Migration and development
By Mattia Giampaolo and Aurora Ianni
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1. MIGRATION, DEVELOPMENT AND THE INTERNATIONAL AGENDA

Migration is a complex phenomenon that can either bring benefits or raise challenges, depending on its good or bad governance. If migration is poorly governed, sustainable development will be negatively affected. In particular, irregular migration can have a negative (or only slightly positive) impact on the countries of origin, transit and destination. On the contrary, if well governed, regular migration can positively contribute to inclusive growth and sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda\(^1\) is the first international development framework that includes and recognizes migration as a dimension of sustainable development\(^2\).

Target 10.7 under the goal “Reduce inequality in and among countries”, directly refers to migration when calling to “facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”. Many other targets refer to migration, which is indeed a cross-cutting issue and should be considered as such\(^3\).

First of all: migration can contribute to economic growth across different migration spaces (hosting and transit countries as well as countries of origin). Target 10.7 is linked to SDG 8 “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” and, particularly, with its target 8.5 aimed at “achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with

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\(^1\) The Agenda is a commitment to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by 2030 world-wide, ensuring that no one is left behind. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda was a landmark achievement, providing for a shared global vision towards sustainable development for all. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a collection of 17 global goals set by the UN General Assembly in 2015 for the year 2030. They address the global challenges we face included those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice. See https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/


See also previous background papers in the framework of the Faces of Migration Project i.e. 1) Climate Change and Migration, 2) Social Inclusion of migrants in the EU, 3) Gender and Migration, 4) Migration in third countries: the Jordanian case, 5) the Global Compact on Migration: a worldwide opportunity to a common governance of migration; that can be downloaded in https://www.focsiv.it/tag/FoM_paper/

disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value⁴. And this holds true also for migrants.

Secondly, ensuring inclusive and equitable education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all (Goal 4) is an essential condition for migrants to access decent work and, consequently, to contribute to both the hosting and origin communities’ development.

Labor migration and education improvement can also reduce poverty (Goal 1). With their work, their remittances and their involvement in the service sector, skilled and trained migrants will be able to fill labor market needs both in origin and destination countries and to channel finance for development.

In addition, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)⁴ represents a significant opportunity to improve migration’s governance, to address the challenges associated with today’s migration, and to strengthen migrants’ contribution to sustainable development. In particular, within its objectives group 18-21⁵ the Compact calls for investing in migrant skills, diasporas, remittances and returns, in order for migrants to be the best players of sustainable development.

**Objectives 18-21 of the Global Compact on Migration**

18. Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences.

19. Create conditions for migrants and Diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries.

20. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants.

21. Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration.

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⁴The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, adopted by the majority of UN Member States (with 152 votes in favor, 12 abstentions - including Italy - and five votes against - Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel, Poland and USA) on 10th December 2018 in Marrakesh, is the first inter-governmentally negotiated (non-binding) agreement covering all dimensions of international migration in order to address the challenges associated with today’s migration and to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development. See https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration

⁵To go into depth see our previous contribution on The Global Compact on Migration: a worldwide opportunity to a common governance of migration, in https://www.focsiv.it/tag/FoM_paper/
The relative increase of migration flows in the last few years has raised, once again, the debate on the root causes of migration. At political level, many put the distinction between refugees and migrants\(^6\) at the core of the debate, particularly the far-right movements and parties, in order to distinguish those who have the right to be hosted and protected from those who do not. The distinction, according to UNHCR definition, is based on the causes that either push or pull individuals to migrate. War, natural disasters or violent discrimination and persecution are all causes that make people become refugees and able to access to humanitarian visas, whose only choice is to leave their origin countries and look for a safer destination.

On the other hand, low wages, poor education and high unemployment rates are all causes that make an individual become a migrant, and, in some cases, yet not all, lead migrants to leave their countries of origin in search of better livelihoods. All the causes outlined above are defined by studies as push factors\(^7\), they push – force or compel– individuals to migrate. Despite their differences, the causes of migration cannot be directly and simply divided into push and pull factors, if we analyze their impact on individuals, the decision-making process on migration and the international system.

In analyzing the economic causes of migration, studies and scholars are divided on the ways in which the economic structures influence migration as well as on the effects it has on both origin and destination countries. The neoclassical approach is one of the theories that attempt to explain the roots of economic migrations as well as their effects. According to this approach, the primary root cause of migration is the difference in terms of salaries and working conditions between the country of origin and that of destination. In this sense, the migration decision-making process is done on an individual and voluntary basis. Migrants decide to leave their countries in order to find higher wages and better living conditions abroad\(^8\). This has a double effect on the economic and labour structure of the countries of destination and those of origin. Those who sustain such analysis think that migration is driven by a high population increase that generates a surplus of workforce as opposed to low labour demand and low capitals, which in turn determine low salaries. These factors push population or labour force surplus out of the country towards countries where labour demand, as well as salaries and capitals are higher. Hence, poor countries face a drop in the labour force with a subsequent increase in wages.

On the contrary, in destination countries, this fills the gap of low job demand and makes salaries decrease. According to the neoclassical approach this dynamic generates a convergence of economic conditions between countries of origin and destinations, thus reducing migration flows in the medium-long run.

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\(^6\) To learn more on the definition, see UNHCR document: [https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html](https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html)


Critics argue that economic migration is generated by the global economic system –globalization– that produces and re-produces inequalities between poor and rich countries, compelling people to migrate. Indeed, following the neoclassical approach, emigration countries –such as the African ones– despite the high number of migrants, did not solve their economic and employment problems. The downward trend of salaries in immigration countries –such as the European ones– are not caused by migration, but by the unequal conditions between labour and capital. On the other hand, it is true that some countries of emigration in Europe and Asia improved their economic and social conditions in the past century, converging towards richer countries, and transforming themselves into immigration countries. The international division of labour is ever changing, and different configurations are constantly emerging. However, all in all, inequalities continue to be a primary driver of migration.

Besides the important social and economic factors pushing migrants to leave their countries, other factors help us better understand the mechanism of migration. The long tradition of migration of some communities, for example in Italy but also from former colonies to some European countries (United Kingdom, Belgium, France …), has developed migrants’ social networks. They are sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and same community of origin.

The networks are defined as pull factors, or also migration chains that promote and facilitate migrations to specific countries due to the linkages with co-nationals, friends or family, and to historical linkages (colonial and new economic relationships). What co-determines and shapes migration is the human and social capital of a given community that provides the new comers with housing, labour opportunities and coverage of travel costs. In several cases, networks develop a tight social fabric that reduces the social mobility of the new comers, builds up criminal networks based on labour exploitation and prevents a real integration in the hosting society. In this context, families in the countries of origin play a central role in determining which member of the family will migrate. This is in full contrast with the neoclassical (and also systemic) approach that reduces migration to economic and utilitarian dimensions, neglecting other social and human factors such as the role played by family or community in the decision making process of migration.

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10 Massey, 1988, op. cit.
12 The presence of members in a given country of destination who the family trust on. This determines the path and the modalities of migration, Monni, Zaccagnini, Ivi, pp. 39, op. cit.
Finally, a more complex analysis indicates how diverse factors interact in explaining migration. The new concept of mixed migration takes into account the interaction of various causes such as environment –climate factors, effects of authoritarian rules –particularly related to repression policies by political and military regimes–, and search for better opportunities. Multiple factors may affect the migrant also during the journey. One can leave his/her country for economic reasons, but during the route he/she can fall in the hands of smugglers and may be victim of violence, discrimination or arbitrary detention, sexual exploitation, slavery-like practices, servitude and torture. Thus, despite the absence of a vulnerable situation at the moment of departure, vulnerabilities may arise along the route. According to the common definitions of migrants and refugees, such phenomenon has an impact on the procedures for asylum protection, especially for those who pass through Libya. Finally, it shows how the simplistic division between refugees and economic migrants may be misleading.

3. EUROPEAN UNION POLICIES AND THE ROOT CAUSES OF MIGRATION

The European Union’s Valletta Plan and the European Emergency Trust Fund attempted to face the challenges of migration by examining its root causes. The Valletta Plan and the related Trust Fund address root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa, to “contribute to a flexible, speedy and efficient delivery of support to foster stability and to contribute to a better migration management. In addition, the Trust Fund will help address the root causes of destabilization, forced displacement and irregular migration.”

The promotion of development is linked not only to economic aspects, but also to a broader vision of sustainability. Increasing resilience of those populations faced with food insecurity, undernutrition, climate change and promoting innovative sources of energy in order to preserve the environment, are also the core of the plan. However, the lack of a strong European Foreign Policy let the high aspirations of the Union only on the paper. Alliances stipulated between authoritarian regimes – for example in the Middle East - and some European member states, aimed at preserving and, in some cases, increasing businesses (arms sales, energy exploitation, trade and investments) somehow legitimate the atrocities which, in turn, have played as push factors for migration.

According to the report “I stop the arms trade”, since the beginning of the revolution in the Middle East, European Countries have exported arms for up to 40 billion Euros, accounting for 30% of the total arms exports in the world.

14 Andrea, Stocchiero, Migrazioni miste tra mobilità e sviluppo in tempi di crisi strutturale, in Africa ed Europa, CeSPI, Roma,
15 See the document: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21839/action_plan_en.pdf
17 European Action Plan, in European Migration Summit in Valletta. See above.
19 To see the report: http://www.istopthearmstrade.eu/en/mapping-arms-trade
In addition to the weaponry trade, foreign policies of individual member states - for example, the support to the authoritarian regime in Egypt or the attempts to re-establish stable relationships with Syria – and the EU migration policy to move the borders to instable countries – as for example Libya – have caused growing human rights’ violations for mixed migrants, making in some way the EU itself as a blackmailable player in terms of migration. The Valletta Plan reports on the relation between development and migration. However, it does not take into consideration that different development models have different migration impacts. In some developing countries, private investments and extractive production models have worsened the livelihoods of local population.

Lack of basic services, soil exploitation and intensive farming - among others- have contributed to reducing the resilience of local population in facing climate disasters and the effects of climate change. Recent studies demonstrated how the gradual impoverishment of soils and natural resources, and the increasing level of global temperature have caused displacements and migration.

Moreover, the creation of EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zones - free tax zones), with the aim to increment job opportunities and investments in poor countries, has increased inequalities.

With a growing new super-rich business class and a huge mass of underpaid workers – without any public service-available. This neoliberal mechanism of development has served as a driver of migration. Despite the modernization of the economic system in these poor countries, disparities contribute to increasing migration.

Moreover, the creation of EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zones - free tax zones), with the aim to increment job opportunities and investments in poor countries, has increased inequalities.

A higher development rate does not correspond, indeed, to lower migration flows. As we outlined in a previous paper, those who migrate today are not the poorer, but rather those who have some resources to invest in migration, and who leave because of the existing inequalities between origin and destination countries, and an impoverished middle-class that, due to neoliberal policies and the high level of corruption within local institutional systems, do not find any job opportunity in their countries and try to reach Europe for a better life.

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20 Climate and environmental Change in: https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/iom-outlook-migration-environment-and-climate-change-1
22 Climate change and migration, op. cit.
4. MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE ITALIAN COOPERATION EFFORTS

As already outlined in the 1st paragraph of this paper, attention to the drivers of migration and to the link between migration and development has been to some extent codified in international instruments such as the 2030 Agenda and the Global Compact on Migration. Reducing inequalities in and among countries, investing in human rights, investing in education, developing fair readmission policies, fighting corruption, implementing strategies to manage migrants’ resources (remittances, skills, networks) and enhancing the role of Diasporas among other things, are all strategies used by the International Cooperation to make migration a factor of sustainable development.

At the Italian level, beside debates on the roots of migrations, many initiatives both at government and civil society levels, have been taken over the years in order to enhance the role of migrants and migration in development.

It is worth noting, first, that Italy recognizes International cooperation for sustainable development as an integral part of its foreign policy. Law 125/2014 changed the former denomination of Ministry of the Foreign Affairs into Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and defined the objectives of development cooperation as a) eradicating poverty and reducing inequalities; b) protecting human rights and dignity; c) preventing conflicts, sustaining peace processes and stabilizing post conflict situations. In addition, art. 2 and 26 of the Law, recognizes migrants and diasporas as key actors of development.

Since 2017, the Italian government has supported the creation of the Summit of Diasporas in which both associations of migrants, MAECI, Embassies, the Italian Agency for development cooperation (AICS), local institutions, civil society organizations, discuss on cooperation programs and objectives in order to raise awareness on the linkages between migration and development and to enhance the role of Diasporas for sustainable development.

As an example in this sense, the program MigraVenture, implemented by IOM and Etimos Foundation with the support of AICS and MAECI, aims at transferring entrepreneurial skills of African migrants residing in Italy who want to set up (or consolidate) a business in an African country. In 2019, AICS begun a process to define the new operational guidelines of Italian Cooperation for migration and development. These guidelines should go beyond the approach based on root causes and support the positive contribution of migrants to sustainable development and inequalities’ reduction.

25 See also Fondazioni for Africa project – Burkina Faso https://www.cespi.it/it/ricerche/progetto-fondazioni-africa-burkina-faso
26 For more information see Migrazione, Integrazione, Sviluppo, OIM 2019 pg. 41. https://italy.iom.int/sites/default/files/M%26D%20PUBLICATION_ITA_241019.pdf
27 For more information on RVA&R projects currently running see http://dirittimigranti.ancitoscana.it/viewtopic.php?t=789
In terms of return and readmission policies, Italy is also committed to strengthening the collaboration with third countries of origin and transit on return and reintegration management. Best practices in this context can be found in the programs of Assisted Voluntary Return & Reintegration (RVA&R) promoted by the Ministry of Interior, co-funded by the European Commission and implemented by both civil society organizations and IOM.

RVA&R projects offer third country nationals the chance to return to their country of origin following a pre-departure plan developed for each beneficiary. The so-called Individual Reintegration Plan (PIR) includes the reintegration plan that the (single or family unit) beneficiary intends to follow once returned to the country of origin, supported by economic resources provided for by the project. The beneficiary has the chance to choose the activities that will be financed through this “reintegration grant”: business, education or vocational trainings, medical assistance etc.

Special mention deserves the Regional Development and Protection Program for North Africa which aims at strengthening protection of refugees and migrants by enhancing their livelihoods and providing alternatives to irregular migration in the Mediterranean. The protection component of the program (currently in its 4th phase) is managed by a consortium of member states (led by Italy) and provides, among other things, for direct assistance to migrants and refugees (food distribution, medical and psychosocial assistance, RVA&R), capacity building for national governments and awareness raising campaigns on risks related to irregular migration.

The relation between migration and development is strictly linked to the social inclusion of migrants in the country of destination. As an example, SIPROIMI - Protection System for International Protection Holders and Foreign Unaccompanied Minors - is the most important network focused on the social integration of approximately 30 thousand asylum seekers and holders of international protection in Italy. The primary objective of SIPROIMI is to provide support for each individual in the reception system, through an individual program designed to enable that person to regain a sense of independence, and thus enjoy effective involvement in Italian’s society, in terms of employment, housing and access to local services and social interaction as well as schooling for minors.

However, the latest government decrees have established that humanitarian visas will no longer be issued and that the new special cases for protection will not have access to the System.

Consequently, many vulnerable migrants are left alone in the streets with no support, and the danger is that some of them could end up in vicious and criminal circles. In order to avoid this risk, the Italian Parliament should review the law on migration to guarantee reception services to all migrants and keep them away from any kind of illegal activities.

27 For more information on RVA&R projects currently running see http://dirittimigranti.ancitoscana.it/viewtopic.php?t=789
28 For more information on PIR see https://italy.iom.int/sites/default/files/news-documents/RAPPORTO%20SULL%20ANALISI%20DEI%20PIANI%20INDIVIDUALI%20DI%20REINTEGRAZIONE.pdf
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