1. Migration as a global issue

Migration is a growing global phenomenon and most countries are simultaneously countries of origin, transit and destination for migrants. The dimension of contemporary migration calls for global action, which must be comprehensive, bringing together humanitarian and development responses.

In 2015, there were 244 million international migrants\(^1\), representing an increase of 40% since 2000. They included 150 million migrant workers.\(^2\) One-third of all international migrants are aged 15 to 34\(^3\). The phenomenon of internal migration is even larger in scale with an estimated 740 million internal migrants in 2013\(^4\). In addition, in 2015 an unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced\(^5\), including over 21 million refugees, 3 million asylum seekers and over 40 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The average length of displacement due to war and persecution is 17 years\(^6\). One-fourth of all global refugees (mostly from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria) reside in Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey. In 2014, more than 19 million people were internally displaced because of natural disasters.\(^7\)

Many migrants are dying during their migration journey. Many unaccompanied children, young migrants and women become victims of human trafficking. Many others face discrimination and social marginalization in their host communities, in terms of access to the formal labour market, education and social protection. Migration also poses serious challenges for countries of origin, transit and destination alike.

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\(^3\) UNDESA. 2011. Youth and Migration Factsheet.
2. Challenges and opportunities for sustainable development in rural areas

Conflicts, violence and natural disasters are among the root causes of migration and forced displacement. Many migrants are compelled to move due to socio-economic factors, including poverty, food insecurity, lack of employment opportunities, limited access to social protection, natural resource depletion and the adverse impacts of environmental degradation and climate change.

Safe, orderly and regular migration contributes to sustainable development, economic growth and food security. However, this is the case only when migration is a choice, not a necessity.

Migration brings both opportunities and challenges for rural areas in countries of origin, transit and destination. For rural areas in countries of origin, migration will affect the supply of labour and the relative skills' mix and demographic composition of the remaining population. While migration may reduce pressure on local labour markets and foster a more efficient allocation of labour and higher wages in agriculture, rural areas of origin risk losing the younger, most vital and dynamic share of their workforce. Depending on the context, women who stay behind may gain greater control over productive resources and services, potentially helping to close the gender gap in agriculture.

Migration itself can contribute to agricultural and rural development in countries of origin, when, in the context of missing or poorly functioning credit and/or insurance markets in rural areas, remittances relax liquidity constraints, provide insurance in case of crisis and shocks and foster investments in rural economic activities with the potential for job creation. Moreover, diaspora organizations and returning migrants can help rural areas in countries of origin, through capital investments, skills and technology transfers, know-how and social networks.

For rural areas in low and middle-income transit countries, migration and protracted forced displacement can constitute a challenge for local authorities to provide quality public services for the migrant and host populations and can, among other things, further strain natural resources, increasing pressure on agriculture- and fisheries-based livelihoods.

3. How FAO can contribute to global migration efforts

Investing in sustainable rural development, climate change adaptation and resilient rural livelihoods is an important part of the global response to the current migration challenge. Agriculture and rural development can make a strong contribution to the definition of a comprehensive approach towards large movements of refugees and migrants across five interlinked thematic areas:

1. The root causes of rural migration in a development context
2. The resilience of displaced people and host communities in protracted crises
3. Conflict prevention and stability
4. Rural labour migration
5. The development potential of migration

FAO has a unique role to play, building on its:

- Extensive technical expertise in: (i) enhancing countries' capacities and policy coherence to address migration in agriculture and rural development, and natural resource management policies and strategies; (ii) meeting the immediate livelihood needs and assisting displaced populations and host communities to cope with protracted displacement; and (iii) building the resilience of rural populations in natural hazard and disaster/crisis-prone contexts.
- Longstanding and widespread country presence.
- Experience in both development and humanitarian settings.
In partnership with governments, development agencies, civil society and the private sector, and building on its comparative advantage, FAO is committed to address the root causes of distress rural out-migration and displacement, and harness the developmental potential of migration, especially in terms of poverty reduction and food security.

In particular, FAO is committed to:

- Generate evidence on international and internal migration, its root causes, and its contribution to agriculture and rural development.
- Support institutional capacities to deal with large movements of refugees and migrants from an agriculture and rural point of view.
- Disseminate the lessons learned and best practices found for scaling-up innovative solutions.
- Facilitate policy dialogue directed towards improving understanding of rural migration.
- Strengthen partnerships and advocate for addressing the root causes of migration while enhancing its positive contribution.

### Addressing the causes of rural youth migration and its developmental potential

In Tunisia and Ethiopia, FAO is working with governments and rural stakeholders to implement a two-year project on ‘Youth mobility, food security and rural poverty reduction: fostering diversification through enhanced youth employment and better mobility’. The project aims to generate knowledge and increase awareness of the causes and consequences of rural youth migration for the areas of origin. In Tunisia and Ethiopia, planning and technical staff in agriculture line ministries and extension officers from national and regional institutions are benefiting from training and capacity development related to the causes and implications of distress migration on agricultural production, opportunities for seasonal migration and agro-entrepreneurship for youth. At global level, the evidence and lessons learned from the project will be most useful towards informing the global agenda on migration, especially through the Global Migration Group.

Source: FAO, Rural Youth Mobility

### The way forward

FAO believes that safe, regular and responsible migration can and should benefit migrants and their communities, as well as countries of origin and destination. By combining efforts, a sizeable and long-lasting difference can be made in improving the global response to migration. FAO has a strong role to play, especially by ensuring that attention
is given to addressing the root causes of migration and displacement and to harnessing the potential of migration for development.

4. FAO and the Global Agenda on Migration

Migration and human mobility are explicitly recognized in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which establishes a number of migration-related targets across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda also recognizes that unemployment, especially youth unemployment, as well as natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation are major challenges to sustainable development. Empowering vulnerable people, including youth, refugees, IDPs and migrants is key to ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, as they all make a positive contribution to inclusive growth and sustainable development.

During the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), FAO made its own corporate commitments, related to the WHS core commitment to “leaving no one behind”.

United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants

FAO actively participated in the organization of the High-Level Event on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants (the Global Migration Summit), convened for 19 September 2016, and is committed to increase the synergies between humanitarian and development actions to respond effectively to the large movements of migrants and refugees and especially to “address the drivers that create, or exacerbate, large movements” and to “cooperate to create the conditions that allow communities and individuals to live in peace and prosperity in their homelands” [taken from the draft of the New York Declaration].

FAO’s Blue Hope Initiative

On 23 June 2016, FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva met with Pope Francis to outline the Blue Hope Initiative that seeks to transform Southern Mediterranean coastal zone communities into engines of stability and growth by supporting small-scale fisheries. With well over 3 000 people estimated to have died to date during 2016 in attempts to reach Europe by sea, the aim is to: (i) strengthen the social and economic resilience of coastal communities, through improved natural resource management, social protection and viable livelihood opportunities; and (ii) provide access for migrants and the communities concerned to comprehensive capacity building programmes and services.