

## Concept Note 0

# **The role of local and regional governments in addressing irregular migration**

## **GOAL**

Irregular migration is a multidimensional phenomenon with roots in economic, social, political, and environmental stress. Local and regional governments (LRGs) are often the first public institutions to face the effects of this phenomenon—whether as regions of origin, transit, or destination. However, their role in mitigating root causes, managing transit dynamics, and facilitating integration or reintegration is frequently overlooked in national and international migration strategies. This roundtable will explore how empowering LRGs across different territorial contexts can lead to more sustainable, humane, and effective approaches to irregular migration governance.

## **CONCEPTUALISATION**

Irregular migration in and from Africa is driven by diverse and intersecting factors such as poverty, conflict, climate change, and lack of opportunities. While national governments traditionally lead migration policy, local and regional governments—due to their proximity to populations and their multisectoral responsibilities—are uniquely positioned to design and implement practical, context-specific responses.

To advance a more precise understanding of their role, it is essential to distinguish between three types of territories: regions of origin, transit regions, and destination regions.

### **1. Regions of Origin (mainly in Africa):**

In areas where migration begins, local and regional authorities are best placed to address root causes. They can invest in economic diversification, education and skills development, youth engagement, and social cohesion to reduce the drivers of migration. Programs that promote inclusive local development and democratic governance can help mitigate feelings of marginalization and hopelessness that often push people to migrate through irregular channels. These LRGs can also play a vital role in preparing local systems to support the reintegration of returning migrants through targeted services and community involvement.

## 2. Transit Regions (both within and beyond Africa):

Transit regions face unique pressures, often hosting populations on the move with limited legal status and minimal institutional support. Here, LRGs can help ensure humanitarian assistance, protection of rights, and coordinated services, even in fragile or under-resourced environments. While transit governance is often under-discussed, it is central to regional stability and human security. Strengthening the capacity of local institutions to manage these dynamics—while coordinating with national and international actors—is essential.

## 3. Destination Regions (including within Africa, Europe, and elsewhere):

In destination territories, LRGs play a fundamental role in integration, social inclusion, and combating discrimination. They are responsible for ensuring access to housing, education, healthcare, and employment support for newcomers. In European cities and regions, in particular, regional authorities can help shape public discourse, foster migrant participation, and create welcoming environments. At the same time, they can contribute to shaping national and European policies by sharing local experiences and advocating for more coherent, human-centered approaches to migration.

Across all three contexts, LRGs must be supported through capacity-building, adequate funding, and the creation of multi-level governance mechanisms that facilitate collaboration with national governments, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations. Enhancing local data systems and migration observatories will also allow for more responsive and evidence-based policymaking.

In sum, while LRGs share some cross-cutting responsibilities—such as proximity to affected communities and multisectoral service delivery—their specific roles must be tailored to their territorial context. Empowering them accordingly is key to turning migration challenges into opportunities for inclusive development and resilience.

## QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- How can local and regional governments be better integrated into national and international migration governance frameworks?
- What targeted policies have proven effective in regions of origin, transit, and destination respectively?
- How can LRGs in origin regions be supported in reducing migration pressures and managing reintegration?
- What forms of inter-regional cooperation can enhance migration management across these different territorial levels?