



POLICY BRIEF

Global Compact for Migration Enhancing African migration governance

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The final outcome document of the Global Compact for Migration calls for developing evidence-based migration policies and discourses. The importance of data for well-informed policy making is also emphasised. The compact follows a comprehensive approach in order to optimise the benefits of migration and address challenges. Different languages, legal systems and levels of technological and socio-economic development between African countries could pose a challenge for building shared data and information systems.

Key findings

- ▶ The need for an evidence-based migration narrative is addressed by the final outcome document of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). This is critical for African migration discourse since outbound migration is widely depicted by images of overcrowded boats, which suggest that desperate African migrants are trying to reach Europe. The reality is that more than 80% of African migration is intra-continental.
- ▶ Building an integrated information and data exchange system between African countries will not be easy. It entails harmonising electronic systems and procedures between various countries with different languages, legal systems and levels of technological and socio-economic advancement. Migration data is valued for intelligence and security purposes, which poses a challenge to building transnational integrated information and data systems.
- ▶ Guided by the Common African Position (CAP), African countries contributed extensively to the development of the GCM. However, the political will to implement the compact will follow only when governments are convinced of the GCM's dividends.

Recommendations

- ▶ African countries should design a GCM implementation roadmap, linking it to their national development, trade and investment policies. The roadmaps should focus on aspects of the GCM that are relevant to each country's context. Special emphasis should be given to connecting the roadmap with national plans on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.
- ▶ Implementation roadmaps should include efforts to raise awareness. Simple communication tools can be developed on the key themes of the GCM. The aim would be to help policy makers and practitioners understand the opportunities presented by the GCM, the roles they are expected to play, expected implementation challenges and ways to address them.
- ▶ Implementation roadmaps should follow a 'whole-of-government' approach, which means coordinating all relevant entities so that they work towards a common agenda on migration governance. Experiences from existing best practice must be drawn, like Kenya's National Coordination Mechanism (NCM), which is part of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiative to develop regional NCMs. Among many other achievements, Kenya's NCM has provided a platform for stakeholders to review the country's national migration policy through a holistic and consultative process.

Introduction

When it is adopted in December 2018, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)¹ is expected to be a pioneer international agreement that provides the basis for global migration governance. This policy brief assesses the significance of the GCM for Africa's migration governance. Specifically, it analyses the GCM's role in strengthening Africa's evidence-based migration narrative and information and data sharing. It also covers expected implementation challenges and provides policy recommendations.

The policy brief is based on an analysis of the final outcome document of the GCM and key informant interviews. It also draws on the Common African Position (CAP) on the Global Compact for Migration since the CAP guided African countries' negotiations.

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

The final outcome document of the GCM was released in July 2018. The GCM was developed based on the 2016 New York Declaration.² The declaration holds a special place in international migration policy making as it was adopted in the first high-level United Nations (UN) meeting devoted to migration and refugee.³ The declaration was largely prompted by the arrival of over a million migrants and refugees in Western Europe in 2015.⁴

The release of the final outcome document followed three phased processes conducted between April 2017 to July 2018: consultation; stocktaking; and intergovernmental negotiations.⁵ The drafting of the document was co-facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Mexico and Switzerland to the UN in New York. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provided technical and policy expertise to the states led process and worked closely with Special Representative to the Secretary General for International Migration (SRSG).⁶

The GCM outcome document covers a set of mutually reinforcing commitments to a global vision for safe, orderly and regular migration. These commitments are presented in its 23 objectives and 10 guiding principles. The objectives are clustered in six thematic areas:⁷ human rights of migrants; drivers of migration; international cooperation and governance; contributions of migrants and diaspora; smuggling and trafficking;

and irregular migration and regular pathways. The significance of data for well-informed policy making is also emphasised throughout the final outcome document.⁸

Each objective comprises a general commitment and a list of possible actions that states can draw from to develop their national, regional and international responses.

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Considering that many countries are deeply divided on the issue of migration, the release of the final GCM outcome document was hailed as 'historic' by UN Secretary-General António Guterres. However, the negotiation process was not without its difficulties. The United States (US) withdrew from the process in December 2017, saying it would define its own migration plans since the 'Compact's approach is simply not compatible with US sovereignty'.⁹ Hungary followed suit in July 2018, stating that the compact 'encourages movements of people which are dangerous for the world'.¹⁰ In October 2018, Austria stated that it will not sign the compact as it blurs the distinction between regular and irregular migrants.¹¹

The GCM is expected to be adopted by member states in December 2018 in Marrakesh, Morocco.

Implementing the GCM

The modalities for implementing the GCM include establishing a capacity-building mechanism within the UN consisting of:

- A connection hub that provides demand driven support for developing tailor-made solutions, identifying implementation partners and exploring funding opportunities, and designing follow-up mechanisms;
- A start-up fund that coordinates financial contributions, including from the private sector, and facilitates the provision of seed funding for specific projects; and
- A global knowledge platform that facilitates knowledge sharing and acts as a repository of existing evidence, practices and initiatives.

Within the UN, a network on migration will also be established to ensure effective and coherent system-

wide support for implementation. The IOM will serve as coordinator and secretariat of the network, which will draw on the technical expertise of relevant entities in the UN. To review progress, an International Migration Review Forum¹² will be convened every four years starting in 2022, and regional review forums will be held every two years beginning in 2020.

Common African Position

The Common African Position (CAP) on the GCM was adopted in January 2018. It aims to reflect Africa's united stance and voice in the development of the GCM.¹³ This makes Africa the only continent to have articulated its position through a regionally agreed document.

The CAP presents its messages under six thematic areas: (i) drivers of migration (ii) human rights of migrants (iii) smuggling and trafficking of migrants (iv) international cooperation and governance of migration (v) irregular migration and regular pathways and (vi) contributions of migrants and the diaspora. These are in line with major themes of the final GCM outcome document.

Addressing biased narratives on African migration

The mainstream narrative on African migration implies that Africans are on the move to the West. Outside the continent, migration is widely depicted by images of overcrowded boats that signal how desperate Africans are to reach Europe.¹⁴ Such images suggest a perilous 'migration crisis' and have led to a biased migration narrative.¹⁵

The reality is that most African migration is intra-continental and that Africans account for a minor segment of the overall migrant population in many parts of the world. In 2017, for example, more than 80% of Africa's migrants were in eastern, middle and western Africa.¹⁶

The biased narrative suggests that migrants can be personally blamed for choosing to move. It fails to recognise that migration is a highly complex topic that cannot be reduced to a single narrative.¹⁷ The mainstream narrative also downplays the positive developmental contributions of migration. The fact that migrants often fill labour shortages and skills gaps is overlooked, especially in the context of decreasing working age populations in developed countries.¹⁸

As a result, building an evidence-based migration narrative is important for African migration governance. Key to achieving this are better information and data systems. Among many other benefits, this will help to develop and implement the right policies on migration.

Promoting evidence-based migration narratives

Both the GCM and CAP promote evidence-based migration narratives. The GCM calls for an open and evidence-based public discourse on migration to generate a more realistic, humane and comprehensive narrative. It encourages states to establish mechanisms to prevent, detect and respond to different forms of discrimination including racial, ethnic and religious profiling, as well as systematic instances of intolerance, xenophobia, and racism.

The GCM also says that hate speech and hate-motivated crimes against migrants should be dealt with. Migrants and host communities need to be empowered to hold alleged perpetrators to account. The GCM suggests introducing laws on aggravated hate crimes against migrants. It also discusses preventing and responding to acts of violence against migrants, and the need for training law enforcement and other public officials. Efforts to counteract the negative perception of migration are also called for by the CAP, including policies to address racism and xenophobia.

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The media's role in shaping migration narrative is emphasised by both the GCM and CAP. The GCM encourages the training of media professionals to ensure independent, objective and quality reporting. It calls for a withdrawal of public funds or material support to media outlets that systematically promote intolerance, xenophobia, racism and other forms of discrimination against migrants. Similarly, the CAP stresses the importance of addressing media narratives that are biased against migrants and lead to the negative treatment and criminalisation of migrants.

The GCM also suggests that the issue of migration should be used to promote mutual respect including in election campaigns.

The final GCM outcome document provides a comprehensive approach to building an evidence-based migration narrative. It highlights roles and responsibilities of relevant actors like the media, legislators, policy makers and law enforcement.

It provides national, regional and continental actors working on African migration governance with guidance on how to counter the existing negative narrative on African migrants and build a more accurate picture. It also benefits African migrants living outside the continent since they are also impacted by the existing negative narrative.

Better data and information exchange systems

Strengthening data and information sharing is central to building an evidence-based migration narrative. Both the GCM and CAP discuss the issue. The CAP calls for the streamlined collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by gender and age in order to develop meaningful and forward looking policies. Similarly, the GCM covers the need for transnational cooperation on information exchange to better understand migration movements and develop appropriate migration policies.

Better information will also expand regular pathways of labour mobility. The GCM emphasises the importance of skills matching based on local labour market needs. Other benefits highlighted by the compact include creating public awareness about the risks of migrant trafficking and providing information to migrants newly arrived in their country of destination. The GCM also stresses that information sharing can help in identifying smuggling routes, as well as the modus operandi and financial transactions of smugglers.

One of the benefits of information exchange discussed by the CAP is that it can help facilitate the contributions of African diaspora to their countries of origin. To enhance contributions of those in high demand professions, it recommends conducting mapping exercises to match their skills with the labour market in their countries of origin. The GCM calls for research on the impact of non-financial contributions by migrants and diaspora members in their countries of origin and destination.

Providing migrants with birth, marriage, death certificates and travel documents is also covered by the GCM. The documents enable migrants to exercise their human rights and reduce the incidence of statelessness. The

CAP calls for the inclusion of migrants in host countries' identification and documentation systems to increase their legal recognition and access to basic services. The importance of documentation during return and reintegration processes is also highlighted in the GCM.

The GCM also covers the need to establish and strengthen regional research and training centres on migration such as the African Observatory for Migration and Development. These observatories provide comprehensive data and analysis on the economic, social and political benefits of migration as well as the challenges in countries of origin, transit and destination.

African countries lack adequate systems to capture information on the different categories of migrants

The compact provides a good basis for strengthening African migration governance through enhancing information and data systems. Regional migration research and training centres in particular can help African countries develop the right migration policies and improve engagement with the diaspora and migrants. Since the majority of African migration is intra-continental, having access to the latest data on migrant movements can help origin, transit and destination countries develop corresponding policies.

Implementation challenges

Although the GCM presents a good opportunity to improve African migration governance, it could face various implementation challenges.¹⁹

Setting up systems to share information

Exchanging information and data entails harmonising electronic systems and procedures. This can be difficult to achieve between African countries with different languages, legal systems, cultures and levels of technological and socio-economic development. Data sensitivity and the importance placed on migration data by intelligence and security services poses another challenge.

African countries also lack adequate systems to capture information on the different categories of migrants present in their territory. Even those that do have such systems

may not have data on all groups of migrants. For example, data on irregular migrants is rarely available.

International organisations dealing with migration issues may sometimes disagree among themselves over data collection and categorisation.²⁰ Over the years, some international organisations have developed the capacity to gather data, especially through censuses and surveys. Most of them are however not disaggregated and lack a deeper analysis.²¹

Getting support from African states

Effective implementation of the GCM in Africa is highly dependent on whether African countries see the compact's benefits in their respective contexts. Although African countries contributed extensively to the GCM's development, political will to take the next steps will be harder to achieve.

It is unclear whether the GCM offers sufficient benefits in areas that truly matter for developing regions like Africa

Except for general provisions on addressing the drivers of migration and strengthening policies to engage the diaspora, it is unclear whether the GCM offers sufficient benefits in areas that truly matter for developing regions of the world like Africa.²² Unless these benefits are clearly articulated, political will may not be forthcoming and could pose a major challenge during the implementation phase of the GCM.

Conclusion

The GCM outcomes document can help improve African migration governance, especially when it comes to building evidence-based migration narrative and strengthening information and data sharing between African states. The suggestion to strengthen regional migration observatories and national data gathering and analysis is especially important.

The fact that the compact follows a comprehensive approach covering all dimensions of migration, provides a strong basis to develop more inclusive migration policies. As the majority of African migration is intra-continental, having accurate data and analysis on migration within

Africa can help origin, transit and destination countries to develop informed policies and approaches.

Recommendations

The implementation of the GCM will be state-led. Thus, African states should consider the following points during the compact's implementation phase.

Designing national implementation roadmaps

African countries should design implementation roadmaps linked to their development, trade and investment policies. The roadmaps should be developed in a participatory manner, focusing on specific aspects of the GCM that are relevant to each country. Special emphasis should be given to connecting the GCM implementation with national plans on SDGs. This could help African countries to establish a better migration governance system in which they realise the commercial benefits of migration.

Raising awareness about the GCM

Creating awareness at the national level is a key step towards implementation. Policy makers and practitioners need to understand the opportunities that the GCM presents, the role they are expected to play, and the challenges they might encounter. Simple communication tools could be developed that inform policy makers and practitioners on the GCM's key aims and themes. These awareness raising mechanisms should be part of the national implementation roadmaps.

Whole of government approach

The design and implementation of the roadmaps should follow a 'whole of government approach'. This refers to involvement of all relevant government entities in drawing up a common agenda on migration governance. This will provide governments with a comprehensive picture of their citizens' movements.²³ Relevant government departments should consider establishing a national secretariat that coordinates their tasks and activities.

A regular evaluation of the process would enhance implementation of the roadmaps. Lessons should be drawn from existing best practices like the National Coordination Mechanisms (NCMs) within the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) initiative implemented through IOM.²⁴

The NCMs are government-led, inter-agency coordination platforms that bring together a range of government institutions involved in managing migration – such as foreign affairs, interior/home affairs, labour as well as non-state actors. Among the IGAD member states, Kenya provides a good example. Kenya’s NCM has provided a platform for stakeholders to review its draft national migration policy through a holistic and consultative process.

Notes

- 1 International Organisation for Migration (IOM), The Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, www.iom.int/global-compact-migration.
- 2 The New York Declaration mandated two separate and parallel processes: the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) led by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration to be negotiated and agreed by member states.
- 3 K Newland, *The Global Compact for Migration: How Does Development fit in?* Migration Policy Institute, Issue No 1, November 2017.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 The consultation phase was conducted between April and November 2017; the stocktaking phase between November 2017 and January 2018; and the intergovernmental negotiations phase between February and July 2018.
- 6 Modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration’ resolution (A/71/L.58) (2017) adopted by the General Assembly on 6 April 2017 outlines the process for the intergovernmental negotiations on the GCM. http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_280.pdf.
- 7 The six thematic areas guided the consultation phase.
- 8 Global Data Portal, Global Compact for Migration, 2018, <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/global-compact-migration>
- 9 US withdraws from UN Global Compact on Migration, *Al Jazeera*, 2017, www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/withdraws-global-compact-migration-171203160804853.html.
- 10 Hungary follows US in pulling out of UN migration pact, *Al Jazeera*, 2018, www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/hungary-pulling-migration-pact-180718174019778.html.
- 11 Francois Murphy, Austria to shun global migration pact, fearing creep in human rights, Reuters, 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-un-migrants-austria/austria-to-shun-global-migration-pact-fearing-creep-in-human-rights-idUSKCN1N50JZ.
- 12 The current High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development will be renamed International Migration Review Forum.
- 13 The Inter-Governmental Agency for Development (IGAD) also issued its common position on GCM as part of the contributions of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) towards the development of Africa’s Common Position. IGAD’s inputs on the Common Position covers six thematic areas including drivers of migration, diaspora, human rights of migrants, governance, regular pathways on migration, and trafficking and smuggling.
- 14 Key informant 1 interviewed for this policy brief, representative of regional organisation.
- 15 UNECA, African Regional Consultative Meeting on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Addis Ababa, 26 and 27 October 2017.
- 16 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Economic Development in Migration for Structural Development, 2018.
- 17 E Wakesho and O Gutbi, African Correctives to European Narratives about Migration and “the Refugee Crisis”, *Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa*, 29 August 2018, www.cihablog.com/african-correctives-to-european-narratives-about-migration-and-the-refugee-crisis.
- 18 Martha Foresti, More than outrage, we need to face hard lesson on migration, *News Deeply*, 2018, www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2018/06/27/more-than-outrage-we-need-to-face-hard-lessons-on-migration.
- 19 The challenges explained in this policy brief are futuristic in nature since the implementation frameworks need to be defined regionally and the modalities of the GCM will be clearer after its adoption in December 2018.
- 20 Taken from discussions at a consultative workshop organised to discuss the first draft of this policy brief on 3 October 2018.
- 21 Key Informant 2 interviewed for this policy brief, representative of international organisation.
- 22 Economic, peace and security benefits matter most to African countries.
- 23 Current trends show that many African states emphasise building systems to deal with diaspora issues but not outbound migration of their citizens, including those who become irregular migrants (Key informant 2).
- 24 IGAD is one of Africa’s Regional Economic Communities covering East Africa and The Horn. IGAD countries are: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. IGAD is the only REC that has adopted a migration policy framework.

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