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Migrations, food security and development cooperation policies

Exploring the nexus beyond the simplifications

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ActionAid is an independent international organization in over 40 countries that, together with the poorest communities, acts against poverty and injustice.

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INTRODUCTION

The increase in migration flows at a global level in recent years has rekindled the debate on their causes (conflicts, violence, and natural disasters), but also on the socio-economic factors (poverty, food insecurity, lack of job opportunities, depletion/overexploitation of natural resources, deterioration and negative environmental impacts and climate change) that determine their nature and magnitude. However, it is important not to consider these elements in a simple cause-and-effect relationship with migratory phenomena, which are the result of numerous factors of a complex and multi-dimensional nature that interact with one another to determine the choice to leave home.

Containment of the flows, the objective of European policies in recent years, has unfortunately reduced the nexus between migration and development to little more than a cause-and-effect relationship: supporting the development of a country to stop migration. This is an over-simplification based on an assumption as pervasive as incorrect, namely, that it is the poorest and hungriest individuals who are most likely to migrate towards Europe. In fact, in the short term, greater development corresponds to a greater compulsion to migrate, thanks to having available resources to tackle the journey. These simplifications have led to a justification among European migration policies to increase funds for development cooperation in the origin and transit countries of migratory flows, causing the manipulation of aid in securitarian terms. Also for this reason, it is necessary to explore the migration and development nexus in greater depth: to restore to development cooperation its original function of solidarity at the service of interventions to reduce and eradicate poverty and inequality.

International cooperation can play a key role in maximizing the positive impact of migration on development starting from a better conceptualisation of the nexus between these two elements. Consequently, this present document intends to explore the dynamics that characterize the relationship between migration and development in the specific case of food and nutrition security. The research that ActionAid commissioned the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)¹ – whose salient contents are included in this document – was guided by an attempt to investigate and clarify the fundamental elements characterizing this nexus, identifying the gaps that currently exist in development cooperation policies in the field of food and nutrition security, the risks as well as the opportunities, and potential priority areas for intervention.

In the medium and long term, agricultural and rural development along with food and nutrition security can certainly help to respond to some of the root causes of current migrations, creating alternatives and improving the means of subsistence available to people. This document highlights how migration can in turn represent a fundamental pillar in the construction of sustainable food systems and in inclusive territorial development. To this end, however, a radical paradigm shift will be necessary in agricultural and rural development as well as in food and nutrition security policies, in order to: prioritize agro-ecology; guarantee small farmers access to markets, technical assistance, research, credit, and natural resources, in particular for women; satisfactorily include the urban dimension in the development cooperation agenda; support appropriate mechanisms of social protection and policies to strengthen territorial food systems.

¹ ECDPM, *The nexus between food and nutrition security, and migration. Clarifying the debate and charting a way forward*, Discussion Paper n° 212, 2017.

1 - MIGRANTS: DEFINITION AND CAUSES OF A GROWING PHENOMENON

Migrations are a global phenomenon in rapid growth. In 2015, the total number of international migrants was approximately 244 million, 41% more than in 2000.² The majority, about 150 million, were working men and women³ between 15 and 34:⁴ a figure much greater than that of refugees, who numbered 65.3 million.⁵ The numbers are even higher if we take internal migrations into account, which in 2013 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated to have hit 740 million.⁶ The departments of the United Nations and the international development agencies (UNDESA, UNDP, World Bank) identify four types of migration depending on their itinerary: North-North, North-South, South-North, South-South. Migrations South-North range between 35% and 45% of the total number of international migrants, while South-South number between 34% and 41% (Table 1). Migrations in a South-North direction are those which have increased most in recent years while amounting to less than half of the total international migrations (around 40% on average).

TAB. 1 **International migrants and proportion out of the total of the four types of migration**
(in thousands of units)

	South-North		North-North		South-South		North-South	
UNDESA	74.297	35%	53.464	25%	73.158	34%	13.279	6%
WORLD BANK	95.091	45%	36.710	17%	75.355	35%	7.044	3%
UNDP	86.873	41%	32.757	15%	87.159	41%	7.410	3%

Source: OIM, *World Migration Report 2013. Migrant well-being and development*, 2013, p.55

According to the IOM, a migrant is “any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of the person’s legal status; whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; what the causes for the movement are; or what the length of the stay is.”⁷ This is therefore a very broad definition that includes different categories of migrants: economic ones; those subject to forced displacement (IDPS, Internally Displaced Persons); refugees; asylum seekers; and those defined as “distressed migrants”.⁸ In the light of the structural and non-emergency condition of the migration phenomenon, and in consideration of the need to guarantee the protection of rights and humanitarian assistance for all individuals, ActionAid judges it ineffective to distinguish between asylum seekers, economic migrants, and environmental migrants, as far as appropriate providing instruments of legal entry and social inclusion not only for asylum seekers but also for so-called “economic” or “environmental” migrants. At the same time, it is useful to recognize how distinct types of migration require specific solutions, side-stepping unnecessary generalizations.

² UN, *Trends in international migration, 2015. Population Facts*, No. 2015/4, December 2015.

³ Women account for 48% of the total number of international migrants. IOM, *Global migration trends 2015 factsheet*, 2016.

⁴ UN, *Youth and Migration. Youth Issue Briefs 2016*, 2016.

⁵ UNHCR, *Global Trend Forced Displaced 2015*, 2016.

⁶ UN, *International Migration Report 2013*, 2013.

⁷ WFP, *At the Root of Exodus: Food security, conflict, and international migration*, 2017, p.5.

⁸ “Distress migration” means the kind of migration in which individuals and/or families who decide to leave their community/city or country perceive that the only option to improve their living conditions is to migrate. Among the causes are: extreme economic deprivation, natural and environmental disasters, forms of social and gender oppression perceived as intolerable. FAO, *Distress migration and youth in protracted crises. The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools approach*, Guidance Note, 2016, p.2.

Most migrants come from rural regions: indeed 40% of remittances are destined for those areas.⁹ If we consider the destinations, 50% of migrants reside in the first ten richest urbanized countries favouring towns and cities.¹⁰ Also international migrations, like internal ones, take place along the rural-urban axis, creating a constant flow of people from the countryside to urban areas.

The increase in migration and its characteristics in terms of age, origin countries/areas and arrival locations, prompt questions about the overall causes and determinants of this process. Among the main reasons, in first place are conflicts, violence and natural disasters¹¹; also socio-economic factors – such as poverty, food insecurity, lack of job opportunities, limited access to social protection systems, depletion/overexploitation of natural resources, environmental deterioration and negative impacts, and climate change¹² – represent decisive drivers. Although the term “drivers” represents an effective summary of the dynamics that lie behind migratory processes, recent literature¹³ advocates a more cautious approach, avoiding considering various migratory processes as addressing the underlying causes in a mechanical way.¹⁴ To this end, it is useful to distinguish between the drivers and the triggers of migratory processes.

“Triggers” refer to sudden happenings – whether political, socio-economic, or environmental – such as natural disasters or forced expulsions, that directly or indirectly can determine forced displacements and migrations. These are the result of complex interactions underlying multiple “drivers”: in fact, no abrupt factor of migratory pressure happens in a “political vacuum”, i.e. outside of the social, political, economic, and cultural processes that determine it. To take an example, extreme natural events are largely the result of poor territorial management: deforestation, inappropriate construction of dams or excessive overbuilding. How these factors determine the choice to migrate is less clear; it is, in fact, less visible factors, acting over longer periods of time, that by linking up, accumulating, and overlapping can lead to a crisis. Therefore, drivers are the result of complex, multi-dimensional factors and interact with one another determining the ultimate causes of the choice to migrate, which, in turn, is the result of decisions influenced by standards, capability, collective decisions, structures of opportunity, contextual factors, economic and social situations, as well as the stability of origin and transit countries, mobility policies, and legal entry into the countries of arrival.¹⁵



⁹ World Bank and KNOMAD, *Migration and Remittances Recent Developments and Outlook*, Migration and Development Brief 26, April 2016.

¹⁰ IOM, *World Migration Report 2015. Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility*, 2015, p.2.

¹¹ FAO, *Migration, Agriculture and Rural Development. Addressing the root causes of migration and harnessing its potential for development*, 2016, p.6

¹² FAO, *The future Trends of food and challenges*, 2017, p.100.

¹³ UNESCO, MOST, *Migration as a development challenge analysis of root causes and policy implications*, 2017. IDMC, Norwegian Refugee Council, *Understanding the root causes of displacement: towards a comprehensive approach to prevention and solution*, Briefing paper, 2015.

¹⁴ UNESCO, MOST, *Migration as a development challenge analysis of root causes and policy implications*, p.7.

¹⁵ FAO, *Addressing rural youth migration at its root causes: A conceptual framework*, 2016, p.9.

2 - “HELP THEM AT HOME”: WHY THE SLOGAN DOES NOT WORK

Migrations have always been intimately linked to social and economic development processes: they are considered both the result of imbalances determined by development processes, and as factors that can influence these ones. The international community's vision of the nature of the complex migration/development relationship has changed over time, alternating optimism and pessimism depending on the ideologies in vogue; naturally, such visions have also played a key role in determining the relevant policies. Over the last thirty years, for example, the prevailing view at the European level has changed: from considering migrations a factor for economic growth in destination countries and positive for the development of origin countries, the “migratory pressure” phenomenon has come to be perceived as intolerable.¹⁶ A view that reflects and determines the emergence of restrictive policies at a European level and an excessively simplified and instrumentalist approach to the issue, translatable in today's political and media language with the slogan “Help them at home”.

In addition, European policies aimed at containing the flows of recent years have reduced the nexus to a cause-and-effect relationship that sees the development of a country as a solution to stop migration. However, this is an over-simplification based, especially in the case of economic migrants, on an assumption as pervasive as incorrect, namely, that it is the poorest and hungriest individuals who are most likely to migrate. In reality, in the short term, greater development generally constitutes a push factor to migrate, by putting people in conditions to move owing to the increased resources available.¹⁷¹⁸ These simplifications have led to erroneous justifications to resolve the so-called “root causes” of migration, to additional investments in development policies in origin countries, making the instrumental ambition to put a stop to the flows patently conspicuous.

It would be more correct to consider migration as a part of wider development processes and structural transformations,¹⁹ depending on specific social, economic and political contexts and the nature of the development processes, which make it impossible to infer *a priori* the type of impact that this relationship will produce on one or other factor.²⁰ The debate on the nature of the migration and development nexus highlights a basic political issue, which emerges increasingly in the European approach to the topic: i.e. that the objective is to curb or accelerate the flows, and that the underlying policies and approaches have instrumental characteristics and are not intended to maximize the positive impact of migration. The goal of working on the root causes of migration should not be reduction of the flows, but to make migration a choice rather than a necessity:²¹ an option among the various ones available to people to improve their lives from every point of view.

¹⁶ IOM, *The Migration and Development Nexus*, 2002, p.6.

¹⁷ J. Carling, C. Talleraas, *Root causes and drivers of migration Implications for humanitarian efforts and development cooperation*, op. cit. p.18.

¹⁸ <http://www.lavoce.info/archives/47909/perche-aiutiamoli-casa-uno-slogan-semplificistico/>

¹⁹ FAO, *The future Trends of food and challenges*, op. cit., p.100.

²⁰ UNESCO, MOST, *Migration as a development challenge analysis of root causes and policy implications*, op. cit., p.3.

²¹ “Migration should be a choice, not a necessity”, according to the 43rd paragraph of the “New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants” adopted in September 2016 by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

3 - MIGRATIONS AND COOPERATION: THE SHORT CIRCUIT OF EUROPEAN POLICIES

A sweeping spectrum of public policies affects the various elements of the migration pathway: development cooperation in origin countries, asylum policies regulation and legal entry channels into destination countries and externalization of borders, the labour market, border control, investments and international trade, energy policies and much more. All these policies can produce direct and indirect effects on migration in the short-term and medium-long term. Purely as an example, bilateral agreements and economic diplomacy in support of foreign investments in the case of acquiring large swathes of land can cause the loss of livelihood of local communities who are thus ejected²² from their territories with repercussions in terms of both development and migration.

In the light of this complexity, it is hard to introduce distinctions: all development policies can produce effects, whether direct or indirect, on migration.²³ The inclusion of international cooperation programmes within European migration control policies is an emblematic example of how labile the boundaries are, and the extent to which they are at risk of instrumental use. In some cases, the connexion between the cooperation programmes and control policies is explicit, as is the aid in exchange for programmes to strengthen border control and prevent migration; one example being the migration cooperation programmes of the European Union with certain states of sub-Saharan Africa such as the Seahorse Atlantic Network, developed within the framework of the Rabat Process,²⁴ or the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative, which provides financial and political support to the countries of the Horn of Africa to manage migratory flows from that region to European territories.²⁵ As reported by Concord, the largest network of European NGOs, the EU uses political and economic incentives to prevent migration from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan and Sudan, despite the widespread and systematic violations of human rights that occur there,²⁶ thereby ignoring both the adoption of approaches to positive mobility for development, and the fundamental issue of respect for human rights.

Instead, in other cases, the connexion may be indirect, for example when Official Development Assistance (ODA) is granted to programmes for the creation of new employment opportunities in rural areas of origin country.²⁷ The issue of coherence between these policies and development objectives was born due to the establishment, at a European level, of an approach primarily aiming to control and stop the flows of so-called irregular migration (i.e. persons who move for economic, socio-political, or environmental reasons). The consequence is that of decisively influencing the development cooperation agendas of the EU and its Member States allocating resources for securitarian purposes that have nothing to do with development in partner countries.

The European Union, with the active contribution of Italy,²⁸ has launched a redefinition of the role and nature of ODA which, while maintaining the objective of reducing and eradicating long-term poverty, ends by becoming an instrument that is "more flexible and aligned with the EU's own strategic priorities [...] and, most importantly, it can now be used to "leverage" partner countries' cooperation on migration".²⁹ This role of ODA in the context of migration is not new, but was

²² S. Sassen, *Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*, 2014.

²³ J. Carling, C. Talleraas, *Root causes and drivers of migration Implications for humanitarian efforts and development cooperation.*, p. 21.

²⁴ The Euro-African dialogue on migration and development, which began with the Conference in Rabat on 11 July 2006, consists in a partnership with the countries of West Africa where the so-called "West-African Migration Route" passes with the objective of "a balanced approach to migration issues in a spirit of shared responsibility". Concord, *Migration and Development coherence for migration and security. What about development?*, 2017, p.4.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ In fact, in 2016, the Italian government backed a proposal to establish a European strategy for external action in the field of migration, the so-called "Migration Compact" - <http://www.governo.it/articolo/immigrazione-la-proposta-dellitalia-alla-ue/4509>.

²⁹ Global Health Advocates, *Misplaced trust: diverting EU aid to stop migration. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa*, 2017, p.5. The basic documents are the "Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy", "New Partnership Framework with third countries under the European agenda on Migration" and the "European Consensus on Development".

relaunched with the adoption of the “New European Agenda on Migration”³⁰ that has among its objectives the reduction of incentives for irregular migration by focusing on the root causes behind irregular migration in non-European countries.³¹ The consequences on the operational level, were: the adoption of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), launched by the European Union at the Euro-African Summit in La Valletta (Malta) in 2015, and the External Investment Plan (EIP), an ambitious investment strategy whose aim is to eliminate “some” of the root causes of migration, also by bolstering public-private partnerships.³²

BOX 1

THE EUTF

The EUTF is run as an “emergency tool” even if most of its resources consist in ODA, which presupposes a long-term approach to development programmes. The total amount of the fund is €2.85 billion, 80% of which comes from the European Development Fund (EDF), a medium- to long-term cooperation instrument aimed at structural challenges of development in the poor countries of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP) within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement. The remainder of the resources come from reallocated funds, for example from the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) of the DG NEAR (Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations) and DG HOME (Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs). The contributions from the member states represent only 5% of the total. Given its emergency profile, the EUTF operates using procedures that are flexible and faster than those of mainstream development programmes. The projects are identified at country level with the coordination of the European delegation, discussed and selected within an Operational Committee where the African countries have only an observer role. The 26 African beneficiary countries are divided into three macro regions: Sahel and Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa. According to an analysis conducted by the Global Health Advocates in Senegal and Niger, what emerges is an attitude of the EU that aims at a “political” use of these funds. For instance, a determining factor in the selection of projects is to bring rapid results, while the speed of approval and external communication is greater than that of the actual disbursement. Moreover, if the aim is to act on the root causes of migration, a much more thorough analysis would be necessary, along with a solid set of criteria and intervention tools, and considerably more coherent policies.

Source: Global Health Advocates, *Misplaced trust: diverting Eu aid to stop migration* The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, 2017, p.7.

³⁰ COM/2015/240 final, Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, the European economic and social Committee and the Committee of the regions, *A European Agenda On Migration*, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en

³¹ Ibid.

³² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/stronger-global-actor/external-investment-plan_en

4 - HUNGER AND MIGRATIONS: EXPLORING THE NEXUS

To better understand the relationship between distressed migration, agriculture, and rural development, the FAO has developed a standard conceptual framework highlighting how the drivers that determine the migration of young persons from rural areas are due to a lack of employment opportunities and situations of underemployment.³³ The lack of decent work opportunities – inside and outside the agricultural sector – is the result of a series of factors linked to specific contexts, which can be defined as “root causes”. These include: rural poverty and food insecurity, lack of income, strong inequalities between urban and rural areas, limited access to social protection mechanisms, climate change, natural and environmental disasters, and depletion of resources.³⁴ These causes relate in turn to specific conditions that characterize rural contexts: low or stagnant agricultural productivity, poorly developed markets (in terms of financial services, physical infrastructure, technical assistance) plus a lack of adequate protection networks and social infrastructure.³⁵ There are also factors at the family level to be taken into consideration, such as: the age of the household head, gender and level of education, size and composition of the family, its social network, social and cultural standards, and basic assets.³⁶ Lastly, the individual determinants: age, work, and personal aspirations.³⁷

Rural migration can be a strategy to diversify risk and family income in the face of food insecurity, the latter being influenced by risk factors that include variable rainfalls and climate change. At the same time, to address the risks of food insecurity, choices other than migration can be made,³⁸ which is therefore seen as an important strategy, but not the only one, to face situations of food insecurity.

Migrations involve risks and opportunities for origin, transit, and destination countries. For example, they can reduce the pressure on the natural resources of a specific territory, accelerating more efficient allocation of jobs in rural areas, and potentially causing an increase in farm income.³⁹ At the same time, they may cause the loss of the most vital and dynamic part of the workforce: the youth, and therefore determine the ageing of local communities and the “feminization” of the rural population, with a consequent increase in the workload on the shoulders of women.

According to the World Bank, 700 million people currently live in extreme poverty (on USD 1.90 per day)⁴⁰ while 78% live in rural areas. The concentration of poverty in these areas affects all regions, notwithstanding variations with respect to the overall poverty rate.⁴¹ In low and medium income countries, a person who lives in rural areas has a chance of living in extreme poverty that is almost three times higher than that of those living in urban areas. To take one example, the rate of infant malnutrition, measured as the prevalence of children up to five years under weight, is higher in rural areas.⁴² As underlined by the FAO, in the absence of further fresh commitments to policies to combat poverty on the part of the international community, by 2030, the number of persons suffering from hunger will still be 653 million.⁴³ Even where poverty has been reduced, marked inequalities remain.⁴⁴ The worst affected are the small farmers, who represent the majority of the rural population and for whom farming is the main source of income and livelihood;⁴⁵ 2.5 billion people in the world directly depend on agriculture and food production, and of these, 1.5 billion are small-scale producers. Only in Asia and Africa, 80% of cultivated land is in the hands of small farmers. Agriculture can play a fundamental role in the fight against poverty and inequalities, however, it is necessary to increase investments through public policies that allow fair redistribution of the benefits among all the actors of the agri-food systems. It is also essential to improve the security of access to and the control over the land of small producers, both individually and collectively, with specific attention to women.⁴⁶

³³ FAO, *Addressing rural youth migration at its root causes: A conceptual framework*, 2016, p.10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.11.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.15.

³⁸ C.a Herrera, D. Sahn, *Determinants of Internal Migration Among Senegalese Youth*, 2013.

³⁹ FAO, *The future Trends of food and challenges*, p.101.

⁴⁰ World Bank, *Taking on Inequality. Poverty and Share Prosperity*, 2016, p.3. Then again, ActionAid considers the figure of 4 dollars per day closer to what we might consider as the threshold of absolute poverty: a figure that is still insufficient to ensure the full realization of every individual's human rights. To achieve this, it would be necessary to set a threshold of absolute poverty at 10 dollars per day. ActionAid, *The Price of Privilege: Extreme Wealth, Unaccountable Power, and the Fight for Equality*, 2016, p. 34.

⁴¹ FAO, *The future Trends of food and challenges*, p.71.

⁴² FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2015 in Brief. Social protection and agriculture: Breaking the cycle of rural poverty*, 2015.

⁴³ FAO, *The future Trends of food and challenges*, p.77.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.71.

⁴⁶ In Kenya, for example, women control 5% of the land. Many women have access to land only through their husband or the male of the household, and in many areas a patriarchal system that accentuates the dependence of women on men rather than ensuring fair rights of citizens over the ownership and control of land prevails. ActionAid, *From Under Their Feet, A think piece on the gender dimensions of land grabs in Africa*, 2015. In addition, World Bank, *World Development Report 2012. Gender Equality and Development*, 2012.

Lastly, conflicts and natural disasters are increasing, reducing the availability of food and medical care, and causing an increase in poverty. Violent conflicts are often characterized by situations of prolonged crisis, defined as environments in which a sizeable proportion of the population is extremely vulnerable to death, diseases and the destruction of their means of subsistence for prolonged periods of time.⁴⁷ The latest FAO data show an increase in the number of hungry people globally, passing from 795 millions in 2015 to 815 in 2016. The main reasons for this increase are violent conflicts and climatic shocks.⁴⁸ In these contexts, food and nutrition insecurity may represent a push factor to migrate. However, as already mentioned, it is important to avoid excessive simplification that sees a consequent reduction in migratory flows through the development of agriculture and an increase in food and nutrition security.



⁴⁷ FAO, IFAD, WFP, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress*, p. 37. Definition taken from A. Harmer and J. Macrae (eds.), *Beyond the continuum: aid policy in protracted crises*. HPG Report No.18, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2014, p.1.

⁴⁸ FAO, *State of Food Insecurity in the World. Building resilience for peace and food security*, 2017.

The impact of migration on food and nutrition security

Migration can have various impacts on food and nutrition security of households and individuals. These are highly complex and case specific with empirical evidence not always being conclusive. Below are some examples of possible impacts:

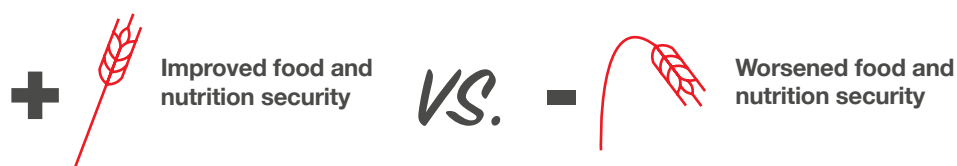
HOUSEHOLD LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



HOUSEHOLD FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY



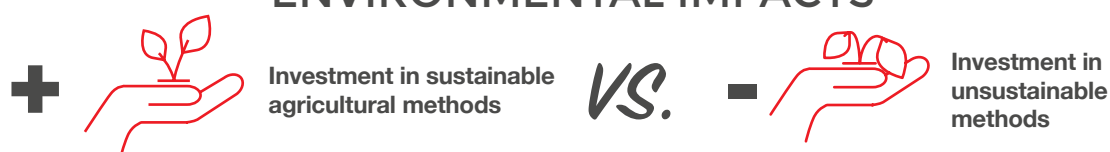
OTHER HOUSEHOLD IMPACTS



INCOME INEQUALITY



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS



Source: ECDPM, *The nexus between food and nutrition security, and migration. Clarifying the debate and charting a way forward*, 2017.

5 - BEYOND THE SIMPLIFICATIONS

To understand the nexus between migration and food and nutrition security it is necessary to consider a series of elements that often receive scarce attention, especially in the European debate.

For instance, for political contingency reasons, literature on migration policies focuses more on analyses of international migration, ignoring the fact that most migrations occur within the borders of the same country (740 million people) or even within the same region.⁴⁹ West African countries, for example, have the most mobile population in the world: intra-regional mobility is seven times greater than the volume of migrants from West Africa to the rest of the world. In addition, particularly in Africa, most of the attention is on migration in rural areas, geared to agricultural and rural development.⁵⁰ This is entirely understandable, since, as we have seen, most migrants are from those same areas. However, in view of today's high rates of urbanization, it is fundamental to pay more attention to food security in urban contexts within a broader analysis of food economies. The effects of urbanization on rural areas can no longer be interpreted exclusively as an exodus from the countryside to the cities;⁵¹ rural areas, small and medium-sized cities and conurbations are closely interconnected, and their interactions can be seen as a part of broader food economies and transformation processes, both rural and urban. This implies the development of new and complementary approaches to food and nutrition security strategies, such as the planning of interventions on food systems starting from an improvement in context data (*spatial data*) and a greater attention to social protection systems.⁵²

Another factor to be carefully considered is nutrition. Nutritional transition in Africa,⁵³ associated with the “double burden” of malnutrition,⁵⁴ is occurring in a context of high rates of migration between the rural and urban areas, along with high urbanization, and represents one of the most significant threats to public health, particularly among the poor. Nutritional transition also occurs in the context of international migration, where migrants tend to adopt the diet of the destination country with an increase in the consumption of processed, less nutritious food.

Additional items to be added to the conceptualization of the nexus between migration and food and nutrition security are the need to consider the impacts of migration both at a family level (remittances as a network of social protection, loss of agricultural workforce, etc.)⁵⁵ and at a macro level (agricultural investments, impact on workforce, prices, and agricultural production, etc.) plus the characteristics of individual families that might affect the impact of migration.⁵⁶

Policy coherence is also essential, whether we are talking about migration policies, or others that may have negative consequences on food systems (e.g. climate, trade, investment, energy or development cooperation policies).⁵⁷ In the case of Kenya, due to the drought in 2008, shepherds were forced to migrate to neighbouring countries in search of new pastures; the borders were closed (also thanks to the incentives that donor countries offered in exchange for a stricter control over borders) and the shepherds were forced to move into the urban suburbs ending up depending on the humanitarian aid system.⁵⁸

Greater attention must also be paid to the gender dimension and the younger population (two fundamental components constantly growing in migration). Men and women aged between 15 and 24 years living in rural areas are among those having greater propensity to migrate because of a lack of jobs and economic opportunities in the agricultural sector. However, aspirations and perceptions play a fundamental role in this choice that should not be considered merely “rational”, i.e. as a response to specific economic or environmental vulnerability. Women account for 48% of migrants⁵⁹

⁴⁹ M.L. Flahaux and H. De Haas, *African Migration: trends, patterns, drivers*, Comparative Migration Studies, 2016.

⁵⁰ FAO, *Addressing rural youth migration at its root causes: A conceptual framework*, 2106.

⁵¹ Global Donor Platform, *Agenda 2030 put into practice: what future for rural development?*, AGA, 2017.

⁵² Social protection policies can, in fact, promote economic and social development in both the short and the long term, ensuring people an income, access to medical care and other social services, strengthening their capabilities and making them better able to manage risks and economic opportunities.

⁵³ By nutritional transition is meant a shift in food consumption determined by changes of an economic, demographic, and epidemiological type. Specifically, the term is used to indicate the transition that is happening in developing countries from traditional diets characterized by a high rate of consumption of cereals and fibre to a more “Western” one characterized by sugars, fats, animal proteins and processed food.

⁵⁴ With the term “dual burden of malnutrition” the United Nations intend the coexistence of the problem of malnutrition together with that of overweight and obesity, the latter also defined as non-communicable diseases linked to diet, between individuals, families, and populations throughout their life. <http://www.who.int/nutrition/double-burden-malnutrition/en/>

⁵⁵ T. Lacroix, *Migration, rural development, poverty, and food security: a comparative perspective*, 2011.

⁵⁶ K. Warner and T. Afifi, *Where the rain falls: Evidence from 8 countries on how vulnerable households use migration to manage the risk of rainfall variability and food insecurity* *Climate and Development*, Vol. 6, N°1, 2014.

⁵⁷ Concord, *Spotlight on Policy Coherence*, 2009.

⁵⁸ M. Adow, *Pastoralists in Kenya*, 2008. <http://www.fmreview.org/climatechange/adow.html>

⁵⁹ IOM, *Global migration trends 2015 factsheet*, 2016.

worldwide, even if in many areas of Africa, due to conflicts and increased risks associated with migration, this share is decreasing. Women are also a sizeable proportion of “highly professionalized” migrants: in 2005, 11.3% of the nurses from Malawi were working in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries.⁶⁰

Much of the vulnerability in agricultural production and food and nutrition security is due to climate and environmental phenomena. Climate change and extreme events (floods and drought) can produce devastating effects on rural communities, which largely depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Support for policies and interventions to improve resilience and adaptation, as well as social protection systems and safe movement, are all fundamental elements to be considered in any analysis.⁶¹

A final priority is the adoption of long-term food and nutrition security strategies for issues inherent to emergencies. In recent years, donors’ strategies have gradually embraced the need for a better understanding of the effects of extended internal movements on food and nutrition security in order to prepare medium-long term strategies to ensure access to sufficient food for internal and international refugees. In fact, crisis situations for prolonged periods are an understandable driver of food insecurity. Over the last thirty years, the types of crisis have evolved from short-term disasters – serious and visible events – to more structural longstanding situations determined by a combination of multiple factors, in particular, conflicts and natural disasters, with climate change and financial and price crises accentuating the seriousness and persistence of these predicaments. Exposure to natural disasters is without a doubt one of the major causes of food insecurity.



⁶⁰ Fleury, A., *Understanding Women and Migration: A Literature Review*. KNOMAD Working Paper 8, 2016, p. 20.

⁶¹ ActionAid, *Climate Change Knows No Borders An analysis of climate induced migration, protection gaps and need for solidarity in South Asia*, 2016.

6 - CHANGING AGENDA, CHANGING MESSAGES: PRIORITIES

Thinking of development in relation to the root causes of migration must necessarily include improvements in the living conditions of highly vulnerable persons, whether they are migrants or potential ones. It is therefore necessary to adopt a broad and structured development agenda that takes account of the complex dynamics at the root of the inequalities in both origin and destination countries, and how the global economy impacts on these ones.⁶² A focus on the root causes of migration must be included in the strategic planning of policies at a national level, through the implementation of innovative policies based on human rights, with particular reference to: donor countries; the creation of new systems of inclusive governance to manage migration; and actions designed to improve living conditions in origin countries. In this connexion, it is interesting to see how migration has been included among the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With their adoption, the signatory countries, including European ones, are committed to “facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people and full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status”.⁶³ Migration cuts across many of the 17 SDGs (Targets 5.2, 8.7, 8.8, 10.7, 10.c, 16.2 and 17.18).⁶⁴ It is equally important to develop a new narrative inside the political debate on migration that no longer leverages fear, since fear can influence the relevant policies, even those of cooperation. It is therefore important to emphasize positive stories of cooperation and solidarity, as well as reception and integration, which mainly come from African countries, relatively more “pressed” than many European countries by internal or continental migration. Through constant analysis and effective use of resources, international cooperation can play a vital role in better understanding and maximizing the positive contribution that migration can bring to development. It is also helpful to distinguish between specific interventions on migration (facilitating smooth and safe migration as envisaged by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, for example by supporting labour mobility between rural and urban areas); interventions on other aspects of migration (e.g. remittances and diaspora investments); general interventions in support of rural and agricultural development and food and nutrition security that can integrate the migration variable more effectively. An effective integration of complex migration issues in food safety programmes (migration mainstreaming) is possible by paying greater attention to the dialogue between the various stakeholders, and by overcoming the economic and political factors that can prevent effective coordination and cooperation.⁶⁵ The objective, must be noted, is not to prevent migration, but to maximize its positive impact on development and food and nutrition security, reducing the negative side for people and making migration a choice among the options.

To this end, it is important to improve policies that support work-related rural migration, for example by optimizing the connexions between urban and rural areas, supporting circular and seasonal mobility, and promoting investment of remittances in activities inside and outside the agricultural sector in rural contexts. Circular migration can offer a real opportunity for migrants who, by moving from and to their origin country, are able to maintain more social, economic, and cultural ties with their own community.

Lastly, it is necessary to adopt a more holistic approach to food and nutrition security policies that extends beyond mere operations of rural and agricultural development. This is why it is important to promote a territorial approach⁶⁶ in order to respond to the many challenges along the rural-urban continuum. Another modality would be to integrate rural issues in the governance of policies aimed at promoting food and nutrition security in urban contexts through, for example, urban-rural partnerships to support the development of a dynamic local private sector and allow the production and processing of nutritious quality food by supporting local and regional trade. Feeding the expanding African cities can represent a major opportunity for the continent’s agriculture providing that there are adequate policies to support local production systems – which are mainly characterized by small family farms – and to enhance and sustain the variety of territorial markets.⁶⁷

⁶² UNESCO, MOST, *Migration as a development challenge analysis of root causes and policy implications*, p. 13.

⁶³ UN, *2030 Agenda Declaration*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

⁶⁴ <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

⁶⁵ Interesting in this regard are the lessons learned from the projects implemented by the FAO in Ethiopia and Tunisia as part of the Youth mobility, food security and rural poverty reduction project (FAO RYM) which Italian Cooperation also contributes to: <http://www.fao.org/rural-employment/work-areas/migration/rym-project/en/>

⁶⁶ The territorial approach is characterized by development that embraces both urban and rural facets, intervening in multiple sectors. FAO, OECD, UNCDF, *Adopting a Territorial Approach to Food Security and Nutrition Policy*, 2016. In addition, FAO, RUAF, *A Vision for City Region Food System. Building sustainable and resilient city regions*, 2015.

⁶⁷ EuropaAfrica, UK Food Group, *Practical Action, Sustaining Local Food Webs*, 2014.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of migration rightfully appears on the EU's development agendas, as well as those of governments and other important institutions such as the UN food agencies (FAO, IFAD, and WFP). However, the approach tends to be fragmented, creating a tension between the development goals, private investments (e.g. the External Investment Plan) and securitarian aspects, i.e., targeted to migration flows containment. In the case of food and nutrition security, there is a lack of clarity in the approach to the nexus between migration and development, combined with a more general political exploitation of development as a "means" to curb international migration. Despite the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs having established important principles and objectives in the fields of migration and development, today there is no shared governance on the theme to guarantee the adoption of approaches that respect fundamental human rights, promote the participation of civil society in programmes in their origin countries and recognize the potentially positive role that migration can play in development, by adopting relevant strategies to maximize effectiveness.

Agricultural and rural development, along with food and nutrition security, can certainly help in the medium and long term to respond to some of the root causes of current migrations, by creating alternatives and improving the means of subsistence available to the people. However, the goal must be to make the choice to migrate a voluntary option that can improve people's lives and that of their family and community, while helping to support the wider processes of structural transformation and development. Conversely, the integration of migration issues in development policies must not be geared towards securitarian measures to control and reduce migration flows.

Migrations can in turn represent a fundamental pillar in the construction of sustainable food systems and in inclusive territorial development. To this end, it is essential to appropriately integrate the migratory aspect within agricultural and rural development policies and food and nutrition security policies, avoiding excessive simplifications and working to build an approach anchored as much as possible in evidence and data (knowledge agenda).

It is therefore vital to continue the effort of a radical paradigm shift in agricultural and rural development, by steering investments towards public assets (water, energy, health, education) and production towards domestic consumption. It is necessary to prioritize agro-ecology to improve the productivity of small farmers while adapting production to effects stemming from climate change. And it is a fact that agro-ecology can respond to both these major challenges.⁶⁸ It is also of fundamental importance to guarantee small farmers – the backbone of world food production – access to the markets especially territorial ones,⁶⁹ technical assistance (extension services),⁷⁰ research and access to credit. It is equally necessary to improve access to and control over the land for small producers, both individually and collectively, above all for women.

Access to land and natural resources is crucial in ensuring the food and nutrition security of local communities. Which means land reforms are necessary to guarantee fair redistribution. To this end, it is vital to promote the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Ownership Regimes Applicable to Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the context of National Food Security (TGs - Tenure Guidelines) through participatory and inclusive mechanisms that prioritize the rights and needs of legitimate holders of land rights, especially women. This includes the adoption of standards based on human rights to strengthen, democratize, and improve land registration, the transfer of land rights, policies, laws, institutions, and governance processes concerning land.⁷¹ In addition, the urban dimension of food security must be added into development cooperation agendas, by backing appropriate social protection mechanisms and policies to strengthen territorial food systems (city-region food systems). Finally, a different governance system is necessary to promote local development interventions geared to maximizing the role that migration can play in food and nutrition security.

Below is a series of **recommendations that ActionAid is addressing to the Italian Government and the European institutions** to prevent the manipulation of development cooperation policies in the context of migration, and encourage an approach that links migration with development and food and nutrition security to maximize the positive role of migration in promoting sustainable food systems and combating hunger.

⁶⁸ ActionAid, *Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture Handbook*, 2014.

⁶⁹ We must not forget that the small farmers in middle and low-income countries are those who invest most in their agriculture, mainly through their own work, more than their governments or the private sector do. For this reason, they should be at the centre of any public investment strategy. FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture. Investing in Agriculture*, 2012 p. xi.

⁷⁰ High Level Panel of Experts, *Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security*, p.81.

⁷¹ On the monitoring of the implementation of Tenure Guidelines see the contribution of civil society in: CSM, *Synthesis Report on Civil Society experiences regarding use and implementation of the Tenure Guidelines and the challenge of monitoring CFS decisions*, October 2016. In addition, R. Hall and I. Scoones with G. Henley, *Strengthening Land Governance: Lessons from implementing the Voluntary Guidelines*, May 2016.

On the migration and development nexus, ActionAid advocates:

- » promoting a positive narrative on migrations, reaffirming respect for human rights and human dignity and solidarity as basic principles in reception, integration, and development policies
- » differentiating migration control policies from international cooperation programmes, reaffirming the distinction of their respective actors, aims and objectives. Cooperation must stay focused on the goals of reducing and eradicating poverty in the medium-long term
- » promoting and implementing coherent policies to prevent those to do with migratory, commercial, investment, agricultural, development cooperation, energy and environmental issues causing negative impacts on development and the respect for human rights in poor countries
- » investing in research and data collection to build a more solid approach to the nexus between migration and development, one that can inform policies and programmes geared to maximizing the positive impact of migration on development

In the planning of development cooperation on food and nutrition security, ActionAid advocates:

- » considering migration mainstreaming, with the aim of supporting fair and sustainable territorial food systems and improving the food and nutrition security of potential migrants
- » prioritizing agro-ecology, support for women and young, integration of the nutritional aspect through an approach that contemplates the entire food system, resilience, and the territorial dimension (urban-rural continuum), promoting and strengthening the participation of local food stakeholders (local authorities, supply chain operators, small producers, peasant organizations, consumer organizations, etc.)
- » supporting rural development programmes geared to the creation of jobs and decent work inside and outside the agricultural sector, favouring circular and seasonal migration between urban areas and the countryside.





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