

Concept Note 1

Migration, youth employment and territorial development

GOAL

Africa's demographic boom presents both an opportunity and a challenge. With over 60% of the population under the age of 25, the continent faces urgent pressure to generate employment and inclusive development. Migration, particularly among youth, is increasingly driven by a lack of local opportunities. This roundtable will address how regional governments can implement territorial development strategies that support youth and create viable alternatives to forced migration.

CONCEPTUALISATION

Youth unemployment remains a pressing challenge across many African regions, where demographic pressures have led to a youth bulge that traditional economies struggle to absorb. Migration, particularly of young people seeking employment abroad or in urban centers, is often driven by the lack of meaningful job opportunities at the local and regional levels.

Territorial development strategies that prioritize youth employment must therefore focus on fostering economic environments conducive to job creation, entrepreneurship, and skills development. Regional governments play a vital role in shaping these strategies, as they have the authority and proximity to influence education systems, vocational training programs, and investment incentives aligned with local labor market needs.

The linkage between migration and employment is complex. On one hand, migration can alleviate unemployment pressures and contribute to skills and capital flows through remittances and knowledge transfer. On the other hand, excessive out-migration of skilled youth can lead to brain drain, undermining regional development prospects.

Effective territorial development requires an integrated approach: supporting youth entrepreneurship through incubators, microfinance, and business mentorship; aligning education and training with emerging sectors such as digital technologies and green economies; and improving infrastructure to attract investment and connect rural and urban areas.

Regional governments also have a critical role in implementing social policies that



support vulnerable youth, including those from marginalized communities or displaced populations. This includes fostering inclusive labor markets, combating informal employment traps, and promoting decent work standards in accordance with ILO guidelines.

Partnerships between regional governments, the private sector, academia, and international organizations are essential to create ecosystems that enable youth to thrive locally. Successful models include regional youth employment forums, skills development initiatives co-designed with young people, and cross-border cooperation on labor mobility.

This approach is aligned with Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), recognizing that regional development and migration policies must work hand in hand to create sustainable futures for youth.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- What sectors hold the most potential for youth employment at the territorial level?
- How can regional development reduce the "push factors" behind youth migration?
- What tools do regional governments need to launch and sustain youth employment programs?
- How can territorial employment strategies be integrated into national migration policies?