FMM West Africa

Support Free Movement of Persons & Migration in West Africa

Labour migration

Baseline Assessment

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Migration in West Africa is primarily motivated by reasons of employment and economic activity, highlighting the importance of the labour dimension of the region's mobility dynamics. Since its inception, ECOWAS has recognised the key role of free movement in the achievement of regional integration, yet to date the labour aspects of migration have received relatively little attention from ECOWAS institutions and its Member States.

This report was conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) during the inception phase of the "Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa" Project to assess the current status of labour migration management within the ECOWAS Commission, in order to establish a starting point to orient the project's capacity-building activities.

The report finds that the current institutional arrangements of the Commission do not favour linkages between migration and labour, employment, social issues. Responsibilities for labour migration-related issues are fragmented across several directorates with limited internal coordination. Nonetheless, a number of the current strategic priorities of the Commission, though not framed as labour migration issues, offer channels through which to introduce labour migration-specific initiatives. The areas of social protection, youth employment and social dialogue all have relevance for labour migration and benefit from momentum that can be capitalised on.

Mechanisms for coordination and dialogue with external stakeholders including Member States, social partners, and other regional blocs are still in the early phases of consolidation, offering windows of opportunity to introduce labour migration issues, which have been largely absent thus far.

At the policy level, key areas of labour migration governance related to labour and employment, social protection and skills qualification are addressed separately in various regional policy instruments validated by ECOWAS Member States. The next step is to tie these areas together into a single, coherent overarching policy framework to facilitate labour migration mainstreaming.

Based on this analysis, the report recommends to the "Support to Free Movement and Migration in West Africa" Project team to focus on bringing greater visibility to the links between employment, labour rights, social protection and migration. At regional level, this involves ensuring that issues of labour mobility and protection of migrant workers are fully addressed in the forthcoming regional migration policy, extending capacity building on labour migration to the four main directorates dealing with migration, and introducing labour migration governance topics on the agendas of existing regional dialogue mechanisms. In addition, it is recommended that the profile of the new labour migration staff member to be recruited for the Commission include expertise in employment issues, so as to better cover the area of labour mobility.

To increase interest in labour migration at national level and build strong political will, the Project is advised to focus on producing outputs that have immediate practical application for Member States (guidelines, best practice models, toolkits, etc.) and disseminating them widely, in order to generate interest that can then be facilitated under Component II and III of the project, through the Demand-driven facility and the engagement of non-state actors and local authorities.

The report ends with specific recommendations for adjustments to the Project document.

ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CIPRES	Conférence Interafricaine de la Prévoyance Sociale
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FMP	Free Movement of Persons Directorate
HSA	Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate
IATT	Inter-agency task team
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy and Development
ICRMW	UN International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families
ILO	International Labour Office
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
LMIS	Labour market information system
MME	African-EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment
MS	Member State
OTUWA	Organisation of Trade Unions in West Africa
OTAUU	Organisation of African Trade union unity
PPO	Principle Programme Officer
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture
WHO	World Health Organisation

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and objectives of the baseline assessment

The present baseline assessment for labour migration was conducted within the framework of the five-year "Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa " Project, launched by ECOWAS and implemented by the IOM, the ILO and ICMPD, with funding from the European Union. At regional level, the project seeks to strengthen the capacities of the ECOWAS Commission to lead inter-regional dialogue on free movement and migration issues and act as a platform for policy development and harmonisation. The effective management of labour migration is an essential element in achieving this objective. To this end, the Project will support the Commission by building capacity in labour migration policy development and data collection as well as in labour migration management, which will focus on five main areas:

1. Regional tripartite dialogue
2. Labour law harmonisation
3. Labour and skills mobility and public information
4. Harmonisation of qualification recognition policies
5. Protection of migrant workers' rights and social security coverage

The assessment was commissioned during the Project's inception phase to establish the current status of labour migration management within the ECOWAS Commission, so as to serve as a starting point to orient the Project's capacity-building activities. According to the terms of reference, the specific objectives of the baseline assessment are to:

• Identify existing needs and priorities of the ECOWAS Commission in the area of labour migration including an analysis of capacity building needs of relevant departments

• Provide an analysis and recommendations towards improved implementation of ECOWAS agreements and tools in the governance of labour migration, and inform the implementing partners follow up activities in supporting ECOWAS' capacity building in this area.

Methodology

The assessment reviews the legal and policy frameworks as well as the institutional and organisational capacities of the Commission relevant to the five areas of labour migration covered by the Project (listed above). The report builds on the findings of the preliminary capacity assessment conducted in 2011 during the project's identification phase.   It primarily concerns the work of the Commission's Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate and the Free Movement Directorate, though due to the cross-cutting nature of labour migration, it also touches on the work of other relevant directorates in the Commission. In addition, throughout the report, other relevant projects underway in the region are identified to orient the Project team to possibilities for capitalisation and synergies with existing initiatives.

A desk review of relevant documents including legislation, policy and strategy documents, annual reports, and research papers was carried out. This was followed by onsite interviews (January 2014) and phone interviews of ECOWAS staff in headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, as well as of other key stakeholders, including representatives of international organisations, social partners and Nigerian national authorities.

CONTEXT

Labour market context

While West Africa has enjoyed stable growth rates overall in the past decade, this has not yet translated into significant job creation or improved employment conditions for the working poor. West African labour markets are characterised by high levels of informal and vulnerable employment, unemployment, and low productivity. An estimated sixty percent of the sub-region's population continues to live in poverty, and as many as 90% of workers are employed in the informal sector or traditional agriculture.

The region's demographics represent a major challenge to improved labour market outcomes. With a population that has grown quickly in recent decades, and a resulting extremely young population - 66% of West Africans are under 25 years old - labour markets do not have the capacity to absorb the working age population, leaving many unemployed or to turn to informal employment. Although statistics are scarce, unemployment is estimated at 28% overall, with youth unemployment rates higher than adult rates.

The demographic challenge is compounded by a mismatch between educational systems and skills needed in the labour market, together with economies which structurally offer few opportunities for formal employment. Small private sector bases, the slow shift from agriculture to expanded service sector, and a saturated public sector limit job creation.

The context of high rates of unemployment and poverty emphasises the need for adequate social safety nets, yet these are often weak and inaccessible to informal economy workers. In most African countries, spending on social protection represents a mere 4-6% of GDP, making Africa the region with the lowest average social expenditure in the world.

Labour market institutions in Member States also tend to be weak. Outdated labour laws, weak collective bargaining structures, and lack of systematic data collection on the labour market are obstacles to effective policymaking. While the region has a long history of trade union presence, collective bargaining is on the decline, challenged by the prevalence of the informal economy and the difficulties in organising workers in small enterprises and in rural areas.

Labour migration context

West African labour migration is primarily an intra-regional affair. An estimated 90% of the region's 8.4 million migrants originate from ECOWAS countries, making it the area with the highest mobility of the African continent. Compared to the global rate of migration however (3.2%), the percentage of migrants among the West African population is similar (2.8%). The vast majority of intra-regional mobility is related to economic activity.

Historically, migrant workers originating from northern inland areas moved towards economic hubs along the coasts, attracted by employment opportunities generated by cash crops and natural resource exploitation as well as by commercial and trading networks, in contexts of relative political stability. Following independence in the 1960s, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal were major countries of immigration. From the 1970s, the Nigerian oil boom also began to attract large numbers of workers to the country. Emigration of West Africans outside of the sub-region occurred mainly to other Sub-Saharan countries. Migrants moved to Central Africa based on historical ties, such as Gabon and Central African Republic, and to North Africa, attracted to the Libyan and Algerian oil booms. To a lesser extent, migration in the 1960 and 1970s included outflows to industrial centres in the former colonial countries in Europe (France, England, and Portugal).

From the 1990s, these patterns were disrupted to a certain extent by a combination of instability within the region and the increasing scarcity of legal channels for travel and employment in northern countries, blurring distinctions between countries of immigration, transit and emigration. While Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria continue to be primary countries of destination for intra-regional migration, they also serve as transit and departure points for emigration outside of the region. For instance, Cote d'Ivoire continues to be the primary destination country for emigrants from Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau and Mali, it also serves as a stepping stone for migration to other regions. Nigeria too is at once a destination country, for migrants from Benin, Ghana and Niger, a transit zone, and a country of emigration for Nigerians who frequently migrate outside the sub-region.

Migration of skills

Labour migration within the sub-region is primarily low-skilled, though little is known about migration patterns according to skill and education levels. There is evidence however that migration can have significant effects on workers' labour market status, allowing a shift from self-employment, (typically agriculture-based) to wage employment.

Whereas labour migration within the sub-region is dominated by low-skilled workers, highly-skilled workers tend to emigrate to countries in other regions. The rate of emigration from West African to OECD countries is almost 15 times higher among skilled workers (14.8%) than among low-skilled workers (1%), though these global figures hide significant disparities between countries.   The most affected country is Cape Verde, with an emigration rate of 67% of its highly skilled workers. The Gambia and Sierra Leone are also highly affected by outflows of their highly skilled nationals. These are countries with small economies which have little to offer in terms of employment opportunities, particularly for skilled workers. Ghana is particularly affected by the 'brain drain' of medical doctors, with almost 38% of its doctors going abroad. From the 1970s, many Ghanaians in medical professions, as well as engineers, scientists, technicians and business managers, moved to Nigeria, and later on to other regions of Africa, or to Europe and North America. At the same time, highly skilled Nigerians were leaving their country primarily for North America.

Female labour migration

Although labour migration in the region continues to be male-dominate, female migration has increased slightly over the past decade, and now constitutes 46.5% of West African migration. Women continue to be disproportionately represented among low-skilled migrants, employed in areas such as cross-border trading. At the same time, the share of female highly skilled emigrants from West Africa increased by 180% from 1990 to 2000, explained in part by increased female school enrolment rates, as well as increasing demand for skilled migrants in areas such as education and healthcare, where women are more highly represented.

International and national policy contexts

Since its inception in 1975, ECOWAS has recognised positive links between migration and development, making free movement a key pillar in the achievement of regional integration.   In contrast, among its Member States, migration has historically been the subject to a laissez-faire approach, and even to policies which impede the free flow of labour. The absence of comprehensive migration policy frameworks, as well as continued application of protectionist policies and discriminatory practices constitutes major barriers to the implementation of free movement. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the idea that migration, when managed effectively, can have significant positive outcomes for development, is taking hold in the sub-region. A number of countries are in the process of developing migration policies, or have created Ministerial positions to deal with diaspora issues.   These initiatives however are mainly aimed at capitalising on the diaspora's contribution to development of their home countries, rather than on promoting migrant workers' rights or labour mobility.

At international levels, migration has risen high on policy agendas over the past few decades, and with it has come a multiplication of consultative forums to discuss its different dimensions.   There are currently two major processes underway for migration dialogue between Europe and Africa.

The first is the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development, known as the Rabat Process, for which ECOWAS is a member of the steering committee. Launched in 2006 in the context of increasing alarm over flows of irregular migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, it serves as a framework for discussions between European, West and Central African countries on (1) the organisation of legal migration (2) the fight against irregular migration and (3) migration and development. The process is now on its third Action Plan, known as the "Dakar Strategy", adopted for the period 2012-2014. The Strategy contains a series of objectives for the promotion of labour mobility and the respect of migrant workers' rights, though to date activities have focussed primarily on issues of irregular migration, refugees and information-sharing.

The second principle dialogue process is the Africa-EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment (MME), launched in 2007 to improve employment prospects in Africa and the management of migration flows between the two regions. Its Second Action Plan (2011-2013) contains priorities for labour market governance and regional forums on employment, social protection, labour migration, and harmonisation of higher education. While there has been some progress on higher education harmonisation, labour mobility governance issues have received relatively little attention to date. An MME working group is in the process of preparing the contents of the 2014-2016 action plan, to be presented at the 4th EU-Africa Summit taking place in Brussels in April 2014.

In short, inter-regional dialogue on migration has primarily taken the form of non-binding consultation in which issues of workers' mobility, rights and protection have been given relatively little attention, and which have not been accompanied by hard commitments from European destination countries to open more avenues for legal migration. Despite evidence of demand for workers from all skill levels, destination countries continue to maintain a policy bias welcoming high-skilled workers while closing the door to low-skilled workers.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

UN and ILO Conventions on the Rights of Migrant Workers

The ILO Migration for Employment Convention, 1949 (Revised) (No. 97) and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), together with their accompanying Recommendations, provide a framework for the protection of migrant workers and guiding principles for labour migration policy, as well as measures to regulate migratory movements. These Conventions are complemented by the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (UN Migrant Workers Convention, ICRMW, 1990), which builds on the ILO instruments to further the rights and protections of migrant workers, including those in an irregular situation. Together, these three instruments provide a comprehensive international framework for labour migration governance and protection issues at all stages of the migration process. In addition, the ILO Multilateral Framework on Migration, a collection of non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration, endorsed by the ILO Governing Body in 2006, brings together the principles found in these international instruments. As described below, a number of ECOWAS policy documents make reference to the norms enshrined in the ILO instruments and ICRMW. Ratification of the three Conventions by West African countries is uneven. Five states have not ratified any of the three migrant-specific instruments, and only one country has ratified all three (see Table 1). The ICRMW has generally enjoyed higher rates of ratification or signature than the ILO Conventions.

In addition to the specific instruments for the protection of migrant workers, the fundamental rights embodied in the eight ILO core conventions are applicable to all workers, including migrant workers. In particular, the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, freedom from forced labour and child labour, and non-discrimination in employment and occupation are widely regarded as essential to protecting migrants human rights.

The ILO core Conventions are widely ratified by ECOWAS Member States though they have not been sufficiently domesticated into national legislation. Furthermore, ECOWAS Member States have a weak track record for compliance with ILO reporting obligations, reporting late or not at all, which has been identified as a potential problem for monitoring labour and employment policies at the regional level.

Ratification of International instruments for the protection of migrant workers				
Country	**UN Migrant Workers Convention**	**ILO Convention No. 97**	**ILO Convention No. 143**	**ILO Core conventions**
Benin	x*	x	✓	✓
Burkina Faso	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cape Verde	✓	x	x	✓
Côte d'Ivoire	x	x	x	✓
The Gambia	x	x	x	✓
Ghana	✓	x	x	✓
Guinea	✓	x	✓	✓
Guinea Bissau	x*	x	x	x
Liberia	x*	x	x	x
Mali	✓	x	x	✓
Mauritania	✓	x	x	✓
Niger	✓	x	x	✓
Nigeria	✓	✓	x	✓
Senegal	✓	x	x	✓
Sierra Leone	x*	x	x	✓

ECOWAS Treaty and Free Movement Protocols

The 1979 Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment provides the legal framework for ECOWAS community citizens to enter, reside and establish economic activities in the territory of other member states. Adopted in 1980, the Protocol sets out the progressive implementation of these rights in three phases - entry, residence and establishment - the specifics of which are detailed in four Supplementary Protocols.

The right of residence, Phase two, (Supplementary Protocol A/SP/.1/7/86) grants Community citizens the right to "reside in other member states for the purpose of seeking and carrying out income-earning employment" (Article 2). It includes the right to apply for jobs and take up employment in accordance with the legal and administrative provisions governing national workers' employment. It also establishes the principle of equal treatment between migrant workers and nationals in regard to employment security, re-employment in the case of job loss, access to training and education, and access to social, cultural and health facilities. Finally, it offers protection to migrant workers and their families from mass expulsion and sets conditions for individual expulsion.

The right of establishment, Phase three, (Supplementary Protocol A/SP2/5/90) grants Community citizens access to economic activities and the right to carry out these activities, as well as the right to set up and manage enterprises under the same legislative conditions the host member state applies to its own nationals. It also protects migrant workers from confiscation or expropriation of capital and assets on the basis of discrimination.

The Supplementary Protocols also calls on Member States to cooperate with each other and with the ECOWAS Secretariat (now the Commission) on issues of labour migration governance, including labour supply and demand, monitoring and sharing information on labour markets, harmonisation of employment and labour policies, prevention of employment of migrants in irregular status, and the elimination of administrative and legal barriers to establishing companies.

Main rights and protections granted by the Free Movement Protocols to migrant workers from ECOWAS countries
• The right to enter, reside and establish in Member State (Protocol A/P.1/5/79, Article 2)
• Protection of property, goods or fixed assets legally acquired in Member States, and equal treatment with nationals in regard to tax laws. (Supplementary Protocol A/SP.1/7/85, Article 7)
• The right of residence in Member States "for the purpose of seeking and carrying out income earning employment," including the right to apply for jobs, to travel and reside in Member States to take up employment, and to live in Member States after having been employed there. (Supp. Protocol A/SP/.1/7/86, Articles 2 and 3)
• Protection from mass expulsion; individual expulsion must be based on "a well-founded legal or administrative decision" and must be carried out in respect of their fundamental rights. (Supp. Protocol A/SP/.1/7/86, Article 14)
• The right to transfer earnings or savings without impediment from Member States (Supp. Protocol A/SP/.1/7/86, Article 17)
• The right to equal treatment with nationals in regard to employment security, re-employment in case of job loss, training and professional education (Supp. Protocol A/SP/.1/7/86, Article 23)
• The right to create and manage enterprises under the same conditions as nationals. (Supp. Protocol A/SP.2/5/90, Article 2)
• Protection from confiscation of assets and capital on a discriminatory bases (Supp. Protocol A/SP.2/5/90, Article 7)

Taken together, the Free Movement Protocols offer few details on migrant workers' rights and do not set out uniform standards. Respect for the "fundamental rights" of migrant workers, defined as those rights which are enshrined in the Protocol and in ILO Conventions, are referred to only in the case of expulsion of migrant workers. In relation to labour and employment, the Protocols defer mainly to the

national laws of Member States, and in the absence of guiding principles or common minimum standards for legislative harmonisation, they leave considerable discretionary powers to Member States to determine who they allow in and under what conditions migrants can work. Also absent from the texts are mechanisms for monitoring implementation or for migrant workers to take recourse in case of the violation of their rights.

Despite these gaps, the Protocols offer a solid basis for establishing free movement and are widely recognised as a best practice for international cooperation on labour migration. Yet progress on implementation has been slow and uneven. To date, only the right of entry has been fully implemented. Member States continue to apply protectionist policies and discriminatory practices to Community citizens, such as establishing quotas for the delivery of work permits, barring foreigners from certain occupations, and placing restrictions on foreign-owned businesses. Added to this are administrative barriers to obtaining residence permits and proper documentation, and a lack of awareness on rights and obligations, both among citizens and government administrations. Thus, while the principles of free movement should restrict the number of irregular migrant workers in the sub-region to a minimum, the barriers that arise in practice have meant that there continue to be many migrants circulating and working without legal status.

Conscious of the need to increase political will and accelerate the process of regional integration, Member States revised the ECOWAS Treaty in 1993. In addition to reaffirming the right of Community citizens to enter, reside and establish economic activities in Member States, the Revised Treaty places greater emphasis on the social dimensions of integration. Chapter XI of the Revised Treaty, which covers employment issues, commits Member States to strengthening cooperation and harmonising employment policies and programmes and to "encourage the exchange of skilled manpower" (Article 60). It also calls on Member States to harmonise labour laws and social security legislation (Article 61), and to set up mechanisms for consultation with socio-economic organisations, among which are listed workers and employers organisations (Article 82). Still missing however are the enumeration of basic labour rights and little mention is made of monitoring mechanisms.

Migration Policies

The Common Approach to Migration, adopted in 2008 by the Authority of Heads of State at the 33rd ECOWAS Summit, constitutes the main overarching framework on migration for the ECOWAS Commission. The document was commissioned in the wake of the adoption of the Migration Policy Framework for Africa by the African Union in 2006 and in a context where alarm in Europe over irregular migration was at an all-time high, inciting Member States to develop a common position from which to engage in more meaningful debate with Europe on migration issues. It also reflects a renewed interest in multilateral approach to migration, following years of relative abandon.

The aim of the Common Approach is to establish the link between migration and development and minimise negative impacts of migration. In regard to labour mobility, it reaffirms the commitment to implementing Free Movement Protocols. Beyond that, it refers essentially to improving access to employment opportunities in Europe, in particular of highly skilled migrants, via measures such as students and young professional exchanges, and strengthening education and training in line with labour market needs.

Regarding the protection of migrant workers' rights, the Common Approach has little to say. The principles and actions are limited to reaffirming the commitment to implement the Free movement protocols, promoting the International Convention on the Rights of Migrants and their Families, and formulating an active integration policy. No mention is made of labour rights or the social protection for migrant workers. The role of social partners is also missing. Finally, the recommended strategies for labour migration policies listed in the African Union Migration Policy Framework are largely absent from the Common Approach.

To date, progress on the implementation of the Common Approach has been limited, due in part to a lack of awareness and appropriation of the document at the national level. It was however referred to in the recent process of drafting a national migration policy for Nigeria, which lists the document among its guiding principles.

One output of the Common Approach has been the drafting of a Gender and Migration Framework and Plan of Action, in line with the need it identifies to include gender dimensions in migration policies. The Action Plan's main areas of intervention centre around addressing gaps in data on female migration, awareness raising and training on gender approaches to migration, and mainstreaming gender perspectives in migration policies. The Plan was adopted by Ministries of Gender and Women's Affairs in June 2011. However, the document is still undergoing revision and is considered to be in draft form. Once finalised, it will be submitted to the Council of Ministers, and finally the Heads of State, for adoption.

Employment Policies

The ECOWAS Labour and Employment Policy, developed with support from the ILO, was adopted in June 2009 by the Conference of ECOWAS Council of Ministers. Its overall objective is to develop, harmonise, coordinate and implement common policies to promote growth and development through decent work. It covers five areas of intervention: labour standards, employment, social protection, social dialogue and regional integration.

Among the actions to be undertaken by ECOWAS at regional level are: the establishment of a regional labour market information system, supporting member states in the ratification of ILO Conventions, promotion of social dialogue, promotion of labour mobility, and harmonisation and monitoring of labour and employment policies. The Policy puts emphasis on the need for harmonised labour standards and the essential role of social partners in achieving this.

Progress on implementation of the Policy has been relatively slow. Since its adoption in 2009, only one meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs has been held, in December 2012. The Policy calls for the set up of a Labour and Employment Fund to support its implementation, but this has not yet materialised.

The Policy however is operational in that it serves as an umbrella framework under which specific aspects of labour and employment policy have been developed further, such as the Youth Employment Action Plan and the Social Dialogue Forum, described below. In addition, a study on the harmonisation of labour laws has been commissioned with support from the ILO. The results of the study, which will include a comparison of national labour legislations among Member States and a draft legal document to serve as the basis for harmonisation, are expected to be presented to the ECOWAS Commission during 2014.

The ECOWAS Youth Employment Action Plan for 2013-2018, adopted in December 2012, also touches on a number of labour migration-related topics. Encouraging intra-regional mobility is identified as a priority area, to be achieved through the development of certificate equivalence frameworks, as well as through studies to better understand the situation of young migrant workers and cross-border traders. The Action Plan also has among its priorities to strengthen labour market information systems in the sub-region, as well as to reinforce youth employability through education and vocational training. The implementation of the Action Plan is in its early stages. For 2014, the priorities are to set up a Steering Committee for the Youth Employment and Development Fund, which will be used to mobilise resources for the Action Plan's implementation, and to develop a database on labour market information systems, based on tools which have recently been approved by the African Union

Social Security

In 1993, the year of adoption of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, a General Convention on Social Security was drafted in a context of renewed interest for strengthening regional integration. The initial political will around the Convention flagged shortly thereafter however. The Convention was not adopted until 2004, and it never achieved a sufficient number of ratifications to enter into force.

It was not until 2011 that the process was revitalised, with the creation of a technical working group supported by UNDP and led by the ECOWAS Commission, and composed of representatives from Member States' social security institutions, the ILO, UNDP, CIPRES and the IOM. A series of meetings were held in 2011 and 2012 to review and update the Convention to take into account changes in national social security systems that had occurred since the drafting of the original text, such as the privatisation of certain branches of social security in member countries, and to further develop administrative arrangements for its implementation.

The revised Convention is largely based on the ILO's Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), the Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 (No. 118), and Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention, 1982 (No. 157). It applies to all nine branches of social security and covers all workers who are national of ECOWAS Member States who have acquired social security rights while residing in a member state, as well as members of their family and survivors. It is based upon the right to equality of treatment between migrant workers and permanent residents.

The Convention guarantees the portability of migrant workers' benefits, aggregation of acquired rights through the totalisation of employment or contribution periods if necessary, and export of benefits abroad. It is supplemented by an administrative agreement which sets out the specifics on the procedures and forms for the submission and examination of claims and the payments of benefits.

The Convention was adopted by the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare in December 2012. In 2013 it was adopted by the Authority of Heads of State as a Supplementary Act to the Revised ECOWAS Treaty, making it a binding instrument which does not require ratification by Member States. If we consider that the process was essentially moribund until 2011, the two-year process of the Convention's revision and adoption was remarkably fast.

Now that the Convention has entered into force, the next step for its implementation is to set up a Committee of Experts on social security as stipulated in the Convention (Article 44), responsible for addressing administrative matters relating to the interpretation of the Convention, drafting models of administrative documents, and preparing information to sensitise migrant workers on their rights and procedures to benefit from them. In parallel to the setup of the Committee, staff from national social security institutions in Member States will require training on the administrative implementation of the Convention.

The Convention can be considered a good practice for the extension of social security to migrant workers. At the same time, it is worth noting that it applies only to those workers with regular migration status and who are employed in the formal sector, which represent only a small fraction of migrant workers in the region. The few opportunities for paid employment and persistently high levels of extreme poverty in West Africa highlight the need to develop strategies for extending social protection beyond social security systems rooted in formal employment.

Skills recognition and qualifications harmonisation policy

Recognition of qualifications across borders is key to encouraging mobility and ensuring that migrants can find employment which match their skills and experience, to the benefit of both countries of origin and destination as well as migrants themselves. The ECOWAS Convention on the Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates and other Qualifications in Member States was adopted in 2003 to increase mobility of students, teachers, and other skilled workers. The Convention commits Member States to recognise the validity or equivalence of degrees and certificates with the same

academic value. It also commits them to providing training and education that comply with international standards, while taking into account the regional context.

Faced with difficulties in its implementation, mainly due to language barriers and to variations in education systems based on different colonial legacies, the ECOWAS Commission launched a feasibility study on the implementation of the Convention in 2009. The results of the report were presented at a 2011 meeting of regional and international education and training experts, who agreed on the need for a system of recognition for all diplomas awarded within ECOWAS to facilitate student mobility and the exchange of teachers and researchers. Based on the results of the study, an ad-hoc Committee was set up to guide the implementation process. A second follow-up study is planned to develop benchmarks for diploma recognition by Member States, with support from the African Development Bank.

Progress has also been made on implementing mutual qualification recognition and harmonised curriculum to encourage mobility of health professionals, led by the ECOWAS West African Health Organization (WAHO).

Challenges in developing and implementing policy frameworks

Based on the experiences in developing and implementing policy frameworks described in the previous section, some common challenges and implications can be identified:

- While the five areas of labour migration covered by the Support to Free Movement Project each find resonance in the principles and objectives found among the different ECOWAS policy documents, the absence of an overarching policy that establishes the links between employment, labour, and migration makes it difficult to discern a clear strategic vision on labour migration.
- Overall, the policy documents tend to be quite ambitious in their objectives, yet weak on implementation strategy (with the notable exception of the Youth Employment Action Plan) in terms of setting targets, putting in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and establishing clear institutional frameworks for implementation.
- The amount of time it takes to develop, adopt and implement a regional policy is quite variable, and the process can lose its momentum. While in recent years there has been a de-emphasis on Protocols and Conventions which involve lengthy adoptions procedures, policies still need to go through a series of validations before becoming binding. Furthermore, the adoption of a policy does not appear to necessarily reflect the political will of Member States to implement it at national level. The successful experience of revitalising the Social Security Convention suggests that significant sustained efforts at both the technical and political levels are required to push a policy forward.
- In a context of high levels of informal employment, the Protocols and existing ECOWAS migration policies, even if wholly implemented, may not ensure that migrants will be able to fully integrate labour markets. Effective access to labour and social rights are often conditioned on formal employment, either explicitly (as is the case of social security rights) or implicitly (e.g., the difficulties in organising informal sector workers). Without improved labour conditions overall, migrants cannot derive the full potential benefits from mobility, highlighting the need to integrate labour aspects into migration policy.

Future policy developments and priorities

The following regional priorities and future policy developments are relevant to the governance of labour migration and increased protection of migrant workers:

- Development of an ECOWAS regional migration policy. In 2013, the Commission began preparations for the development of a Regional Migration Policy with the aim of operationalizing the principles of the Common Approach through more specific actions, as well as including previously unaddressed issues, such as intra-regional mobility of skills, diaspora issues, the facilitation of cross-border trade, and the protection of specific categories of migrants. The process is led by the Commission's Free Movement of Persons Directorate, with support from the African Development Bank. A series of 'brainstorming sessions' were held in 2013, with additional support from the

Intra-ACP Migration Facility, to identify guiding principles for the policy. A consultant was recruited in early 2014 to develop a draft policy based on the consultations held.

- Facilitation of free movement. The ECOWAS Commission is preparing a series of amendments to the Free Movement Protocols to simplify the administrative requirements for entering and residing in Member States. These include the elimination of residence permit requirements, and the possibility to enter Member states with only an ECOWAS national identity card, replacing the need for an ECOWAS passport. A Supplementary Act has been drafted and presented to the Heads of Immigration (October 2013) and Ministries of Security (February 2014), and is expected to come into force by 2015. In a context of informal culture and weak civil registrars, these measures have the potential to significantly reduce the number of migrants in an irregular situation in the sub-region, and thus open the door for greater access to social and labour rights.

- • Prioritisation of youth employment and harmonised labour market information systems. At the 17th Ordinary African Union Summit held in Malabo in July 2011, African Heads of State and Government adopted a declaration which included commitments to harmonise labour market information systems (LMIS), address skills mismatch, and seek coherence in certification systems. The AU Commission has made concrete progress on LMIS harmonisation by developing a minimum list of labour, employment and TVET indicators, and has prepared a plan of action and questionnaire for the realisation of a harmonised labour force survey. The first regional experts training workshop on the harmonisation of LMIS based on the tools validated by the AUC took place in August 2012 in Cote d'Ivoire in collaboration with ECOWAS.

- Renewed interest in technical and vocational training. In the past few years, technical and vocational training has been the subject of renewed interest at sub-regional and regional levels. In 2009, with support from UNESCO, ECOWAS launched the "Abuja Process" to revitalise technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the sub-region, which has among its priorities the harmonisation of qualification recognition policies. An Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT), institutionalised in 2010, has developed guidelines for regional and national qualification frameworks for TVET, and a roadmap for implementation in ECOWAS countries. At the regional level, the African Union Commission developed a "Continental Strategy to revitalise TVET in Africa" (2012). With support from UNESCO, the AU has revised the Arusha Convention for Mutual Recognition of Degrees and Certificates in Africa, which serves as the basis for the ECOWAS Convention on the same subject. In addition, under the Africa-EU Partnership on Migration, Mobility and Employment, a series of meetings of education experts was held from 2011-2013 to discuss the development of generic and specific competences for selected occupations.

- Development of social protection floors. In recent years, the concept of establishing "social protection floors" has gained traction among governments and international agencies, including the ILO, WHO, UNDP and the World Bank, as a strategy to extend social protection to those left out of classic employment-based social security schemes. Social protection floors establish a set of basic social security guarantees which are defined at national level, but which include as a minimum universal access to basic services such as health and education, and social transfers. In 2012, the ILO adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202). This new Recommendation provides guidance to ILO Member States in providing social protection to the unprotected, the poor and the most vulnerable, including migrants and their families. Migrants and their families should have access to these basic social security guarantees in the State where they reside, as well as in their home country. Should there be bilateral or multilateral agreements in place providing for higher levels of protection, or should the countries concerned be parties to international or regional Conventions containing higher requirements with regard to migrants' social security rights (e.g. ILO Conventions No. 118 and No. 157), these would prevail. Thus, national social protection floors can be used as a means to compensate for the lack of coordination arrangements between countries with respect to any branch of social security. National social protection floors are thus a very useful tool to address gaps in the social security coverage of migrant workers and their families. A joint UNDP-ILO project is currently underway to support Southern countries to develop social protection floors. Pilot countries include Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS, OPERATIONS AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Within the current structure of the ECOWAS Commission, no single department or directorate has overall responsibility for labour migration. Instead, specific aspects of labour migration fall under the portfolios of essentially four directorates: (1) Humanitarian and Social Affairs, (2) Gender, Youth, Employment, CSO and Drug Control, (3) Education, Culture, Science and Technology, and (4) Free Movement of Persons. The first three are located within the Department of Human Development and Gender, whereas the Free Movement of Persons Directorate is under the Department of Trade, Customs, Industry and Free Movement.

At present, the Commission is undergoing a process of expansion. Six additional Commissioners were appointed by the ECOWAS Council of Ministers in January 2014, each of which will be assigned responsibility for a new department. The opening of the new departments and distribution of their respective portfolios have not yet taken place, but it is worth noting that among the new departments to be created are (1) a Social Affairs and Gender Department and (2) an Education, Science, and Culture Department, which can be expected to have implications for the portfolios presently under the Human Development and Gender Department.

Free movement of Persons Directorate

Mandate and responsibilities

The Free Movement of Persons (FMP) Directorate, created in 2008, has the lead responsibility for the implementation of the Free Movement Protocols and for the Common Approach to Migration. As such, it is generally considered both internally and by external partners as the Commission's lead directorate for migration matters.

Although labour migration does not figure specifically in the FMP Directorate's description of its mandate, labour mobility and migrants' rights cut across several areas of its responsibility, which include:

- Implementation of the Free Movement Protocols
- Promotion of compliance with the ECOWAS Common Approach to Migration
- Strengthening cross-border cooperation
- Monitoring and management of migration

The FMP Directorate is divided into three divisions: Cross-Border Cooperation, Migration and Free Movement, and Tourism. Each division's staff consists of a single Principle Program Officer. In addition, the Directorate currently houses two externally-funded projects for migration, each with staff supported by the respective projects. The EU-Funded Intra-ACP Migration Facility has assigned a technical assistant to the FMP Directorate (June 2012 to December 2014) with the objectives of strengthening national-level institutional capacity to mainstream migration and development issues and to support civil society to engage in migration dialogue. The ECOWAS-Spain Fund on Migration and Development, with two staff members, was set up to support the Commission and Member States on the implementation of the Common Approach to Migration and to finance civil society projects relevant to migration and development.

Outputs and operations

Presently, the Free Movement Directorate's work on implementing the Protocols is primarily focussed on Phase One, the right of entry, and therefore deals mainly with issues of border management. It is the lead Directorate driving the process of adoption of the Supplementary Act aimed at simplifying administrative procedures for entering and residing in Member States (see Section 3.7). Given the

persistent challenges around achieving full implementation of the right of entry, the Directorate's work on the implementation of Phase Two, the right of residence (and thus employment), has been limited.

Within the Commission, the Directorate is also leading the process of developing a regional migration policy, with support from the African Development Bank (see Section 3.7). In comparison to the Common Approach document, this new policy is expected to further develop or include dimensions of migration previously ignored, as well as to be more action-oriented, in terms of specific objectives, targets, etc. While currently none of the Free Movement Directorate staff work specifically on labour mobility, it is an area that has been identified for expanding upon in the new migration policy, in particular as a mechanism to address skills shortages in Member States.

The Directorate has touched on issues of migrant workers' rights in its training and sensitisation activities related to the Free Movement Protocols. For instance, a training module on free movement was developed for border control officers with support from the EU-ICMPD MIEUX project. While the training was aimed primarily at creating homogenous procedures for border management, issues of human and labour rights were also included in the module.

The work of the Cross-border initiative Programme (CIP) also bears some relevance for labour migration. The CIP was developed with the aim of fostering 'bottom-up' regional integration via local trans-border cooperation. The Programme supports local social and economic development projects run by NGOs and local authorities which cover cross-border areas and marginalised border populations. The types of projects it seeks to support include the development of cross-border markets, information and communication activities, and social protection programmes. However, implementation of projects has been hampered by lack of funding.

Under the Intra-ACP Facility, support has been provided to six countries on a demand basis for elaborating national migration policies. The Facility is also in the process of carrying out a study on the linkages between migration, labour and employment and social protection issues, with support from an external consultant, expected by mid-2014.

The ECOWAS Spain Fund on Migration and Development has launched two calls for proposals (2010 and 2012) for projects from civil society organisations. In both rounds, the guidelines for applying for funding called for projects related to the theme "Actions to promote free movement of persons within the ECOWAS zone". The second call for proposals was expanded to include projects related to the promotion of management of regular migration (e.g., measures concerning students and young professionals), and gender issues, such as entrepreneurship training for female migrants, and projects for migrant domestic workers and cross-border migrant women. Although the calls for proposals were open to different types of civil society organisations, respondents to the calls in both rounds were almost exclusively NGOs, and project proposals related to labour mobility or migrant workers rights were rare.

In its coordination with Member States, the FMP Directorate deals mainly with Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Immigration, and the Interior. It is also the lead Directorate for a number of intra-regional and inter-regional dialogue processes on migration, including the MIDWA process and Heads of Immigration meetings (see Section 4.3), and is a member of the Steering Committee of the Euro-African Dialogue on Migration and Development (Rabat Process).

Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate

Mandate and responsibilities

The Humanitarian and Social Affairs (HSA) Directorate covers labour migration issues primarily through its Social Affairs Division. The Directorate houses other units with responsibility for migration issues, though not from a labour standpoint - human trafficking and forced migration are also under the HSA portfolio.

The Social Affairs (SA) Division derives its mandate from Articles 60 and 61 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, under which Member States undertake to strengthen their cooperation in the field of employment, encourage the exchange of skilled workers, and harmonise their labour laws and social security legislation.

The SA Division has the lead responsibility for the ECOWAS Labour and Employment Policy, which includes the promotion of the rights of migrant workers, encouraging bilateral and multilateral cooperation on labour migration, and encouraging geographic and occupational mobility.

Currently the SA Division has only one permanent staff member, who is both Head of the Division and Principle Programme Officer for Social Affairs, and has responsibility for all labour-related issues, including labour migration.

Outputs and operations

Progress on implementation of activities relevant for labour migration has primarily been on:

- *The promotion of social dialogue.* As the lead directorate for the Social Dialogue Forum, HSA is responsible for facilitating the establishment and operations of the Forum and encouraging participation of social partners and Member States. Because staff for the Permanent Secretariat for the Forum has not yet been recruited, the SA Division has also had to assume a number of the administrative tasks related to organising General Assembly and Bureau meetings.
- *Coordination of social security systems.* The HSA Directorate led the process of revising and adopting the General Convention on Social Security within the Commission from 2011 to 2013, with technical support from a consultant funded by UNDP. It also ensured that the Convention was presented and reviewed by the Social Dialogue Forum.
- *Harmonisation of labour legislation.* A consultant has been hired with support from the ILO to conduct a study on the harmonisation of labour laws, which will result in a draft proposal for harmonisation, expected in 2014.

The SA Division does not have specific focal points within Member States. It deals primarily with Ministries of Labour, in addition to contacts with regional social partner organisations. The Division does not receive any regular reports from Member States on labour or working conditions, nor does it have mechanisms for monitoring labour policies and practices.

Other relevant directorates

Directorate of Gender Youth, Employment and Civil Society Organisations

Within the Directorate of Gender Youth, Employment and CSO, two divisions work on issues relevant to labour migration.

The Gender Division, consisting of one permanent staff member, the Principle Programme Officer for Gender, is responsible for gender mainstreaming, and is leading the process of drafting the Gender and Migration Framework and Plan of Action, the text of which is still under revision.

The Youth, Sports, and Employment Division (one permanent staff member) has the lead responsibility for implementing the Youth Employment Action Plan. While actions to promote intra-regional labour mobility have not been identified as a priority per se for 2014, the development of a regional labour market information system is planned for September of this year.

Education Culture, Science and Technology Directorate

The Education, Culture, Science and Technology Directorate has as one of its objectives to harmonise education and training systems, guided by the General Convention on the Recognition of Equivalence of Certificates. Since the adoption of the feasibility study on the establishment of a Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in 2012, the Directorate has been seeking funding for sensitisation and capacity building to develop the frameworks.

The Education Division has also focussed on the promotion of vocational education and training, through the roadmap for the revitalisation of the ECOWAS Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) (See Section 3.6).

Labour migration responsibilities and policy frameworks in ECOWAS		
Labour migration area	ECOWAS Policy Framework	Lead ECOWAS Directorate
Labour law harmonisation	-ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Articles 60 and 61 (1993) -Labour and Employment Policy (2009)	-Humanitarian and Social Affairs
Social security	-General Convention on Social Security (2012)	-Humanitarian and Social Affairs
Social dialogue	-Labour and Employment Policy (2009) - Supplementary Act on the Establishment of a Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum (2012) -Regional Charter on Social Dialogue (2011)	-Humanitarian and Social Affairs
Labour and skills mobility	-Labour and Employment Policy (2009) -Youth Employment Action Plan (2012) - Free Movement Protocols (1979)	-Humanitarian and Social Affairs -Gender, Youth and Employment - Free Movement of Persons
Protection of migrant workers' rights	-Free Movement Protocols (1979) -ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993) -Common Approach to Migration (2008) -Labour and Employment Policy (2009) - Action Plan on Gender and Migration	-Free Movement of Persons (right of residence and establishment) -Humanitarian and Social Affairs (Labour and social rights) -Gender, Youth and Employment
Harmonisation of qualification recognition	-General Convention on the Recognition and equivalence of Qualifications (2003)	-Education, Culture, Science and Technology

Coordination and dialogue mechanisms

Social Dialogue Forum

The ECOWAS Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum was established in 2011 in the framework of implementation of the ECOWAS Labour and Employment Policy (2009). Its objectives are to:
- promote social dialogue for the prevention and resolution of conflicts, social harmony, and socio-economic development and integration at national and regional levels;
- balance the enhancement of productivity and competitiveness with improved working conditions;
- promote the establishment of instruments and mechanisms for collective bargaining and dialogue at national and regional levels;
- build capacity on collective bargaining and relevant legislation and international norms;
- encourage information sharing on relevant economic and social issues.

The institutional structure of the Forum consists of a Bureau, a General Assembly, and a Permanent Secretariat. The Bureau, which acts as a steering committee for the Forum to identify priority areas of

work and monitor and report on progress, is expected to meet bi-annually. It consists of six members drawn in equal parts from representatives of government, employers and trade unions, elected for a three-year non-renewable term. The first Bureau, elected for the period 2011-2014, is completing its term and a new Bureau will be elected during the 2014 General Assembly of the Forum.

Ordinary sessions of the General Assembly have been held annually since 2011. Each Member State is invited to send a tripartite delegation of three participants. Representatives from regional social partner organisations such as the West Africa Workers Organisation (OTAO) and the West African Employers Federation (FOPAO), and international organisations (ILO, UNDP) are also invited. The Assemblies serve to discuss relevant ECOWAS policy developments and regional issues, share national experiences on collective bargaining, and develop and review Forum action plans. They are also used as occasions to provide trainings to Forum participants.

The Permanent Secretariat, expected to be recruited by the ECOWAS Commission in 2014, will be responsible for the administrative organisation of Forum meetings. The Secretariat will be physically based in the HSA Directorate.

To date, the main activities and outputs of the Forum have been:
• Validation of a draft Regional Charter on Tripartite Social Dialogue (March 2011).
• Adoption of a triennial action plan (2011-2013) and annual action plan for 2014.
• Adoption of a Supplementary Act on the Establishment of a Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum, which was subsequently adopted by the ECOWAS Meeting of Ministers of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs held in Dakar in December 2012, and signed by the Authority of Heads of State in 2013.
• Review and validation of the terms of reference for the recruitment of a consultant for the harmonisation of labour laws in the ECOWAS region (March 2012).
• Review and validation of the General Convention on Social Security, the Youth Employment Action Plan, and the Action Plan against Child labour (Oct 2012) which were then adopted by the meeting of ECOWAS Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs in Dec 2012.
• Training on social dialogue and collective bargaining techniques for Forum participants (Nov 2013).

Although the Forum serves its purpose as an annual meeting place for tripartite social partners from across the region, its capacity to generate substantive dialogue and strengthen the role of social partners regionally has been hampered by:
• Insufficient human and financial resources. The absence of a Permanent Secretariat has negatively affected the administrative organisation of meetings (meetings held late in the year, under short notice). Also, the non-release of ECOWAS funds to finance Forum activities in 2013 due to administrative constraints limited the Bureau's capacity to carry out activities as an autonomous body.
• Low and inconsistent participation from Member States. Not all Member States send representatives to General Assemblies, and among those who do, there is a lack of continuity among the delegates sent from year to year. Furthermore, the profiles of delegates designated by Member States are not always relevant to social dialogue.
• Limited knowledge among Forum participants on how ECOWAS institutions function. The lack of in-depth understanding of how ECOWAS decision-making bodies   (Parliament, Council of Ministers, etc) operate, limit Forum members' capacity to make relevant recommendations and influence these bodies.

For 2014, the main priorities of the Forum are to: consolidate its institutional framework, increase participation from Member States, strengthen Forum members' understanding of ECOWAS institutions and operations, and support sensitisation on the General Convention on Social Security.   Training will also be held at the 2014 General Assembly on "Macro-economic concepts applied to social dialogue." With the exception of the General Convention on Social Security, issues of labour migration governance have not yet been included on the Forum agenda.

Outside of the framework of the Forum, social partners' involvement in dialogue on migration at the sub-regional level has been limited. The Organisation of Trade Unions of West Africa (OTUWA), founded in 1984 as an official ECOWAS Community organisation to coordinate the action of ECOWAS workers, has as one of its objectives "to protect the rights of migrant workers through policies of free movement, rights of establishment and the harmonisation of Member States' labour and social security legislation."   However, OTUWA has been essentially inactive for several years, and has not participated in Social Dialogue Forum meetings.

West Africa is also home to a number of other regional and sub-regional trade union organisations including the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) based in Togo, and the Organisation of African Trade union unity (OATUU) based in Ghana, though these organisations have not yet developed policies or positions on West African labour migration.

At national levels, evidence of social partner involvement in labour migration issues is also scant, though in some countries, social partners have been involved in consultations for the formulation of national migration policies. It is also worth noting that under the ECOWAS-Spain Fund's calls for migration project in both 2010 and 2012, virtually no proposals were submitted by social partners.

In recent years, there have been a number of internationally-supported initiatives to strengthen social partner capacity and involvement in labour migration issues. To highlight a few:

- In October 2013, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) Foundation supported a meeting in Dakar of West and North African trade unions to initiate the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean/Sub-Saharan trade union network for migration. The FES also supported a visit of trade union leaders to the ECOWAS Commission in June 2013 for a "Get to Know ECOWAS" programme which provided information and training on the operations of the Commission in relation to free movement.
- The ILO Technical Cooperation Project "Migration Governance and links with development" (2009-2013) provided 'training of trainers' to trade unions and employers associations in Senegal, Mauritania and Mali on issues of reintegration, return and employability of migrants. The project also fostered links and exchanges between trade unions in West Africa and Europe.
- In the framework of the ILO project "Managing Labour Migration for Development and Integration in the EuroMed, West Africa, and East Africa" (2004-2006), national tripartite migration committees were set up in Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal, to serve as consultative platforms on labour migration. However, although intended to be permanent, the committees were not sufficiently institutionally consolidated to continue on after support from the ILO project ended.

MIDWA

Following several years of inactivity, the Migration Dialogue for West Africa (MIDWA) process is in the early stages of being revitalised. Originally launched in 2000, MIDWA's purpose is to serve as a regional non-binding consultative framework for dialogue, and for generating political engagement and capacity building on migration. In July 2012, ECOWAS, supported by the IOM and the Swiss government, held a meeting to relaunch the process, during which MIDWA's institutional framework was defined and priority areas for discussion for the coming years were identified.   Among these were: migration data collection and management, the creation of national migration policy frameworks and the establishment of governance frameworks on migration. While issues of labour migration did not figure prominently in the first meeting, the areas for discussion identified are quite broad, leaving room to insert labour migration issues within these areas.

Membership to MIDWA is restricted to ECOWAS Commission Member States; civil society and other institutions can be given observer status. The next MIDWA meeting is scheduled for May 2014 and has as its theme the development of national migration policies.

Heads of Immigration meetings

The Heads of Immigration Meetings have been held annually since 2007. These meetings, which bring together representatives from Ministries of Immigration and of the Interior, serve as a platform for dialogue and coordination on the implementation of the Free Movement Protocols from the perspective of immigration and border management. Discussion centre primarily around challenges and violations to the right of entry, and technical solutions for harmonising border management and travel documents. At the last meeting, held in October 2013, the proposed Supplementary Act to remove the requirement of residence permits and introduce ECOWAS national biometric identity cards was presented and reviewed.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

This section reviews the organisational capacity, as well as factors influencing the organisational capacity, of the Commission to lead intra-regional dialogue on labour migration and act as a platform for policy development and harmonisation.

Organisational Structure

- Each Directorate's mandate is clearly rooted in ECOWAS legislation and policies. Staff regularly refers to the policies in their work and their annual work plans are aligned with the objectives of these policies. Staff also has a clear picture of which Directorate is assigned the 'lead' for each of the relevant policies.
- While the distribution of responsibilities for labour migration issues across several directorates can be justified as it is a cross-cutting theme, the absence of a clearly identifiable lead directorate for labour migration tends to dilute the level of priority and attention given to the subject.
- The location of the Free Movement Directorate within the Dept of Trade, Customs, Industry and Free Movement, is indicative of the Commission's approach to migration, primarily from the perspective of regional economic integration. Its institutional separation from the department labour and employment department disassociates migration from the movement of labour and skills.
- Regarding labour mobility, it is difficult to distinguish the boundaries between the roles and responsibilities of the Free Movement Directorate (responsible for implementing the right of residence), the Youth and Employment Directorate, and the Social Affairs Directorate (responsible for labour issues). This may have contributed to the issue 'falling between the cracks' - it has received little attention from any of the directorates thus far.

Internal coordination

- There is little evidence of formalised processes for coordination and information sharing between directorates on labour migration issues. Collaboration across directorates and departments is done mainly on an ad-hoc basis, for instance, by inviting staff from another directorate to a specific meeting, though there have been few consultative discussions on labour migration issues to date.
- Staff's awareness of other departments' current priorities and activities is limited, and is gained mainly through personal contacts and individual initiatives to seek out information, rather than through standardised mechanisms.
- The process of developing policies does not appear to involve significant consultation across directorates. Typically a single 'lead directorate' is assigned the task of formulating a policy, often with support from external consultants. This has led to a lack of shared ownership of policies across departments and directorates.

Coordination with external stakeholders

- Based on the Commission's mandate, coordination with Member states on labour migration ideally consists of: monitoring to ensure compliance with Community Acts, data collection and information sharing for situation analysis, fostering dialogue between member states and the Commission, and support for the harmonisation of national policies.
- The lack of available data on migration and labour markets from Member States makes difficult for the Commission to conduct situation analyses to feed into policy formulation and priority-setting. None of the directorates interviewed receive regular reports or data from Member states, and the Commission has not yet developed tools to monitor labour migration at the sub-regional level.
- Although the Directorates are broadly aware of violations of the principles of free movement and labour standards in Member States, they are not mandated to apply sanctions to countries who do not comply with obligations.
- Communication with Member States is often addressed to directors of the relevant Ministries, depending on the issue at hand, rather than to specific focal points. Establishing specific focal

points is complicated by the fact that Member States differ in their institutional approaches to migration (i.e., some place it under the Ministries of Labour, others under the Ministry of Interior).

- The role of the Commission in providing support to Member states for formulating and harmonising labour migration policies has been minimal, mainly because few member states have such policies.
- The existing migration-related platforms for intra-regional dialogue led by the Commission - MIDWA, the Social Dialogue Forum, and Heads of Immigration meetings - are still in the process of consolidation, and to date labour migration has not figured prominently on their agendas.
- While the placement of staff from the Intra-ACP Facility and the ECOWAS-Spain Fund physically inside the FMO Directorate facilitates integration and information sharing, synergies between these projects and regular programme activities are not fully exploited. The Intra-ACP Facility is working on a number of initiatives relative to labour mobility and protection with little formal coordination or collaboration from the Social Affairs or Employment Directorates.   Likewise, there is no mechanism for formally referring projects identified for support by the Cross-border initiative programme, which lacks funding, to the ECOWAS Spain Fund for financial support.

Human and financial resources

- The number of permanent staff members within each Directorate is not commensurate with the broad scope of their mandates and the ambitious objectives set out in policy frameworks. Several divisions are composed of single staff members, who are responsible for a wide range of areas. Salient examples are the Principle Programme Officer (PPO) for Youth, sports and employment, and the PPO for Social Affairs.
- The Commission staff members interviewed are all highly qualified; all of the principle programme officers interviewed have masters or doctoral degrees and significant work experience. The directorates also dispose of staff with a good mix of backgrounds, with expertise in legal issues, economics, and social sciences.   There is however limited technical expertise in the area of employment and labour mobility.
- A number of planned activities have not been fully implemented or have been abandoned due to a lack of predictability in financial resource availability. A case in point is the continued postponement of the setup of a permanent secretariat for the Social Dialogue Forum, due to bottlenecks in procedures to release internal funding within the Commission.
- There appears to be a mismatch between the ambitious policy objectives and actual resources available or capacity to attract resources to implement policies. Difficulties in establishing the Labour and Employment Fund and the Social Fund are examples.

SWOT Analysis of labour migration management in the ECOWAS Commission		
Strengths	- Legal basis for labour mobility and non-discrimination in place - Policy frameworks for labour and employment, social security, qualifications harmonisation and social dialogue in place - Internal recognition of labour migration as a cross-cutting issue - Qualified human resources	**Weaknesses** - Fragmented institutional approach to labour migration - Weak internal coordination - Insufficient quantity of human resources - Low capacity for monitoring, no mechanisms for sanctions
Opportunities	- Renewed interest in the region in multilateral approaches to migration - Regional migration policy being drafted - Youth employment, social dialogue and social security are priority areas for ECOWAS that can be built upon - Intra-regional dialogue mechanisms on migration being consolidated - Progress on removal of administrative barriers to right of entry (elimination of residence permit requirement)	**Threats** - Low political will in MS to promote intra-regional labour mobility - Discriminatory policies and practices in MS - Lack of reliable data on migration and labour markets - Low coverage of social security systems in MS - Weak collective bargaining structures in MS

CONCLUSIONS

- To date, labour migration governance issues have received relatively little attention within the Commission in comparison to other areas of migration. Internally, this can be attributed to a combination of unfavourable institutional arrangements, heavy workloads of staff, and insufficient internal coordination across directorates.
- While solid policy frameworks exist for labour and employment, social protection, and skills qualifications, respectively, the absence of an overarching policy framework which brings together social, labour, employment and migration issues has hampered labour migration mainstreaming.
- The Commission also faces several challenges to acting as an effective policy platform for labour migration over which it has little control. These include a lack of available migration and labour market data, little leverage over Member States to ensure implementation, and low prioritisation of labour migration issues on both national and international policy agendas. Nonetheless, there are indications that in coming years labour mobility will be given greater priority on policymaking agendas.
- The Project comes at an opportune time, when relevant policies and mechanisms for dialogue are under development or are in the early stages of implementation. Furthermore, a number of the current priority areas for the Commission, such as youth employment, social protection, social dialogue and TVET have relevance for labour migration. The existing momentum around these priority areas can be capitalised on to promote labour migration issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendations

To achieve the Project's outcomes, one of the main cross-cutting tasks of the Project team will be to promote both at regional and national levels greater recognition of the essential role of labour migration governance (including social dialogue) in implementing free movement.

At the regional level, the links between employment, labour rights, social protection and migration can to be given greater visibility by:
1.   Ensuring that issues of labour mobility and protection of migrant workers are fully addressed in the forthcoming regional migration policy, both in its guiding principles and action plan.
2.   Building capacity through tools and training for Commission staff across the four main directorates dealing with labour migration issues.
3.   Introducing labour migration governance topics on the agendas of existing regional dialogue mechanisms (MIDWA, Social Dialogue Forum, Youth employment forums)

At the national level, to increase interest at national level and build strong political will, the Project is advised to focus on producing outputs that have immediate practical application for Member States (guidelines, best practice models, toolkits, etc.) and disseminating them widely, in order to generate interest that can then be facilitated under Component II and III of the project, through the Demand-driven facility and the engagement of non-state actors and local authorities. Studies and assessments can be limited to areas where Member State interest has been clearly expressed and where a link can be made with outputs and impact at national level.

Specific recommendations for project activities

The following recommendations are based on a review of the activities set out in the project document and work plan under Expected Result 1.4 "The capacities of the ECOWAS Commission in the area of labour migration management are strengthened." They aim to take into account the capacity issues identified above, as well as new developments that have arisen since the drafting of the project document in 2012. Given the large number of initiatives underway in the region, it is recommended that the ILO project staff conduct a more detailed mapping of relevant projects to identify specific areas for synergies before launching new activities.

Enhancing regional tripartite dialogue on labour migration Activity 1.4.3
* To the extent possible, the project should support the setup of the Permanent Secretariat for the Social Dialogue Forum within the Commission as soon as possible.
* A first Forum meeting can be support to offer training to the members of the General Assembly and the Bureau on labour mobility and migrant workers' rights. The tool "In Search of Decent Work-Migrant workers' rights: A Manual for trade unions" developed by the ILO Bureau for Workers Activities (ACTRAV) in 2008 can be updated and adapted to the West African context.
* The second Forum meeting to be supported can focus on reviewing the draft Regional Migration Policy before it is submitted to the Council of Ministers for adoption.
* A technical working group on labour migration can be set up within the Forum to elaborate common positions, report on experiences at national level, and disseminate tools and policy developments.

Facilitate progress on labour law harmonisation Activity 1.4.4
* As a comparative study on national labour legislations of member states is already underway (commissioned by ILO Dakar office, expected early 2014) which is to result in a draft legal harmonisation document, the project can focus directly on supporting the Commission with (1) validation of the harmonisation document in the form of regional policy recommendations accompanied by specific timetables for achieving short, medium and long-term goals and indicators

for monitoring; and (2) elaborating practical guidelines to assist member states in aligning their national legislation with regionally agreed upon standards, which could serve to generate interest for legislative reviews to be supported under the demand-driven facility.

- Due the limitations of the project in terms of time and budget, it may be necessary to select a few areas of labour legislation to focus on for the promotion of harmonisation. Priority areas could be: equality of treatment and non-discrimination, social dialogue, and freedom of association. These are areas which the majority of Member States have already adhered to in principle via ratification of ILO standards, and which resonate most with other themes of the project's intervention. The guidelines for these areas could be developed based on the ILO Conventions and recommendations, without having to wait for final validation of regional policy recommendations on harmonisation.

Improving the governance of labour and skills mobility and public information Activity 1.4.5

- Conducting a study on labour market information systems in the region does not appear necessary at this stage in light of (1) general acknowledgement of the fact that LMIS in Member States, where they exist, are weak and require extensive overhauls; (2) the existence of studies on good practices and policy recommendations for LMIS; (3) the progress that has already been made under the African Union initiative to harmonise LMIS tools (see Section 3.6 above).
- Project activities can start with supporting awareness raising activities on AU LMIS tools (annual labour market survey, reports on labour market indicators, etc.) and supporting the Commission in producing an annual sub-regional labour market report based on collated data from member states.

Improving the governance of labour and skills mobility and public information Activity 1.4.6

- To support public employment services capacities, the experience of the Accueil emploi' employment database implemented in Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania and Benin can be disseminated widely via regional forums (Social Dialogue Forum, MIDWA, youth employment meetings) in order to generate interest among other Member States to strengthen their PES, which can later be supported under the Demand Driven Facility component of the Project.
- The use of Accueil Emploi as the basis for creating a sub-regional employment database can be explored. A brief feasibility study can be carried out to assess the outcomes of implementing the database thus far in the five pilot countries, and to analyse the technical requirements and human resource implications of creating a sub-regional database.

Supporting harmonisation of qualification recognition policies Activity 1.4.7

- Given the limited data available on skills and occupational shortages at present, in terms of timing of activities, it is recommended that the Project focus first on Activities 1.4.5 and 1.4.6 above before addressing issues of qualifications recognition.
- Activities (iii.) and (iv.) do not appear relevant as studies have already been carried out on the feasibility of implementing the Convention on Equivalence of Certificates and on the establishment of regional and national qualification frameworks.
- The project can build on the roadmap adopted for the revitalisation of TVET by focussing the identification of skills and occupational shortages (activity i) on technical and vocational fields. The project can also support the ECOWAS Commission in preparing a directory of TVET institutes in the region to enhance exchanges and cooperation.

Improving migrants' rights protection and social security Activity 1.4.8

- Rather than elaborating a model integration policy, a lengthy process which would leave little time for generating the political will necessary for its adoption and implementation, the project can build awareness through the development of a practical guide on migrant workers' rights in ECOWAS Member States, and provide training via the MIDWA Forum.
- A rights-based approach to labour migration can also be emphasised transversally through other Project activities such as (1) promoting the harmonisation of labour legislation based on the ILO principles and fundamental rights at work, in particular elimination of discrimination in respect of employment (see activity 1.4.4); (2) sensitising social partners on their role in protecting migrant workers' rights and providing them with training and practical guides (see Activity 1.4.3); (3)

supporting civil society projects on combating discrimination and xenophobia under Component III of the Project.

Improving migrants' rights protection and social security Activity 1.4.9
- Now that the General Convention on Social Security has been adopted, the project can focus on (1) providing technical support and guidance in the setup of the Committee of Experts (2) supporting harmonisation of data collection and information exchange between Member States social security systems, exploring the feasibility of implementing a regional IT-based exchange platform (3) disseminating the implications of the Convention widely through regional dialogue forums (Social Dialogue Forum, MIDWA, etc.) and print materials (pamphlets, guides).
- In consultation with the Commission, consider promoting the establishment of social protection floors in member states as a strategy to extend social protection to a greater proportion of migrant workers. As a first step, a study can be conducted to assess migrant workers' current level of access to social protection floors in Member States and identify gaps and recommendations for protection. Links can be made with the current ILO-UNDP supported projects for social protection floors in Member States.

Summary of proposed revised project activities
Activity 1.4.3: Support the development of a tripartite dialogue on labour migration issues within the ECOWAS High-level Social Dialogue Forum

• Support the setup of the Permanent Secretariat for the Social Dialogue Forum
• Support two Forum meetings:
   1. Training on labour mobility and migrant workers' rights.
   2. Review of draft Regional Migration Policy before submission to Council of Ministers
• Adapt "ILO Migrant workers' rights: A Manual for trade unions to West African context" for use in training.
• Establish a technical working group on labour migration within the Forum

Activity 1.4.4: Support the ECOWAS Commission in promoting the harmonisation of labour legislation in ECOWAS Member States in line with international and ECOWAS standards and frameworks
• Based on forthcoming regional labour legislation study, support the Commission to develop regional policy recommendations for harmonisation with specific timetables, goals and indicators • Support the Commission in elaborating practical guidelines on select areas of labour legislation to assist Member States in harmonising their national legislation
Activity 1.4.5: Support strengthening of national and regional labour market information systems
• Support Member States in the implementation of the African Union LMIS tools • Support the Commission in producing an annual sub-regional labour market report based on collated data from Member States.
Activity 1.4.6: Support the implementation of regional public employment services
Sensitise Member States on the *Accueil emploi*[21] employment database to generate interest. Carry out a feasibility study on the use of *Accueil emploi* as a regional database
Activity 1.4.7: Support the harmonisation of qualifications & recognition policies in ECOWAS Member States
•Identification of skills and occupational shortages in select technical and vocational fields filled by foreign workers and development of compatibility standards in these fields •Support the Commission in preparing a directory of TVET institutes in the region to enhance exchanges and cooperation
Activity 1.4.8: Support the ECOWAS Commission in elaborating tools for Member States for the mainstreaming of the protection of the rights of migrant workers

- Develop a practical guide on migrant workers rights in ECOWAS member states.
- Address migrants' rights transversally through:
  - Training for social partners via the Social dialogue forum (Activity 1.4.3) and training for MIDWA Members
  - Elaborating practical guidelines for harmonisation of labour legislation related to the ILO principles and fundamental rights at work (Activity 1.4.4)

Activity 1.4.9: Enhance progress in the extension of social security coverage to migrants and their families

- Technically support the setup of the Committee of Experts for the General Agreement on Social Security
- Support harmonisation of data collection and information exchange between Member States social security systems (exploring the feasibility of implementing a regional IT-based exchange platform)
- Sensitise Member States and social partners on the principles and rights in the General Convention via regional dialogue forums and production of printed materials (pamphlets, guides).

Human resources and training recommendations

The additional human resources to be attributed to the Commission through the recruitment of a Principal Programme Officer in charge of Labour Migration is highly relevant. The position will serve to consolidate the treatment of labour migration issues under the HSA Directorate and to relieve some of the burden on existing staff due to high workloads and broad range of responsibilities. Taking into account existing expertise and gaps within the Commission, it is recommended that the new staff member bring expertise in employment. Specifically, a background in economics or social sciences, and experience in employment-related areas such as labour market policies, employment services, skills development and employability, is suggested for the profile.

Training for ECOWAS Commission staff can be extended beyond the Social Affairs and Free Movement Directorates to include other relevant staff from the Human Development and Gender Department. The relevance of training staff from the Legal Directorate and Research and Statistics Directorates on specific areas of labour migration can also be considered. In the table below, topics for training are identified which can be incorporated into a comprehensive training plan (project Activity 1.4.2), based on capacity gaps and project priority areas. Contents of training modules can be drawn from the ILO-ITC labour migration academy and other ILO standard courses.

Recommended training modules	
Training topics	**Target Groups**
Equality and non-discrimination	- Social Affairs Division - Youth Employment Division - Free Movement Directorate - Social dialogue forum - MIDWA participants
The role of social partners in the protection of migrant workers	- Social Dialogue Forum - Social Affairs Division
International Labour Standards and the Protection of migrant workers' rights	- Social Affairs Division - Free Movement Directorate - Legal Directorate - Social Dialogue Forum - MIDWA participants

Mainstreaming labour migration issues into regional and national migration policies	• Social Affairs Division • Youth Employment Division • Free Movement Directorate • Social dialogue forum • MIDWA participants
Social Security and the social protection of migrant workers	• Social Affairs Division • Free Movement Directorate • Social Dialogue Forum • MIDWA participants
Regional labour market information systems (based on AU tools)	• Youth Employment Division • Social Affairs Division • Statistics Directorate

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Annex

Table of Persons Interviewed

Name	Institution	Position
Fernando Jorge Alves D'almada	ECOWAS	Head of Division of Social Affairs
Ismaila Dangou	ECOWAS	Programme Manager of ECOWAS/Spain Fund on Migration and Development
Brown Odigie	ECOWAS	Programme Officer, ECOWAS/Spain Fund on Migration and Development
N'Faly Sanoh	ECOWAS	Director, Free Movement Department
Tony Elumelu	ECOWAS	Principle Programme Officer, Free Movement
Kinza Jawara N'jai	ECOWAS	Principle Programme Officer, Cross Border Cooperation
Kennedy Barsisa	ECOWAS	Principle Programme Officer, Youth, Sports and Employment
Bolanle Adetoun	ECOWAS	Principle Programme Officer, Gender
Rachel Ogbe	ECOWAS	Principle Programme Officer, Education
Koku Atadi	ECOWAS Forum on Social Dialogue	Chair of the Bureau
Badara Ndiaye	Intra-ACP Migration Facility	Technical Assistant
Emmanuel Igbinosun	Nigerian Ministry of Labour and Productivity	Assistant Director
Joyce	Nigerian Ministry of Labour and Productivity	Assistant Chief Labour Officer
Charles Anaelo	Nigerian National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs	Head of Migration Division
Mathias Esene	Nigerian National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs	Programme Officer for Migration
Adenike Adebayo	Nigeria Employers Consultative Association (NECA)	Liaison Manager
James Eustace Emoyera	Nigeria Labour Congress	Migration focal point for NLC
Sina Chuma-Mkandawire	ILO	Director, Abuja Office
Chinyere Emeka-Anuna	ILO	National Project Officer
Geertrui Lanneau	IOM	Programme Manager, Support to Free Movement
James Atusue	IOM	Programme Assistant
Pauline Leonard	Independent consultant (IOM)	Responsible for Baseline Assessment on Public Information
Akemi Yonemura	UNESCO (Dakar)	Programme Specialist
Couty Fall	UNDP (Dakar)	Former Regional Coordinator, Youth Employability and Retention Programme
Frank Okafor	EU Delegation to Nigeria	Project Manager, Economic Governance and Trade Cooperation Section
Frederic Varrene	EU Delegation to Nigeria	Programme Manager

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