



# Conflict-Induced Migration in Africa: Maximizing New Opportunities to Address its Peace, Security and Inclusive Development Dimensions





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. HIGHLIGHT OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS	5
2.1 Forced Migration is a Pressing and Growing Global Issue	5
2.2 Causes of Conflicts and Forced Migration	6
2.3 Destination of Forced Migrants	9
2.4 Impact of Migrants on Origin, Transit and Destination Countries	9
2.5 Human Rights Challenges faced by Migrants	10
2.6 Contributions and Needs of Communities Receiving Migrants	10
2.7 Deficiencies in Conflict Prevention and Early Action	10
2.8 Challenge of Implementing Existing Regional and Sub-Regional Mechanisms	10
2.9 Caution against Coercive Interventions	11
3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	12
3.1 Conflict Prevention	12
3.2 Good Governance	13
3.3 Focusing on Human Rights	13
3.4 Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development	14
3.5 Partnership	14
3.6 Proactive Role of Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations	15





## 1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) co-organized a High-Level Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the theme, “*Conflict-Induced Migration in Africa: Maximizing New Opportunities to Address its Peace, Security and Inclusive Development Dimensions*”, in Durban, South Africa, from 23 to 24 November 2015. The meeting was organised in close collaboration with the African Union (AU) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The EGM also benefitted inputs from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The main objective of the EGM was to provide a platform for United Nations Member States, key African regional and sub-regional organizations and mechanisms, as well as African civil society organizations, academia and international partners, including the United Nations system, to discuss current causes, trends and challenges of conflict induced migration in Africa. The aim of the meeting was to explore strategies to better prevent and address its root causes within the context of implementation of various existing and new African and global policy agendas.

Over sixty (60) expert participants, working on issues of peace and security, conflict resolution, migration and development in/on Africa, attended the meeting and advanced the following key issues and recommendations in the subsequent sections.



## 2. KEY ISSUES

The meeting examined major global and continental trends on migration vis-à-vis its impact on affected African migrant populations as well as on sustainable development, peace and security and good governance in Africa. Drawing on the recent xenophobic experiences of foreign migrants in South Africa as a case example, among others, the meeting discussed the roles and efforts African regional and sub-regional organizations have made in formulating and implementing various policy instruments on conflict-induced and forced migration, as well as the challenges confronting them. The meeting also highlighted a number of new opportunities for addressing migration and conflict related issues in a holistic manner, including in the context of implementation of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the continental Agenda 2063, and the outcomes of the reviews of United Nations Peace Operations, United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture and Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

### 2.1 FORCED MIGRATION IS A PRESSING AND GROWING GLOBAL ISSUE

Participants underscored the fact that migration is not a new phenomenon. Migration is a complex issue that has always been an integral part of human existence. Historically, in Africa, a number of socio-economic, political, cultural (including historical and linguistic ties), geographical and environmental factors have often coalesced to exert pressure



on people, causing them to migrate. As a form of migration, conflict-induced or forced migration has also been a long-standing phenomenon across the world, although it gained prominence in recent times as a result of its severity, magnitude and frequency. Protracted conflicts in countries such as Syria, Libya, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Central African Republic as well as the heightened activities of terrorists, violent extremists and radicalized groups in North and West Africa and the Middle East have contributed to increased and widespread forced displacement of persons, in search of basic safety and security.

Africa is disproportionately affected by conflict-induced or forced migration, with four of the top ten refugee accepting countries in the world being in Africa; and over 25 percent of the world's refugees residing in Africa – this is excluding migrants who are internally displaced within different African countries. Based on this, participants collectively underscored the important need for accelerated and targeted regional action, and international support, to address the challenges faced by forced migrants and the root causes of conflict-induced migration in Africa.

## 2.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICTS AND FORCED MIGRATION

A number of participants emphasised that in order to understand and address the issue of forced migration, there is a need to adopt a more holistic analysis of the underlying causes of conflicts that induce forced migration. The following were discussed and examined in this respect:

### A. State Fragility and Governance Failures

State fragility and bad governance was noted to be a major cause of conflicts in Africa. Participants decried the breakdown of the social contract between governments



and their citizens that is largely informed by the growing perception of the failure of governments to meet the basic needs of their citizens. They underscored that the promise of democracy in some African States is yet to yield the necessary dividends that would contribute to enhancing the quality of people's lives. Furthermore, some African states have tended to marginalize and/or exclude certain parts of their societies from decision-making, and this creates mistrusts, grievances and conflicts.

Electoral violence was also highlighted to be a major cause of conflicts in Africa. While elections is a necessary part of democratic governance and is also vital for peacebuilding, participants stressed that elections in Africa are often marred by vote rigging, fraud, political repression, corruption and political disillusionment. In addition, electoral related violence that is associated with the growing manipulation of constitutions to extend term limits, breeds tension and instability that also incite violence and trigger forced migration.

Participants also established the causal links between human rights violations, conflict and massive refugee outflows, noting that state repressions and human right violations are potential proximate causes of conflicts and forced migration.

## B. Youth unemployment

High youth unemployment was noted to be a major driver of voluntary migration, as well as a threat to peace and security. Africa's demographic trends demonstrate a highly youthful population, of which a significant majority are without decent jobs. For instance, participants referenced the 2015 African Economic Outlook, which stated that "sub-Saharan Africa's population is becoming more youthful, with youth -- aged between 15 and 25 -- as a proportion of the total population projected at over 75 per cent by 2015. It is estimated that about 133 million young people (more than 50 per cent of the youth population) in Africa are illiterate. Many young people have little or no skills and are therefore largely excluded from productive economic and social life. Those that have some education often exhibit skills irrelevant to current demand in the labour market, in a situation where educational and skill requirements are increasing, resulting in millions of unemployed and underemployed youth. The incidence of youth unemployment in sub-Saharan African is estimated to be over 20 per cent"<sup>1</sup>.

Without decent jobs and meaningful employment, youths remain highly vulnerable to exploitation by both politicians and opportunist elements, such as terrorist and criminal networks, who engage and manipulate them to incite violence and/or destabilize the state.

## C. Pull and Push Factors

Some participants further noted that migration, in all its forms, is also caused by pull and push factors, which are largely driven by gross underdevelopment, extreme inequalities

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/theme/developing-technical-vocational-skills-in-africa/tvsd-in-specific-contexts/youth-unemployment/>

and the resultant perception that another region or state is better developed or peaceful than one's current region or state. This development-security nexus underscores the need to invest in the building of inclusive, peaceful and prosperous societies where all are equal and entitled to life, liberty, human rights and enjoy the dividends of governance. The absence of which creates tensions, and political instability that could result in armed conflicts and forced migration. This buttresses the fact there can be no peace without development, no development without peace, and no peace and development without human rights. Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provide clear blueprints on how to ensure integrated approaches to peace, security, inclusive development and human rights. Among others, both agendas underscore the important need for accountable leadership and effective institutions, good natural resource management, accelerated post-conflict development, and citizens' agency.

#### D. Border Issues in Africa

Participants noted that contestations over porous and artificial borders in Africa remain a cause of disputes and violent conflicts, which can lead to forced migration. For instance, borders disputes between Eritrea/Ethiopia, Sudan/South Sudan, Kenya/Uganda, as well as Somalia and Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya, have led to various forms of conflicts. In addition, the porosity and poor management of borders in Africa, coupled with the effects of the war on terrorism, make border crossing dangerous and create strict border controls and enforcement. Often this has implications for the safety and protection of migrant populations, who are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse at border points by state and non-state actors.

The porosity of borders in Africa also tends to create disjoints in national identities, as communities on either side of the border are merely divided artificially, despite having family ties on either side. Given this artificiality and the fact that often people tend to simply migrate across the border, participants reaffirmed the need to promote migration for development, as espoused in Agenda 2063, including by identifying and focusing on connectors such as cultural heritage and language ties that exist across borders. Such an approach could help in fostering the receptivity of host communities to migrants.

#### E. Small Arms Proliferation

Participants underscored the continuing challenges posed by the proliferation of small arms in Africa. They decried the availability and easy accessibility of small arms that end up in the wrong hands. Small arms are sold at affordable prices in some crisis region without restriction; thus constituting further threats to peace and security. Participants *inter alia* emphasized the important need for disarmament and weapons collections, as well as the need to better regulate private security companies across Africa. They also called on Member States to ratify and domesticate the Arms Trade Treaty, as well as enhance measures to comprehensively assess and address the role of suppliers, financiers, facilitators, transit and recipient countries of illicit weapons, and of non-state actors involved in the proliferation of small arms. They called on the African Union and Regional Economic Communities to work with Member States in



accelerating efforts in this regard, especially as we aim to realize the targets of Agenda 2063's Flagship Project on "Silencing all Guns in Africa by 2020".

## F. Environmental issues

Participants further observed that issues such as population growth, environmental degradation and climate change are subtle but potential significant drivers of conflicts in Africa. Floods, droughts, landslides, unpredictable weather patterns and food insecurity have led to various forms of violent contestations and forced migrations on the continent. Participants called for integrated approaches that address the economic, humanitarian, developmental, as well as peace and security implications of these drivers, as a strategy to avert future conflicts and forced migration.

### 2.3 DESTINATION OF FORCED MIGRANTS

Participants unanimously noted that contrary to popular perception, the destination of most African migrants is within the African continent rather than Europe. The limited statistics about forced migrants in Africa as well as popular narratives tend to advance the view that Europe is the major host for African migrants especially those fleeing conflict and instability. However, participants emphasized that four of the top ten refugee receiving countries in the world are in Africa, namely Ethiopia, Kenya, Chad and Uganda.

In addition, some participants raised questions over European concerns about African forced-migrants seeking refuge in Europe, especially in the face of the current war on terror that is fast shaping and defining the contemporary and dominant narrative about migration to Europe. Participants recalled that historically, Europeans and other non-Africans have also been forced to migrate to Africa. Therefore, migration patterns of non-Africans into Africa also need to be interrogated, in order to counteract the negative narratives and misconceptions over Africans migrants to Europe. Participants underscored that forced migration is not a crime and destination countries must work to ensure maximum protection for all migrants, without discrimination, in keeping with international humanitarian and international human rights law.

### 2.4 IMPACT OF MIGRANTS ON ORIGIN, TRANSIT AND DESTINATION COUNTRIES

Participants observed that the impact of forced migrants in destination countries is often considered from the negative perspective with a limited emphasis on the positive benefits and contributions migrants and refugees make to economic growth. For instance, there have been anti-immigration and xenophobic sentiments in host communities against migrants who are perceived to be receiving better support. This growing phobia for migrants has also resulted in violent conflicts, as in the case of South Africa. Furthermore, growing terrorist activities and violent extremism have resulted in the stigmatization of particularly Muslim migrants, and the securitization of the overall migration agenda by a number of transit and destination countries.

## 2.5 HUMAN RIGHTS CHALLENGES FACED BY MIGRANTS

It was observed that some migrants flee human rights violations, and equally face untold pain and deplorable human conditions as they make their journey to destination countries. Traffickers and criminal groups also exploit the vulnerabilities and ignorance of migrants, particularly women and children who are susceptible to trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse. There are also growing concerns about the human rights of Muslim migrants who are increasingly arbitrarily targeted and discriminated by receiving states that are tightening their security measures in response to the war on terror. Participants cautioned there is a global responsibility for addressing the problem of migration. Therefore, humanitarian principles should not be undermined on the basis of national security.

## 2.6 CONTRIBUTIONS AND NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES RECEIVING MIGRANTS

Participants stressed the need to support host communities that historically receive migrants and refugees; noting that often these communities have their own challenges and the presence of migrants and refugees creates additional stresses or pressures. In this respect, it is essential that governments, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations endeavour to support local communities, as this will avert hostilities and foster cohesion, peace and tolerance. As such, host communities and civil society organizations need to be fully included in all efforts and processes aimed at addressing conflicts and migration related concerns and issues.

## 2.7 DEFICIENCIES IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND EARLY ACTION

Conflict prevention is key for averting violence and forced migration. Participants bemoaned the fact that attention is only given to conflict when there is widespread violence and/or massive displacements. They noted the lack of adequate investment in conflict prevention, especially limited early action to complement the robust mechanisms for early warning on the continent. Participants called on governments, the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities, as well as the international community, to enhance investments in early warning and early action, as a basis for addressing the root causes of conflicts and preventing forced migration.

## 2.8 CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTING EXISTING REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL MECHANISMS

Participants noted there are a plethora of international and regional policies for addressing migration, refugees, internally displaced persons, and peace and security issues. However, implementation is lagging. The challenge of implementation was attributed to a number of factors, including the lack of coordination, capacity and resources, among others. Some participants noted that the issue of state sovereignty is often a limiting factor, especially with respect to the effective implementation of regional policies. Furthermore, implementation is constrained as a result of the decreasing funding for humanitarian assistance — an issue that needs to be seriously addressed during the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.



## 2.9 CAUTION AGAINST COERCIVE INTERVENTIONS

Participants observed that international intervention could exacerbate conflicts, and thereby further induce forced migration. They therefore cautioned against the use of coercive military 'solutions' in resolving political conflicts. In particular, they noted this could have protracted implications for refugees and internally displaced persons, and emphasized the need to promote and exhaust other conflict resolution measures such as dialogue and reconciliation before initiating military action as a last resort.



### 3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key recommendations emerged from the deliberations:

#### 3.1 CONFLICT PREVENTION

Conflict prevention — as opposed to reaction — should be central to addressing the root causes of conflicts and forced migrations. Therefore, it is imperative to scale-up conflict prevention, including through holistic approaches that transcends a narrow focus on the traditional drivers of conflicts. Among others, this will entail the following:

- a. **Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict:** Migration policy cannot be holistic unless it involves interventions to address its root causes. The outcome of major global conferences and reviews, such as the reviews of United Nations Peace Operations, United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture and United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the outcomes of the recent Valletta Summit on migration, as well as Agenda 2063 and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan, all highlight the need for urgent action to prevent and address the root causes of conflicts. Among others, this will entail addressing challenges of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, land disputes, rapid population growth, climate change, environmental degradation, and natural resource management. It is important to ensure youths are at the centre of these interventions, which should be holistic, integrated and comprehensive in addressing migration, development and peace and security challenges.
- b. **Engage Religious and Community Leaders in Efforts to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa:** The international community, including the United Nations, the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities, as well as African civil society organizations should actively engage religious and community leaders in pressing efforts to counter terrorism and counter violent extremism.
- c. **Early Warning and Early Action:** The strengthening of early warning mechanisms on the continent is crucial to identifying and addressing the underlying and proximate causes of conflicts and forced migration in Africa. This also requires early action to avert the eruption of armed violence. Greater collaboration between African Member States, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, the International Community, including the United Nations and civil society organizations is crucial for enhancing the efficacy of early warning capabilities and mechanisms on the continent. Stakeholders can promote early warning by integrating robust conflict vulnerability assessments into the work, sustaining high-level political engagement in support of national efforts to address the root causes of conflicts, and deepening dialogue and reconciliation processes.
- d. **Promoting a Culture of Peace:** The international community should prioritize the utilization of peaceful means of settling disputes, especially through preventive diplomacy, negotiation and mediation, rather than military means. In addition, Member States, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, and civil society organizations should ensure the integration of peace education into the curriculum for education and training.

### 3.2 GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance and responsible leadership are essential elements of any intervention aimed at bringing about durable solutions to conflicts and forced migration. In this respect, it is important to:

- a. Prioritize state-building initiatives that enhance the horizontal relationships between states and their citizens, including by promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, in keeping with Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- b. Strengthen the African Peer Review Mechanism and the African Governance Architecture to enhance good, inclusive, democratic and accountable governance on the continent.
- c. Enhance measures to address and mitigate corruption, human rights violations and socio-economic inequalities, as well as promote free and fair elections, justice, the rule of law, the protection of vulnerable populations and effectively manage diversity.
- d. Promote and invest in people-centred and human security approaches in keeping with Agenda 2063.
- e. Promote measures to accelerate economic growth and the creation of decent jobs for especially the youth, including by strengthening manufacturing and services sector, and promoting intra-African trade.
- f. Promote good natural resource governance and management to avert the resource curse phenomenon and foster inclusive economic growth and peace.

### 3.3 FOCUSING ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The promotion and protection of the rights of migrants is an urgent and growing human rights challenge. Therefore:

- a. The United Nations, the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, the European Union and other relevant stakeholders should ensure the inalienability of the human rights of migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons.
- b. As appropriate, ensure peace operations personnel receive training on human rights and the protection of civilians, in order to enhance support for refugees and internally displaced persons, especially vulnerable groups such as women, youth and children.
- c. Key relevant agencies and institutions should be adequately resourced to oversee, monitor, evaluate and report on the protection of civilians in conflict regions.
- d. National authorities should device strategies for engaging and supporting host

communities, as a means of ensuring migrants and refugees receive maximum protection.

- e. Key relevant agencies and institutions should ensure the promotion and protection of the rights of especially migrant, refugee and internally displaced women and children, including by instituting practical measures to safeguard them from trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as ensure their access to emergency and humanitarian relief.

### 3.4 POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Forced migrants and refugees can play an active role in peacebuilding and reconstruction processes back in their conflict-affected countries. Likewise, they also make substantial contributions to development in their host communities. Their role and contributions — not least in terms of financial, human and social capital — should be fully leveraged to support the post-conflict reconstruction and development processes in especially their home countries. In this respect:

- a. Member States, with support from African regional and sub-regional organizations and development partners, should strive to better integrate and/or link their migration and national development policies, in ways that establish coherent and constructive approaches to the issue of migration and development, as espoused in Agenda 2063.
- b. National authorities with support from relevant international organizations should actively seek to engage refugees, internally displaced persons and their diaspora communities in the reconstruction and development of their home countries.
- c. The international community, including the United Nations, should enhance support to the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities in accelerating the full implementation of the African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development policy framework.

### 3.5 PARTNERSHIP

Tackling the challenges of forced migration is a shared responsibility that requires robust and sustained partnerships among different stakeholders at all levels. Therefore:

- a. There is need to ensure international migration policy development processes adopt integrated planning approaches that inter alia promote meaningful partnerships between actors at all levels, as well as progressively integrate humanitarian, peace and security elements and actors.
- b. There is a need for harmonization of various national, regional and international policies to ensure coherent and efficient responses. For instance, this could be achieved by integrating international policies on migration into national and regional development planning.



- c. It is important to strengthen collaboration and coordination between international, regional and national structures, and build strategic alliances with civil society and grassroots organizations, including in accelerating implementation of key regional and global migration policies, such as the African Common Position on Migration; and fostering the exchange of good practices and lessons learned.
- d. Promote joint efforts to foster reintegration, which remains one of the durable solutions for addressing the challenge of forced migration.
- e. Enhance global solidarity, cooperation and responsibility in addressing the plights of migrants and refugees, including through the implementation of the outcomes of various international forums, such as the Valletta Summit on Migration.
- f. Ensure coherence, synergy and coordination in the implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with respect to Agenda 2063's First 10-Year Implementation Plan's flagship project on 'Silencing all Guns in Africa by 2020' and Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals on 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions'.

### 3.6 PROACTIVE ROLE OF REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The leadership and coordinating role of African regional and sub-regional organizations is crucial for preventing and addressing the root causes of conflicts and forced migration on the continent. As such, Regional and sub-regional organizations should:

- a. Recognise the linkages between migration and conflict, and adopt holistic rather than exclusive approaches, as well as invest in long-term solutions to effectively address the root causes of conflicts and forced migration, including by promoting regional cooperation and solidarity.
- b. Be proactive in engaging their member states towards upholding the rule of law and consistently safeguarding the interest of their citizens.
- c. Ensure African voices, perspectives, narratives, frameworks and common positions are adequately reflected in all global debates and negotiations on migrants and migration.
- d. Document and showcase good practices of migrants and refugees' contribution to economic growth, as a ways of promoting tolerance within host communities.
- e. Promote the role of hegemon countries in championing and providing regional leadership in addressing the root causes of conflicts and forced displacement.
- f. Promote the full implementation of the aspirations, goals and targets of Agenda 2063, in particular the flagship project on 'Silencing all Guns in Africa by 2020', which is critical for stemming violent conflicts and forced migration flows.

# HIGH-LEVEL EXPERT GROUP MEETING:

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Conflict-Induced  
Migration in Africa:  
Maximizing New  
Opportunities to  
Address its Peace,  
Security and Inclusive  
Development  
Dimensions

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23–24 November 2015  
Durban, South Africa

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International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)  
Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)

