

Regional Forum on Sustainable Development

Side event on

Rural women, migration and agriculture

Organized by FAO in cooperation with International Office on Migration (IOM) and UN Women

Thursday 1 March 2018

Venue: International Conference Centre (CICG), ROOM 18, Level 1

13:15-14:30 a.m.

Issue

FAO considers migration as a movement of people, either within a country or across international borders, irrespective of the drivers, duration or purpose of the movement. It encompasses economic migrants, migrants in distress, internally displaced persons (IDPs) refugees and asylum seekers, returnees and people moving for other purposes, including for education and family reunification¹.

In 2017, there were 258 million international migrants, which is a significant increase from 220 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000². The median age of all international migrants in 2017 was 39.2 years, compared with 38.0 years in 2000, and women comprised slightly less than half of all international migrants worldwide (with the regional deviations however). A large share of both internal and international migrants originate from rural areas, with around 40 percent of international remittances sent to rural communities.

The region of Europe and Central Asia experiences different types of migration, including internal (particularly from rural to urban areas), but also international (primarily between the countries in the region). Germany and the Russian Federation host the third and fourth largest numbers of migrants worldwide (around 12 million each), followed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (nearly 9 million)³. Turkey hosts the largest refugee population worldwide, with approximately 3.2 million refugees and asylum seekers⁴. Migration-source countries in the region include primarily Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. Women make up a slight majority (52%) of all international regular migrants in this region; non-migrant women in the region, particularly those in rural areas, are also highly impacted by migrating spouses and other male relatives.

The patterns and scales of migration in the region are very diverse, and include regular and irregular labour migration flows, primarily from the Central Asian countries to Russia and Kazakhstan; refugees (primarily from Syria to Turkey) and IDPs associated with the active and frozen conflicts, concentrated mostly in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine, affecting women and men alike.

The main drivers of migration may derive from economic, social, demographic, and political factors, to mention a few. Consequences of climate change processes, such as deteriorating environmental

¹ <http://www.fao.org/migration/en/>

² UN DESA International Migration Report 2017 highlights. At: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/migrationreport/docs/MigrationReport2017_Highlights.pdf

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

conditions, access to natural resources and loss of livelihoods, are emerging as further reasons, exacerbating the economic drivers of migration as well as incidents of forced displacement. Changes in weather patterns and extreme events, such as prolonged droughts, are exacerbating and contributing to conflicts, such as in Syria affected by a protracted complex crisis with resulting IDPs and migration⁵. Obviously, the changes in the demographic patterns in the countries of both origin and destination, the pace and the quality of reforms in agriculture and rural development, and the evolution of food systems have implication on the way people move and/or migrate.

Different types of migration (forced or voluntary) have direct implications for agriculture, food security and rural development. For example, male migration from rural areas of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan leads to feminization of agricultural labour in the countries of origin. Moreover, in many instances some longer-term and wider impacts are generated by migration. There is increased evidence of labour migration, having both positive but also negative impact on local developments in rural areas. For example, positive effects of labor migration include: (a) financial remittances, which may improve nutrition in the household, strengthened women's decision-making and income earning power, and contribute to broader developmental aspects; and (2) social remittances, that can be in the form of skills learned abroad and "modern" attitudes, may lead to enhanced practices, favorable to gender equity and justice; reduced pressures on local labour markets and reduced social tensions, etc. Adverse effects of labor migration may include: brain drain; depopulation of rural areas, with lesser numbers of people willing to engage in farming activities locally and 'feminization of agriculture'; high risks to which irregular migrant workers are exposed; human costs, separated families and its impact on rural communities, with children, women and the elderly being most affected.

Agriculture and rural development can be instrumental in addressing the root causes and reducing the risks and negative effects of migration, including rural poverty, food insecurity, inequality, unemployment, lack of social protection - all of which often have disproportionate impacts on women, - as well as natural resource depletion due to environmental degradation and climate change. At the same time, investment in food security and agriculture, for example, through policies and practices that support small and medium scale agricultural practices, can help in addressing the challenges associated with migration.

FAO addresses the root causes of internal and international migration and displacement, harnessing the developmental potential of migration, especially in terms of food security and poverty migration. Examples of the FAO interventions include a Regional initiative tailored to the Europe and Central Asia region, with the overall goal to empower smallholders and family farms to improve their livelihoods. The work focuses equally on technical issues (animal health, production, phytosanitary and so forth) and inclusive social, economic and environmental developments, with respect to gender and vulnerable groups.

Migration and gender equality are contributing to all aspects of economic and social development, and as such, they are recognized as essential in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the same time, all the SDGs have the potential to enhance positive aspects of migration. Moreover, the SDGs mainstream a gender perspective, with SDG 5 focused specifically on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The SDG 5 also includes a specific target on equal access to economic resources and to ownership and control over land for women, measured partly through their rights over agricultural land.

Thus, the drivers and impacts of migration are intrinsically linked to the FAO's global goals of fighting hunger and achieving food security, reducing rural poverty and promoting the sustainable use of natural

⁵ Colin P. Kelley, Shahrzad Mohtadi, Mark A. Cane, Richard Seager, and Yochanan Kushnir (2015) Climate change in the Fertile Crescent and implications of the recent Syrian drought. Available at: <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/11/3241> visited 11 February 2018

resources. Investing in sustainable rural development, effective food systems, climate change adaptation and resilient rural livelihoods, with a dedicated support to small scale food producers and family farmers and particular attention to women and other disadvantaged groups, is addressed by the SDG Goal 2 which states: 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture', has a target 2.3: ***'By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous people, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment'***, which implies specific policies and action to support small scale food producers and family farmers, with particular attention to women, and other disadvantaged groups. Indeed, increasing their incomes and productivity and contributing to improved quality of their livelihoods leads to their empowerment enabling them to take informed choices and control their lives and resources.

This strategy can be crucial in addressing some of the social and economic drivers of migration, such as rural poverty, food insecurity, inequality, unemployment, lack of social protection as well as natural resource depletion due to environmental degradation and climate change. Often these drivers impact women disproportionately. Therefore, gender-responsive policies and strategies on sustainable rural development, climate change adaptation and resilient rural livelihoods can be an important part of the response to the migration challenges, if based on thorough analysis that takes gender dimensions into account and ensures that everyone, including women, benefit.

Objectives of the side event

The proposed side event will raise awareness on the links between agriculture, rural development, food security, gender and migration in the region of Europe and Central Asia, and the measures to sustainably increase agricultural productivity and income of rural women, small scale producers and family farmers, by discussing the key challenges of rural migration and its gendered impact on migrant workers and family members left behind, in particular women and the elderly. The side event will also serve to identify opportunities and promising practices for creation of better conditions and resilient livelihoods in rural areas in the context of the SDGs, that allow women and men to stay and continue farming and engage in non-farming activities in rural areas rather than migrating.

The event therefore would ultimately contribute to better coordination of the efforts of various development partners and stakeholders and in formulation of effective strategies at country and regional levels.

Partner organisations

In preparing this event, FAO cooperates with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as both agencies appointed to co-chair the United Nations Global Migration Group (GMG) in 2018. FAO also cooperates with UNECE which hosts the SDGs regional forum, and UN Women, which provided substantive inputs to the side event concept and preparations.

Side event programme

The side event will be opened by Mr Rakhmanin, Regional Representative, FAO Office for Europe and Central Asia, and moderated by Ms Froniga Greig.

The event will have the form of a panel discussion, by inviting up to four key speakers/panellists to share their experiences and promising practices in agriculture and rural development that have implications on rural/urban labour migration, refugees and IDPs integration strategies and action, and gender

equality in different parts of the region. The panellists and the audience will focus on the following questions:

(1) In your opinion what are the 3 most pressing issues relating to migration, agriculture and gender in your country (Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Russian Federation)?

(2) What are the causes / impacts of migration on rural women? How are the different types of migration affecting rural communities in your country / region?

(3) How can we mitigate the risks of migration (make it safer) and ensure greater benefits for women left behind in rural areas.

(4) What promising approaches and strategies have / are being tried by CSOs / governments / international organisations to address the issues?

Panel speakers

Mr Tauhid Pasha is a senior specialist for labour mobility and human development issues with IOM Headquarters in Geneva. In this capacity, he provides technical and policy guidance to governments and other stakeholders, and support to IOM's regional offices worldwide. Mr. Pasha has previously worked in IOM in the Middle East and North Africa advising governments and civil society across the region on issues related to protection of migrants' rights, with a particular focus on Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Prior to this, he was IOM Afghanistan's International Advisor within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Dr Saodat Olimova is an expert on labour migration in Central Asia, with extensive research experience. Dr Olimova was affiliated with the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, and the al-Farabi Carnegie Program on Central Asia. Currently, she is a Head of SHARQ (ORIENT) Research Centre in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Ms Aleksandra Vladisavljevic is a co-founder of regional organization Social Innovation Laboratory (located in Serbia) that aims to address socio-economic challenges in the Balkans through innovative sustainable approaches to learning, cross-sectoral networking, policy development and implementation. Ms. Vladisavljevic has extensive consulting and training experience focus in SME development, business planning and innovations, as well as gender analysis of public policies and budgets in Serbia and the Balkans region.

Mr Ibrahim Vurgun Kavlak has been a coordinator at Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) in Turkey since 2005. With its 80 field offices in 50 provinces and 1600 staff, ASAM is one of the most important implementing partners of several UN organizations and international organizations, and has been operating in Turkey since 1995. Mr Kavlak coordinates the projects which assist the refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey in accessing the services which help them meet their basic needs, and provide protection, psychosocial support and health counselling.

Mr Vladimir Korovkin is a head of research at SKOLKOVO IEMS, with over 20 years of experience in emerging market economies, digital innovation, retail banking and management consulting. In his research, Mr Korovkin focuses on a wide range of social and economic development issues with special focus on Russia and the post-soviet states, and migration as a contributing factor to economic growth and social development. His works are published extensively in the regional media.