



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID GLOBAL MIGRATION POSITION PAPER

AUGUST 2024



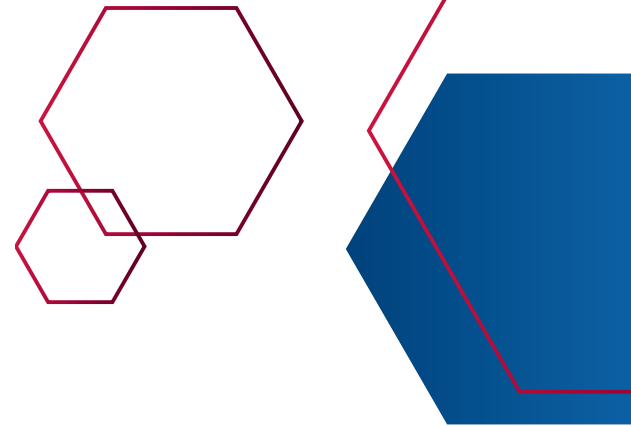
“

Migration is an
intrinsic part of
development

– *Hein de Haas*

”

INTRODUCTION



Migration – the movement of people both within and across international borders – is a growing, global phenomenon.[†] There are more people on the move now than ever before and increased conflict and accelerating climate change will continue to shape migration patterns. So too will the profound demographic shifts taking place across the globe. Populations of many of the world’s advanced economies are rapidly aging. By 2050, Japan, Spain, Italy, South Korea, and Portugal are projected to have four or fewer working age individuals for every three retirees – ratios the world has not seen before. Meanwhile, populations are booming in other parts of the world.[‡] In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, over 1.5 million individuals become working age every month[‡]

The nexus of migration and development has been elevated at some of the highest global fora in recent years, with ongoing global and regional efforts seeking both to address the root causes of irregular migration and to leverage migration for the benefit of sending and receiving communities. For instance, in June 2024, G7 leaders declared a commitment to collectively work towards these mutually reinforcing goals in which the role of development interventions is central.[‡]

This paper identifies four priority areas for USAID’s development-related programming, policy engagement, and partnership: 1) addressing the drivers of migration, 2) enabling pathways that facilitate safe, regular, and orderly migration for work, 3) strengthening migrant integration and reintegration, and 4) enhancing diaspora engagement and remittance flows. The position articulated in the paper is global in scope and builds on existing USAID policy and programmatic engagement, while also emphasizing areas for additional focus and innovation in light of major migration, demographic, and development trends.

This position paper is designed to guide the USAID workforce in considering migration, by addressing its challenges and maximizing its development benefits in human-centered, context-specific, and evidence-driven ways. Complex migration dynamics are at play across USAID’s partner countries, whether they are primarily migrant sending, receiving, or transit communities. Priority areas may therefore have more relevance in some regions than others.



We are affirming our collective commitment and enhanced cooperation to address migration, tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities that it presents, in partnership with countries of origin and transit. We will focus on the root causes of irregular migration, efforts to enhance border management and curb transnational organized crime, and safe and regular pathways for migration.

– G7 Apulia Leaders’ Communiqué
June 14, 2024

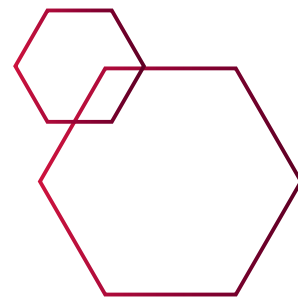
[†] Migration is a complex topic with myriad interconnected factors and implications. The [IOM Glossary on Migration](#) provides helpful definitions that pertain to specific aspects of USAID’s work.

[‡] This commitment is aligned with declarations stemming from other global and regional fora: the Global Compact on Migration; the Rabat Process, led by the European Union (EU) and Economic Community of West African States; the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection in the Western Hemisphere, led by 22 countries in the Western Hemisphere ; the Pacific Immigration Development Community, led by Australia and the South Pacific Islands; the Almaty Process in Central Asia; the Khartoum Process, led by the EU and Horn of Africa states; among others.



PHOTO: EMILY MAHONEY

MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS



Migration rates vary around the world. In 2023, there were 302 million people living outside their country of origin, less than 4 percent of the global population³. The top five origin countries were India, Ukraine, China, Mexico, and Venezuela, and the top five destination countries were the United States, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United Kingdom.³ A substantial share of international migrants (43 percent) migrate to low- and middle-income countries, meaning that many USAID partner countries are home to significant migrant populations.⁴

Demographic shifts have important implications for maximizing the benefits of migration. Declining fertility and mortality rates have shifted population age structures worldwide. By 2050, the number of people 65 years and over is projected to be more than twice the number of children under age five. Many high-income countries struggle with aging populations and economic stagnation.⁵ Many low and middle-income countries have youthful populations, high unemployment rates, and are hoping to realize their demographic dividend.⁶ Researchers have found that migration policies that promote a strong match between a migrant's skills and experiences with the labor market of the receiving community may have mutually-beneficial results.⁴

Migration can pose risks and costs for migrants as well as for origin, transit, and receiving communities. Migrants may be at risk of exploitation, trafficking, and abuse, and may lack access to basic and legal services and social support systems. Migrants may also experience distress and negative mental health outcomes due to family separation, isolation, and discrimination.⁷ For destination communities, the arrival of migrants may displace or reduce wages for some native workers or previous migrants. Migrants may also impose a short-term fiscal cost in social assistance and administrative services, although researchers have found that longer-term economic gains outweigh these costs when migrants are granted legal status^{8,9} and integrated into destination labor markets.¹⁰ For origin communities, migration (particularly permanent, skills-based migration) can mean a loss of human capital, which can contribute to labor shortages and weaken systems and institutions.

Migration can also be a powerful engine to maximize development outcomes. For populations around the world, mobility, including

[Safe Migration in Central Asia \(SMICA\)](#) strengthens bilateral and multi-country systems to promote rights-based migration and counter trafficking in persons. SMICA has reached tens of thousands of migrants through training and education on safe and responsible migration, and aided stakeholder organizations (government bodies, private sector entities, and social service providers) to enhance safe employment practices, labor migration processes, and repatriation and reintegration procedures for trafficked persons.

within a country's borders, in safe, humane ways can improve access to livelihood and education opportunities and increase incomes. For receiving communities, migrants can fill labor gaps, boost the local economy by creating demand, increase trade between origin and receiving areas, and catalyze new businesses. In origin communities, remittances, knowledge and skills exchange, and new networks can drive development. Remittances account for one-third of the capital flowing into low- and middle-income countries and are critical for reducing household poverty.^{4,11} In addition, having relatives abroad can have other less tangible benefits for the overall wellbeing and prosperity of origin communities,⁹ including through “social remittances,” the exchange of knowledge, norms and ideas.¹² Internal migration, including rural-urban, can boost incomes and drive development outcomes.¹³ Finally, circular migration and return migration can bring new skills, assets, and other forms of investment to communities of origin.^{14,15}

USAID's efforts to improve lives and support safe, orderly, and regular migration align with a broader approach to development that seeks to minimize risks while maximizing development gains. While most people may never decide to move, even those who remain in place are likely to be affected by migration in some way. By approaching migration through sustainable and inclusive programming, development diplomacy, and strategic partnerships, USAID can address these challenges and unlock many benefits for migrants, as well as for origin, transit, and receiving communities.



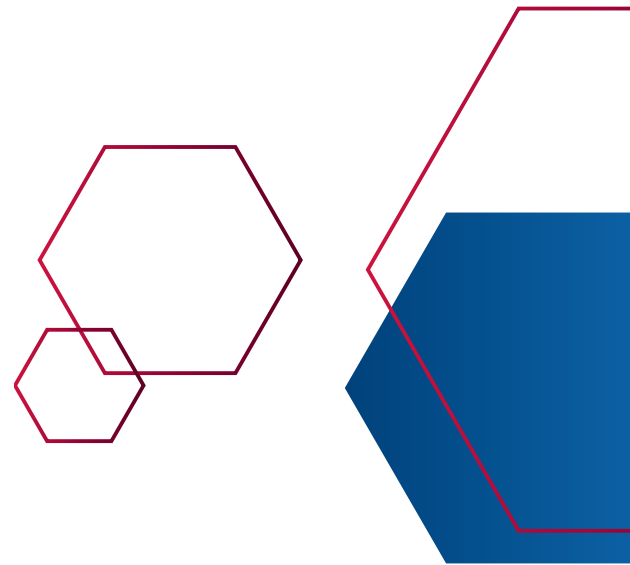
Labour migration has the potential to benefit both origin and destination countries. Migration makes it possible for workers to take up productive work in destination countries and contribute to their overall economic output and growth when migration systems are fair and well-managed.

– *International Labor Organization*



PHOTO: SIEGFRIED MODOLA/USAID

VISION AND APPROACH



USAID aims to maximize the opportunities and benefits of migration, including by continuing and building on ongoing work to address the root causes of irregular migration and counter trafficking in persons. By working with a variety of USG, international, regional, and local actors, USAID can elevate the development benefits of migration across the migration experience: providing assistance for people on the move; facilitating access to essential services and social protections; and reintegrating migrants in their home communities. Increasingly, development institutions are recognizing the linkages between migration and development, and USAID’s scale and global reach present an opportunity to drive greater development progress by taking key migration dynamics into account in programming and policy engagement. USAID will work closely with partner countries to tailor approaches to migration based on their context and our shared priorities, recognizing that countries may simultaneously send and receive migrants.¹⁰ Addressing the drivers of migration is fundamental to the U.S. Government’s overall approach to migration. In addition to addressing migration drivers, USAID will focus on safe and lawful migration for work, migrant integration and reintegration, and diaspora engagement and remittances.

ADDRESSING THE DRIVERS OF MIGRATION

The drivers of migration vary greatly by country and region. USAID is taking a leadership role in implementing the U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration in Central America by prioritizing economic opportunities, empowering women and youth, supporting responsive and transparent governments, building communities where people feel safe, and combating gender-based violence. The intent is that as individuals observe and experience improvements in these areas, more people may be able to build successful lives supported by place-based development strategies that specifically target drivers of irregular migration and out-migration hotspots. USAID can also learn from the work being done in other regions, such as West Africa, to strengthen resilience to violent extremism and reduce vulnerability to climate shocks as a means of mitigating the drivers of insecurity that may influence decisions to migrate.

Addressing migration drivers is a long-term and complex endeavor, in some respects relying on policy decisions in partner countries. While USAID’s programs cannot substitute for systemic changes at that level, when used strategically, U.S. development, diplomatic, and related tools can catalyze improvements in governance, private investment, and human capital that promote conditions that enable individuals to improve their livelihoods in their communities of origin.

SAFE AND LAWFUL MIGRATION FOR WORK

The search for economic opportunities is a significant driver of migration in many parts of the world.⁴ People migrate to seek jobs, often temporarily and at times permanently, both within and between high-, middle-, and low-income countries. While the majority of international labor migrants work in the services sector, many work in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, among other industries.¹⁶

Limited livelihood opportunities in communities of origin, in combination with labor shortages in certain countries and industries, are exerting increasing pressures for individuals to seek opportunities abroad. The absence of or difficulty accessing lawful migration pathways drives migrants to resort to irregular channels, putting their lives and resources in the hands of smugglers, undertaking dangerous journeys, and working informally, under illegal contracts, or in poor working



PHOTO: EMMILY MELO

conditions. Even educated and skilled migrants seeking better lives abroad experience grave risks due to misperceptions about the journey and the opportunity. To date, 2023 was the deadliest year on record for international migrants, with more than 8,500 recorded deaths on migration routes.¹⁷ Labor migrants face a range of risks along and possibly after their journey: debt stemming from the payment of recruitment fees, violence and trafficking in persons on their migration route, exploitative conditions at the worksite, and lack of access to accurate information or reliable legal recourse combined with the inability to join a trade union or otherwise enjoy their labor rights. These risks are particularly acute for migrants moving through irregular channels.

USAID can advance efforts to make internal and international labor migration safe for migrants and beneficial to their communities of origin and destination, decreasing the likelihood for irregular and unsafe migration. We can partner with origin communities to create an enabling environment to manage safe and productive migration: promoting fair and ethical recruitment processes, legal and institutional frameworks, and supporting comprehensive pre-departure preparation for migrants and labor market reintegration to maximize the benefits of migration (including the application of skills acquired abroad) to the community of origin.

Leveraging USAID's expertise in capacity building, we can collaborate with both origin and destination partners to create and deliver training programs that align labor market needs with migrant skill sets. USAID can help forge partnerships between countries seeking opportunities abroad for their nationals and advanced economies with corresponding labor market needs - such as hospitality in Singapore, or construction and trucking in Poland - connecting government, nongovernmental, and private sector actors across borders to strengthen cooperation and mutual accountability. In the Americas, we can advance partnerships in countries with growing sectors (such as energy in Guyana, advanced manufacturing in Mexico, and information technology in Uruguay) that simultaneously address their labor needs while facilitating lawful migration opportunities for workers across the region.

We can encourage destination countries to establish safe, lawful, skills-based migration pathways for work, and advocate for stronger worker protections. These may include worker-driven approaches for collective bargaining, the remediation of labor rights abuses, and the freedom of association. Finally, we can also draw on models and good practices to address the specific vulnerabilities women, particularly young women, face, such as the heightened risks to gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, including forced labor, as well as inequitable access to safe and lawful migration pathways.¹⁶

MIGRANT INTEGRATION AND REINTEGRATION

Migrants' successful integration into their destination communities is critical to realizing the development potential of migration. Successful integration may also promote regional stability by reducing pressures for onward migration. Migrant integration is "the degree to which migrants have the knowledge and capacity to build a successful, fulfilling life" in destinations.¹⁴ Integration includes access to quality, affordable education, health and social services, and livelihood opportunities. For migrants arriving in new communities, integration yields social and economic benefits through increased employment and earnings, improved health outcomes, and realization of human rights.¹⁵ For receiving communities, sustainable integration of migrants has been linked to increased tax revenues, increased local demand for goods and services, alleviated labor shortages, and improved social cohesion through the increased acceptance of migrants, including by addressing xenophobia and reducing conflict.⁴ The needs of migrants, the local context, and the policy environment are key considerations for integration, or reintegration, for migrants and receiving communities.

Integration support should include access to legal rights; language and cultural training; labor market training and job search



assistance; support for accessing health, education, and financial services; psychosocial support; anti-xenophobia programs; and temporary assistance.¹⁸ Access to legal rights is among the most effective policy tools for improving the integration outcomes of migrants.¹⁹ USAID can build on existing capacity in this area to work with internal and international migrants and receiving communities. Integration into the labor market and access to public services is key for migrants' ability to support themselves and their families. USAID and other development partners can support integration through policy engagement and interventions to access and maintain paid employment (e.g., training, apprenticeships, and job search support) and self-employment (e.g., business development, training, and networking). Language training and skills recognition programs are also important for improving economic outcomes and mitigating negative social outcomes for migrants and their receiving communities.^{20,21} USAID will continue to facilitate and advance voluntary, migrant-centered integration in the countries where it works, including through its work on democracy, human rights, and governance; education and livelihood opportunities; gender; climate resilience; health; urban programming; and private sector engagement.

Through the innovative Planning for Productive Migration pilot in Niger, USAID provided comprehensive job search support and facilitated cross-border migration within the ECOWAS countries. Participants gained an improved understanding of steps they can take before migrating, such as reaching out to contacts in the destination city, arranging documentation and transportation, and making plans with other household members, in order to facilitate a more safe and productive journey.

Migrants returning home face unique challenges. This return may be voluntary to reconnect with their home community or after conflict or crisis, or involuntary through repatriation processes. Addressing short-term reception needs may be an important first step towards successful reintegration, followed by long-term reintegration services with considerations of safety, security, and stigmatization. USAID recognizes the importance of strengthening national capacities to deliver temporary shelter and jobs, education, and health services for returned migrant populations, with a special focus on unaccompanied migrant children, family units, women, youth, trafficked, and other vulnerable groups. By addressing the multifaceted needs of returning migrants, USAID aims to enhance reintegration outcomes, thereby contributing to the overall stability and development of their communities and reducing the likelihood of repeat migration.

The USAID-supported Digital Regional East African Community Health (REACH) Initiative was designed in response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa when cross-border movements, coupled with a lack of coordination between health information systems, created major challenges to reducing disease spread. The Digital REACH Initiative supports the free movement of people and cross-border health services through interoperable digital health systems.

6 DIMENSIONS OF MIGRANT INTEGRATION



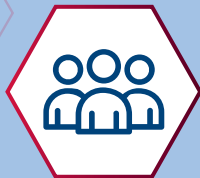
PSYCHOLOGICAL



ECONOMIC



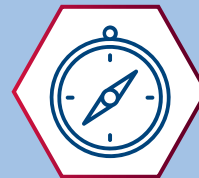
POLITICAL



SOCIAL



LINGUISTIC



NAVIGATIONAL

Source: [The IOM / IPL Migrant Integration Index](#)

MOBILE MONEY AGENT

GOD IS ABLE

MOBILE

PHONE CHARGING

MONEY

PHONE CHARGING

MOBILE

MONEY

MTN
Mobile
Money

MTN

**Airtime Available
Authorized Agent**

**Mobile Money
available Here**

Collaboration

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Authorized Agent

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DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT AND REMITTANCES

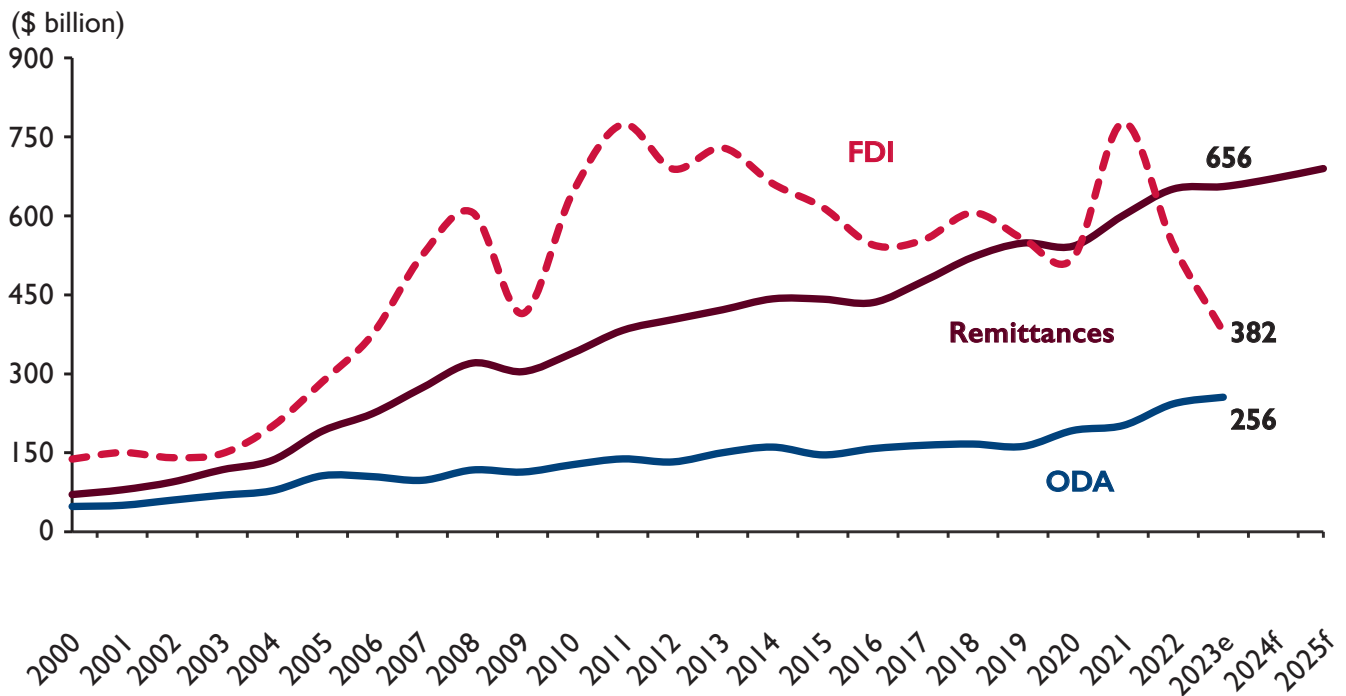
Remittances are a significant source of financial flows for low- and middle-income countries and are especially critical for marginalized and vulnerable populations. Around half of global remittances, which are projected to reach \$1 trillion over the next five years, go to rural areas, where the majority of the world's poor and food insecure live.²² This private capital is a key source of investment in locally led development. These remittances contribute to household economic resilience and investments in nutrition and food security, education, improved housing and sanitation, and entrepreneurship. Remittances mitigate risk for receiving households because they tend to run counter-cyclical to the migrant's home country economy, typically increasing during economic downturns or after a disaster.

The USAID/Pakistan Mission is leading the way in modeling productive diaspora engagement linked with investment and development outcomes. Between the October 2022 and September 2023, the U.S. Mission to Pakistan mobilized \$196 million in diaspora-led technology, health, tourism, and flood-relief sector investments and contributions.

Despite the importance of remittance flows, the last mile of delivery of these transfers is often still a challenge. Many existing and potential remittance recipients remain financially excluded, and digital payment ecosystems remain underdeveloped and often fail to serve rural and low-income users. USAID can build on its successful programming in digital financial services, financial inclusion, financial literacy, and access to finance by helping to improve the remittance-sending and -receiving experience and giving families and communities the tools to make the most of their remittances. This applies to internal as well as international remittances and may include decreasing the cost of remittances through the promotion of more efficient, safe, and inclusive digital financial ecosystems; partnership with financial institutions; and coordination with other donors.

Diaspora communities can serve as a vital resource for sustainable development in their home countries through direct investment and philanthropy, as well as through knowledge transfer and market linkages. USAID can harness the power of diaspora communities for development by supporting diaspora investment, facilitating employment opportunities where appropriate, and co-creating with diaspora communities on opportunities that match their interests and resources with local needs.

FIGURE I.1 Remittances Larger than FDI and ODA in 2023



Source: World Bank/KNOMAD staff estimates.

Note: f = forecast; FDI = foreign direct investment; ODA = official development assistance.



SUSTAINING APPROACHES

Across all four priority areas, USAID can leverage its experience and expertise in fostering sustainable development and advancing human dignity. USAID will consider migration across its policy engagement and programming, and improve the coherence and coordination of dedicated migration-related programs and research. USAID will also consider establishing a formal institutional home for migration to facilitate this work and complement the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance’s work on forced displacement. These and other actions will be documented in an internal implementation plan, which will provide additional detail and guidance for USAID Missions and staff.

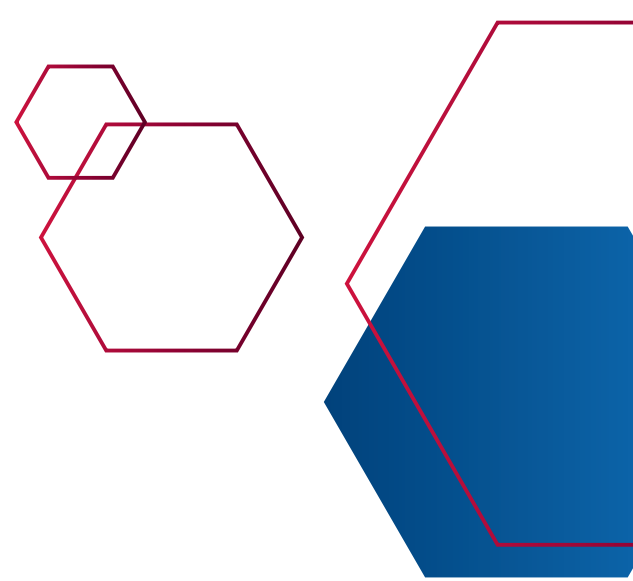
MIGRATION AND HUMANITARIAN, DEVELOPMENT, PEACE (HDP) COHERENCE

USAID is committed to strengthening coherence across humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) assistance to reduce humanitarian need and protect development and peacebuilding gains. Addressing migration requires an HDP lens. Migration can stem from, and exacerbate, social tensions. A coherent HDP approach to migration is essential for meeting urgent needs, while also leveraging the ways in which migration can help build peace and resilience and establish development pathways out of crises.

PHOTO: JANICE SETSER, MERCY CORPS



PRINCIPLES



USAID's work on migration will be grounded in three principles: being human-centered, context-specific, and evidence-informed. This is consistent with the vision of the Global Compact for Migration.²³



HUMAN-CENTERED

USAID strives to sustainably improve the wellbeing and dignity of people globally. This requires a consideration of unique needs across and within cultures, contexts, and varied individual backgrounds and identities in order to place people at the core of each activity the Agency funds and policy the Agency promotes. When considering USAID's contribution toward the wellbeing of all people, including migrants, a holistic view of the individual, with a focus on vulnerable populations, must be considered: for instance, what social protections they have; whether they are enjoying equal access to human and labor rights; and how USAID can appropriately support migrants and communities in countries of origin, transit, and destination. This also means working directly with migrants and communities of all diverse identities and experiences and meeting their specific needs. Through sustainable development programming that addresses migration while focusing on wellbeing and dignity, USAID can best promote respect for human rights and other forms of protection.

CONTEXT-SPECIFIC

USAID's approach to migration is context-specific, recognizing the tremendous diversity in experiences surrounding migration in origin, transit, and receiving countries. There is no "one size fits all" panacea to any aspect of development, and migration is no different. Following the **human-centered** principle outlined above, the principle of being **context-specific** further elucidates people's lived realities in their communities, regions, and countries. There are distinct and interacting drivers - economic, socio-cultural, environmental (including climate drivers), politico-institutional, security, and more - which may require dedicated and potentially divergent approaches when considering migration-related development activities. As environmental degradation and climate variability are increasingly significant drivers of displacement and migration, USAID's expertise equips the Agency to develop context-specific interventions that address the root causes of climate-induced migration. Further, USAID programming must continue to be agile, considering ever-changing contextual realities of origin, transit, and receiving countries.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

Due to the complexity of migration, as well as the "hidden" nature of irregular migration, high-quality, timely data, and evidence on related programming are scarce, especially regarding internal migration. However, there is a growing literature that can help point to promising interventions and approaches, as well as identify key gaps and opportunities for learning. Expanding the evidence base through data collection and research, including impact evaluations, will increase our understanding of the challenges and opportunities

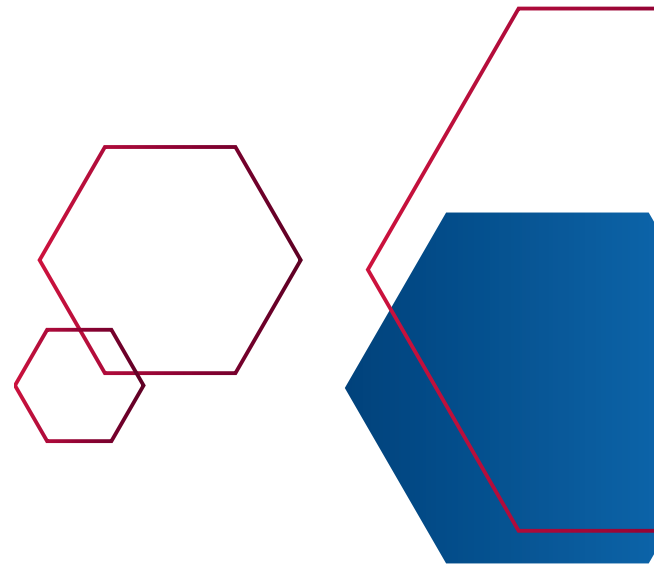
that migration poses and allow USAID to direct resources to the most cost-effective and sustainable interventions. Drawing on the existing evidence base, both from within and outside of USAID, and enriching it with lessons learned, will help USAID address the root causes of irregular migration and increase the positive impacts of its programming for migrants, as well as origin, transit, and receiving communities. USAID will apply a multidisciplinary lens to gather evidence and use it to support more holistic, sustainable, and locally led approaches.

Migration evidence and data will bolster the other two principles by informing **human-centered** approaches that are sensitive to the complex and nuanced experience of humans on the move and applying local and international expertise to anchor USAID programming in its **specific context**. In this way, USAID positions itself to provide thought leadership and advance solutions to realize the potential for positive development outcomes related to migration. To accomplish this vision, USAID will proactively partner with diverse USG, international, and local actors.



PHOTO: USAID'S DEVELOPMENT CREDIT AUTHORITY

CONCLUSION



Migration, in its many forms, is a common and enduring livelihood strategy. There is a tendency to emphasize the challenges and risks associated with migration, which perpetuates negative narratives and perceptions. This position paper presents an opportunity for USAID to advance a balanced approach that addresses the drivers of migration while also realizing the development potential of safe and regular migration to further the Agency's goal to promote broad-scale human progress while expanding stable, free societies; creating markets and trade partners for the United States; and fostering goodwill abroad. USAID's approach involves coordinating with key U.S. government agencies, including the Departments of State, Labor, Agriculture, and Homeland Security, in addition to international organizations and local stakeholders in support of development policy goals.

Migration is a highly complex experience that requires a nuanced, evidence-informed approach. Shifting demographics and climate change, in particular, have highlighted the urgency to better understand and address migration. USAID's resources, expertise, partnerships, communication platforms, and reach can and should be leveraged to ensure that our development work that considers the challenges and opportunities presented by global migration.

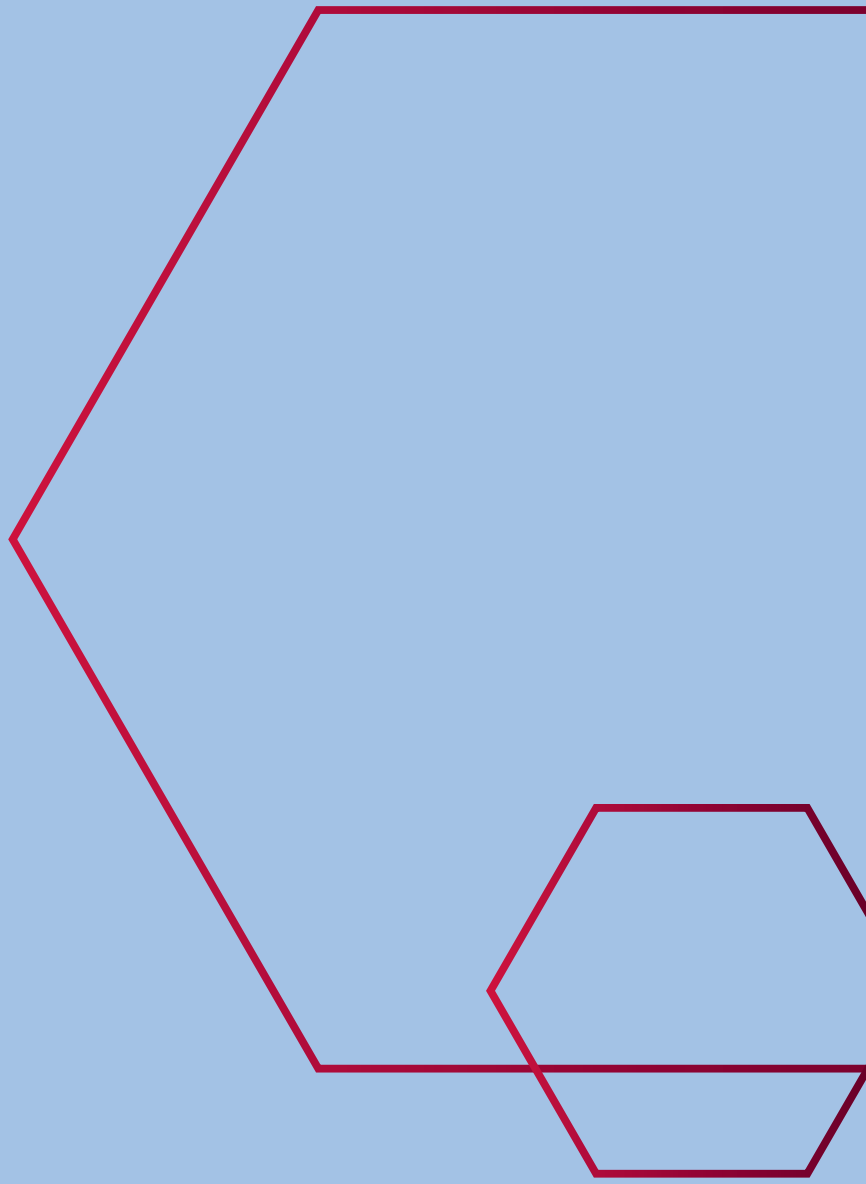
PHOTO: RICHARD NYBERG



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