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## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MDGs IN AFRICA

Economic Commission for Africa Sustainable Development Division

## A. INTRODUCTION

Although the debate on the impact of international migration on development in Africa has largely been shaped by the loss of skilled Africans to the developed world, growing evidence shows that international migration has positive effects on social and economic development in Africa. The estimated 3.6 million Africans in the Diaspora are directly and indirectly contributing to the achievement of the MDGs. Diaspora remittances and the income multipliers they create are becoming critical resources for the sustenance strategies of receiving households as well as agents of local and national development. In 2004, remittances to Africa amounted to \$14 billion, with Egypt, Morocco and Nigeria being the largest recipients (World Bank 2005). Households that receive these migradollars tend to use the proceeds primarily for current consumption (food, clothing) as well as investments in MDG related areas such as children's education, health care and improvement in household food security through investments in agricultural technology.

The process of people moving to other countries in search of a better life is not new. What has however changed is the increasing voluntary movement of both low-skill, low-wage workers

Besides increasing mean household incomes, remittances can also reduce the proportion of people living in poverty through investment induced multiplier effects. Although there is limited information on how remittances are spent in most African countries, there is no doubt that having a large, flourishing, influential and skilled diaspora is an asset for any country. Investments, venture capital and technology transfers from diaspora populations have the potential to stimulate local and national development efforts (Sriskandarajah 2005). There exists today in many African countries hundreds of small and medium scale factories, commercial businesses and agricultural enterprises that were established and operated by returnees and circular migrants. In many cases, these enterprises are established and operated using the wealth of ideas

D. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'

sanitation made by such groups. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the impact of such "transnational aid" on the development of local communities is well documented (Landolt 1997; Portes 1997). But in Africa, very little research has been undertaken to document the scale and impact of such development projects that have a direct bearing on child and maternal health.

Source country	Population (thousands) <sup>a</sup>	Total number of nurses and midwives in home country <sup>b</sup>	Number of nurses and midwives working in 7 OECD recipient countries <sup>b</sup>	Percentage of home country workforce <sup>b</sup>	Maternal mortality rate in home country (deaths per 100,000 births) <sup>e</sup>
Angola	13,841	13, 627	105	0	1,700
Cameroon	14,856	26,032	84	0	730
Ethiopia	68,525	20,763	195	0	850
Ghana	19,867	17,322	2,267	13	540
Mozambique	17,911	6,183	34	0	1,000
Nigeria	117,608	210,306	5,375	3	800
South Africa	45,610	184,459	13,496	7	230
Uganda	24,309	17,472	21	0	880
Tanzania	34,763	13,292	37	0	1,500
Zimbabwe	12,595	9,357	3,183	34	1,100
Total	369,885	505,186	24,797		

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF NURSES AND MIDWIVES TRAINED IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA WORKING IN OECD COUNTRIES AND SELECTED HEALTH INDICATORS

<sup>a</sup> Source: United Nations (2005)

<sup>b</sup> Source : WHO (2006)

<sup>c</sup> Source: United Nations (2006)

## F. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Africa is today faced with a multitude of environmental challenges, from land degradation and desertification to destruction of tropical forests and loss of biodiversity. These environmental problems can in many cases be linked to 'local-level population-livelihood-environment dynamics' as well as the impact of internal and cross-border populations movements, for instance, the impact of refugees and internally displaced persons on local environments (de Sherbinin 2006). However, given the lack of appropriate data, the potential positive and negative environmental externalities associated with international migration are not well known even though international migration contributes to changes in population concentration, distribution and globalization (Curran 2002). Thus, the impact of international migration on environmental sustainability should be analyzed within the context of globalization, taking into consideration the size, composition, and distribution of affected populations as well as the organization of production and consumption of goods and services in both sending and receiving countries.

Unlike in the pre-19<sup>th</sup> century era, today's international migrants do not have expansionist attitudes that have long-term consequences for land-use and resource exploitation. Large multinational corporations have assumed this role. However, the exodus to other countries, just like the exodus to urban areas, can reduce pressure on natural resources in the sending communities. In some cases, this demographic shift can have serious impacts on ecologically vulnerable areas and urban agglomerations through increased levels of pollution, waste disposal, and congestion. It can also be argued that by improving the livelihoods of families in the sending communities through the transfer of remittances, international migration can indirectly contribute to ameliorating the negative links between poverty and natural resource exploitation. For

instance, Lucas and Stark (1985) noted that remittances were positively related to the degree of drought in Botswana- the worse the drought, the higher the level of remittances. Under such a scenario, remittance-receiving families might not overexploit the environment just to stay alive.

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