THE POTENTIAL OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNITION FOR REGULATED LABOUR MOBILITY IN THE IGAD REGION

A scoping study covering Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan

RESEARCH CONDUCTED FOR THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Introduction

Governance of migration is an ongoing challenge for nation states, and is exacerbated by globalisation and climate change. The Migration Policy Framework for Africa, the African Common Position on Migration and Development, and the IGAD regional Migration Policy Framework aim to mainstream migration at the national, regional and continental levels.

This scoping study focuses on the potential of skills development and skills recognition to enhance a regional system of regulated labour mobility within and between the member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). IGAD member states involved in this study are: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

The link between skills development and skills recognition

In this research it was deemed important to achieve an equitable balance in emphasis between the potential of skills development and skills recognition. The need to invest more in skills, given that skills development and training systems need to be strengthened is fundamental. Better skills systems will benefit all, whether nationals or migrants. It is also important to acknowledge the beneficial interaction between skills development and recognition that facilitate improvements to the quality of skills and functioning of the labour market.

Skills recognition systems generate better information and pathways for the labour market which makes the market more effective in facilitating greater productivity, improved worker income and social mobility.

Furthermore skills recognition systems contribute to improved opportunities for work seekers in various migration contexts.

Findings

Skills development

- Countries foresee the need to allow migrants to access skills that facilitate reintegration and to achieve this in ways that are not detrimental to nationals. This generates an inherent tension between policy and implementation.

- TVET systems in member states are under-developed and also require strategic direction to match national social and equity needs and also satisfy skills demands for economic growth.

- Robust labour migration governance architecture depends heavily on the capacity and coordination of IGAD member state government departments that are responsible for: identity and status of citizens and other persons resident; early childhood development; health; TVET and local economic development matters.

- Skills development models based on static populations and location bound institutions are severely challenged by population movement. High value therefore needs to be placed on flexibility of institutions, coordination of systems, and appropriate modes such as community-based solutions, modular courses, continuous training, communities of practice, and outreach training.

Recognition of skills

- Migrants and refugees are unlikely to have documentary evidence of formally acquired skills and non-formal learning.

- Forms of recognition range from long-established approaches, to more modern ones and approaches that are only starting to gain traction.

- Found that recognition systems can be used in validating the informally learned skills of labour market participants and in confirming the skills of workers who have lost their physical certificate.

- Observes that for skills recognition systems to work optimally, they must be supported by other systems of recognition: recognition of skills certification routes (e.g: RPL) by workers and employers.

- A wide variation in progress towards well-developed and structured national qualifications systems was observed.

Migrant and refugee governance

- Policy development around labour migration in IGAD is moving incrementally towards more openness such as in Uganda where a more open policy regarding access and rights has been adopted.

- Practically, governance and implementation efforts are primarily focused on the perceived need to control and monitor population access to resources and statuses.

- Meaningful engagement with migrants and refugees to a lesser extent, to understand their needs, requires improvement.

Multilateral cooperation

- Refugee and migration phenomena are multilateral and IGAD primarily deals with such events. Furthermore, some IGAD member states are partners in multiple RECs and respond to various protocols that create difficulties for crafting coherent policy regimes.

Skills information systems

- Across case study countries, various institutions generate information relevant to the labour market, and these databases are the foundations of a nascent national labour market information system.

- Automated identification of humans (biometric methods), including iris recognition is gaining traction in several contexts.

Observations from country reviews

1. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The distribution of refugees and migrants is concentrated in certain areas, so it is recommended that implementation of relevant programmes should initially concentrate on these localities. The Ethiopian government is faced with overwhelming demand for social and economic services to its citizens. Therefore, it will be important for government to work towards higher levels of cooperation and support from international governments and aid agencies.

2. Republic of Djibouti

The Djibouti government adopted an open-door policy to refugees and migrants. As a result the population of indigent refugees and migrants living in the city has increased. Simultaneously, many Yemeni refugees who cannot sustain their positions in Djibouti city (due to the high cost of living) are forced to return to camps at Markazi or Obock. This research found evidence of a developing public employment services (PES) infrastructure in Djibouti that has potential to support refugees and migrants.

3. Republic of Kenya

It is evident that a substantial number of ministries in Kenya dealing with migration which limits coordination amongst them. Sub-regional cooperation is visible though, and provides important lessons for IGAD.

4. Republic of Sudan

Sudan's borders are porous. Several bilateral labour agreements on migration were reported but details and evidence of implementation was limited. The capacity of TVET is very low in Sudan and reform of the skills development system is crucial. In this national context there is a strong need for more coordination across international development agencies and with IGAD member.

5. Republic of Uganda

Various international agencies are working with migrants and refugees in the skills development space to support the Skilling Uganda programme. Uganda is active in facilitating political cooperation amongst the countries along the migration route between the Horn of Africa and Europe.

Recommendations

#1 Integrate migrants early

Findings from the case studies strongly corroborate international research that the sooner migrants can be integrated in the labour market in the receiving country, the sooner they can contribute meaningfully. *Recommendation 1.1* argues that a comprehensive migration architecture for IGAD should include the early integration of migrants as an important strategic priority.

#2 Take stock of migrants' skills

Migrants, and more so refugees, are unlikely to have documentary evidence of their formally acquired skills and even less likely for non-formal learning. A move towards prior skills assessment, or recognition of prior learning (RPL), is in line with the African Union Commission (AUC) directive that RPL be considered for returning migrants. *Recommendation 2.1* proposes the establishment of a centralised RPL Facility in IGAD, working with the AUC, that is able to support other member states and provide guidance and instruments for the recognition of skills. The Facility should be staffed by at least one RPL expert from the region – if possible, the Facility should be based at the IGAD Secretariat. It is proposed that the RPL facility focus specifically on the recognition of work experience for employment purposes, and that the results be located within a labour market information system in a searchable format to employers specifically, and to governments more broadly.

#3 Approach skills recognition in its multiplicity

There are different forms of recognition, many of which are being used in the international context, ranging from long established approaches, to more modern ones, and approaches that are only starting to gain traction. IGAD has the opportunity to leapfrog other regions and countries by learning from these developments and contextualising the application thereof in the region. *Recommendation 3.1* proposes that the feasibility, benefits and costs of a regional qualifications framework for IGAD should be explored; *Recommendation 3.2* argues for a more detailed review of the innovations being introduced by credentialing agencies in other migration contexts; *Recommendation 3.3* proposes that the potential role of the Addis Convention in promoting the recognition of higher education qualifications, including some skills-based qualifications, across IGAD countries should be explored by the IGAD Secretariat. The recent recommendation on the recognition of refugees' qualifications under the Lisbon Recognition Convention (European Commission 2017) for higher education is a very good example of how skills recognition can be promoted under the broader ambit of a regional convention. The IGAD Secretariat is encouraged to raise this option with the AUC and other continental bodies.

#4 Develop inclusive labour market information systems

Across the country case studies, we observed that in different configurations, various institutions in each IGAD country generate information relevant to the labour market and employment as part of their internal processes. These data and database forms could be taken to be the foundations of a nascent national labour market information environment. *Recommendation 4.1* proposes that refugee and migrant information systems are developed in relation to these national initiatives; *Recommendation 4.2* emphasises that information systems must be developed within a sufficient institutional base that can provide support, continuity and quality; *Recommendation 4.3* adds that the strategic approach would be to include refugee and migrant data into the existing systems, as with inclusion into health and schooling systems.

#5 Use new technology to automate migrant data collection

Newly available technologies for automating identification of humans such as biometric methods, including iris recognition, are being tested in several contexts, including in Ethiopia. *Recommendation 5.1* proposes that a project is initiated to learn more from the technology-driven solutions that are currently being developed internationally and how these could be used for migrants within the IGAD context. Recent UNESCO research in this area can provide a useful point of departure (UNESCO 2018).

#6 Develop tailor-made approaches for skills development for migrants

Skills development opportunities for citizens in IGAD countries are very limited. Expanding TVET systems that are inclusive of all should be the primary objective for all IGAD members. However, in order to address short-term integration needs of migrants, it is also recommended to systematically develop skills programmes for migrants

and refugees in both receiving and sending countries, should IGAD and its member states want to take this process forward. *Recommendation 6.1* proposes that a tailor-made skills training initiative in IGAD is undertaken as a pilot project in an area that has the best chance of success. *Recommendation 6.2* explores the option of specific multilateral recognition arrangements for relevant sectors, or occupations most affected by migration across IGAD, drawing on similar international attempts.

#7 Explore the benefits of more open policies on access and rights

Policy development in respect to labour migration is based on the perceived need to control and monitor population access to key resources and statuses. In this regard, Uganda is a good example where refugees are not compelled to be interned in refugee camps. Migrants are claimed to be able to integrate freely, and also have rights to buy land. *Recommendation 7.1* proposes a case study focusing on the process in Uganda that would be of benefit to other IGAD countries.

#8 Prioritise the development of TVET systems in member states

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems in member states tend to be under-developed in relation to social needs and economic skills demands. A robust labour migration governance architecture for IGAD is very dependent on the TVET capacity in member states. While bolt-on interventions (i.e. interventions that are largely ad hoc and do not form part of a more holistic planning process) in the region may have some short-term gains, they will ultimately not succeed. *Recommendation 8.1* emphasises that IGAD member states must prioritise systematic and well planned TVET infrastructure and capacity development.

#9 Listen to the migrant

It is not evident that any substantial effort has been made to engage migrants directly, less so refugees. While there are limitations to such a direct interaction, any intervention mechanisms will be incomplete without engagement. *Recommendation 9.1* proposes that focused research using participatory methods be conducted to better understand the needs of migrants and how they can be supported. The complexities associated with different languages should be considered, including the ability of interpreters to gather reliable information.

#10 Take a broad view of the role of IGAD

Refugee and migration phenomena are multilateral; so it makes sense for affected countries that share common borders and therefore economic interests to work collaboratively. This is the fundamental premise of IGAD. Admittedly, IGAD can be put forward as the preeminent unit for dealing with migration and refugee events because these events traverse the entire region. Some IGAD member states are party to multiple RECs (e.g. Kenya and Uganda are also part of the East Africa Community) and must therefore also respond to multiple protocols, even when there might be incoherence in some cases. *Recommendation 10.1* proposes the multilateral approach and coordination role of IGAD be strengthened by making use of existing migration governance architecture of IGAD such as IGAD RCP and RMCC and further take efforts to enhance coordination with similar structures of other RECs. *Recommendation 10.2* proposes that IGAD needs to closely examine existing protocols and programs of other RECs that its member states are party to. This complexity needs to be carefully examined and managed. Lastly, *Recommendation 10.3* argues for the enhancement of bilateral initiatives and programs among IGAD member states, including collaboration arrangements among member states themselves within the broader scope of regional integration and development.

Skills development and skills recognition have the potential to support and extend the impact of a regional system of regulated labour mobility within and between member states of IGAD, but only when the interrelationships between the concepts are understood and then developed and implemented in a coordinated and realistic manner.

It is not enough that governments recognise skills and implement systems. Labour market actors such as employers and workers and their organisations also need to buy in and play an active role. Social dialogue and the active involvement of business associations, professional associations, workers' organisations, and training institutions is critical for skills development and recognition to be meaningful.