CONCEPT PAPER

1st MOST Forum of Ministers of Social Development in Central Africa

Insecurity and Migration in Central Africa: Impact on Women and Youth

An activity of the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme

24-26 October 2016, Yaoundé, Cameroon

1. Overview

The first MOST Forum of Ministers of Social Development for the Central African countries,1 under the auspices of UNESCO’s Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, will be hosted in October 2016 by Her Excellency, Ms Madeleine Tchuinte, Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation, Government of Cameroon.

The Ministerial Forum – a flagship activity of the MOST Programme – will take place over two and a half days and be preceded by a senior officials meeting (24 October am).

The Forum’s aim is to share knowledge, expertise, and experience on developing and implementing innovative, evidence-based, effective public policies and to establish relevant, credible, and actionable agendas for translating rigorous social science knowledge into policy action within the theme of the Forum. Twenty-one MOST Regional Forums have been organized since 2001 in different parts of the world. More than 200 Ministers and Ministerial representatives have so far participated in the Regional Forums of Ministers of Social Development.

Under the Cameroonian Vice-Presidency of the MOST Intergovernmental Council, for the first time in its history, the Forum will come to the Central African region to bring together Ministers in charge of the social development portfolio from across the entire sub-region. A wide range of stakeholders will be invited to contribute to the Forum, including UN system bodies such as UNDESA, UNHCR, UNEP, OHCHR, UNDP, UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), UNICEF as well as the International Organisation on Migration (IOM), and the African Union (AU), researchers, senior officials and civil society representatives. The specific roles of the various institutions will be defined at a later stage. The Forum will

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1 Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and São Tome and Principe. Nigeria will also be invited.
be a high-level opportunity to showcase success stories in the region, to identify the priority policy challenges for each country, to promote evidence-based policy solutions, to harmonize policies across national borders, and to enrich policy design and implementation processes by cutting-edge research from the academic establishment, with priority concern for also keeping in mind the human rights of the people who are affected.

Given the theme of the Forum, Nigeria will also be invited to participate due to the increasing number of people internally displaced or leaving the country in an attempt to flee Boko Haram.

2. **Thematic Focus of the Forum, taking into account both Agenda 2030 and the 2008 African Social Policy Framework**

Member States in Central Africa are affected by considerable challenges and issues related to poverty, climate change and ethno-religious conflicts. Of particular challenge is the sectarian violence and forced displacement of civilians affecting several countries in the region, particularly the Central African Republic and Chad, both classified by the IOM as refugees’ and IDPs’ main countries of origin.

The continual presence of terrorist groups in Central Africa represents a major concern in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in relation to the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

Expressing the UN's commitment to protect the rights of the 60 million refugees and Internally Displaced People in the world, the Secretary-General convened the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016. Furthermore, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) has called for a high-level plenary meeting on refugees and migration, to be held on 19 September 2016, just before the 71st session of the UNGA.

In February 2016, the Secretary-General had called for Member States' support to resolve these issues. During a visit to a site hosting IDPs in North Kivu, in the the DRC, on that occasion, he particularly emphasized the specific vulnerability of women and young people: “We have to give hope to young people,” said Mr. Ban on the first stop of his two-day visit. “Particularly, we have to do much more to bring all these children back to school; we have to do much more to protect human dignity and human rights of women and girls to save them, to protect them from sexual violence.”

This emphasis echoing UNESCO’s Global Priority on gender equality, is reflected in the overall theme for the MOST Ministerial Forum: **Insecurity and migration in Central Africa: impact on women and youth.**

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The various aspects of these issues—which include refugees and climate-induced migration as well as gender and youth-relate to a series of major global and regional agendas.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) directly related to the theme of the Forum are found under the following in addition to SDG 16 and SDG 5 to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”: on ending poverty (SDG 1), on healthy lives and well-being for all (SDG 3), on equality quality education and lifelong learning (SDG 4), economic growth, employment, and decent work (SDG 8), inequality (SDG 10) and on combatting climate change and its impacts (SDG 13). SDG 10, target 7, “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.” is of key importance.

The issue of migration and refugees is also one of the thematic focus areas of the African Social Policy Framework adopted at the first AU Conference of Ministers in charge of Social Development in Namibia in 2008, which has particular resonance in the security, social and environmental context of Central Africa.

The AU African Social Policy Framework is emphasizing that «due to the deteriorating socio-economic and environmental conditions, as well as armed conflicts in many African countries over the last four decades, the pattern of migration in the continent is dynamic and complex. This is reflected by, among others, increasing feminization of migration streams, diversification of migration destinations, transformation of labour flows into commercial migration, human trafficking, and the increasing role of regional economic organizations in fostering free flows of labour.”

It is well established that the insecurity situation in Central Africa severely contributes to migration and internally displaced people due to e.g. the killing of animals, less food production and lack of livelihood, and to refugee flows due to threats and violence.

Furthermore, environmental conditions, including climate change, are also a major reason for lack of food and water security due to drought, and thus also constitute a major driver for migration, particularly affecting women in rural areas, who are dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood, because of their responsibility to secure water, food and energy for reasons linked to cooking, heating, cleaning and hygiene. The effects of climate change, including drought, uncertain rainfall and deforestation, make it harder to secure these resources. It is therefore imperative that a gender analysis be applied to all actions on climate change and that gender experts be consulted in climate change processes at all levels, so that women’s and men’s specific needs and priorities are identified and addressed.

In the Paris Agreement signed in New York in April 2016 following UNFCCC COP 21, it was agreed that “Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with
disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity."

Similarly, recognizing this nexus, the fifth target of SDG 1 reads: “By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.”

Women and youth see their vulnerability further enhanced by the threat of facing abandonment, when their husbands or fathers migrate without them. Being left behind increases women’s workload, as they must take on men’s farming roles in addition to their existing agricultural and domestic responsibilities. It may also be difficult for a female-headed household to retain control over land and other productive assets because of restrictions on women’s property and land rights.

However, women who migrate, which constitute in many countries a higher percentage that men, also consider special attention. The Migration Policy Framework for Africa (Doc. EX/CL/276 (IX)), adopted at the ninth ordinary session of the Executive Council of the African Union, June 2006) is stating: “Migrant women’s vulnerabilities to exploitation are highlighted by the frequently abusive conditions under which they work, especially in the context of domestic service and sex industries in which migrant trafficking is heavily implicated. It is therefore important to give particular attention to safeguarding the rights (labor, human rights, et alia) of migrant women in the context of migration management.”

Women are in general more exposed to gender-specific threats and discrimination all along the migratory route, and are more prone to gender-based violence at the hands of smugglers, local authorities and fellow travelers, and to trafficking. Women need also protection from abuse in the shelters.

Besides women, the effects of migration are likely going to perturb the lives of young people disproportionally. This is evidenced in great detail by the 2014 Global Migration Group (GMG) Publication on Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities. Migration can either aggravate young peoples’ challenges (enhanced vulnerability on the migration route, moving to unsustainable locations, family separation etc.) or increase their opportunities (improve access to education, health and work opportunities).

Extensive available research and policy knowledge thus establish that all factors point to a network of interrelated subjects, which is best seen as a vicious circle of problems. Conflicts, terrorism, economic hardships, poverty, climate change and political instability are all push factors for migrants seeking refuge in other countries or as internally displaced people. This has profound socio-economic impacts, and especially for women and youth.

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The overall ambition of the MOST Ministerial Forum is to contribute to enhanced understanding of the research-policy nexus in this regard, enabling participant governments to interact more proactively with research and to make better use of its outcomes to support more inclusive and sustainable policy responses.

3. Format of the Ministerial Forum

The Forum will be preceded by a half day senior officials meeting on 24 October. In the afternoon the Ministerial Forum will open, followed by a session in which Ministers in Cameroon with portfolios relevant to the overall theme will each present policy challenges and research needs in their respective areas.

The format of the Ministerial Forum on 25 and 26 October will include the sharing of policy experiences among Ministers and a limited number of substantive research-based presentations. The Forum will also be structured around some panels in which panelists can engage with each other and with expert participants and UN representatives.

On the basis of the exchange of experiences and substantive discussions, the Forum should provide provisional, contextualized, and practical answers to these two overarching questions concerning the research-policy nexus in the relevant areas:

- What do Central African policy-makers in charge of social policies want from researchers in relation to migration and security?

- What are the researchers’ policy-relevant research findings and views on the needs of social development policy-makers in relation to migration and security in Central Africa?

4. Outcome of the Forum

The Forum will culminate in the adoption of a policy-oriented Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan. The Declaration will provide:

- an overview of the key policy concerns and priority issues in line with the theme of the Forum with corresponding policy recommendations supported also by the research findings presented during the Forum;

- succinct recommendations for follow-up action until the next Ministerial Forum.

5. Structure of the Ministerial Declaration and Its Preparation Process

1. Shared general objectives (referring to UN and international and regional agendas)
2. Statement of the current situation (referring to the research-policy nexus)
3. Commitment to act to support relevant research
4. Commitment to act through national policies
5. Follow-up mechanisms
The first outline of the Declaration will be prepared by the host Government and UNESCO and be shared with all participants for feedback well-advanced in time prior to the Forum. It is important that the voices of all stakeholders be heard.

Based on the comments and suggestions from participants the draft Declaration will be amended, and first presented to the senior officials meeting in the morning of 24 October for discussion and further revisions. The senior officials will brief their respective Ministers about the draft content in the evening of the 24th or morning of the 25th.

The draft Ministerial Declaration will be discussed in the Ministerial meeting for adjustments following the comments from participating Ministers or their representatives before adoption by the Ministers.