Global Forum on MIGRATION & DEVELOPMENT

Emerging Needs Roundtable
Rapporteurs report 12ᵗʰ March, 2014

Moderator: Lynn Shotwell
Rapporteur: Khalid Koser[1]

Summary:

The outcome of the roundtable reflected the importance of finding a voice that appeals to both government and businesses. While the discussion had focused on healthcare, hospitality and to some degree, education, the experiences from these sectors can be shared across other sectors as well. Given the multiple constraints and challenges, it is good to have a broader debate initially, and then to narrow the discussion. The trends we have seen for increased mobility of workers are a direct response to skills gaps in respective economies, skills retention challenges and returning skills. To begin to address the underlying challenges as a result of the mismatch, there needs to be an alliance between business and governments to develop workable migration policies as well as a forum where both parties can meet.

Introduction

The moderator began by outlining the focus of the roundtable discussion. As a result of demographic changes - be it ageing populations, increased mobility, or changing consumptions patterns - sectors addressing human care, education and hospitality are increasingly facing migration-related obstacles both in terms of recruiting talent and (depending on the size of the business) moving personnel across borders. **Companies working within the human care sectors must allocate significant time and resources to address immigration compliance** when recruiting for skills that often are not available in their country of location. Migration regulations are often not consistent, creating uncertainty for businesses (and potentially additional costs) as they cannot be sure that the person(s) recruited internationally actually will receive the necessary visas and permits. In emerging sectors, delays in visa processing can carry significant risks for companies seeking to establish themselves on the market, which in turn can **undermine socio-economic growth opportunities**.

The challenge

The moderator stressed that states must be aware of the constraints that businesses face but that **businesses must also be prepared to support the efforts of governments to address migration policies.** The moderator invited speakers from both businesses and states from the floor by asking how both policy makers and private sector actors can work together to improve access to skills on the global labour market. She also invited participants to provide examples of workable policy models that balance the need that businesses have to access skills with adequate protection of the domestic labour market.

---

[1] This report has been compiled with the help of the rapporteur as well as note-takers during the session.

Examples of policies that work: partnering with business

One business representative emphasized the need for some possibility for movement of workers between countries. She cited the Netherlands as a positive example of a good immigration model, saying that her company had been invited to a consultation with the government to address the lack of needed skills. As a result of that consultation, the Netherlands introduced a new system that made it possible to get a visa within two weeks. The flexibility that this system offers has helped multinational companies establish a base in the Netherlands. Another issue that was raised was the lack of trust between government and business, with governments being sceptical of the intention of the businesses. **She emphasised that the first option for any business is to hire locally, but there are many constraints to that.** One country responded by confirming that his country does try to facilitate visas for businesses but that with the high levels of unemployment as a result of the financial crisis, migration is unpopular. At the same time there is a labour mismatch between actual needs of business and what is available on the market. He added that the challenge is not only between business and government; the difficulty is compounded by the competing interests within e.g.: ministries of foreign affairs, interior and justice with regard to migration policy.

A developing country raised the importance of **approaching immigration policy from the private sector perspective.** He felt that the private sector could provide guidance to governments regarding labour needs. He also suggested that the private sector could look more to the global south for labour.

A business representative expounded on the importance of trust, which had been raised earlier. He referred to the fast track system that records entry by category of worker. He pointed out that most governments want to facilitate visa processing but that oftentimes, resources are lacking within government departments. Given that visa processing is a burden, **his suggestion was that governments make a distinction between the level of scrutiny for fast-tracked companies (trusted employers) and those who have not yet qualified for that status.** Fast tracking is one possible solution to the delays in the processing of business visas.

A middle income country informed about their electronic visa application system which enables fast track visa processing which is a collaboration between the Ministry of interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The system works well for people coming from larger, established economies, but could be more difficult for those from a small state. The system nevertheless worked well and the speaker said she would be happy to share more information. She concluded by saying that **it is important for governments to come up with tools that work for business.**

One OECD country reaffirmed the value of fast track programs for larger countries, adding that it had also helped address trust issues and misunderstandings. Not all missions have fast track options for business visa applicants but normally this option is available in larger hubs such as Beijing and Delhi.

One developing country explained about its work with the ILO to address educational requirements within its development framework. He added that migration had not been incorporated into the framework, but that going forward part of the framework could be to give certain privileges(perhaps recruitment of migrant workers), in order to entice businesses to take part in the action plan and therefore support economic and social development locally.

Developing the local labour market

The Moderator commented that the presence of multinationals requires a workable migration policy. There is a focus on Africa currently because of the need for worker mobility across the continent, but also the need for government to train local workers. She invited comments and asked for examples of how to address this problem.

One business representative suggested that this was not only an African problem. Third country nationals in the EU also face constraints on their mobility even while young people responding to surveys demand opportunities for mobility. Another business representative commented that the interest in Africa was very high, creating an opportunity for serious negotiations between governments and businesses. He referred to his own company that is expanding its presence on the African continent. He shared one example used by his company, which has been to create a hub system whereby talented Africans have the opportunity to work within the same company in other parts of Africa in order to gain experience. He commented, however, **that it is easier to get visas for people coming from outside of Africa than it is for Africans to get a visa for another African country. Why is this the case?** This should be a topic for discussion between African states and businesses working on the continent.

The moderator asked if it were possible to develop a partnership between business and governments to address the development of local talent, commenting that this had already been proven to work when e.g.: developing college curriculums.

One African country described a partnership between universities and the private sector to create training placement jobs. **Here the challenge lay in getting students to study topics that were demanded by employers.** Their governments focus is aimed at skills matching. This also applies to facilitating access to international labour migrants when needed. An Asian country described that in his country, an offer letter must be submitted in conjunction with a visa application. He also suggested that different companies could work together to cooperate and harmonize [their applications]. One European country pointed out that they have a formal platform where employers and government meet to discuss socio-economic development, including the need for salary increases. This process is effective in addressing options towards stimulating socio-economic growth during difficult times. He added that the dialogue between business and government is necessary.

Challenging public perceptions of migration

The moderator asked how the public perception of migration could be improved and what forms of collaboration between the private sector and government could assuage negative public opinion against migration.

A European country affirmed that it is difficult for politicians to address this topic alone, and to make the public aware of the country's needs. A business representative supported the idea of a common forum where government and private sector can meet to identify shortages and then measures to address them. She reflected that her government did not welcome migration in times of high unemployment and was more likely to close the border.

An African country voiced reservations that while his country allows foreign investors to bring in skills, sometimes the investments are short term. Another African country pointed out the **need for**

labour market testing which also serves as empirical evidence for policies to address labour migration.

A South American country suggested that rather than focusing on sectors, government and business should collaborate to develop a common goal of socio economic growth. His country had adopted that model and this had been achieved with very low unemployment. A proactive migration policy had promoted integration of different migrant groups. He thought the key was to improve migration as a policy area. The spokesperson said that the growth strategy was government led.

One European country proposed sharing positive examples about migration with the public. She cited a project with GIZ on circular migration with Germany and that it also functions as a vehicle to attract diaspora to return. At the same time root causes of migration could not be ignored and that her government had recently introduced a socio-economic strategy that takes into account migration strategies.

A smaller African state talked about the challenges of his own and neighbouring African states, where **despite programs in support of migration or diaspora initiatives being in place, migrants still faced dificulties working in their host countries**. He also explained that his governments' national employment agency was working with the EU to identify needed skills. Another African state supported the idea of forums, including Diasporas to discuss challenges regarding employment opportunities. The education sector was also included to help address the development of needed skills.

A Southeast Asian country explained how his country's migration policies had evolved from one of migrant protection to a greater focus on Diasporas. He said that the private sector was important because of its capacity to absorb migration; therefore it is necessary to create a predictable framework within which the private sector can operate. He shared some key points: the country could reduce and try to eliminate the administrative barriers that hinder migrants from migration, increase access to information about investment opportunities for Diasporas and migrants, create business networking organisations and programs, facilitate the participation of Diasporas, and to create and support innovative projects. For example, his country had established a returning scientist program to attract Diasporas to return.

An African country explained that they have a lot of diasporas in France, and that together with the French government they had tried to attract diasporas to return. He felt that his country's efforts had been impeded by the presence of international companies that had brought with them their own workforce instead of utilising the skills of Diasporas. A European country also commented on the importance of mobility between universities both for students and staff, particular for traineeships. He warned of only talking about skilled migrants saying that if there are no opportunities for poor workers they will also contribute less to their country's development.

Concluding remarks

Migration should be considered in a wider context and that building alliances to address mutual challenges is part of a bigger picture. One should not forget that migration is also an integration challenge, and that without dialogue, more migration will increase distrust in governments. There is

a need for political leadership in the debate on migration to remove its toxicity. At the same time there is **shrinking space for a reasonable debate, and unless businesses are willing to engage on migration issues, they will unintentionally be contributing to increased regulations and further restrictions on the mobility of labour**. Consensus between businesses and governments on the importance of migration has been achieved, now there is a need for implementation through some concrete projects.

Key takeaways:

- Need to compile a set of best practices, outcomes and consultation mechanisms
- The education sector should be included in the discussions (mobility for academics and students, but also for mid-skilled workers)
- Training, with a long term perspective is necessary in order for businesses and governments to understand each other.
- Need for tripartite consultations between government, employers and employees.
- Importance of investing in Diasporas to meet future skills needs.
- Compile lessons learned from other sectors that can be adapted to address migration challenges.

March 30th, 2014

Concept note in preparation for the GFMD roundtable

Emerging Needs: Shaping visa policies to address skills gaps in emerging sectors such as human care, education and hospitality

12 March, 2014, Geneva
Salle VII, R2 Level

It is widely recognized by states and the private sector that mobility is fundamental for fostering entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth. Yet migration policies are often ineffectively integrated with economic strategies to the detriment of both: border controls may inhibit rather than promote economic growth and development, business start-ups may be frustrated by visa regulations on overseas skilled workers, too many migrants are employed at a level that is not commensurate with their skills, employers may be incentivized to hire irregular migrants and not respect the rights of migrants, poorly managed migration may generate competition rather than added value, and looking to the future there is no effective mechanism for matching the global supply and demand of labour generated by widening demographic disparities as reflected in emerging sectors such as human care, education and hospitality.

It is in the interests of both states and the private sector to develop constructive partnerships on mobility, in order to resolve the dilemmas of balancing national security with economic growth, develop effective policies for forecasting and filling labour market gaps, promote employment, foster economic growth, protect migrants rights, and communicate more widely the potential benefits of migration. It is also the purview of governments to shape visa policies that can address skills gaps in key sectors such as human care.

Companies working within the human care sectors must allocate significant time and resources to address immigration compliance when recruiting for skills that often are not available in their country of location. Migration regulations are often not consistent, creating uncertainty for businesses (and potentially additional costs) as they cannot be sure that the person(s) recruited internationally actually will receive the necessary visas and permits. In emerging sectors, delays in visa processing can carry significant risks for companies seeking to establish themselves on the market.

 In 2013, the Council for Global Immigration released the findings of a report that for the first time was able to quantify how businesses in North America allocate resources to manage aspects of migration related to talent acquisition. The report reveals that migration-related work per capita is more resource and capital intense than other core human resource functions such as compensation or benefits. The findings indicate that the impact of migration policies merit further discussion by both corporations and governments concerned with maintaining a competitive advantage.

We ask:

- *How can policy-makers and the private sector cooperate to improve access to skills and talent on the global labour market?*

- *What new models of public-private cooperation exist which balance the need to access skills and talent with adequate protection of domestic labour markets?*
- *What sector specific strategies for accessing skills can be replicated at a global scale?*
- *What consultation process would you like to see states establish with businesses and what format would you prefer to use?*

This roundtable is intended to stimulate discussion between states and the private sector on what works, why some things don't work, and how it could be done better.

This meeting is one of four roundtables arranged as part of the Swedish GFMD Chair's Thematic Meeting on Private Sector Engagement. The purpose of the meeting is preliminary discussion to a) identify core issues where the interests of states and businesses converge that can become the foundation for a sustainable consultative process, b) identify businesses and states interested in carrying this discussion forward, and c) identify a format for how these discussions can be held.

Mobility is the defining framework for the 21st century, closely linked to employment opportunities. States that can establish partnerships with businesses based on a mutual interest in sustainable growth will have a competitive advantage.