1. Introduction

Migration today is linked, directly or indirectly, to the world of work and the quest for decent work opportunities, either within countries or across international borders. There are 244 international migrants in the world today (UNDESA, 2016) and the majority, 150 million, are migrant workers, accounting for 72.7 per cent of the migrant population of working age (15 years and over) of 206.6 million. (ILO, 2015). Refugees or other forcibly displaced persons fleeing persecution, conflict, violence and environmental disasters may also eventually end up in the labour market, either as salaried workers or as self-employed entrepreneurs, as may family members who accompany or join migrant workers. It is not possible, therefore, to discuss migration in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without consideration of decent work issues.

The purpose of this Note is to: (1) provide a brief overview of how decent work and migration have found their way into the global development agenda; (2) describe the main elements relating to decent work and migration in the 2030 Agenda, with reference to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and SDG targets and proposed indicators (classified into three tiers based on the extent to which a methodology for measurement has been established); (3) analyse the linkages between SDG 8 on economic growth and decent work and SDG target 8.8 on the protection of the labour rights of all workers, including migrant workers, with the other SDGs and targets; and (4) draw attention to the commitment of the international community to reduce the costs of labour migration as an important linking factor.

2. Decent work and global development: From the MDGs to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

Both migration and decent work are relative newcomers to the debates on global development. Migration was not included as a goal or target in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but was referenced in the United Nations Millennium Declaration in the context of democracy, human rights and good governance (UN, 2000). Similarly, a reference to productive employment and decent work only appeared in the Declaration, although a target was subsequently added under MDG 1 – Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. In the lead-up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, however, both featured much more prominently.

That world of work issues constituted a significant omission in previous debates on global development was recognized in the UN Secretary-General’s Synthesis Report on the 2030 Agenda, issued in December 2014 and preceding the Agenda’s adoption in September 2015, in which the Secretary-General observed that “Member States will need to fill key sustainable development gaps left by the MDGs, such as the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, decent work for young people, de...
social protection and labour rights of all” (emphasis added). This was closely tied to the demand to “leave no one behind, ensuring equality, non-discrimination, equity and inclusions at all levels”, which is a central principle of the 2030 Agenda, and the need to. (UN, 2014, paras 50 and 51).

2.1 Decent work and migration in the 2030 Agenda

Decent work and migration feature strongly in the Declaration on the 2030 Agenda, adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. The Heads of State and Government resolved “to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities” (UN, 2015, para. 3). They committed to working “to build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centred economies, promoting youth employment and women’s economic empowerment, in particular, and decent work for all” (UN, 2015, para. 27). With regard to migration, they recognized “the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development” and that “international migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of countries of origin, transit and destination, which requires coherent and comprehensive responses”. They committed also to “cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons” (UN, 2015, para. 29).

The Declaration views economic growth and decent work as mutually reinforcing, which is clearly reiterated in the title of SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. SDG target 8.8 is of particular relevance to the protection of migrant workers and labour migration: “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments of all workers, including migrant workers, particularly women migrants, and those in precarious employment”. The proposed global SDG indicators to measure this target focus on improving conditions of occupational safety and health and the right of all workers to freedom of association and collective bargaining, which is an important means of realizing other labour rights. Given that target 8.8 specifically refers to migrant workers and women migrants, these indicators are also to be disaggregated by sex and migrant status:

8.8.1 Frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries, by sex and migrant status
8.8.2 Increase in national compliance of labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation, by sex and migrant status

ILO is the custodian agency for further developing the methodology for these two indicators, which are both classified as tier 1 indicators (i.e., an established methodology exists and data are already widely available).

2.2 Linkages to other SDGs and targets

Decent work is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond merely having a job. The ILO’s Decent Work Agenda contains four inseparable, interrelated and mutually supportive objectives: (i) respecting, promoting and realizing the fundamental principles and rights at work; (ii) promoting employment by creating a sustainable institutional and economic environment; (iii) developing and enhancing social protection measures; and (iv) promoting social dialogue and tripartism (ILO, 2008). The fourth objective recognizes that the principal world of work actors, namely representative organizations of employers and workers, together with labour ministries and other relevant parts of government, have a critical role to play in implementing and taking forward the Decent Work Agenda.
This expansive understanding of decent work is important lending itself to connect seamlessly with other relevant SDGs and targets. Within SDG 8, in addition to target 8.8, the other decent work targets can all be aligned to one or more of these four objectives.

**SDG 8 – Decent work targets**

- **8.3** - Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services
- **8.5** - By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- **8.6** - By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
- **8.7** - Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour [...]

The same can also be said of a number of targets in other SDGs.

**Other SDG targets relevant to decent work (non-exhaustive list)**

**SDG 1 - End poverty in all its forms everywhere**
- **1.3** - implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors [...]

**SDG 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**
- **3.8** - achieve universal health coverage [...] access to quality essential health-care services [...]
- **3.c** – Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries [...]

**SDG 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**
- **4.4** - By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

**SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**
- **5.1** - end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- **5.2** - eliminate all violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- **5.4** - recognize and value of unpaid care and domestic work [...]
- **5.5** - ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

**SDG 10 – Reduce inequality within and among countries**
- **10.3** - ensure equal opportunity and reduced inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard
- **10.4** - adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality
When it comes to migration and particularly migration for employment, the most evident linkage is to SDG target 10.7: “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. Two global indicators are proposed to measure target 10.7, the first on lowering recruitment costs and the second on well-managed migration policies:

10.7.1 Recruitment cost borne by employee as a proportion of yearly income earned in country of destination (Tier 3)
10.7.2 Number of countries that have implemented well-managed migration policies (Tier 3)

ILO and World Bank are the custodian agencies for further developing the methodology for indicator 10.7.1, which is classified as tier 3 (i.e., an internationally agreed methodology has not yet been developed or it is not widely accepted or discussed and scarce information is available), while IOM and the UNDESA are tasked to develop the methodology for indicator 10.7.2, also classified as tier 3.

Realizing adequate and effective protection of the labour rights of migrant workers, as expressed in SDG target 8.8, would not be possible, however, without “planned and well-managed policies” containing a number of essential elements. In ILO’s view, these should include: a rights-based approach to labour migration, in accordance with relevant international human rights and labour standards, which recognizes labour market needs at all skill levels; fair recruitment processes; adequate attention to gender issues; the involvement of world of actors (employers and trade unions) in the formulation, reform and implementation of evidenced-based labour migration policies; and effective cooperation on migration at the bilateral, regional and multilateral level. These elements can be gleaned from international labour standards, particularly ILO Conventions Nos. 97 and 143, the ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2006) and the Fair Migration Agenda (2014). There are also other understandings of “planned and well-managed policies” in relation to SDG target 10.7. As noted above, IOM and UNDESA are developing a methodology for indicator 10.7.2, based on the recently adopted IOM Migration Governance Framework (IOM, 2015) which contains similar elements.

Other migration-related targets also closely interact with the decent work components of SDG 8, such as target 10.c (reducing transaction costs of migrant remittances) and target 17.18 (enhancing capacity-building support to developing countries to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by several characteristics, including migratory status).

2.3 Reducing the costs of labour migration

Addressing abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices, which is also the focus of SDG indicator 10.7.1 referred to above, is an important aspect of reducing the costs of labour migration.
and thus improving sustainable development outcomes for migrant workers and their families, as indeed recognized by governments in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (UN, 2015), which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. In addition to the costs of migrant recruitment, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda identifies the lack of recognition of qualifications and skills and portability of social security benefits as significant migration costs. This broader understanding of migration costs is also reflected in the UN Secretary-General’s eight-point agenda for action, contained in his report to the 2013 General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development: “There are enormous gains to be made by lowering costs related to migration, such as the transfer costs of remittances and fees paid to recruiters, especially by low-skilled migrant workers. In addition, countries can strengthen the benefits of migration by enhancing the portability of social security and other acquired rights, and by promoting the mutual recognition of diplomas, qualifications and skills.” (UN, 2013, para. 113).

This list of labour migration costs, however, is by no means exhaustive and can also include costs relating to the wages and working conditions of migrant workers. The ILO Global Wages Report 2014-15 found that there continue to be significant wage gaps between migrant workers and nationals in relation to both high and low-wage earners, which are only partly explained by differences in experience, education, occupation and other labour market characteristics. The unexplained part of this wage gap could be attributed to such factors as employer discrimination against migrants, differences in returns to education acquired abroad, or a lack of representation or underrepresentation in collective representation structures (ILO, 2015, p. v). Moreover, under the auspices of the Thematic Working Group on Low-Skilled Labour Migration of the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), the ILO and the World Bank are undertaking empirical research to assess the extent of labour migration costs, including the costs associated with migrant recruitment, which are extortionate in certain high-volume migration corridors. Research is also being conducted on the costs associated with migrants’ stay and work at destination, such as non- or late payment of wages, or unpaid time off work because of employment-related injuries or illness.

The concept of labour migration costs can therefore be viewed as an important linking factor between the various elements of the SDGs as these relate to decent work and migration, and particularly as between the migration-related and other targets in SDGs 8 and 10. Reducing such costs would result in significantly improving development outcomes for migrants and their families concerned, and help to fulfil one of the key imperatives of the 2030 Agenda, namely that no one should be left behind.

3. Guiding questions for discussion

- To what extent can the inclusion of decent work and migration in the 2030 Agenda strengthen activities on migration and development at the country and regional level?

- How can the linkages between decent work and migration, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, be appropriately taken account of in the technical cooperation work in your country? Which specific elements could be especially relevant to your work?

- How can your work at the national and local level contribute to the work on consolidating and/or developing methodologies for indicators to measure the globally accepted SDG migration-related and other relevant targets? How can these indicators be applied at the national and/or regional levels?
REFERENCES


UN Millennium Declaration, UN General Assembly Resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000.


