Making migration work for development requires more than migration management. The Sustainable Development Goals’ acknowledgment of the contribution made by migrants to global development marks a step forward, but is not enough.

Migration can have a positive effect on development; as can the transnational activities of refugee diasporas in conflict settings. In 2003 the Global Development Finance Annual Report took formal notice of remittances to developing countries for the first time. This brought increased attention to the migration-development link in both migrant-sending and -receiving states, and later in international groups.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Migration policy should actively support development efforts instead of primarily serving migration management and border control functions.

- Migrants’ contribution to development must be understood beyond remittances and include the social, cultural and political effects diaspora activities may have if supported in the right way.

- Migrant and refugee producing countries in the Global South must be partners in formulating migration-development policy and not only in – often conditioned – implementation.
and fora, such as the Global Migration Group (GMG) and the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).

Building on this knowledge, numerous international fora have aimed at including migration concerns in the post-2015 development agenda. The original MDGs briefly mentioned the respect for and protection of migrants’ human rights but largely ignored broader migration-development issues. No specific goals and targets related to migration were included, basically because the hype around the migration-development nexus not yet was established in the international policy agenda-setting fora.

After years of negotiation it is somewhat disappointing that no specific SDG on migration has made its way to the 17-Goal agenda. However, Paragraph 29 recognizes “the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development of countries of origin, transit and destination” and mentions international cooperation to “ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons”. International cooperation is expected to “strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries”. Finally “the right of migrants to return to their country of citizenship” is underlined, as is the responsibility of States to “ensure that their returning nationals are duly received”.

Migration-development connections likewise appear in a few other sections that acknowledges that humanitarian crisis and forced displacement of people threaten to reverse achieved development progress; recognizes refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants among vulnerable people who must be empowered; establishes the right of migrants to have access to life-long learning opportunities; and indicates a commitment to eradicate forced labour and human trafficking.

Three explicit migration targets are made around the protection of migrant worker rights (8.8), migration management (10.7), and remittances (10.c). In addition, three targets call for eliminating trafficking, sexual and other forms of exploitation (5.2, 8.7, and 16.2).

Full respect for human rights and the humane treatment of migrants regardless of category and legal migration status is an important step forward. So are attempts to regulate the exorbitant costs related to the transfer of hard-earned wages to family members in poverty and/or recovering from conflict. The emphasis on migration management nevertheless echoes a persistent Northern bias: Strict differentiation between labour migrants, refugees and human trafficking conveniently continues to ignore the fact that stricter migration policies in the Global North partly are responsible for pushing refugees into the hands of human smugglers and traffickers. Likewise, the responsibility of states to take back returning nationals echoes current attempts of promoting return of irregular migrants and failed asylum seekers.

Making migration work for development requires migration policy to actively support development efforts rather than migration control functions, that migrant and refugee diasporas’ contribution to development is actively promoted beyond their financial remittances, and that Southern development concerns – including those of migrants and refugees in search of better futures - are taken seriously into account in coherent global migration-development policies.