

Migration Dynamics in Africa – Understanding the Narrative

ADPC, in cooperation with UNECA, GIZ and ADEPT, organised a South-South exchange conference between key policymakers from several African Diaspora Ministries in Addis Ababa on 23-24 November. The aim of the conference was to facilitate the AU member states to exchange information, learn from each other and share good practices (both policies and programmes) in the policy areas of migration management, integration and migration, and development. The countries represented at the conference were: Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Tunisia. The event brought together government policymakers, researchers and practitioners in Africa, representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC) and UNECA as well as diaspora from Europe.

The gathering provided an opportunity to shift the policy discussion on migration and mobility dynamics to the prevailing reality in Africa. It also created a platform for the stories and perspectives of diverse stakeholders in Africa active in the field in different ways. The narratives shared during the conference reiterated the complexity and challenges of migration dynamics in Africa, which has yet to receive proper research and policy attention. For instance, many countries have become simultaneously a source, transit point and destination location for migrants on the continent. They are confronted with the challenges emanating from the different facets of migration, while lacking sufficient policymaking capacity, institutional experience and resources to deal with them effectively. In certain instances, this results in the neglect of rights and is a barrier to the economic and social integration of migrants in the host countries. More gravely, many African migrants in Africa are badly mistreated, de-humanised and even killed. The reality is that many governments in Africa are not only failing to adequately respond to the challenges emanating from the dynamics of migration but are also failing to exploit its opportunities and development potential. Moreover, the phenomena of migration manifests itself as a complex field with different dimensions encompassing economic, social, political and transnational transactions across countries and continents. This aspect adds an additional layer to the complexity of migration dynamics in Africa.

During the conference, there was a general feeling that the needs and support of displaced persons and the massive refugee population within Africa have been severely neglected in favour of the few migrants going to Europe. The participants were of the view that **seriously addressing the migration challenges within Africa will also reduce the root causes of migration from the continent to Europe** and beyond. Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of evidence-based, policy-supporting research conducted to document the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of African countries in terms of migration management, protection of migrant rights, as well as social and economic integration in host societies. For example, government participants from Cameroon, Ethiopia and Tunisia presented examples of good practices in migration and diaspora related programmes implemented in their respective countries that have not yet been showcased.

In addition, the government participants emphasised the need to generate knowledge informed by the development challenges in Africa born out of the continuing migration of skilled personnel outside the continent. This concern was repeatedly raised due to the fact that certain countries in

Africa, like Ethiopia, are undergoing an accelerated economic growth and development boom that necessitates a greater need for mass skilled personnel in order to sustain it.

Participants identified three key sectors - health, education and private development (i.e. SMEs) – badly affected by the flight of skilled personnel from the continent. They stated the urgent need to invest in policy-oriented research that provides policy recommendations and practical insights into the most appropriate methods for African governments to tap the skills and professional capacity of the diaspora. This would improve the operational capacity to deliver services in these three critical sectors for the overall development of the continent. As a general observation, participants highlighted the need for the AUC to develop an African-owned agenda that will help the continent to formulate a comprehensive approach to addressing the many facets of migration and mobility dynamics in a better manner. This would mean updating the outdated African Migration Policy Framework of 2006 in order to keep pace with the prevailing migration and mobility reality in Africa today.

The government participants in the conference appreciated meeting each other, building up networks and sharing policy and practical experiences on migration related issues. They also appreciated the unique opportunity to gather, deliberate and jointly identify broader policy instruments to address the challenges emanating from migration and mobility dynamics within the context of Africa. More importantly, the conference was valued as a platform for countries that are new to this area to learn from the experiences of those at the forefront of the field. At the end of the conference, the participants unanimously proposed the following actions in three key areas:

- 1) Establish an African Capacity-Building Instrument that strengthens the institutional capacity of migration governance at continental, regional, national and local levels;
- 2) Set up a platform or a mechanism through which migrant/diaspora-oriented government policymakers, researchers and practitioners in Africa can exchange knowledge, information, experiences and share good practices (both policies and programmes) on a more regular basis in the form of South-South exchange;
- 3) Invest in the generation of new knowledge to support the development of an African-owned agenda in the field of migration and development, strengthen knowledge capacity and thus increase the contribution of the continent to the development of knowledge globally in this emerging research and policy field. This is with the realisation that, thus far, the available knowledge in this emerging field has not taken into account the policy and institutional challenges emanating from the different facets of migration and mobility dynamics currently prevailing in Africa. In particular, there is a need to respond to the lack of knowledge institutions on the continent that address migration dynamics from the perspectives, aspirations, priorities and specific needs of Africa.