United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

African regional review of implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

Key findings of the continental report

August 2021

Table of contents

Introduction

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is set out in General Assembly resolution 73/195,[1] adopted on 19 December 2018, and was formulated on the basis of a shared 360-degreee vision and nine cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles.[2] The Global Compact sets out 23 objectives and affirms that migration is a source of prosperity, innovation and development, but can also give rise to risks and challenges in origin, transit, and destination countries.[3]

Implementation of the Global Compact is being reviewed in 2020 and 2021 in preparation for the International Migration Review Forum, to be convened in 2022. To that end, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which acts as the secretariat for the United Nations Network on Migration, and the African Union Commission are organizing the African regional review of implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which will be hosted by the Government of Morocco from 26 August to 1 September 2021. Drawing on information contained in national voluntary reports submitted by member States, together with additional information and data, this brief report summarizes the status of implementation of the Global Compact in Africa.

Overview of migration in Africa

Despite the significant disruptions caused by the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, African countries have made progress in their implementation of the Global Compact. In the first 10-year implementation plan (2014–2023) for Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, the African Union proposed that all visa requirements for intra-African travel should be waived by 2018 and a legal framework adopted by 2023 for the issuance of an African common passport.[4] Furthermore, the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment was adopted in January 2018 while intraregional trade under the terms of the African Continental Free Trade Area started on 1 January 2021.

Between 2015 and 2019, there was a disproportionate increase in the number of African migrants compared with the number of migrants from other global regions. Indeed, migrant numbers in Africa increased from 23.5 million in 2015 to 26.5 million in 2019, equivalent to a 13 per cent increase. Migrants in Africa accounted for 9.8 per cent of the total number of migrants worldwide in 2019. That trend is due in part to increasing regional integration, which has accelerated thanks to measures enacted by the continent's regional economic communities.[5]

---

[1] General Assembly resolution 73/195 is available at: undocs.org/A/RES/73/195.

[2] The nine principles are: (a) people-centred; (b) international cooperation; (c) national sovereignty; (d) rule of law and due process; (e) sustainable development; (f) human rights; (g) gender-responsive; (h) child-sensitive; (i) whole-of-government approach); and (j) whole-of-society approach.

[3] For further information, see: United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, "General Assembly Endorses First-Ever Global Compact on Migration, Urging Cooperation among Member States in Protecting Migrants", 19 December 2018. Available at www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12113.doc.htm.

[4] African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want First Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2014–2023: A shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and Sustainable Development* (September 2015). Available at: au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33126-doc-ten_year_implementation_book.pdf.

[5] The regional economic communities include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the

Remittances to African countries totalled some $84.3 billion, equivalent to approximately 12.14 per cent of global remittances in 2018. Remittances to African countries rose to some $85.9 billion in 2019, equivalent to 11.98 per cent of global remittances that year. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to lead to a decrease in remittances to Africa in 2020, by October 2020 remittances to Africa had reached approximately $78.4 billion, constituting 11.7 per cent of global remittances.[6] Remittances have therefore demonstrated greater resilience and reliability as a source of capital in Africa than foreign direct investment flows.[7]

According to the flagship report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) entitled "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019", there were some 34.1 million refugees and other persons of concern in Africa by the end of 2019.[8] Furthermore, there were 7,348 disaster events recorded globally between 2000 and 2019, with 1,192 of those events occurring in Africa, which together led to the loss of some 1.2 million lives.[9]

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted trade and travel, leading to a spike in unemployment. This threatens to undo much of the progress that has been achieved in recent years on key development indicators and has further worsened the long-standing migrant "protection crisis", in that increasing numbers of migrants are facing food insecurity and compromised access to health-care services.[10]

Ensuring that migration is voluntary, orderly and regular (Global Compact objectives 2, 5, 6, 12 and 18)

Objective 2: Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin

Data on migration reveal that 86 per cent of migration within Africa is unrelated to conflict.[11] As a result of uneven development, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people living in extreme poverty in Africa, namely those living on less than $1.90 per day, was projected to reach 425.2 million by 2020.[12] In a baseline scenario, that figure is now likely to increase to some 453.4 million as a result of the economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic but could rise to some 462.7 million in a worst-case scenario, leading to an increase in the number of people living in extreme poverty in Africa by between 34 and 49.2

Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU).

[6] ECA, *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and migrant remittances: Protecting an economic lifeline* (September 2020).

[7] Gift Mugano, "Diaspora Investment and African National Economies: Case Studies", in *African Diaspora Direct Investment: Establishing the Economic and Socio-cultural Rationale*, Dieu Hack-Polay and Juliana Siwale, eds. Palgrave Studies of Entrepreneurship in Africa, Palgrave Macmillan (2018).

[8] UNHCR, *Global Trends. Forced Displacement in 2019* (2019). Available at: www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/globaltrends2019/.

[9] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *Human Cost of Disasters. An Overview of the Last 20 Years 2000–2019* (2019). Available at: www.undrr.org/publication/human-cost-disasters-2000-2019.

[10] United Nations Sustainable Development Group, *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and People on the Move,* (June 2020); UNHCR/IOM, *COVID-19 and mixed population movements: emerging dynamics, risks and opportunities: a UNHCR/IOM discussion paper*. (May 2020).

[11] Marie-Laurence Flahaux and Hein De Haas, African migration: trends, patterns, drivers. *Comparative Migration Studies*, vol. 4 (1) (January 2016).

[12] African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2020. Supplement Amid Covid-19* (2020).

million. It is, moreover, estimated that GDP in Africa contracted by between 1.7 and 3.4 per cent in 2020.[13]

In their national voluntary reports, African countries indicate that, to minimize the impact of adverse drivers of migration, they have focused, primarily, on the implementation of long-term national sustainable development plans and strategies, often with a particular focus on the creation of internal and overseas job opportunities. In particular, those plans, and strategies seek to address the situation of young people, promote safer labour migration and combat smuggling and trafficking in persons. Sectoral initiatives in agriculture, social protection, labour, health, enterprise development and disaster management have also been launched to create additional job opportunities.

Key message

- African countries should address the drivers of migration by intensifying efforts to eradicate poverty, create jobs and foster good governance. They should effectively implement frameworks for development, including, in particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

Objective 5: Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration

African countries have expanded their national immigration offices to facilitate the issuance of travel documents. They have also signed bilateral labour agreements and memorandums of understanding with countries willing to offer employment to their nationals with a view to increasing the number of options and pathways for regular migration. Several African countries have, moreover, launched programmes to promote ethical recruitment among labour migration stakeholders and have also sought to enhance the skills of migrants to improve their chances of successfully using regular migration pathways. The successful achievement of objective 5 in Africa depends to a large extent on the adoption of key pan-African free movement policy instruments. Full implementation of the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment will require concerted efforts to address key impediments to free movement, including: (a) restrictive visa practices; (b) fears with regard to mass migration among populations in destination countries, particularly in relatively prosperous economies; (c) delays in the ratification of free movement treaties and right of residence provisions;[14] and (d) inadequate infrastructure and connectivity. Easing restrictive immigration and visa practices could significantly reduce irregular migration flows and boost circular migration.

Key messages

- African countries should design and launch policies to promote full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, both of which recognize the critical role played by migration in fostering sustainable development;

---

[13] Ibid.
[14] While 44 African Union member States have signed the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, only 32 have signed the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. Only Rwanda has ratified the Free Movement Protocol.

- In partnership with national and regional research institutions wherever possible, ECA, IOM and the African Union Commission should undertake in-depth analysis with a view to better understanding why certain member States have so far failed to sign and/or ratify the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment.

Objective 6: Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work

Labour migration policies and legislation that promote decent employment and minimum wages, together with bilateral labour agreements and memorandums of understanding are the main tools that African countries have adopted to facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and decent work for their nationals. To enforce compliance with international recruitment and labour standards, African member States continue to work closely with international partners and recruitment agencies in order to promote ethical recruitment and discourage harmful practices, including the use of child and forced labour and trafficking in persons. Efforts to implement objective 6 are largely coordinated through the Joint Labour Migration Programme for Africa,[15] which was launched with a view to supporting implementation of the actions prescribed in Key Priority Area 5 of the Plan of Action for promotion of employment and poverty alleviation, adopted by the African Union in 2004. The Joint Labour Migration Programme for Africa draws on various instruments adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO)[16] in order to strengthen labour migration governance in Africa. In that regard, it should be emphasized that there are grave concerns concerning the situation of many African migrants employed in Gulf Cooperation Council countries under the terms of the *Kafala* system.

Key messages

- African countries should draw up and implement bilateral and multilateral agreements that support student exchange programmes, circular migration, bilateral temporary work schemes and business support initiatives;

- Action should be taken to promote and support labour circulation within Africa and strengthen protections for migrant workers and their family members, inter alia by strengthening international oversight of social security mechanisms and developing standards for the international transfer of migrants' social security benefits and savings.

Objective 12: Strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures for appropriate screening, assessment, and referral

Objective 12 emphasizes the importance of certainty and predictability in migration procedures and referral mechanisms, and of clear standard operating procedures, gender-responsiveness, and child-sensitivity. Key reference guidelines in that area include the

---

[15] African Union Commission, *Report on Labour Migration Statistics in Africa in 2015* (March 2017) Available at: au.int/sites/default/files/pages/33793-file-1st_labour_migration_statistics_report_in_africa.pdf.

[16] ILO conventions 88, 96, 97, 143, 181, and 189 have specific provisions relating to the fair recruitment of migrant workers. The ILO General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs sets out the responsibilities of governments, enterprises and public employment services in connection with fair recruitment practices.

provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In that connection, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), established under Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/17, has emphasized the duties of States towards migrants under the International Covenant,[17] stating that "protection from discrimination cannot be made conditional upon an individual having a regular status in the host country". The Committee has also emphasized the need to uphold the rights of children to education, food, and affordable health care, and stressed that victims of trafficking, smuggling and gender-based violence, the majority of whom are women and girls, should be provided with access to appropriate assessment, referral, and assistance services.

Many African States have established national referral mechanisms that provide for screening, assessment and referral at border entry points and by relevant government departments. Many African States have also provided training to officials at border crossings and at consulates abroad on appropriate procedures for dealing with migrants.

Key message

- Action should be taken to ensure respect for the rights of migrants to access resources and social protections, and to promote sustainable livelihoods with a view to bolstering resilience so that all individuals are better able to cope with economic crises, violence and conflict, including, in particular, migrants who are "immobilized" by those factors and whose livelihood options are limited.

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

A number of obstacles continue to impede the recognition of education, skills and qualifications across national borders.[18] In 2015, in order to address that challenge, the African Union adopted the Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa and the Joint Labour Migration Programme. Other African Union instruments adopted with a view to promoting economic integration on the continent and labour and skills mobility include the Youth and Women Employment Pact for Africa, adopted in 2013, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025, and the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Initiatives undertaken by African countries to advance investment in and mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competencies include the establishment of technical and vocational training institutions, the adoption of regional and bilateral agreements on the verification of certificates, skills and qualifications, and the establishment of national and regional qualification frameworks that provide for the recognition of prior learning, even for uncertified workers.

Key messages

- African countries should adopt national qualification frameworks in addition to systems and processes for the validation and recognition of qualifications;

---

[17] CESCR, "Duties of States towards refugees and migrants under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights", 13 March 2017 (E/C.12/2017/1). Available at: www.refworld.org/docid/5bbe0bc04.html.
[18] ILO and African Union Commission, *Migrant workers' skills portability in Africa at regional economic community and continental level: Guidance towards an African qualifications framework*? (2019). Available at: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/documents/publication/wcms_731236.pdf.

- African countries must negotiate more robust bilateral labour agreements and memorandums of understanding that prioritize the protection of workers with Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Countries should also strengthen labour externalization approaches to enhance opportunities for young people in Africa to pursue employment and business opportunities across borders. They should also expand and improve existing infrastructure and launch national initiatives to grant visa-free access on the basis of the good practices already established by certain member States;

- A continental-wide skills accreditation body should be established to establish equivalence rules and certify skills, diplomas and degrees in Africa. The objective of that body should be to facilitate the circulation of skills within the continent and the exchange of expertise with other countries outside Africa;

- In coordination with member States, the African Union Commission should strengthen global cooperation with respect to the African continent's so-called "brain drain" in order to address the loss of skills in African countries, strengthen skills partnerships and develop domestic skills in line with labour market needs.

Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance measures abroad (Global Compact objectives 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 21)

Objective 4: Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal identity and adequate documentation

A number of African countries have carried out reforms to their national vital registration systems, conducted national digital identification and civil registration exercises and started issuing e-passports including through their consulates abroad. Several countries have also addressed statelessness by giving citizenship to hitherto stateless communities and issuing them with civil registration documents. Free movement within Africa remains elusive for millions of Africans without valid travel documents, however. To enhance recognition of migrants' travel documents across Africa, African countries will all need to issue digitalized travel documents, while efforts will also be needed to ensure the interoperability of border systems. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), some 96 million or 57 per cent of the world's children who are unregistered at birth are in Africa, with 38 million in East Africa, 27 million in West Africa, 16 million in Central Africa, 14 million in Southern Africa and 500,000 in North Africa.[19] Furthermore, according to the World Bank, Africa was the continent with the highest number of unregistered persons in 2018.[20]

Key message

- African States should take all necessary steps to ensure the issuance of birth certificates to all persons born within their national borders, regardless of their nationality or immigration status.

---

[19] UNICEF, *A statistical profile of birth registration in Africa* (November 2020). Available at: data.unicef.org/ resources/a-statistical-profile-of-birth-registration-in-africa/.
[20] World Bank, Identification For Development (ID4D) Global Dataset (2018) Updated data available at: datacatalog.worldbank.org/dataset/identification-development-global-dataset.

Objective 8: Save lives and establish coordinated international efforts on missing migrants

Many African migrant lives are lost in their attempt to reach destinations in Europe, the Middle East and Southern Africa along established smuggling and trafficking routes.[21] Prominent smuggling and human trafficking routes are to be found in West, North, Southern and East Africa, particularly in the Horn of Africa.[22] Data from the European Union reveal high numbers of irregular sea and land border crossings by Africans and high numbers of fatalities among migrants attempting to cross to Europe using the Mediterranean routes. Total migrant fatalities in the Mediterranean were estimated at 1,051 in 2020 while the number of migrants reported missing after attempting to use one of those routes was estimated at 1,270.[23]

Countries in Africa rely heavily on international partners to carry out search and rescue missions, particularly in the Mediterranean, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. Nonetheless, many African countries are now also taking steps to strengthen their capacity to undertake search and rescue missions for missing migrants and to repatriate the bodies of the deceased.

Key message

- Action should be taken to address the issue of missing migrants, inter alia, by strengthening coordination mechanisms and aligning humanitarian and development planning.

Objective 9: Strengthen the transnational response to smuggling of migrants

Many African countries have ratified protocols on smuggling and trafficking in persons, established national taskforces and action plans to combat those phenomena and taken steps to strengthen their border management to enhance prevention and detection mechanisms. Some countries have also taken steps to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies to detect, investigate and prosecute those involved in the trafficking of migrants. African countries cooperate broadly in efforts to combat trafficking in line with the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Smuggling of migrants is prevalent in East Africa, including the Horn of Africa and makes use of two major routes, namely a southern route to southern Africa, and an eastern route to the Arabian Peninsula via the Gulf of Aden.

Key message

- Steps should be taken to encourage broader ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments on smuggling and trafficking in persons and the adoption by States of laws in line with those instruments.

---

[21] Erhabor Idemudia and Klaus Boehnke, *Psychosocial experiences of African migrants in six European countries: A mixed method study*, Social Indicators Research Series vol. 81 (July 2020).

[22] Katrin Marchand, Julia Reinold and Raphael Dias e Silva, *Study on Migration Routes in the East and Horn of Africa*. (Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, 2018).

[23] European Union, Infographic – Migration flows: Eastern, Central and Western routes. Available at: www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/migration-flows/.

Objective 10: Prevent, combat, and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration

Trafficking in persons remains a serious concern for many African countries. According to the 2018 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a total of 855 victims of trafficking from Africa were detected outside the continent in 2018. That figure was the second highest globally (after East Asia). Nonetheless, Africa also had the lowest number of persons convicted of the crime of trafficking per 100,000 people. West Africa was the African subregion with the highest number of child victims detected. Africans were abducted or trafficked in 2018 for forced labour, organ removal, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and the recruitment of child combatants. Moreover, many African countries had little or no data on trafficking. This can undermine detection and the prosecution of perpetrators of trafficking in persons.[24]

To address the challenges posed by smuggling and trafficking in persons, most African countries have enacted anti-trafficking laws, operationalized international toolkits and guidelines for preventing and combatting trafficking, established referral mechanisms and provide support to trafficking victims. Some countries have also established assistance funds to provide additional assistance to victims of trafficking and have engaged with relevant stakeholders to provide training and raise awareness of ways to combat the phenomenon. Specific protection measures taken by some States include setting up shelters for victims, and establishing specialized inspection agencies to prevent, investigate, detect, and prosecute those involved in trafficking in persons.

Key messages

- Relevant stakeholders should conduct intensive awareness-raising among migrants and potential migrants on the risks and dangers of human trafficking and smuggling (including sexual exploitation, abusive labour practices and modern-day slavery), and provide information on access to services and mechanisms to prevent and report human trafficking and smuggling activities;

- Steps should be taken to encourage broader ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments on smuggling and trafficking in persons and the adoption by States of laws in line with those instruments.

Objective 11: Manage borders in an integrated, secure, and coordinated manner

Challenges related to border management result from the sheer size of the continent, its often lengthy and porous borders, institutional and structural weaknesses, and corruption. Border communities in Africa often interact freely with those across the border, and many individuals have family ties across national boundaries. Borders among most African countries remain poorly managed. Intra-African migration takes place, primarily, across land borders. Border traffic can be considerable. For example, some 30,000 people cross the border each day between the towns of Rusizi in Rwanda and Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.[25]

---

[24] UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2018)*. Available at: www.unodc.org/e4j/data/_university_uni_/global_report_on_trafficking_in_persons_2018.html.

[25] IOM and others, *Africa Migration Report: Challenging the Narrative* (October 2020). Available at: publications.iom.int/books/africa-migration-report-challenging-narrative.

Africans also cross borders using unofficial crossing points for pastoralism or transhumance, to visit relatives and in some cases for commodity smuggling. Effective border management is complicated by the multiplicity of functions and the many stakeholders and agencies involved. [26] Human rights are central to all border management practices and it is crucial to combat discriminatory practices, and provide assistance, protections and access to justice for all migrants.[27]

Border management can involve commendable levels of bilateral and regional cooperation. In cooperation with international partners and regional economic blocks, certain African countries have established joint border monitoring mechanisms, moved to install systems and tools for better border management, including e-gates and biometric and facial recognition technology, and have bolstered the capacity of immigration and customs departments and personnel. Countries have also adopted physical and social distancing protocols and established health facilities at their points of entry into their territories to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Key message

- African States should invest in border management tools and initiatives, including in the training of border, immigration and security officials, with a view to establishing high standards of border management and fair and transparent immigration processes.

Objective 13: Use migration detention as a measure of last resort and work towards alternatives

International human rights law requires States to use appropriate alternatives to migrant detention, which should be used only as a measure of last resort in compliance with articles 9 and 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Those who are detained should be accorded humane treatment and the right to due process, have recourse to claim compensation for unlawful detention, and be treated and kept in appropriate circumstances according to their age while in detention.[28] Unfortunately, there are still significant regulatory gaps and weaknesses in law enforcement that place millions of migrants in Africa at risk of detention and violation of their rights.

A number of African countries have put in place mechanisms and procedures to regularize the situation of irregular migrants rather than holding them in detention. They also work with international migration agencies to facilitate their return to their countries of origin and their reintegration into society.

---

[26] Angela Mackay, "Border Management and Gender" *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit*, Megan Bastick and Kristin Valasek, eds., (Geneva: International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2008). Available at: www.unhcr.org/4d9484be9.html.

[27] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights at International Borders* (2015). Available at: www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ Migration/OHCHR_Recommended_Principles_Guidelines.pdf.

[28] The Covenant is available at: www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx.

Key message

- African countries should strengthen the implementation of conventions and protocols protecting the rights of migrants by actively combating all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance against migrants and restricting, as far as possible, the use of detention.

Objective 21: Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as suitable reintegration

Certain African countries have struggled to cope with the return of large numbers of their nationals during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Those countries have been working closely with international, national and local humanitarian partners to provide pre-departure assistance during repatriation, psychological and counselling support, skills training in economic sectors of returnees' choice and financial and technical support to facilitate returnees' economic reintegration. A number of mass forced returns of African migrants have already occurred, including the expulsion of 160,000 Ethiopians from Saudi Arabia in 2013 and 2014. Furthermore, large numbers of African migrants were provided with assistance in 2019 to facilitate their return and reintegration to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa.[29] Through its assisted voluntary return and reintegration programme, IOM facilitated the return of 22,785 migrants, including 1,482 migrants in vulnerable situations, to the West and Central Africa subregions in 2019. The top five African countries to which IOM facilitated the return of migrants were Mali (5, 576 returnees), Guinea (4,458), Côte d'Ivoire (2,057), Nigeria (1,914) and Sierra Leone (1,777). Reintegration assistance provided to returnees includes financial, psychosocial and social support.

Key messages

- African States and their international partners should develop comprehensive reintegration programmes to facilitate the voluntary return of migrants and support communities in high return areas;

- IOM and other international partners should support African States in facilitating the voluntary return and reintegration of migrants in their countries of origin;

- To provide effective protections to migrants, every effort should be made to ensure that migration is rights-based. Efforts should also be made to strengthen border governance in destination countries. Labour recruitment procedures, particularly for employment in Gulf Cooperation Council countries should be reviewed and the *Kafala* system should be abolished;

- To combat smuggling and trafficking in persons, procedures by which prospective migrants obtain travel documents should be simplified and streamlined. Every effort must be made to eradicate corruption among law enforcement officials responsible for combating smuggling and trafficking, and appropriate training

---

[29] IOM, *Migrants and their vulnerability to human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour* (July 2019). Available at: publications.iom.int/books/migrants-and-their-vulnerability-human-trafficking-modern-slavery-and -forced-labour.

should be provided to African countries' maritime security and land border forces, which should, moreover be issued with the modern equipment and tools they need to detect irregular migrants;

- African countries and international partners should strengthen protections for vulnerable populations, including women, children and young people, to prevent them from falling victim to organized criminal groups involved in smuggling and trafficking. Countries should aggressively enforce human trafficking laws and prosecute all traffickers. African countries should also impose tighter controls at points of entry into their territories, make active use of innovative mechanisms and tools for detecting smugglers and traffickers; and strengthen cross-border security coordination.

Supporting the integration of migrants and acknowledging their contribution to development (Global Compact objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22)

Objective 14: Enhance consular protection, assistance, and cooperation throughout the migration cycle

In many destination countries, there is an urgent need to strengthen the consular services offered by migrants' home countries. There is, for example, an acute demand for consular protection in Gulf Cooperation Council countries. In that regard, it should be noted that Arab States host 23 million migrant workers, some 9 million of whom, equivalent to 39 per cent of the total, are women. Although the majority of migrant workers in Arab countries are from Asia, a significant proportion are African nationals, with the majority from Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.[30] There is an urgent need to improve migrant workers' living conditions in Arab countries, where migrants are often accommodated in squalid and overcrowded labour camps.[31] Furthermore, as a result of measures taken by many host countries to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, including lockdowns and travel restrictions, many African countries have been compelled to enhance the consular services they offer and provide emergency assistance, including evacuations to their nationals. African countries have also sought to work with migrants' host countries in order to regularize and extend the visas of their nationals who have been unable to access regular host country immigration services during lockdowns.

Key message

- Strengthen protection mechanisms so as to ensure respect for the human rights of all migrants, inter alia by strengthening consular protections for migrants in destination countries, and particularly for migrants who are especially vulnerable, irrespective of their migration status.

Objective 15: Provide access to basic services for migrants

In many destination countries, migrants provide essential services in retail, transport and logistics, health care, sanitation, domestic services, restaurants and hospitality, agriculture and other economic sectors, thereby ensuring that global supply chains continue to function

---

[30] ILO, "Labour migration". Available at: www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm.
[31] Amnesty International, "COVID-19 makes Gulf countries' abuse of migrant workers impossible to ignore", 30 April 2020. Available at: www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2020/04/covid19-makes-gulf-countries-abuse-of-migrant-workers-impossible-to-ignore/.

during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ensuring migrants' access to affordable health-care services is, moreover, essential if countries are to successfully contain the pandemic.

Although some African countries were already extending basic services to migrants before the COVID-19 pandemic, the outbreak has strengthened many States' willingness to extend health, education, and sanitation services to migrants as doing so is seen as an effective way to help curb the spread of the virus. Many countries have also taken action during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve the health-care services provided at ports.

In their national voluntary reports on the status of implementation of the Global Compact, African States indicated that access to basic services for migrants has been strengthened by the COVID-19 outbreak, as host countries have been compelled to provide services to all individuals, including irregular migrants. This has been done largely to protect host countries' own public health interests.

Key message

- Involve all stakeholders in building inclusive and resilient communities to facilitate the social inclusion of all migrants.

Objective 16: Empower migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion

Because of the high number of migrants in Africa who have been forced to leave their home countries, the achievement of objective 16 remains a daunting challenge. In many cases, the factors that lead to forced migration from countries of origin are also present in destination countries. Consequently, migrants often face exclusion, discrimination and xenophobia in their host communities, thereby limiting the beneficial impact of migration on development. This is because the migration-development "nexus" can only be successful if migrants are empowered.[32] However, on a refreshing note, some countries in Africa have issued citizenship to stateless persons as part of their efforts to promote the inclusion of migrants and strengthen social cohesion. Other countries have launched community-level events to promote cohesion between migrants and their host communities, in addition to youth and diaspora-led entrepreneurial development initiatives.

Key message

- Relevant stakeholders in Africa should conduct awareness-raising activities among migrants and potential migrants of the political landscape and the social and cultural values of destination countries. Efforts should also be made to raise the awareness of populations in destination countries within and outside Africa of the potential social, cultural and economic contributions of migrants in order to combat negative stereotypes and the stigmatization of migrants and foster their integration into host communities.

Objective 19: Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries

In addition to offering incentives to diaspora communities abroad to encourage them to invest in their countries of origin and allowing members of diaspora communities to hold dual

---

[32] IOM, *Migrants and their vulnerability to human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour.*

citizenship, African countries have adopted a number of strategies to leverage the cultural, social, and economic resources of those communities. Those strategies include allowing members of diaspora communities to vote in elections in their home countries, actively engaging with their elected and selected representatives to encourage their participation in national and local development initiatives, providing tax incentives to encourage members of diaspora communities to send remittances to and make investments in their home countries, and making it easier for them to register businesses.

The most direct way to achieve objective 19 is through mainstreaming migration into national and local development planning in all sectors. Several tools have been developed for that purpose, including the IOM Migration Governance Index, and the Dashboard on Policy and Institutional Coherence for Migration and Development, developed by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development and the United Nations Development Programme. At the local government level, the Guidelines on mainstreaming migration into local development planning, formulated by the United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative, provide guidance on "inserting migration as a parameter across different policy areas through multi-stakeholder and multi-level mechanisms."[33] Other tools include the Global Migration Data Portal, managed by the IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, and the IOM Migration Governance Framework and Migration Governance Indicators. The preparation of country migration profiles provides baseline indicators that can be used to manage migration-related initiatives and track progress. At present 51 country profiles have been prepared, including country profiles for 11 African States, namely Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Uganda and Zambia.[34] Migrants' remittances to their families in their countries of origin make a direct contribution to local community-level development. Because remittances are sent directly to migrants' families, they have great potential for reducing poverty and household vulnerability while also contributing to better housing, improved access to services, improved food security and construction in local communities. Job losses among migrants in destination countries stemming from government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have seriously undermined the well-being of a huge number of households and communities in migrants' countries of origin.

Key messages

- African countries should strive to create environments with appropriate governance mechanisms that encourage migrants to invest in their countries of origin, for example, by strengthening property rights, supporting temporary return programmes, facilitating knowledge and technology transfer, and by providing tax incentives and subsidies;

- Efforts should be made to strengthen mechanisms and platforms for diaspora engagement through dedicated coordination offices at national and local levels in migrants' countries of origin and in destination countries.

---

[33] United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative, *Guidelines on mainstreaming migration into local development planning* (undated). Available at: www.migration4development.org/sites/default/files/guidelines_on_mainstreaming_migration.pdf.

[34] IOM Global Migration Data Analysis Centre, *Global Migration Data Portal*. Available at: /gmdac.iom.int/global-migration-data-portal.

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

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and Sustainable Development Goal indicator 10(c) provide that countries should, by 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.[35] The costs associated with sending remittances to Africa are some of the highest in the world. Until very recently, average transaction costs were equivalent to 8.9 per cent of the amount being sent for a remittance payment of $200.[36] Remittances are estimated to constitute approximately 65 per cent of the income of some receiving countries and senders spend an estimated 15 percent of their income on remittances.[37] For 25 African countries, all of which have large diaspora populations, remittances are the primary source of national income.

Due to the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, remittances to African countries in all subregions are expected to decrease from $44 billion in 2020 to a projected total of $41 billion in 2021, equivalent to a decrease of 5.4 per cent. With respect to the cost of sending money, Africa is still far from achieving the 3 per cent target set out in Sustainable Development Goal 10 and, in the third quarter of 2020, sending $200 to Africa still cost an average of 8.5 per cent of the total amount sent.

In response, a number of African countries have taken action to lower the costs of remittance transfers. Some countries also offer diaspora bonds to investors and have relaxed foreign exchange controls to allow for electronic and mobile money transfers at reduced costs. It should be noted, in that regard, that the use of digital money transfer platforms reduces transfer fees in Africa by an average of 7 per cent. Private financial institutions also offer incentives to encourage members of diaspora communities to use their services, including low transaction fees for remittances, and facilitate diaspora-initiated projects, especially in the real estate sector. These measures all promote the financial inclusion of migrants and their families.

Key message

- States should support migrants and their families through the adoption of laws and regulations to facilitate the sending and receiving of remittances, including by fostering competition among banks and other remittance handling agencies with a view to establishing low-cost transfer mechanisms.

Objective 22: Establish mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits

According to the International Social Security Association, some 400 million people worldwide are not covered by health insurance schemes.[38] In recent years, a number of African countries have made progress with regard to the ratification of international and regional

---

[35] United Nations, *Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development* (2015). Available at: sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type= 400&nr=2051& menu=35.

[36] IOM and others, *Africa Migration Report: Challenging the Narrative*.

[37] Ibid.

[38] International Social Security Association, *10 Global challenges for social security: Developments and innovation* (2019). Available at: ww1.issa.int/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2-10-challenges-Global-2019-WEB-263629.pdf.

conventions relevant to the social security entitlements of migrant workers. Bilateral agreements between migrants' countries of origin and destination countries have also strengthened protections for migrant workers. Some destination countries that have yet to conclude bilateral agreements with migrants' countries of origin have extended social security coverage to foreign nationals through legislative amendments and by establishing specific administrative procedures to that end. Establishing mechanisms for the portability of social security entitlements and earned benefits will require the adoption of policies aligned with objective 22 of the Global Compact and possible amendments to bilateral labour agreements and memorandums of understanding with destination countries. In that connection, it should be noted that a number of African countries have already signed bilateral agreements with European Union and Arab Maghreb Union countries to ensure the portability of social security entitlements.

To promote implementation of Global Compact objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22, African countries should step up efforts by their embassies to monitor the welfare of their nationals abroad. They should, moreover, strategically reposition their economies in the light of the repercussions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage the domestic production of strategic supplies, including pharmaceuticals and personal protective equipment. African countries should also make every effort to reduce the transfer costs associated with remittance payments, inter alia, by making more extensive use of digital transfer solutions, such as MPESA, and by streamlining the regulatory constraints associated with international money transfers. African States should also engage with destination countries to identify ways to enhance the provision of basic services to migrants in those countries.

Key message

- Efforts must be made to strengthen the regulations governing labour relations and the activities of recruitment agencies, raise awareness among migrant workers of their social protection entitlements, and extend access to social protection benefits to migrant workers and their families. African States should also conclude bilateral social security agreements with host countries to ensure the portability of social protection benefit, not only with a view to enhancing the security of many migrants but also with a view to encouraging the circulation and return of labour, family and student migrants.

Improving value- and evidence-based policymaking and public debate, and enhancing cooperation on migration (Global Compact objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23)

Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidenced-based policies

Many African States report that they have conducted data collection and research studies on migration. Some of those studies have focused on the situation of specific groups of migrants. Some States have also streamlined and enhanced their migration data collection processes, including by adopting standard operating procedures and innovative data processing technologies, and have incorporated information provided by relevant United Nations agencies into the datasets compiled by their national statistical offices. Some African States have sought to enhance their collaboration with other countries and international stakeholders in the area of migration data management. Conferences, workshops, and regular meetings with key

stakeholders have also been held. To facilitate the achievement of Global Compact objective 1, implementation of the African Charter on Statistics and the incorporation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics into national initiatives will prove critical. In that regard, it should be noted that some regional economic communities have launched initiatives to strengthen the collection, analysis, and dissemination of statistics at the subregional level. Although African regional economic communities have already developed some limited statistical capacity, their statistical strategies and plans are not always aligned with continent-wide statistics agendas, such as the African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa.[39] At the national level, migration statistics are produced, analysed, and disseminated by national statistical offices.

Key message

- Support should be provided to migration observatories, research institutions and national statistical offices to enable them to create and strengthen databases on migration and disseminate migration data effectively so as to enable African countries of origin, transit countries, destination countries and the broader international community to design and roll out effective and robust migration policies and programmes.

Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration

States should conduct multilingual, gender-responsive and evidence-based information campaigns on migration, including awareness-raising events and pre-departure orientation training sessions for migrants in their countries of origin. In that regard, it should be noted that the Principles and Guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations, issued in 2018 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Global Migration Group[40] set forth common standards on travel and border management. In Southern Africa, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Statistics Group compiles and publishes migration statistics, while in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) subregion, national statistical offices, the ECOWAS Statistics Division and a number or specialist research agencies including the Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa, are responsible for compiling statistics on migration. In East Africa, national statistical offices, the East African Community (EAC) Statistics Bureau, and the African Union Institute for Statistics perform that task. The Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre in the United Republic of Tanzania and Makerere University School of Statistics and Planning in Uganda also produce migration data. The African Centre for Statistics at ECA also produces research and publications on migration. Data collated in North Africa is primarily relevant to mixed migration flows. In Central Africa, the IOM regional office for West and Central Africa issues migration flow monitoring reports through its Migration Information and Data Analysis System.[41]

Many African countries have launched websites and information campaigns to strengthen labour migration management and support communication strategies. Many also

---

[39] John Kahimbaara, *Report on The Pan-African Statistical Institute* (Paris, Africa-EU Partnership, n.d.). Available at: au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32832-file-pas_au_institute_report.docx.pdf.

[40] OHCHR and Global Migration Group, *Principles and Guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations* (2018). Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/PrinciplesAndGuidelines.pdf.

[41] IOM, *Migrants and their vulnerability to human trafficking, modern slavery and forced labour.*

carry out educational and awareness-raising campaigns targeting migrants prior to their departure. Some Africa States have established dedicated information centres to raise awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration and the assistance that migrants may be able to access while abroad. Specific outreach initiatives for diaspora communities have also been launched with dedicated websites and social media channels established for that purpose.

Key message

- African countries and other stakeholders should undertake timely analysis of issues relevant to migration, in partnership with national and regional research institutions wherever possible, in order to deepen understanding of the implications of migration for the continent.

Objective 7: Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration

Under objective 7, the provision of necessary support to migrants, regardless of their migration status, is encouraged as good practice. It is especially important to provide support to women and children at risk, members of ethnic and religious minorities, victims of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons who are discriminated against on any basis, indigenous peoples, workers facing exploitation and abuse, domestic workers and victims of trafficking.

Tools used by various African countries to reduce vulnerabilities in migration include legislative actions to protect migrant children, women and other categories of vulnerable migrants, specific referral mechanisms for vulnerable migrants, and the implementation of specific protection measures at all stages of migration including the provision of personal protective equipment to migrants to prevent infection with COVID-19.

Key messages

- Stakeholders should establish procedures to identify victims of trafficking and other migrants in vulnerable situations so as to provide them with appropriate assistance and protection, taking into full account their special needs, vulnerabilities and rights;

- Action should be taken to promote coherence among continental and national migration and assistance policies and align them with regional and subregional protocols and agreements. It is also important to strengthen stakeholders' understanding of the need to adopt rights-based approaches when addressing the situation of migrants.

Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration

Gender imbalances in labour force participation rates are often an indication that women face particular difficulties when seeking to enter the labour market or remain in employment. According to the 2020 Africa Migration Report, published jointly by IOM, the African Union, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the United States Department of State, women migrants seeking to enter the labour force often face double discrimination as women and as migrants. Female labour force participation rates in countries in the Middle East and North Africa remain extremely low compared to rates in sub-Saharan African countries.

Women's labour force participation rates appear to be slowly increasing in the former, however, while there has been a slight decline in some sub-Saharan African countries.[42] During the COVID-19 pandemic, women migrant workers have often faced greater difficulties than men in accessing social protection.

Most African countries have signed and/or ratified relevant international conventions and protocols on non-discrimination, and many countries are now seeking to raise awareness among State officials responsible for migrant issues of the importance of non-discrimination. Many States are also supporting gender mainstreaming in migration programmes and have launched youth-focused interventions to improve employment opportunities for migrants. Tools and approaches being used to counter discrimination include media campaigns, the convening of forums and conferences that facilitate social dialogue, and the holding of seminars, workshops and town hall meetings with relevant stakeholders and migrant-hosting communities.

Key messages

- African countries and their international partners should seek to strengthen implementation of international conventions and protocols protecting the rights of migrants by actively combating all forms of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance against migrants;

- In-depth analysis of the changing structure of African labour markets is needed in order to enhance understanding of future labour market trends and the protections needed to uphold the rights of migrant workers.

Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration

African countries continue to engage in dialogue at the subregional level in pursuit of objective 23. The Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa, for example, brings together SADC member States and IOM on an annual basis to discuss migration issues. SADC member States have also concluded numerous bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding on migration.[43] All African countries participate in consultations on migration within the context of the continent's regional economic communities. Pursuant to those consultations, a number of States have waived visa requirements for citizens of other African countries. Furthermore, progress has been made in the implementation of the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment and free movement will be further enhanced under the terms of the Agreement on the African Continental Free Trade Area, which came into effect on 1 January 2021.

All countries in the ECOWAS subregion participate in the Migration Dialogue for West Africa, the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development, and the Africa-EU

---

[42] Alma Boustati, *Women's Employment in North Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report (Institute of Development Studies, November 2020). Available at: www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/womens-employment-in-north-africa.

[43] Christopher Nshimbi and Lorenzo Fioramonti, "The Will to Integrate: South Africa's Responses to Regional Migration from the SADC Region", *African Development Review*, Vol. 26, No. S1, pp. 52–63 (2014). Available at: repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/49457/Nshimbi_Will_2014.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment.[44] North African countries participate in the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development and The Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugees Affairs. East African countries that are members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) cooperate under the IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework.

The Migration Dialogue for the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa facilitates the harmonization of immigration policies and legislation in Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) member States. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) launched the Migration Dialogue for Central African States in 2012.[45] The Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) aims, inter alia, to promote the free movement of goods, services, capital, and persons.[46]

To achieve Global Compact objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23, member States should implement steps proposed in the context of regional economic community-led dialogues on migration; and take into account the increasingly important role played by diaspora communities in fostering development, including through remittance payments, skills development initiatives and the adoption of emerging technologies.

Key messages

- African countries should ease visa restrictions and remove other barriers impeding people's mobility within Africa, including within and among subregions;

- In coordination with member States, the African Union Commission should strengthen global cooperation with respect to the African continent's so-called "brain drain" in order to address the loss of skills in African countries, including by strengthening skills partnerships and supporting the development of domestic skills in line with labour market needs.

- Efforts should be made to harmonize African migration policies and ensure that they are not driven by external interests. To that end, African States should ratify and implement relevant protocols on the free movement of persons, the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and regional instruments pertaining to the protection of migrants. States should also adhere to the ILO international labour standards, particularly those relevant to migration for employment.

---

[44] Alexandre Devillard, Alessia Bacchi and Marion Noack. *A Survey on Migration Policies in West Africa*. (IOM and International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2015). Available at: publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/survey_west_africa_en.pdf.

[45] African Union Commission, *Report on Labour Migration Statistics in Africa: Second Edition* (December 2019). Available at: au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39323-doc-web254_184-10_english_2nd_edition_of_the_africa_labor_migration_statistics.pdf.

[46] Vittorio Bruni and others, Study on Migration Routes in West and Central Africa. (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, 2017).