Forced migration, free circulation: Policy challenges for human mobility in Eastern Africa

Conclusions and Follow up
SID Workshop, Nairobi, December 4-5, 2008
Looking at some figures...

The eastern Africa region\textsuperscript{1} is the second largest area in Africa hosting international migrants (after West Africa), with the second highest percentage of refugees (after central Africa) and the second largest aggregate flows of remittances in sub-Saharan Africa, contributing to approximately one third of the total amount remitted. Kenya, Uganda and Sudan are, after Nigeria, the largest recipients of remittances in sub-Saharan Africa and represent - together with Senegal and South Africa – almost 90\% of the total amount of remittances (World Bank estimates).

Persistence of drought, conflicts and the increasing diversion of migratory flows towards the East African routes – as a consequence of border tightening and intensified patrols of Northern and Western fronts – suggest that a significant increase of migratory flows may occur within and across the region in the coming years. These data - matched to the ongoing process of regional integration led by the East African Community - contribute to describe a compelling scenario for the entire region that deserves a more structured, coherent and profound analysis.

...an interconnected reality is depicted...

Looking at the balance between emigration and immigration, the region - although characterized by a variegated situation - is dominated by a common and recurrent pattern: the area is a striking example of cross-border mobility whether considering forced migration, labour mobility or refugee movements. Although there are consistent movements of eastern Africans towards international destinations (within and outside the continent), intra-regional mobility remains the predominant pattern. In other words, eastern Africans move predominantly within eastern African countries.

\textsuperscript{1} The eastern Africa region comprises: the Great Lakes region (Burundi and Rwanda, DR Congo), the East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) and the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan). Nevertheless, the data reported here refer to a greater area as defined by UN Population Division and also comprises the following countries: Comoros, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Reunion, Seychelles, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Why would you migrate from one bad situation to another? From poverty to poverty, from conflict to conflict?

Chris Dolan, Refugee Law Project
The same pattern occurs with regards to remittances. East African countries (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) are the main destination of remittances while at the same time they represent the major source of capital towards the Horn, particularly towards Somalia where remittances account for up to 40 % of GDP (CIA World Factbook)

...and multiple policy challenges emerge.

The volume of transactions, the presence of Diaspora communities and reasonably good transport connections make East Africa a strategic transit hub for sub-Saharan migrants heading towards the Mediterranean and the Gulf.

Kenya for instance, a traditional arrival point in the region that gradually, from the 1970s, became a sending country, is emerging more and more as transit hub, facing the triple challenge of:

- Dealing with regional and international pressures as a transit country;
- Protecting and supporting communities abroad as an origin country;
- Managing flows and related emergencies as an immigration country.

In political terms, the above observations imply that: a) both emigration and immigration are priority issues for the region; b) migration is an African priority that has to be addressed first and foremost in Africa, both at the regional and inter-regional level.

This implies that many countries face a double-triple challenge at once and emphasizes the need for:

i) Implementing a regional policy framework that regulates and facilitates human and labour circulation in the entire region;

ii) Improving and strengthening the space for cooperation and dialogue among all the African regions.

In particular, looking at mobility from the perspective of the ongoing regional integration, the existing gap between the actual patterns of mobility (forced and unregulated) and the desirable scenario of free movement and labour circulation represents a challenging dichotomy within the process itself. As an essential element of integration, mobility issues and all related aspects may either activate centripetal or centrifugal forces, virtually being a resourceful policy for the regional process or a reason for additional tensions and fracture. It derives that regional mobility and regional integration are two facets of the same policy objective, one the reflection of the other, and need to be properly addressed as an interconnected nexus of the wider regional process of political and economic integration.

Looking at mobility in perspective...

People’s movement - forced and voluntary - have been for centuries a connective tissue of life and human history, the basis of countries’ and regions’ economic strength as well as instruments and numbers of warfare, invasions and economic competition.
Movements of people represent the basic energy for growth and development, promoting an exchange of ideas and knowledge, circulation of labour, capital and goods. When people move, money also moves, and they usually circulate in opposite directions, shaping a system of natural compensation that should be premise for mutual cooperation among countries. Mobility is part of Africa's history and can never stop or be blocked. Indeed, there are compelling reasons for countries to send and to receive migrant workers.

Today in the context of globalization, mobility is acquiring new dimensions and features but it is also becoming - among dichotomies and contradictions - the main concern of contemporary society, seen alternately either as a positive premise or as negative implication of the regional process. Compelling questions, such as people’s identity and sense of belonging, inevitably arise, contributing to either pulling together or splintering of areas and regions that are already profoundly fractured and which instead might find cultural and political relief through the integration process.

...a double-sided reality emerges...

Persisting conflicts, porous - rather than open – borders, environmental vulnerabilities, population growth, shortage of livelihoods, youth unemployment, together with political instability and growing inequalities, are the basic factors pushing people towards “greener pastures”. These factors contribute to generate an increasing pressure on the already fragile borders and thus producing additional vulnerabilities for the region.

Additionally, in many countries the introduction of new technologies has not been accompanied by the necessary socio-cultural changes; thus the region continues to register a different pace of growth and development with the result of:

a) Generating different aspirations and expectations of movements;
b) Hindering the entire process of integration as a political and cultural goal.

To some extent therefore, mobility functions as a litmus test of economic and social inequalities within and among countries. Those who move are those able to see and perceive the inequalities. The poorest in fact stay, unless they are forced to move - as in the case of conflict refugees and environmental migrants – ending up in camps and ghettos where – again – they will be forced to stay.

In political terms this implies a deeper analysis of migration patterns, looking both at people who are forced to move and people who are forced to stay; in other words this means addressing mobility and sedentarization as two sides of the same phenomenon, mapping out spaces of ejection and marginalization that arise when people move and when people cannot.
...which calls for a new balance in society.

Given its multiple connections within the economy and society, mobility is the lens through which the contradictions and dichotomies of the wider regional process may become more evident.

In the region, for instance, there is labour circulation, even though of a distressed kind, with a high percentage of refugees and displaced. There is a strong political and cultural vision of integration, even though conflicts and porous borders contribute to generate concerns on insecurity and instability, that legitimise states to adopt control and defence based measures. In order to reduce or to avoid the spill-over effects of conflicts and environmental degradation, countries tend to close their borders thereby restricting outflows from neighbouring countries, with the risk of reducing trade flows and curbing livelihoods border communities.

This contributes to slowing integration efforts while people continue to move in unsafe and perilous conditions.

A first sign of change may start with a major political willingness of citizens and policy makers to formulate and address some few, basic questions such as:

- Whom do we need to defend ourselves from and for what reason?
- What does state security mean?
- What does citizens’ security mean?
- What kind of stability and security do we want to achieve (as a nation, people, society)?
- What makes our society safe?

There is a need to shift political priorities from state stability to human security, from control to defence of vulnerable people, from passive protection to active support in favour of migrants whilst being aware of the slight differences and huge implications of their political meanings.

This means working towards changing the balance of society and moving beyond the politics and economy of violence. This implies that regional policy making needs to:

a) Evolve from merely addressing the bureaucratic management of migration and shifting from relief and emergency based approach to durable and development based solutions;

b) Address mobility as a priority issue within the integration process and within the spirit of regional ownership that maximizes regional policy making efforts and minimizes external overlaps.

Moving from exclusion to inclusion...

Apart from discretionary measures of repatriation and resettlement in some cases, no uniform and durable solution exists in the region or elsewhere.
Rather than the promotion of freedom and rights, the general trend is towards deepening the technology of control (ex. borders’ patrolling, detention camps, biometric controls at borders, databases, etc.). Such mechanisms, rather than facilitate management of flows in the national space, might actually contribute to restrict peoples and labour circulation within the wider regional space. As a matter of a fact, the actual responses are closer to a lose-lose than to a win-win strategy.

African states do not need to strengthen themselves by using technology of control, classifying migrants, erecting border fences or creating new administrative districts in countries that are already fractured. Such forms of power decentralisation – based on top-down distribution of control rather than on democratic processes of power devolution – can hardly contribute to create virtuous circles of regional mobility. The risk is that of designing an open regional space and end up constructing a regional fortress. This might contribute to increasing the spaces of ejections on one hand and a sense of insecurity on the other, which in turn will legitimize strong and aggressive measures that reduce mobility and contribute to raising xenophobia. Conversely, the region needs to build on a safe, open and inclusive common space whose strength has to be rooted in legality, accountability and a common vision of integration and participation.

...whilst not neglecting the gender dimension...

Taking up the issue of vulnerability in relation to migration we need to turn attention to specific concerns of women as well as to children and other vulnerable groups of both genders - the elderly, the disabled and the landless. These groups make up the majority of the displaced and refugees. As the most vulnerable to conflict situations women and children constitute 70% of refugees and IDPs in the continent.

Women and children are vulnerable, both inside and outside the camps. In the camps they are frequently segregated from their male family members and often within a context of total moral breakdown where sexual violence prevails. Outside the camps, once repatriated, they are often left stranded with no structures to support their psychological and social reinsertion into society and thus must bear the burden of both psychological and physical injury.

In addition, women are called upon in the absence of men to take up roles of responsibility and leadership inside and outside camps. This does not necessarily lead to greater gender equality or positive shifts in gender relations for women. On the contrary, having to take up male roles leads to further exclusion and loss of dignity for women in some cases. They struggle from restrictions to credit and to land, and find themselves dependent on aid and in some cases, predation from aid workers. In these situations women can too often lose their own sense of worth as women. This poses very real problems for the aid operators working in these situations. Their interventions, whilst well meaning, could in some instances contribute to further stigmatization. Women, may paradoxically, out of concerns for their personal security, avoid seeking support from aid and humanitarian groups.

The policy implications of the above imply that there is a need for a greater understanding of the gender dimension of vulnerability and humanitarian interventions. As such, we need to rethink our approaches in terms of how gender plays out in such contexts of vulnerability and move beyond the silences and blind spots that prevail around gender relations.
...and putting in place a win-win strategy!

Although some initiatives at national and regional level have begun, the regional agenda still needs to include a number of additional objectives and extend its efforts to different sectors. As noted, economic cooperation and integration does not happen without great effort and great planning.

A protocol on free circulation in itself may indeed have a low impact on mobility regime if it does not entail a broader scheme of collaboration based on:

a) **Inter-sectorial cooperation**: removal of trade barriers, regulation of financial regimes, coordination of youth policy, labour market and educational systems; harmonization of social security schemes and establishment of a common framework of legal and social protection.

b) **Inter-regional dialogue**: promotion and establishment of regional alliances, functional to strengthen the negotiation power of the individual countries with their international counterparts and also to promote and rationalise the effective use of resources and talents.

This means looking at society as a whole and addressing inner dichotomies of ‘fragmentation vs. unification’ and ‘standardization vs. harmonization’ in the broader regional process. This calls for involving all parts of society and policy actors as an interactive and intertwined set of concentric circles that discuss and cooperate in parallel.

**Which way forward? Future challenges...**

Multi-stakeholder dialogue, inter-institutional cooperation, information sharing, improved data collection and quality of research emerged as priority actions to be pursued at national and regional levels in cooperation with universities, research centres, private sector and local administrations.

On the basis of these indications, SID will aim to promote a shared space for dialogue and reflection that may contribute to enhance the regional process of political and cultural ownership of mobility within the public and the policy making realms.

More concretely, SID envisages contributing through the following:

*Through regional alliances, African countries can give themselves the means to negotiate more favourable terms with their international counterparts.*

*Senator Joseph Karemera*

*Senator Joseph Karemera*

*Kabu Mban – ITUC Africa*
a) Collection and systematization of data and figures available in the region on mobility patterns and trends, in order to rationalise the existing resources and mapping out information gaps. East Africa Human Mobility Observatory – (HUMobs);

b) Generating a series of relevant policy briefs that will explore global and regional issues (e.g. financial crisis, relations with emerging economies, climate change etc.) and their impact on human mobility in the region;

c) Identification of future mobility patterns and possible policy responses through a scenarios based exercise linking up to the methodology and the outputs of the SID East Africa Scenario project.
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Created in 1957, the Society for International Development, is a unique global network of individuals and institutions concerned with development which is participative, pluralistic and sustainable.

Through its programmes and initiatives, organised in key centres of development policy making in the North and in countries of the South, SID plays a crucial role in helping promote dialogue between the various stakeholders and interest groups, both locally and internationally. SID research and dialogues gather together parliamentarians, policy makers, academia and grass-root organisations. In this way, SID acts as a unique “global space” for dialogue and critical thinking among different development actors, with a multidisciplinary approach. SID can be defined as a "knowledge network" where knowledge is shared and processed into action and promotes innovative policy directions. SID is constantly seeking to facilitate new research, encounters, knowledge sharing in order to stimulate regional and interregional networking and policy change.

SID is currently undertaking multi-year initiatives in Africa, South Asia and Latin America in the fields of sustainable livelihoods, women’s empowerment and democratisation, reproductive rights and health, scenario-building, inequality, natural resource conflicts and migration & development.

SID’s work is implemented by a staff working in the International Secretariat (based in Rome) and in the Regional Office for Eastern Africa (based in Nairobi), working with a broad network of over 3000 members and 45 local chapters, in 80 countries. It works with several organisations, networks and institutions, both a local and international level. this makes SID one of the few organisations that has a holistic, multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial approach to development and social change.