

**TWELFTH COORDINATION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

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**MAKING MIGRATION RESEARCH WORK FOR MIGRANTS: THE ROLE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY¹**

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¹ The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

A. UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY MIGRATION AGENDA

1. *United Nations University's emerging migration focus*

The United Nations University forms the academic and think tank arm of the United Nations. In recent years, the UNU has significantly increased its policy-focused migration research program. This includes the foundation of a new institute, UNU-GCM, specifically focused on migration research and the creation of a new UNU Migration Network, a cross-institute platform that brings together UNU's considerable strengths in the field of migration studies, as well as a greater possibility of multi-lateral communication with policy-makers. Moving forward, the UNU seeks ways to support the Secretary-General's eight-point agenda for action through its research projects and findings, and to work together with other United Nations bodies to ensure successful integration of migration in the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda. The UNU has the potential to act as a key player in strengthening the migration evidence base, which it sees as a fundamental part of this process.

The UNU Institute on Globalization, Culture and Mobility (UNU-GCM) is the first UNU institute with a specific focus on migration and has already developed a body of research and relations with United Nations agencies, academic institutions and civil society organizations. Alongside academic outputs, UNU-GCM's first series of Policy Reports, on Migration, Media and Intercultural Dialogue, is now available online. UNU-GCM identifies how policy can celebrate wider contributions of migrants. UNU-GCM's second Policy Reports series, on Statelessness and Transcontinental Migration, offers insight into one facet of the elimination of exploitation and the protection of the human rights of migrants. Future programs already planned will focus on female agency, diaspora, the impacts of the global economic crisis upon migration.

In June 2013, the UNU formed its Migration Network, coordinated by UNU-GCM. This is already providing a new way of working for the UNU in the area of migration, and facilitates new forms of partnerships. The network comprises more than fifty researchers working across the UNU's institutes focusing on Health, on Regional Integration, on Culture, on the Environment, and on Governance. It brings together projects in each of these areas as well as providing a forum for collaborative work. The Network recognizes its responsibility to support international policy-making and policy fulfillment and hopes that collaboration will provide a means for the development of relationships and cooperation with other agencies.

On February 10th February 2014, the UNU Migration Network launched its website, www.migration.unu.edu. This provides, for the first time, comprehensive, searchable access to the UNU's extensive existing work on migration. For each project, information is available about how it responds to certain MDGs, and enables connections to further projects responding to each Goal. It also offers access to the latest research projects and events of the Network according to six focus areas: Forced Migration, Migration and Culture, Migration and Development, Migration and Environment, Migration and Health, and Migration, Governance and Policy. The website provides access to a bank of over 200 recent articles, books, policy briefs, reports and working papers, and the contact information for the over fifty participating specialists.

B. UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY AND THE 2013 HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

1. *Preparatory Documents*

The UNU has provided expertise in the preparation for the 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. Policy Reports produced by various UNU Institutes have addressed the considerations needed in the lead up to the 2013 High-level Dialogue, and experts writing on behalf of UNU-MERIT and UNU-EHS produced some official preparatory materials. UNU-EHS also bring their expertise from collaboration in the High-level process in the area of Climate Change. The UNU also recognizes that, while there is significant good practice in individual institutes' collaborative projects with other agencies, future work across UNU institutes could be made more widely accessible to a non-academic audience and adopt an increasingly collaborative approach with other United Nations agencies or with policy-makers. The new UNU Migration Network and the website created help to resolve some of these difficulties, by bringing together the UNU's migration policy work in one place, enabling the development of a more interactive approach to research.

2. *Attendance*

While the UNU brought an intervention to the second interactive round table of the 2013 High-level Dialogue, drawing attention to the growing use of the private sector in migration control and the effects of this on stateless persons, its attendance of the gathering was primarily one of observation and learning, to try to understand how best to fulfill the role of the academic and think tank arm of the United Nations in the area of migration. The UNU occupies a unique position within the international system, sitting between academia and the United Nations network, also with significant civil society connections. It hopes to use this role to support the continuing development of a positive and cooperative international migration agenda. The UNU also plays a key role in raising discussion about the High-level Dialogue process in the academic community, and this is reflected in recent and upcoming academic publications of the Migration Network.

3. *Responding to the Secretary-General's Eight Points*

The 2013 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development has left a lot to consider. The UNU is developing work that can respond to the concerns raised and the UNU Migration Network is keen to collaborate in this area. Below is a cursory summary of some of the ongoing UNU work in the areas of the Secretary-General's Eight Points, which it is hoped can provide a starting-point for collaboration.

a. Protect the human rights of all migrants

The UNU supports positioning the protection of the human rights of all migrants as the top priority and has already been developing work looking into how this can be achieved. This includes projects examining labor practices (UNU-MERIT) and how to include migrants into public health systems (UNU-IIGH). Some emerging research into statelessness and into the question of migration detention (UNU-GCM) is also producing results in this area. The human rights of migrants can be easily

overlooked, and the UNU is aware of its important role in producing research supporting the explicit integration of migrant rights into the post-2015 agenda.

b. Reduce the costs of labor migration

The costs of labor migration, including the costs of remittance-sending and social and cultural effects of labor migration have been an ongoing concern of UNU institutes (particularly UNU-CRIS and UNU-MERIT) and this can form the basis for the UNU's contribution in this area. Indeed, UNU-MERIT has already brought together and summarized research in this area in their Policy Brief: Migration in the Post-2015 Agenda.

c. Eliminate migrant exploitation, including human trafficking

The concern at human trafficking has been important to the work of UNU-WIDER and UNU-GCM has recognized a concerning tendency in the discourse of the 2013 High-level Dialogue to conflate human trafficking and human smuggling, something flagged in their current Policy Report series on Statelessness. UNU-EHS, meanwhile, has done recent work on regional and international norms in this area. These are matters on which UNU would be interested to build partnerships.

d. Address the plight of stranded migrants

This is an important and under-researched area. UNU-EHS has developed some work looking at the situation for those who are unable to move in response to environmental threats and UNU-GCM has developed a body of work looking at stateless persons and how current international policy regimes particularly impact on this group. More work is certainly needed in this area.

e. Improve public perception of migrants

Research on public perceptions of migrants has been important to UNU-GCM's work on Migration, Media and Intercultural Dialogue and researchers currently developing innovative projects in this area are keen to collaborate to ensure emerging academic work in this area is translated to policy formation. Work is also being done to find ways to disseminate research results to new audiences through film and web technologies, for example.

f. Integrate migration into the development agenda

Including migration into the development debate is crucial, and is important to the strategy of UNU in the field of migration. The UNU's contribution to the integration of migration into the post-2015 Development Agenda is laid out below.

g. Strengthen the migration evidence base

As the academic and think tank wing of the United Nations, the UNU understands the importance of its role in the strengthening of the migration evidence base, and the UNU Migration Network's

interdisciplinary ethos means that this can draw upon the latest developments across fields of academic research. The over fifty migration specialists work in interdisciplinary teams including, for example, anthropologists, climate scientists, demographers, geographers, international relations specialists, lawyers, linguists, medical doctors, philosophers, political scientists and sociologists. They are all dedicated to producing the highest quality research to respond to emerging international needs. This includes work recognizing the cultural needs and contributions of migrants to host societies.

h. Enhance migration partnerships and cooperation

The UNU already carries out work in the area of migration for, and in collaboration with, various international organizations, such as ILO, IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, as well as various Government Development Agencies and non-governmental organisations. Its positioning at the intersection of United Nations agencies, academic institutions, and civil society, gives it a unique and important role in facilitating the enhancement of migration partnerships and cooperation.

C. UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY AND INTEGRATION OF MIGRATION INTO THE
POST-2015 UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The UNU Migration Network considers it imperative that migration be an important part of the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda. Migration needs to be included, not only because of the many benefits (cultural and economic) that migration and migrants can provide for state development, though these are important factors and the UNU has worked extensively to identify how policy can better acknowledge and facilitate this. Migration also needs to be part of the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda because, although the human development of migrants, their families and their communities is as important as the human development of any other group, migrants often find themselves in situations of heightened vulnerability, less able to access the protections available in wider society. It is this specific vulnerability associated with migrancy that needs to be acknowledged and addressed directly in the post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, as well as an emphasis on how migration can be better enabled to support wider human development within States.

The UNU is using its existing foundations to support this, and its contribution can perhaps be most easily seen through three key areas:

- The human development and wellbeing of migrants, their families and their communities;
- Migration as a choice (so that migration is a feasible option and not the only feasible option) and
- Migration within the wider development framework.

As a first step, the UNU Migration network commits, in 2014, to continuing to produce reports in these key areas, setting out current research and how it relates to the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It also hopes to build on its already collaborative approach to research. Plans are currently underway across UNU institutes to shape policy-oriented research projects on climate change and migration, as well as on migration and global health. These plans are currently at the stage of planning and will be further consolidated at the forthcoming meeting of the UNU Migration Network in Bonn in April 2014.