their expertise in human or material investment, by supporting relevant programmes to attract migrants such as organizing business trips and offering high salaries to attract them.³ In some cases, political factors may be the main reason of migration as in Lebanon in the late seventies and eighties, Algeria in the nineties and others.⁴

Brain gain occurs when brain drain is beneficial to sending countries in terms of transfer of technology, investments and trade exchange. The experience of migrant workers in investment and trade, coupled with their capacity to establish strong linkages with their sending countries, further strengthens trade. Besides, brain gain occurs when the non-migrating population of sending countries is encouraged to upgrade its educational level for the purpose of migration. Applied evidence revealed that some countries, outside the ESCWA region such as the Philippines, have implemented brain gain policies, but evidence did not apply to other countries such as Mexican migrants to the United States of America.⁵ In other words, brain gain mainly relies on national policies that establish linkages with migrants. Many countries have adopted these policies which should not necessarily be governmental as they can be undertaken by individuals and associations. Ghana, for instance, established successful linkages between migrants and their relatives to export agricultural goods to Europe in view of maximising benefits from the experience of migrants in European market needs and from the agricultural land potential in the country of origin. Furthermore, project returns were partly used to re-invest in the country of origin, thereby motivating banks to fund local projects and win governmental support for those projects.⁶

In the ESCWA region, Egypt has a low return on investment in education, including basic or secondary education. Besides, the return on investment in basic education in Egypt is uncommonly lower than the return on investment in secondary education.⁷ As a result, if brain drain sometimes exists in the ESCWA region, it may be caused by other internal reasons that should be addressed in the sending country. Furthermore, brain drain largely relates to the migration period. If migration to GCC countries is temporary as in the case of many Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese migrants, it will reduce brain drain especially that there is no single-pattern migration of highly skilled labour to GCC countries.

² Ron Skeldon (2005), “*Globalization, Skilled Migration and Poverty Alleviation: Brain Drain in Context*”, available at: http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/working_papers.html.

³ Kathleen Newland and Erin Patrick (2004), “*Beyond Remittances: The Role of Diaspora in Poverty Reduction in Their Countries of Origin*”, Washington, Migration Policy Institute, available at: http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/MPIDiaspora.doc.

⁴ Phillipe Fargues (2006), “*International Migration in the Arab Region: Trends and Policies*”, paper presented at the United Nations Expert Group meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, Beirut, 15-17 May, 2006; see also: League of Arab States (2008), Regional Report on Arab Labour Migration: Brain Drain or Brain Gain?, Population Policies and Migration Department, Social Affairs Sector.

⁵ Robert E.B. Lucas (2008), “International Labour Migration in a Globalizing economy” Carnegie Papers: *Trade, Equity, and Development Program*, Number 92, July, 2008.

⁶ Jemini Pandya (2007), “When Investment is not about economics, Migrants making a difference in the development equation”, *International Organization for Migration*, Geneva, available at: <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/featureArticleAF/cache/offonce?entryId=14589>.

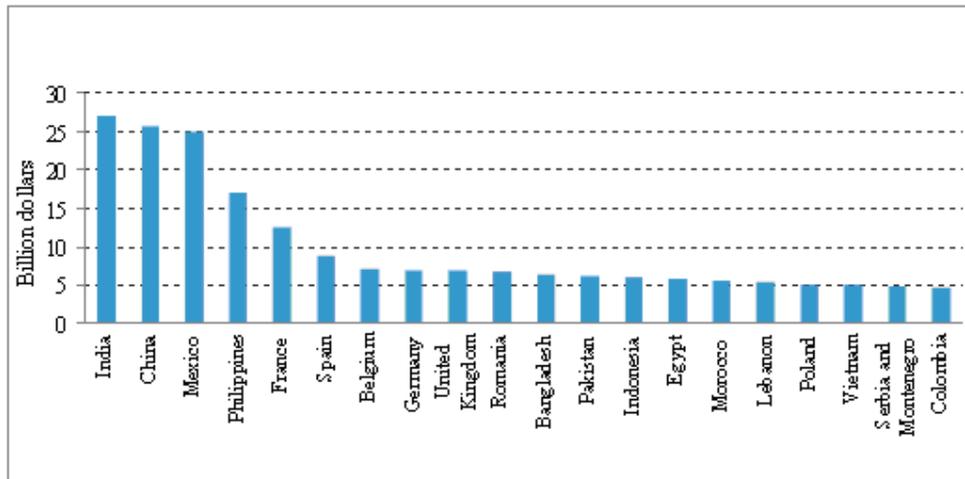
⁷ Heba Nassar (2005), “*Migration, Transfers and Development in Egypt*”, Analytical and Synthetic Notes 2005/1 – Political and Social Module, Cooperation Project on the social integration of immigrants, migration and the movement of persons, Florence: European University Institute.

As such, brain drain has been very controversial but its impact on sending countries was not decisively proven. Some evidence suggests, however, that the adverse impact of brain drain may be reduced if sending countries adopt sound policies such as conducting labour market reforms and benefiting from migrants and returning migrants.

4. Policies on attracting remittances

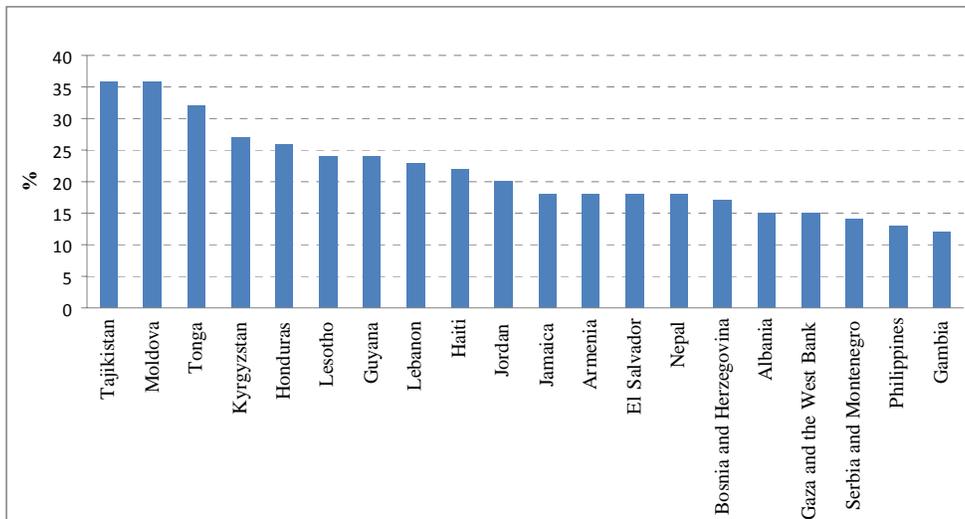
Two sending countries of the ESCWA region, namely Egypt and Lebanon, rank among the top twenty countries receiving remittances (in absolute value) in the world. Jordan is part of this group of countries in terms of GDP percentage (see figure below). On the other hand, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Saudi Arabia were among the top 20 countries sending remittances in 2006.

TOP TWENTY COUNTRIES IN TERMS OF REMITTANCE INFLOW
FIGURE (A) IN ABSOLUTE VALUE 2007 (ESTIMATED FIGURES)



Source: Migration and Remittances Fact Book 2008, Top 10 (March 2008), Development Prospects Group, The World Bank, webpage: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Top10.pdf>.

FIGURE (B) IN GDP PERCENTAGE OF 2006



Source: Migration and Remittances Fact Book 2008, Top 10 (March 2008), Development Prospects Group, The World Bank, webpage: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1199807908806/Top10.pdf>.

Remittances played an important role in the economies of ESCWA sending countries, as they exceeded foreign direct investment and export returns in countries like Egypt and Lebanon in some years, and reached 25 per cent of gross domestic product in Jordan. Some reports also show that remittances reached 14 billion dollars per year in Arab countries or were four times higher than foreign development assistance received by Arab countries.⁸ Some countries, such as Jordan, relied on migrant remittances to achieve the targeted economic growth in the seventies and eighties.⁹ Remittances are economically important as they are less volatile and less sensitive to economic cycles compared with foreign investments and aids, thereby reducing poverty rates in general. Nevertheless, the impact of remittances on poverty reduction is hindered by some other factors such as the incapacity of the very poor population to migrate. However, the case may be different in the ESCWA region where host countries, namely GCC countries and Europe, are geographically close, and the number of migrants is high, therefore reducing migration costs and allowing the poor to migrate.

Remittances are often said to be allocated to non-productive investments, notably real estate purchases and consumption,¹⁰ therefore minimizing their positive effects on development. In fact, those effects basically depend on policies adopted to attract remittances such as creating an environment conducive to investment in many ESCWA countries, the development of financial systems to attract remittances, and the prevailing culture and traditions. By adopting suitable policies and creating an adequate institutional system, remittances can be geared towards productive investments. This approach is lacking in many ESCWA countries, and even when the largest share of remittances is allocated to consumption, as in Egypt,¹¹ it certainly contributes to poverty reduction especially in the absence of a strong social security network in many ESCWA countries. It is worth mentioning that remittances are not only used for initial expenditure, albeit on consumption, but also help to create, through multiplier effect, employment and investment opportunities for small and medium enterprises, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.

Many countries in the world adopted policies aimed at attracting and gearing remittances to productive purposes. Some countries levied taxes on remittances, such as Eritrea, but this policy failed. Some other countries sought to maximize remittances during the temporary residence of migrants abroad, such as the Philippines which created tools to reduce remittance costs by introducing special credit cards that charge less than 3 dollars on each remittance. Moreover, the Philippines government designed new programmes to attract migrant resources for development and poverty reduction projects by providing migrants with information about development projects. In 2001, President Fox established, in Mexico, a department for Mexican diasporas, affiliated to the Presidential Office and aimed at strengthening linkages between migrants and their country of origin. To overcome the lack of confidence among migrants in development projects, programmes mobilizing migrant remittances engaged migrants in the implementation, management and follow-up of remittance programmes.

5. Return migration and integration policies

Returning migrants play an important role in development by investing the surplus of their savings in their countries of origin, sending regular financial remittances, and transferring the expertise and knowledge

⁸ League of Arab States (2006), Regional Report on Arab Labour Migration, Population Policies and Migration Department, Social Affairs Sector.

⁹ Nader Fergany (2001), "*Aspects of Labor Migration and Unemployment in the Arab Region*", Almishkat Center for Research, Egypt (www.almishkat.org), revised February 2001; and Martin Baldwin-Edwards (2005), "*Migration in the Middle East and Mediterranean*" a paper prepared for the Policy Analysis and Research Program of the Global Commission on International Migration.

¹⁰ Richard Adams (2006), "Migration, Remittances and Development: The critical Nexus in the Middle East and North Africa", paper presented at the UN Expert Group meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab region, Beirut, 15-17, May, 2006.

¹¹ Ayman Zohry (2006), "Attitudes of Egyptian Youth towards Migration to Europe", study undertaken for the Information Dissemination on Migration (IDOM) Project.

acquired abroad. As a result, migrants contribute to economic development in their countries of origin when they return to settle in specific jobs or to launch their own business.¹² In addition to the investments of returning migrants who are equipped with new expertise and skills, the migrant labour force plays an important role in unemployment reduction in sending countries during their absence. This fact is highlighted by studies related to some ESCWA countries. In Egypt, for instance, a study conducted by Jackline Wahba shows that returning migrants positively affected development in Egypt through their acquired skills by generating new employment opportunities upon their return, managing their commercial projects, and using capital in a productive manner. However, returning migrants tend to stay in cities away from rural areas, thereby minimizing the positive effects of their return.¹³

In order to maximise the positive impact of returning migrants on economy and society as a whole, a set of targeted policies should be adopted. For instance, Taiwan called upon migrants to return to their country to benefit from their expertise in human or material investment, by supporting programmes aimed at attracting migrants such as organizing business trips and offering them high salaries. China is seeking to establish linkages with migrants by increasing commercial ties and promoting investment, and the same goes for India.¹⁴ Many sending countries of the ESCWA region began adopting similar policies, even if their policies did not develop as desired.

6. Good practice in migration

The experience of receiving countries and sending countries has undoubtedly evolved, thereby giving way to very important policies with regard to labour force movement. Below are some relevant experiences and good practice:

- **Policies countering illegal migration**

The repatriation agreement signed between Egypt and Italy and the agreement aimed at sending an annual percentage of Egyptian labour force abroad are considered as useful policies for both parties, especially that they give them necessary incentives and regulate migration without preventing it but rather by rationing it to serve the interests of both parties. The same regulatory policy can be adopted among Arab host countries which fear an increased illegal immigration but, at the same time, need foreign workers to complete their development projects.

- **Policies countering illegal trafficking of persons**

The United Arab Emirates is among few ESCWA countries which took serious actions with regard to the illegal movement of women and children. As of January 2003, the Emirati Government introduced the use of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) to disclose the illegal entry of children with their parents to the country. As a result of this policy, more than 250 children were prevented from entry and repatriated to their countries of origin in Bangladesh and Pakistan, and persons in charge of transferring them were arrested and laws were enforced against them.¹⁵

¹² Barry McCormick and Jackline Wahba (2002), “*Return International Migration and Geographic Inequality: The case of Egypt*”, University of Southampton mimeo; see also: Jackline Wahba (2005), “*International Migration Education and Market Failure in MENA*” Background Paper for the World Bank’s MENA Regional Report on Education.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Newland and Patrick (2004), op. cit.

¹⁵ ESCWA (2006), “*International Migration in the Arab Region*”, paper presented at the United Nations Expert Group meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, Beirut, 15-17 May, 2006.

- **Policies protecting the rights of migrants**

Many ESCWA countries have taken actions to protect the rights of migrant workers. In Jordan, for instance, foreign domestic workers were covered by the enforced labour law and special labour contracts were adopted to hire foreign labour force. Contracts provide for the respect of human rights of migrants and determine their financial rights including their basic salaries. Furthermore, Jordan amended the law on offices specialized in recruiting foreign domestic workers in order to control them.¹⁶ The same action was also undertaken by Lebanon.

In 2003, Bahrain issued the first report on human rights which included information about the ill treatment of foreign domestic workers. Based on the report, the Ministry of Labour undertook serious actions regarding the work permits of those migrants and introduced a hotline to receive their complaints.¹⁷

In Saudi Arabia, the Consultative Council approved, in 2003, the creation of a Saudi Human Rights Authority. One of the main tasks of this independent authority was to investigate human rights violations against foreign labour force. In December 2004, the Ministry of Labour established a new department for the protection of foreign workers against ill treatment by their employers. Indeed, the ministry took serious actions against 30 Saudi persons who mistreated foreign domestic workers.¹⁸

- **Use of modern security tools to track the entry and exit of migrants**

Lebanon is considered among the leading ESCWA countries in this field as it established an electronic database recording the number of entries of all migrant workers in Lebanon, including the names and addresses of their employers. This database facilitates the control and tracking of foreign workers by the concerned authorities in the event of security unrest.¹⁹

- **Policies on the long-term integration of migrants in host countries**

Saudi Arabia is preparing a policy for the integration of non-Arab migrants by promulgating a law that extends the required residence period for settlement but does not allow this right to migrants from all nationalities.²⁰

7. Gaps in migration regulations and policies in ESCWA countries

Four main gaps can be identified in migration regulations in ESCWA countries, as follows:

- **First gap:** Absent or weak institutional frameworks regulating migration in ESCWA countries. With the exception of Egypt, most ESCWA countries either do not have an integrated institutional framework to address migration issues or suffer from weak frameworks either because they are incomplete or due to weak coordination among concerned governmental bodies, absent laws, procedures and policies, or lacking transparency and multiple policy changes. Even in the case of Egypt, some institutions are not activated as required, such as the Higher Committee for Migration.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Baldwin-Edwards (2005), op. cit.; see also: ILO (2004), "Gender and Migration in the Arab States: The case of Domestic Workers", Arab Regional Bureau.

¹⁸ Baldwin-Edwards (2005), op. cit.

¹⁹ ILO (2004), op. cit.

²⁰ Baldwin-Edwards (2005), op. cit.

- **Second gap:** Weak legislations related to the rights of migrants. Some ESCWA countries have recently demonstrated their interest in that issue, such as Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon regarding foreign domestic workers. However, legislations are still weak and they should be enacted to protect migrant rights.
- **Third gap:** Weak policies countering illegal migration. ESCWA countries do not have intra-regional repatriation agreements or agreements with other countries except for the one signed between Egypt and Italy. Few legislations in ESCWA countries criminalize human trafficking brokers or whoever helps in using trafficking channels. In terms of international agreements, the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air was ratified by 89 countries including five ESCWA countries, namely Egypt, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.²¹ The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children was ratified by 97 countries including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.²²
- **Fourth gap:** Weak commitment of many ESCWA countries to international conventions and agreements regulating the rights of migrants. For instance, except for Bahrain and Kuwait, few GCC countries ratified international conventions on the protection of the rights of migrants. Besides, the United Nations Trafficking Protocol was only ratified by Bahrain and Egypt among ESCWA countries, and the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families of 1990 was only ratified by Egypt in the ESCWA region.²³ Furthermore, Egypt and Yemen are the only ESCWA countries which ratified the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol, while ESCWA countries which host the highest number of refugees, namely Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic did not ratify those conventions.²⁴

Conclusions

The 2009 Human Development Report included several fundamental orientations about migration that should be adopted at the global level, such as: Protecting the basic rights of migrants; minimizing the cost of migration transactions; incorporating human transfer into development strategies; liberalizing and simplifying ways for people to work abroad. Therefore, the main challenge facing the world in general and ESCWA countries in particular is to adopt the best ways to manage migration (rather than allowing or preventing migration) in order to maximise benefits and mitigate losses. This is the pivotal issue of migration which needs to be addressed by ESCWA countries in the light of the ongoing political and social changes affecting societies. As such, several actions should be taken by ESCWA countries to enhance migration management.

Another main problem lies in migration data and distribution of migrants on the basis of age, skills and education, both in receiving countries and sending countries of the ESCWA region. In order to develop sound policies, ESCWA countries need accurate data on migrants, especially if they are seeking to benefit from migration in development. Therefore, there is an urgent need that host countries publish detailed statistics about migrants as per their countries of origin, as this action is not currently undertaken in ESCWA countries. Moreover, data should be classified according to specific standards in order to follow up developments over time, and should be continuously updated. To that end, new statistical methods should be

²¹ Treaties Office Database, EUROPA, webpage: <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=2841>.

²² UN Treaty Collection, webpage: http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtmsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18<en.

²³ Baldwin-Edwards (2005), op. cit.

²⁴ ILO (2004), op. cit.

adopted instead of relying on a general population census which is conducted once in ten years or more in many ESCWA countries. In this regard, population registers can be used to ensure a continuous registration of population and capture any change in their place of residence, as implemented by some European countries. It is also essential that migration data do not cover only legal migration but also illegal migration. Therefore, with available data, ESCWA countries will be able to formulate sound policies so that migration ceases to be a source of brain drain in sending countries or an additional financial burden on the budgets of receiving countries but rather a main component of development both in receiving countries and sending countries.

One of the most important actions which should be undertaken by ESCWA countries is increasing linkages between migrants and their countries of origin. Although some institutions in the sending countries of the ESCWA region seek to leverage those linkages, many efforts should be further deployed, such as ensuring the right to vote for migrants in elections and issuing identity cards in host countries. In this context, enhancing consular services plays an important role as well as verifying the credibility of information published by the governments of ESCWA countries about migrants and services provided for them in order to boost the efficiency of institutions which are leveraging linkages with them. These actions may require conjugating efforts at the international level to urge countries, through international forums and conventions, to comply with international conventions on the rights of migrants.

Cooperation among Arab countries in general and ESCWA countries in particular, with regard to migration, should be reconsidered. Although inter-Arab agreements exist, they are not implemented. It is worth mentioning that the Arab Declaration on International Migration issued by the League of Arab States in July 2006 is a step in the right direction but it needs the necessary implementation mechanism, especially with regard to rights and treatment of migrants. Those issues require regional conjugated efforts by signing regional and bilateral agreements and developing the necessary implementation mechanisms.

It is important to note that migration policies, especially in GCC countries, should be developed on a country-by-country basis despite inter-country economic similarities. In fact, the global financial crisis in 2008 showed that the response of return migration varied among GCC countries where Saudi Arabia, for instance, was not severely affected compared with the other GCC countries. Therefore, although the general framework of policies can be collectively developed, the specific conditions of every country should be taken into account.