



Joint IPSS-ICRC Webinar

Examining the Human Cost of Migration Policies in Africa

15 September 2020

10:00am-12:00pm EAT

Concept note

I. Background

Migratory movements are inherent to the cultural, social and economic development of many countries of origin, transit and destination, be it on the African continent or beyond. Mobility in all its forms is often an essential coping mechanism for survival and is becoming even more important to populations in zones impacted by climate change and environmental degradation. When possibilities and coping mechanisms are not available in-country, cross-border displacement is often the only available option for people to avoid further erosion of their fundamental rights, notably in situations of armed conflict and other situations of violence. The displacement of populations, internal or cross-border, is often coupled with serious food insecurity, lack of access to basic services, increased vulnerabilities, human rights abuses and protection threats.

Along Migration routes, many migrants, including refugees and other people in need of international protection, may remain trapped in a dangerous situation or find themselves stranded in countries in conflict, others may consider undertaking or returning on dangerous migratory journeys, whether at sea or via land. Along the route, migrants are faced with situations that increase the risk of them going missing or dying. Migrants, including refugees, are often exposed to different forms of abuses that not only increases their vulnerabilities, but create additional protection needs. In the midst of these challenges, vulnerable migrants, especially those in an irregular situation, are often becoming invisible or inaccessible. This goes against the fundamental needs for protection of people from critical and pervasive threats, abuses and situations.

In such already challenging environment, and more so compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic with major restrictions on movement of persons across territories, migration policies in countries along the migration routes have direct or indirect consequences on the situation of migrants and on the safe space available for migrants to access basic services and enjoy their rights under international laws. In addition, the space available for humanitarian actors to deliver their services in a principled manner is jeopardized, with the latter at times instrumentalized in containment and return policies.

The importance of maintaining avenues for asylum seekers to access international protection at all times, and the respect to the principle of non-refoulement in all circumstances is critical to the dignity of migrants. Across borders, migration policies prevent the admission of



individuals in need of international protection, without measures to protect them against *refoulement*. Furthermore, States are called upon to protect the life and dignity of all migrants, irrespective of legal status. Migrants must always be treated with humanity, whether at borders, in transit or in destination countries. Migration policies exclusively focused on containment and return fail to give appropriate attention to vulnerable migrants or those requiring specific protection such as asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, sick and injured, and trafficked persons.

Throughout recent history, African States have shown remarkable solidarity, generosity and judicious self-interest by admitting and hosting significant numbers of migrants, including refugees for many decades. The AU has adopted a number of legal and policy instruments intended to regulate voluntary and forced migration on the continent. Historically, we can recall the **OUA Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems** in Africa, enacted in 1969, to address the issue and protect asylum seekers on the continent, notably those fleeing armed conflicts.

The AU has been increasingly engaging in migration management policies and dialogue. The AU's overall approach to migration is articulated in two policy documents, adopted by the AU Executive Council in 2006: the African Common Position on Migration and Development and the Migration Policy Framework for Africa. Most importantly, the AU and the RECs maintain regular continental consultations in order to speak with one voice at international foras. The AU organized consultations for its member states, resulted in Common African positions both on the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact of Refugees.

II. Webinar Objectives:

The webinar will be used as a platform to exchange with policy makers, practitioners and academicians on challenges and solutions to overcome the vicious cycle in which migrants, including refugees, are trapped and in which migration policies fail to protect them.

We suggest the webinar to address three points:

1. The human cost faced by migrants along migration routes, including consequences of lack of protection-centered policies; Induced and Forced Returns and shrinking humanitarian space and its impact on peace and security.
2. Highlight the negative impact of policies mostly focused on containment and their effect in Africa, with a focus on the heavy deployment of security measures to the detriment of migrants' rights and dignity.
3. Way forwards to enhanced protection of migrants: ensure migration policies consider the needs of migrants, taking into consideration political, security, social, environmental, economic, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.



4. AU's positioning on human cost on migration policies and their related actions for the protection of migrants. The AU's call to its member states, to consider the rights of migrants when formulating **Covid19 response** policies

III. Webinar Guiding Questions

The followings are the guiding questions of the webinar.

- What are the challenges migrants face along migration routes in Africa and their impact on the humanitarian situation of migrants?
- How should the current migration policies be ameliorated in order for them to ensure the space for the protection of migrants in Africa?
- What role can the AU play in coordinating migrant management policies in Africa for an enhanced protection of migrants? How should the AU DSA, the RECs, engage with Africa CDC, to ensure the inclusion of migrants and refugees within the Covid19 response framework?

IV. Webinar Language

The webinar will be conducted in both **English and French**.

V. Date & Time

The webinar will be conducted on **15 September 2020** from **10:00am-12:00pm EAT**

VI. Webinar Platform

The webinar will be conducted **via KUDO-an online platform** and a link will be shared along with the invite.

V. Expected Outputs

These include:

- An outcomes document to be shared with the AU/RECs, development partners, foreign government representatives (specifically the EU, US, UK govts.) peace & security actors and other stakeholders working on this topic;
- Video recordings to be shared on IPSS social media;
- Coverage of the dialogue proceedings on IPSS social media platforms;
- Sustainable and practical policy recommendations targeting stakeholders.

IV. Participants

Participants of the webinar will be from

- ✓ Member states-Migration authorities
- ✓ RECS through the liaison offices at the African Union



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- ✓ Member States (Addis-based MSs missions)
- ✓ Think tanks – (Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS), Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Amani Africa.



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