Migration, Inequalities and the SDGs

By Laura Hammond, Giulia Casentini and Oliver Bakewell

Abstract:

In this paper we start by considering SDG10 on Reduced Inequalities, arguing that the reference to facilitating 'orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies' speak less to the experiences and interests of people on the move and more to the approaches of governments towards migrants; it prioritises migrants who move through legal means over those who do not or cannot and so are seen as 'irregular.' We then broaden the discussion of inequalities to consider SDG1, with its focus on eradicating poverty, making the case for a more inclusive approach that takes account of mobility and migrants in each of its targets and indicators. We discuss mobility as a means by which many people seek to realise the outcomes for themselves that SDG1 envisions. This kind of inclusion must take place if there is any chance of seeing significant progress either in eradicating poverty or reducing inequalities.

Keywords: SDGs, migration, inequalities, poverty, Global Compact, MDGs, irregular migration, documentation, development, border control, labour rights, social inclusion.

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Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), had a dramatic impact on the allocation of development resources and programming in the early 2000s, in terms of the sectors, populations and geographies that received focused attention. However, the MDGs made no mention of migration or the specific needs of migrants at all. This was in many ways a missed opportunity to link migration and development dynamics, in both programmatic and conceptual terms. It was also arguably a factor which prevented greater fulfilment of the MDGs not only for migrant communities but for countries affected by large-scale migration.

In the intervening period since the MDGs were launched, there has been growing interest in the relationship between migration and development. Arjan de Haan highlighted the important role of migration in rural livelihoods and urged development policy to take more account of mobility (de Haan, 1999; de Haan, 2006). Ron Skeldon published an influential volume relating changing global migration patterns to development progress, in particular the demographic transition (Skeldon, 1997). And perhaps most significantly the burgeoning realisation that migrants send a huge volume of money to developing countries through their remittances – in many cases outweighing development aid or even foreign direct investment (Ratha, 2003; Kapur, 2004) helped to demonstrate many of positive impacts of both intra-country and international migration. Since then, an array of studies, initiatives and policies have been produced seeking to understand better the links between migration and development, especially focusing on international migration and how to maximise the benefits it might bring to development. This academic turn has informed the shifting positions of international organisations, governments, and policy makers to begin to more fully embrace an effective discourse that demonstrates the centrality of mobility, migration and displacement to the wider development agenda.

In the framing of the Sustainable Development Goals, international agencies and governments who recognised migrants' positive contribution to global development were keen not to repeat the MDGs' error of omission. Migrant rights and migrant service providing organisations were also anxious to ensure that they were not left behind by the renewed development agenda that they knew would develop around the SDGs. They moved together to find a common agenda to promote the rights of migrants (Suliman 2017). The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) actively

played a key role in directing and constructing the discourse around policy making and the political space of migration in the SDG consultative process. Much of this work was framed using the language of international human rights (Ashutosh and Mountz 2011) to appeal to nation-states to exercise their responsibility to protect. At the same time, despite efforts to place rights at the centre of consideration, many wealthy states were concerned about political narratives which portrayed migration as a costly and risky problem (even if public opinion in many countries remained relatively less concerned).[1] They saw the emerging SDGs as a means to ensure that the emerging development agenda did not exacerbate problematic movement and even could be used to curb some forms of migration (Skeldon, 2008). As a result, border enforcement strategies, state inclusion or exclusion of migration flows, and externalisation strategies are integral part of the current language of development adopted by international organizations.

In this chapter, we reflect on how research on the links between migration and development has informed a shift in approaches towards both migration and development, so that the former has started to be seen as less of an *obstacle* to development and more of a *context* – sometimes problematic but in many cases beneficial – in and through which development may take place, influencing its outcomes and trajectories. We use the Sustainable Development Goals as a prism through which to view this dynamic process, considering the practical implications of the SDGs on fostering a mobility-sensitive approach to development that may ultimately reduce inequalities within societies. We begin our analysis by looking at SDG10 on Reduced Inequalities, the goal which most directly references migration. We argue that its reference to facilitating 'orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people,' speaks less to the experiences and interest of people on the move and more to the approaches of governments towards migrants. It prioritises migrants who move through legal means over those who do not or cannot and so are seen as 'irregular.' We then broaden the discussion of inequalities to consider SDG1, with its focus on eradicating poverty, making the case for a more inclusive approach that takes account of mobility and migrants in each of its targets and indicators. In so doing, we argue that we need to see migration not as a side-product or even an obstacle to development, but rather as a centrally important part of <u>how</u> development happens. We discuss mobility as a means by which many people seek to realise the outcomes for themselves that SDG1 envisions. This kind of inclusion must take place if there is any chance of seeing significant progress either in eradicating poverty or reducing inequalities.

Our interest in this chapter is to focus on inequalities and in particular income inequalities, which are a central feature of the SDGs. Inequality between migrants and migration-affected communities and wider populations is often pronounced. Analysis of empirical evidence and related national and international policies discloses contradictions in the development discourse on migration. The existence of different, often contrasting regional and continental perspectives, and the effects of unequal power relations, are evid ent in the drafting of contemporary development policies: for example, the African Union and the European Union have very different ideas about the relation between migration and development that reflect their different political and economic priorities as well as distinctive histories, demographics, and social processes (Kihato and Bakewell, 2022) which

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[1] For example, in the UK, IPSOS polling for British Future have shown that attitudes to migration in the UK have consistently been more positive than negative since their survey started in 2015 (Rolfe et al., 2022). Nevertheless, if we examine the responses to immigration in more European countries, we find out that the general attitude is complex and composed by a variety of elements. For example, countries with weaker states (high level of tolerance to corruption, high level of perceived corruption and low institutional trust) manifest more anti-immigration attitudes (for a complete discussion of this point see the ICMPD report by Dennison and Dražanová, 2018).

we discuss below. Ultimately we argue for a more joined-up global debate on the relationship between migration and development to inform more inclusive policies that more effectively ensure that no one is left behind.

Our analysis is based on research from two collective projects. One was carried out between 2016 and 2023 under the auspices of the Research and Evidence Facility (REF), a research consortium funded by the European Union Trust Fund for Africa aimed at generating original research on the dynamics of mobility and migration within the greater Horn of Africa region (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda)[2]. The other research project was carried out between 2019 and 2024 under the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) research Hub. MIDEQ considered migration and dynamics of inequalities in six specific migration corridors linking two countries. We draw on data from two of those corridors here (Burkina Faso-Cote d'Ivoire, and Ethiopia-South Africa).[3]

In both research initiatives, research has been carried out through a mix of qualitative interviews as well as quantitative surveys. Research for the REF has entailed more than 30 different projects on different issues related to migration and development. Here we focus on a study conducted in Ethiopia and Uganda with over 600 young people enrolled in technical and vocational training (TVET) initiatives to determine the extent to which the skills training influenced their thinking about whether or not to migrate. We also draw from a study conducted in Metema on the Ethiopia/Sudan border involving informal border crossing and the impact of attempts to 'regularise' border crossing by imposing control and documentation measures. The MIDEQ work has involved semi-structured interviews with migrants, migrants' households and returnees in the Burkina Faso-Cote d'Ivoire corridor and in the Ethiopia-South Africa corridor. The conversations gathered a wide range of different themes, from travel condition, aspiration and projects to the economic and social situation in the countries of destination. Great attention has been given to the intersection between income inequality, irregularity, the importance of remittances, and the role of social networks in mobilising migration choices.[4]

The Global Compact and Sustainable Development Goals: changing views on migration?

The silence of the Millennium Development Goals on migration and migrants revealed a long-standing tendency to disregard migration's relevance to development. In policy and academic circles, migration and development had been considered to have a negative correlation. Migration

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[2] The Research and Evidence Facility (REF) on migration in the Horn Of Africa is a research consortium led by SOAS University of London with partners the University of Manchester and Sahan Research, based in Nairobi, Kenya. It is funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa). For more details see the REF webpage: https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/ref-hornresearch/about-us/.

[3] MIDEQ work has been funded by the UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) [Grant Reference: ES/S007415/1]. The GCRF is a five-year £1.5 billion fund aimed at addressing the problems faced by developing countries. More at https://www.mideq.org/en/

[4] The research has been undertaken as part of a work package on Poverty and Income Inequality (WP3), which has involved the research fieldwork completed in three South-South migration corridors: Burkina Faso – Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia – South Africa and China – Ghana. Laura Hammond and Oliver Bakewell are WP3 Co-Directors, Giulia Casentini is associate researcher.

has often been cited as having the potential to limit for development for the poorest regions of the world (Suliman 2017). Development outcomes are assumed to be more difficult to achieve with mobile populations. And high levels of migration are often associated with a failure of development, as many migrants cite lack of economic opportunity as at least one of the reasons that they have moved. The assumption therefore is that generating positive development would help dissuade people from moving in the first place.

Countries from which many people migrate are considered to be victims of 'brain drain,' whereby skilled workers take their expertise abroad rather than contributing to the economy of their country of origin (Skeldon, 2009). While this phenomenon certainly does occur in many places, it is also true that there may be a 'brain gain' as migrants eventually return, or contribute in other ways through financial and social remittances (Levitt and Nyberg-Sørensen, 2004).

The focus on 'better managed migration' found in the SDGs has been expanded upon and set in motion in subsequent policy instruments. Soon after the finalisation of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the New York Declaration was signed in 2016. This Declaration laid the groundwork for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Managed Migration as well as the Global Compact for Refugees, both signed in 2018. Together with the SDGs, these Compacts aim at laying out common understanding, practices and responsibilities regarding migration and displacement. In this paper, we focus mostly on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Managed Migration (hereafter referred to as the Global Compact).

The Global Compact sets out 23 objectives covering a wide range of issues including the drivers of migration, protection for people on the move, migrant rights and inclusion in destination countries, access to services, reduction of smuggling and trafficking, border management, documentation and data collection. While it is not a legally binding agreement, it elaborates a set of conditions that countries should aspire to fulfil; and the fulfilment of these conditions is associated with maximising the benefits of migration for all parties – 'making it work for all'. It lays out a vision of what 'safe, orderly and regular migration' looks like and how we might get there.

While the Global Compact is presented as a global initiative, and it has been the subject of intense international negotiation and debate. Critics have charged that it is an initiative that has arisen largely from the priorities of the wealthiest regions of the world, and responds more to their concerns about irregular migration, especially after the so called 2015 crisis in which more than 1 million people sought to enter the European Union irregularly, than it does to the protection of migrants or a reduction in inequalities (see Kihato and Bakewell 2022).

The gap in perspectives between states and blocs can be seen in in the different ways in which EU and African policy environments conceive of the relationship between migration and development. From an EU perspective, migration is often presented as a response to development failures, a choice made by people who are desperate to try to find a solution to their conditions of conflict, poverty, unemployment (Kihato and Bakewell 2022). At the height of the 2015 influx of migrants and refugees into the EU, the Valletta Summit was held to develop a response to address these drivers of migration. The result was the launch of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, a fund that eventually grew to over Eur 2.5 billion. The Trust Fund was based on the central premise that addressing the root causes of migration and displacement, assumed to be primarily those linked to underdevelopment and instability, would lead to a reduction in the

flows of people seeking to move to the European Union, as well as reducing forced displacement within the region.

The link between investment in development efforts and migration outcomes (either in terms of decreased migration or indeed increased migration) is unclear. In some cases, as de Haas (2010) and others have argued, investment in development may actually lead to increases in the numbers of people on the move, as people seek to take advantage of increased income and to seek opportunities that have previously been closed to them. Often such moves are intra-national or intra-regional, as openings in the labour market attract workers from the surrounding area. But longer-term moves may also be driven by development opportunities. Young secondary school or university graduates, for instance, may seek to move in order to further their education. Such moves may not necessarily be considered as migration, even though international students are controversially included in the UK and other countries' migration figures, since most students will return to their country of origin on completion of their study. But they do point to enhanced mobility as an outcome of increased development options.

Our study for the Research and Evidence Facility looking at the expectations of young people in Ethiopia and Uganda before, during and after they had taken part in Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) programme illustrates the point. Based on a survey of 600 young people and over 70 semi-structured interviews with TVET students, providers and project implementers, the study sought to determine the extent to which people's ideas about, and plans for, migration had changed as a result of participation in the TVET programme. We found that at the completion of their training between 68-80 percent of graduates felt that their livelihoods had improved since completing the course (REF 2019, 22).[5] When respondents were asked how their participation in the training had influenced their thoughts about migration, responses were more variable. In Uganda, 70 percent of respondents said that they had a greater desire to move after they had completed the TVET programme, in Ethiopia only 15 percent in Amhara Region and 21 percent in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region indicated a greater desire to move. In those regions, the percentage who said that they were less interested in moving was higher, at 42 and 31 percent, respectively (REF 2019, 38). These findings show a variable correlation between improved livelihoods and migration aspirations that required more investigation. The semi-structured interviews with those intending to move showed that people actually wanted to move locally – to the nearest city where they had a chance of finding employment using their new skills and education – rather than internationally. While the research was not able to provide insight on whether people might seek to move onwards to further destinations later, the finding that at the time that they graduated from the programme, their ambition was not to migrate outside of the region but to try to stay closer to their family and friends, where they had social, ethnic, linguistic and other ties, challenges predominant assumptions about migration decision making.

These findings support the view that mobility can be an engine for generating or accelerating developmental progress. Many migrants use mobility as a strategy not only to move away from personal development challenges (e.g. lack of employment opportunities where they are located) but also make the most of their human resource capacities in new labour markets. Seen in this way migration can be a powerful facilitator of positive development outcomes.

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[5] The variation came from different levels at different sites in Ethiopia and Uganda.

A key point here is that increased mobility resulting from better development outcomes is more likely to be sought under conditions of greater safety and as a positive choice. With more income people are often better able to choose routes and means of travel that are safer, deciding when, where, with whom and under what conditions to move. They therefore avoid many of the vulnerabilities and risks that are involved in irregular movement and forced displacement. In the context of SDG 10.7, it can be argued that promoting positive development progress may help to enable people to undertake more orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility.

Such an outcome is significant in both practical as well as conceptual terms. Migration is often portrayed in popular media, discourse and policy terms as a problem to be solved or avoided. It is considered an obstacle to, or a brake on, development. This view has had quite significant outcomes: the enhancement of bilateral agreements between the EU and African states with the aim of tackling smuggling and trafficking, that have actually been used to restrict Africans' mobility by externalising the control of European borders and in some cases hardening African borders (see Lemberg-Pedersen, 2019; Gaibazzi, 2020; Cuttitta 2020) and to raise smuggling costs and increase migrants' risks (Kihato and Bakewell 2022). From this point of view migration and development are separated: migration is not conceived as integral part of the development process of one country, or one region. It is portrayed as a problem that must be contained with the joint effort of countries of origin, transit and destination.

The African Union perspective goes some way towards recognising this alternative understanding of the role of migration in development. We argue here that this perspective is not sufficiently considered and employed in the preparation, discussion and drafting of international, "global" agreements.

An analysis of the international instruments drafted by the African Union, from the 1969 Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa to the 2063 Agenda: the Africa We Want demonstrates a recognition that the continent needs the free movements of people to realise its economic objectives (Kihato and Bakewell 2022). In particular, AU has worked to develop strategies aimed at protecting people's right to movement. In 2017 the Common African Position (CAP) on migration and development was drafted, calling for a better understanding of the implications of migration for development before implementing measures to address irregular migration, and speaking up against the negative perception of migration at the international level (Kihato and Bakewell 2022). Other relevant instruments have been issued recently, like the 2018 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons (FMP) and the 2063 Agenda, that proposes the introduction of an African passport with the aim to abolish any visa for African citizens moving in other Africa countries. The focus on migration-development nexus here is clear, and it develops a perspective that is based on the reality and the needs of Africans on the move: the vast majority – 80% (Flahaux and de Haas, 2016) – migrate within the continent, while actually only a small proportion of African migrants seek to enter Europe.

SDGs: possibility or failure for the inclusion of the interests of people on the move?

Just how significant is it that migration has been included in the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, and what might be the concrete positive outcomes for people on the move is a subject of academic

and policy debate (see Piper 2017; Suliman 2017; Kihato and Bakewell 2022). Approaching the incorporation of migration into such an important developmental agenda from a human and labour rights perspective, Piper (2017) highlights the important inclusion of decent work for all as per Goal 8, thus at least indirectly including migrant workers (see also Withers, this volume). She laments, however, that any direct referencing of migration or migrants in the SDGs reflect the general tendency by policymakers to focus on the most extreme forms of human rights violations such as trafficking in the case of migrants. Explicit concerns with migration and for migrant workers' wellbeing rarely go beyond stating the need for 'orderly and safe migration', rather than better regulation of abusive practices at work. Nonetheless, the inclusion of decent work provides the potential to address labour rights violations that commonly occur around the world, especially for migrant rights advocates (Piper 2017).

Other scholars critical of the SDGs' inclusion of migration focus on the inconsistencies, idiosyncrasies and contradictions embedded in the way that migration is considered. In particular, Suliman questions how, by analysing the SDGs, the concept of development is at stake, by stressing the fact that there could be some unintended, but problematic, consequences of the inclusion of migration into this new development agenda. The SDGs do not question or challenge existing global and regional economic and power relations, and thereby reproduce a vision of development that has long been implicated in the production of inequalities, and in particular of unequal mobilities (Suliman 2017). The author states that, to produce a real positive impact on the relationship between migration and development, we must understand migration to be inherently constitutive of particular social and political relations which are themselves based upon and generative of, inequalities. An effective critique, Suliman argues, should be able to critically address how development has produced problematic conditions under which often migration occurs (Suliman 2017).

This focus on the role of the SDGs in informing the nature of development discourse and practice is highly useful in understanding both the potential and limit of the development agenda. Indeed, the role of the SDGs in potentially re-defining development is crucial: for example Goal 10.7, by including the phrase on 'orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration' while talking about the possible role of migration in development, is saying that programmes that support regular and safe migration can now be described as development. In other words, reducing irregular migration can be presented as a mainstream development objective While such an understanding of development may currently raise questions among practitioners, scholars and the wider public – especially when faced with stories about development funds supporting militias enforcing border management (Cuttitta, 2023) – over time, its position in the SDGs will filter through to foster a more nuanced understanding of the migration-development relationships.

SDG 10 on the reduction of inequalities

As noted above Sustainable Development Goal 10 is focused towards reducing inequalities within and among countries and ensuring that no one is left behind. In its sub-goal 7, it calls for facilitating orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies (2030 UN Agenda). This goal does speaks less to the experiences and interests of people on the move than it does respond to the attitudes of governments towards migrants. It prioritises migrants who move through legal means over those who do not or cannot and so are seen as 'irregular' and therefore

undeserving of protection, support or inclusion in development efforts. In doing so, SDG 10 potentially exacerbates inequalities in the access to safe routes, labour security and social protection. Very often, indeed, people are simply unable to move regularly, as our research demonstrates.

When it comes to immigration, particularly in Africa, a great deal of national and regional policy focuses on attempting to curb irregular migration, smuggling and trafficking, and respond to the needs of hosting refugees and internally displaced persons. With the exception of economic blocks such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where policy aims to regularise movement between member states, there is less said about regular immigration. A ICMPD survey of policies in West Africa in 2015 noted that, 'Very few countries consider foreign workers to be crucial to meeting national labour market needs.' (Devillard et al., 2015). This despite that fact that labour migration across the region is the dominant form of migration flow – mostly between different rural areas, and increasingly from rural areas into cities. There is even less said about such matters as the integration of migrants, pathways to citizenship and family reunification.

If we look at the Asian context as a point of comparison, where temporary contract migration is a common practice characterising regular mobility, the right to permanent settlement is in most cases denied, and legal precarity becomes the structural framework of employment opportunities (Piper et al., 2016). Most governments in Asia have come to actively promote outflows or inflows of migrant workers in line with the policy of facilitating migration to enhance development, but huge institutional gaps remain regarding the protection of migrants' rights (ibid). We suggest that there can be a gap between the front stage (national) pronouncements on migration policy and the back stage (local) interests in making them work.

We refer to a study that two of our authors were involved in through the Research and Evidence Facility in the Horn of Africa at Metema, on the border between Ethiopia and Sudan. Here the border crossing is dominated by two main sets of movements. First, there are those leaving Ethiopia in the hope of moving through Sudan and possibly reaching into Europe. Individuals on this route tend to be middle-class and better educated than many of their compatriots, able to mobilise significant sums of money through their families (even if this causes great suffering to their relatives) to finance their journeys. Second, there are the much larger numbers of agricultural labour migrants – both Ethiopian and Sudanese nationals – often moving between Ethiopia and Sudan to work in the cotton, sesame and sorghum commercial farms for a season. These labour migrants play an essential role both in the agricultural production of eastern Sudan and Western Ethiopia, but also stimulating the economy of the border region. For the most part, both sets of movement are irregular in that people lack official documentation, visas, or travel authorisation. This irregularity can lead to vulnerability, as migrants may be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention or deportation. Such movement is part of the target of SDG 10.7's efforts to better manage migration, and an example of an initiative that seeks to implement this agenda can be seen in the European Union-funded Better Migration Management programme, which has supported bilateral dialogue between Sudan and Ethiopia to improve the situation of these labour migrants and regularise their position (Bakewell et al., 2020).

Irregularity and the Significance of Documentation

Undocumented migration is often associated with a range of risks for people on the move, since it opens spaces for rights violations. This is why states and international agencies tend to reduce these risks by controlling the migration flows and reducing the movements, thus decreasing the number of people who move undocumented (Bakewell 2020, 74).

In some contexts, though, especially in the poorest countries where access to formal papers is limited in various aspects of daily life, undocumented mobility is not seen as a major problem, and that states' attempts to tighten documentation requirements for all movements seem to bring more problems than solutions (Bakewell 2020, 76). In many border areas people cross on a daily basis, for example to visit cross-border markets that are numerous in a continent like Africa where international borders are often positioned in the middle of culturally homogeneous regions. Documentation is usually not a problem also for pastoralists and labour migrants (unless states restrict their borders), whose lives and livelihoods flexibly transect borders.

In these contexts, it seems that requiring border crossers to obtain and carry documentation and trying to stop or regulate migration could actually reinforce barriers to movements, limit livelihood options and give space for exploitation, abuse and corruption (Bakewell 2020, 80).

Movements of people in African contexts very often take place without documentation: this can happen in border regions or towns in which people move for labour or family reasons, or to find shelter from conflict situations, but also when travelling longer routes, where the regular transit from one country to another to reach the final country of destination is simply impossible.
In Metema, where border crossings are an everyday practice for different reasons (labour migration, family mobility, transit migration), many people have an interest in migration, both legal and illegal. These programmes offered information to discourage irregular migration and reinforcing border control, which is a practice that can actually put the lives of people on the move in greater danger. Most respondents to the interviews reported that the programmes on migration management did not address their needs; rather they tried to merely promote regular migration without having a real connection with the territory: local key stakeholders were not engaged, and often some actors involved like security officials were working in collusion with those organising irregular transits (Bakewell et al., 2020). The study highlights how mobility is central to the existence of the town itself and its inhabitants, and how migration management strategies at controlling, regulating and stemming mobility end up failing their objectives and eventually producing a problematic rhetoric that suggests that the only safe migration is the regular one (Bakewell et al., 2020).

Further evidence of the negative impacts of 'regularising' migration comes from research conducted by the MIDEQ Research Hub along the Ethiopia-South Africa migration corridor. In this case, we are not talking about just one, regular (daily or seasonal), border crossing, but a long-distance journey, usually taken overland, between Ethiopia and South Africa that involves many international borders to be crossed, often irregular, and increasingly dangerous.

In 2013, the Ethiopian government banned the activities of all licensed Private Employment Agencies (PEAs), that were acting as brokers in the job market related to migration. The case for this radical decision was made by two serious incidents in the migration history of the country, that received wide media coverage: in 2012, several dozen migrants were suffocated in the back of a truck in Tanzania while travelling towards South Africa (Al Jazeera, 27 June 2012), and more than 160,000 undocumented migrants from Ethiopia, mainly female domestic workers, reportedly

arrived in Saudi Arabia, many facing horrific abuse (Adugna et al. 2019; Estifanos and Freeman 2022). The government ban was an attempt to address the exploitation of migrants on the journey and in their destinations. However, rather than bringing any positive outcome, many migrants were put into even more danger, as smuggling networks adapted to the changes, picking more risky, higher cost and less scrupulous agents to work with. After the ban, the smuggling network had to shift the operations because the chief smugglers have moved to other countries to escape the government restrictions, further complicating the migration paths (Estifanos and Zack 2020).

Together with the PEAs ban, the Ethiopian government increased border control and securitisation measures, which also contributed to increasing the cost of irregular migration and associated risks: smugglers demanded additional payment as they had to avoid usual routes and reschedule journeys, and often migrants were put in greater danger because they were hidden in unsafe places (under the carriage of large trucks, inside crowded containers) to avoid increased controls (Estifanos and Zack, 2020).

SDG 1 on eradicating poverty

Given the limited potential impact of SDG 10.7 on reducing inequalities, we argue that the key to foster a productive discussion on development and migration would be to focus on SDG 1, that calls for eradicating poverty for all people, everywhere. Focusing on the delivery of SDG 1, could have a more profound impact on the lives of people on the move than SDG 10.7. In particular, we believe that the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all (Goal 1.3) and the attention to ensure equal rights to economic resources for all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable (Goal 1.4), should include also migrants, refugees, and people on the move.

Our findings from Migration for Development and Equality (MIDEQ) research hub, especially focusing on the research material coming from Burkina Faso-Cote d'Ivoire and Ethiopia-South Africa migration corridors, can suggest interesting elements for the discussion on a way forward.

As noted above, often migration dynamics in African countries are characterised by a high level of informality (Bakewell 2009): many of these movements are defined as irregular, sometimes in terms of the journey, as described above, more often in terms of the permission to reside and work in the country of destination (see Casentini, Hammond and Bakewell 2023). The possibility of migrants accessing services, rights, legal protection and the labour market can have an important impact on inequalities between migrant and non-migrant communities, between those arrived in different moments, and eventually on development as broadly conceived. As suggested by Hujo (2013), the absence of social policy towards inclusion can enhance poverty among migrants. Social policy is, in fact, recognised as a powerful tool for poverty reduction and social development, especially in Global South countries which are dealing with more entrenched poverty and higher levels of inequality (ibid).

The Burkina Faso-Cote d'Ivoire corridor can illustrate how the absence of basic rights for migrants – newly arrived but also those residing in the destination country for generations – give rise to a condition of permanent exclusion from the social, political and economic space that perpetuates inequalities and produces structural poverty among migrants. In Cote d'Ivoire, there has been for generations a practice of recruiting Burkinabè migrants – many of them children – to work on the

cocoa and other agricultural crops. For many Burkinabè migrants, the move becomes permanent, yet they are excluded from obtaining their own access to land and securing basic rights due to their condition of *apatridie[6]*. After many years of internal conflict in Cote D'Ivoire, where anti-immigrant sentiments were politically exploited, the Constitution has been frequently amended to prevent a rising number of people born in Côte d'Ivoire, especially those who have Burkinabè ancestry, to acquire Ivorian citizenship (Adjami, 2016).

This harsh condition of inequality experienced by migrants has important negative consequences in terms of inclusion and access to the labour market. It is interesting, however, to analyse the strategies put in place by migrants to fight against social insecurity created by income inequality and inequalities in access to land. As reported by Soumahoro and Bi (2022), Burkinabè residing and working in Cote d'Ivoire are trying to restructure work relations between local and migrant workers around the sustainable exploitation of land, and the production and reproduction of forms of social cooperation. What the Ivorian government is failing to provide, that is political inclusion and social security for everyone, is perceived as crucial both by migrant and local communities, and therefore pursued in various informal ways.

Burkinabè survival strategies work around the reproduction of bond of solidarity with the host society, by respecting the rules of tutoring – a mechanism of dependence between locals and migrants – and financing local communities facing important social events (funerals, marriages…) (Soumahoro and Bi, 2022). This strengthens social ties with locals, by assuring inclusion through participation.

Another strategy is represented by the implementation of programs of transfer of skills and knowledge between migrants and natives: Soumahoro and Bi (2022) report an example in which Burkinabè, with the approval and support of local communities, provided training on the use of chicken manure as an innovative fertiliser for cocoa trees. This project has brought an amelioration of the cultivation techniques, and a consequent strengthening of social ties between migrants and local communities.

The Ethiopia-South Africa corridor provides similar evidence regarding access to rights: migrants without the possibility of acquiring regular status and/or regular residence permit in South Africa cannot access the formal labour market and are often forced to rely on the informal sector (Casentini, Hammond and Bakewell 2023). More liberal migration policies in South Africa in the 1990s and 2000s made not only made migration routes safer, because regular migration was possible, but also granted permits and documents to migrants that enabled them to get established. More recent migrants face the consequences of a more restrictive attitude of South African government towards migration, that force people on the move to remain irregular or to search for fake documents, and of a more competitive and saturated labour market.

In practical terms, this means that many Ethiopian migrants to South Africa who are often relegated to the informal sector, do not have access to financial services in the country of destination. Therefore, they cannot deposit their money by using bank services, receive credits or loans. Thus, many Ethiopians hide their money at home, which is a dangerous practice in a country like South Africa where the crime rate is high (Gebre et al., 2011). Recent Ethiopian migrants also always work in the informal sector and find themselves in a condition of vulnerability and income

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[6] Literally, statelessness.

inequality compared to early settled migrants, because the latter have a better access to rights, together with the better access to capital (Estifanos and Zack, 2020).

As noted by Gebre, Maharaj and Pillay (2011), the integration of immigrants into the labour market of the host country is important and prevents occupational segregation, labour market inequalities and low earnings. Therefore, the incorporation of migrants' inclusion and development into Goal 1 may produce a discourse on the relationship between migration and development that could benefit migrant communities and host countries as well.

Conclusion and Implications

In this chapter we have argued that the attention given to migration in the SDGs falls short of producing meaningful results for mobile populations and those living with them. SDG 10.7's aim of addressing migration by declaring an intention to 'facilitate orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies' does not hold promise for effectively tackling inequality for those affected by migration. We argue instead that SDG 1, which pledges to 'end poverty in all its forms everywhere' is actually more fundamentally important for protecting and promoting the welfare of migrants. Applying SDG1 to migrants would be a powerful step towards a more inclusive approach that takes account of mobility and migrants not only in reducing poverty, but because SDG1 provides the foundation for all of the other Goals, it would also result in migrants being considered in each and every target and indicator.

For a country to achieve its target of eradicating poverty, the needs of people on the move – whether labour migrants, internally displaced persons, refugees, or others for whom mobility is a key livelihood strategy – must be taken into account as central development priorities. Migrants and communities affected by migration would be included in governments' development plans in order to eradicate poverty. This would be a major step forward from the current situation, where migration and displacement concerns are generally addressed through specific policies that sit outside national development planning, where migrants' rights are not respected to the same degree as other citizens, and where their own strategies for self-help and livelihood development are often thwarted by migration management practices. People on the move are often perceived as a special category, to be treated separately from the more settled population, and in practice are excluded from most development efforts. This actually limits the impact of development policies on poverty and inequality eradication; not only are people on the move left behind, so too are those who share resources and live amongst them.

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