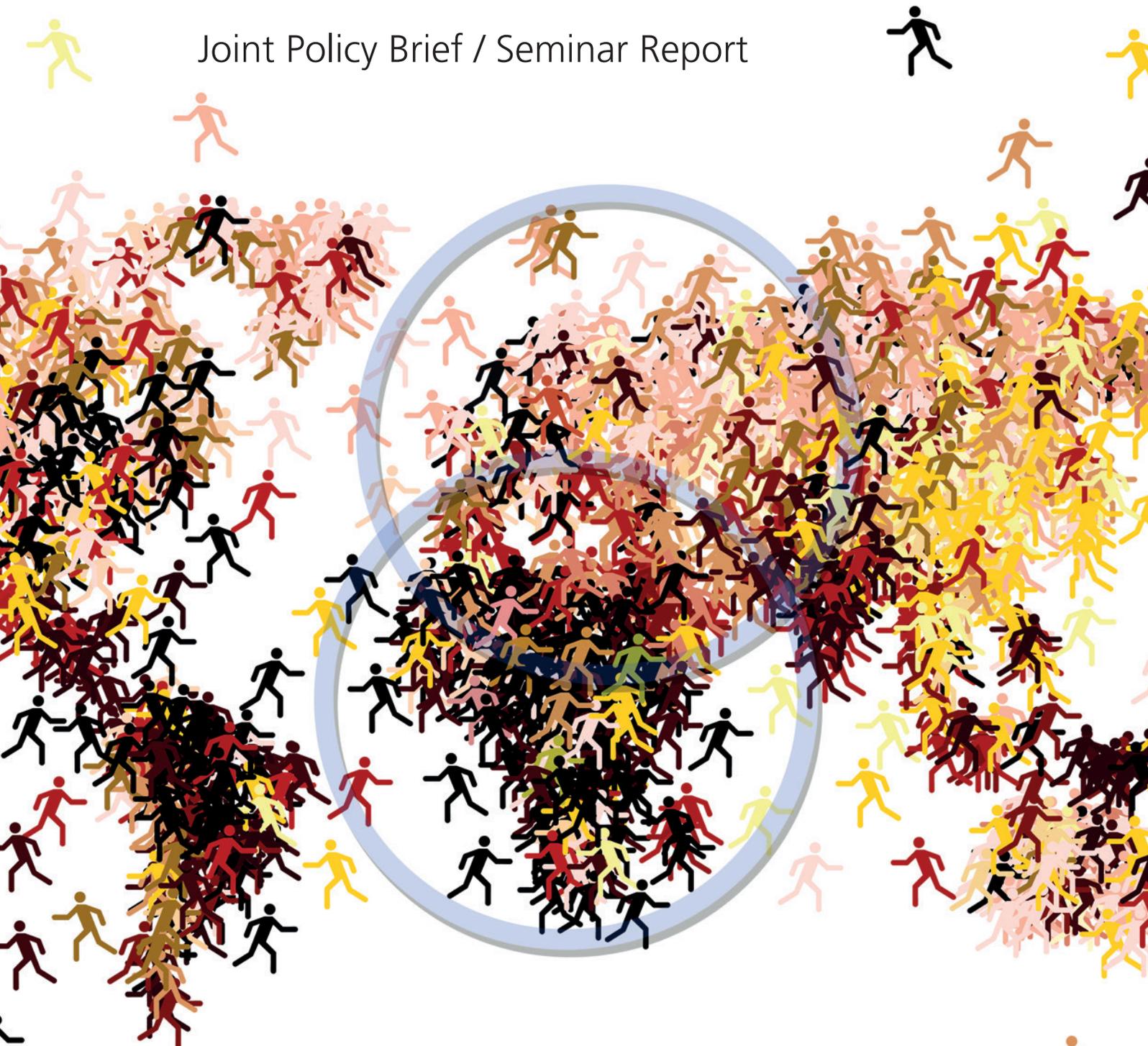


Making Migration beneficial to Europe and Africa

Joint Policy Brief / Seminar Report



I. Background

Migration is increasingly becoming a hot topic for Africa-Europe engagement, particularly in the light of increased irregular migration to Europe from Africa in the recent years. Despite having started several processes to jointly deal with migration, more consistently since 2007, there are still great differences in understanding of the issue, priorities and how to best address challenges and opportunities of migration between Europe and Africa. These differences exist not only between the two continents but they also emerge between countries depending on whether they are countries of origin, transit or recipient. This may be a challenge for a successful outcome and implementation of the planned EU-Africa Summit on migration to be held in Valletta, Malta on 11 and 12 November 2015

In an effort to contribute towards a successful outcome of the Valletta Summit the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) the Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) and European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) co-hosted a pre-summit seminar in Addis Ababa on the 21st of October 2015. The seminar brought together relevant representatives from the African Union (AU), the EU Delegation to the AU, Representatives of European and African states, UN organisations, experts and civil society organisations to discuss this topic in an informal and constructive manner.

This seminar report provides a summary of key outcomes and recommendations from the discussions. It does not represent the views of co-hosting organisations.

II. Summary of Discussion

The following key points emerged from the discussions and dialogue during the seminar.

Africa and the EU – different priorities and different understanding

The current refugee crisis receives different levels of attention and urgency on the two continents. While migration and the refugee crisis are high up on the European agenda, it has not received a comparable level of attention in Africa. Participants have pointed out that this at times impedes finding common ground between the EU and African actors.

The beneficial aspects of migration and mobility to development are largely absent from the dominant political discourses. Europe's immediate reaction to the refugee crisis is mostly dominated by actions to curb mobility of irregular migrants through tightening border controls, return and readmission programs and shows a tendency towards a regression to the narrow securitisation approach.

On its part, Africa, or the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (REC) respectively, is at least on paper working towards free movement of persons. As one participant noted: "We want mobility in Africa not mobility controls. Mobility is critical for integration." However, African countries are themselves struggling with the implementation of free movement of people and cooperation in this regard. In this context, it was criticised that many African countries are

closing their borders for migrants and refugees. Hence, there is sometimes a contradiction between Africa's push for regional economic integration and the restrictions of people's movement.

Short term responses vs. Long term solutions

Participants stressed that the current approaches dealing with the migration and refugee crisis tend to be reactive. They seem to be geared towards containment as opposed to pro-actively addressing and solving longer-term root causes. The reaction of the EU to the current refugee crisis was highlighted as typifying these approaches. While potentially bringing quick results these measures will not necessarily solve the underlying challenges and stop people wanting to migrate and embark on the journey to Europe.

Participants were divided over the envisaged EU Trust Fund (EUTF) for African countries and whether it is the right vehicle to identify and work towards long term solutions. The EUTF could be helpful in implementing the action plan of the Valletta Summit and supporting African countries to overcome development challenges. However, participants raised a number of issues

- The funding may not match the ambitions of its strategy. The EU institutions have pooled €1.8 billion from different development, emergency and internal budget lines and encouraged EU Member States to match this amount. Yet, participants pointed out that compared to the €3 billion, which the EU has pledged for Turkey alone, the current €1.8 billion of the EUTF are to fund the

implementation of programmes in three regions involving 23 diverse countries part of the Khartoum and Rabat process. This comparison between the funds for Turkey and the EUTF also raised some questions about the seriousness of the EU in supporting African countries with longer-term challenges as compared to its goal of containing migration.

- There were also concerns about the possibility of diversion of funds to border control, at the expense of long term sustainable solutions to the crisis.
- Some have voiced concerns that programming of EUTF funds may be driven by an EU security logic of border protection and containment of irregular migration. This could potentially impede African agendas on legal mobility and could also risk diverting development funds for other development projects.

Lastly, the issue of **legal ways of migration towards the EU** was recommended as a longer term solution. Yet, it was noted that progress on legal mobility and opening channels cannot be achieved by the EU institutions alone as it is individual EU member states who have the prerogative of deciding whether or not and how many migrants they admit. The political situation in many EU member states however does not favour strong expansion in this area.

Challenges with the implementation of joint strategies

Despite several joint programs and strategies on migration that have been adopted by the EU and the AU, especially since 2007, not all have been effectively implemented. A point in case is the most recent Action Plan on migration

and mobility under the Joint Africa EU Strategy, which was adopted during the 2014 Africa-EU Summit in Brussels at highest level next to a standalone political declaration. Participants noted that implementation of this Action Plan has been slow as for most of the items in the plan no strong efforts have been made on following up. Hence, several participants raised their concerns that the Valletta Summit may come up with a new action plan on top of the existing one that has barely been touched.

In this context, it was also underlined that implementation of existing initiatives should come first and that new initiatives should not undermine existing mechanisms. One speaker argued that **“if Valletta wants to be useful it needs to be a booster shot to existing systems”**. Further, there was therefore scepticism about Valletta coming up with yet another action plan without addressing existing implementation bottle necks.

The lack of implementation pointed to another crucial factor in the EU-Africa relations as a whole: the need for more high level political dialogue as it will take place in Malta. One participant emphasized that without such a reinforced dialogue the issues around migration and refugee cannot be addressed adequately. He thus called to underpin the proposed action plan – which is rather a technical tool – with increased high level political exchange on implementation and follow-up mechanisms.

The issue of an unequal partnership between EU and Africa was also discussed. Some participants criticised that African stakeholders do not have an equal say in the crafting of agreements and that in the case of the Valletta Summit, they were mere invitees to the Summit instead of being equal partners in its preparation.

Rights of refugees and migrants

Participants agreed that in the discussions and all interventions it is crucial to not lose sight of the protection of migrants and refugees as a critical issue. “In times of crisis it is tempting to disobey international migration law” as one participant pointed out, yet all actions should have human rights of migrants at the core.

Another point that was highlighted was that the current framing of migration as a state-security issue and the tendency towards tougher border controls, return and readmission may lead to policies and actions ignoring migrants’ rights and a climate not conducive for enforcing them. Participants argued that it is crucial to factor in the human rights records of the countries to which people are being sent back, when returning migrants.

The issue of particularly vulnerable groups, such as disabled persons, women and children among migrants and refugees, has gained attention at AU through Agenda 2063 and the SDG framework. It was noted that the AU Commission wants to strengthen social protection frameworks in this context.

Engagement at the local level and attention to international drivers

One speaker highlighted that **migration starts at the local** level following decisions of individuals yet also has **global implications and impact**. It is at the local level that awareness and perceptions are being created. To find long-term solutions it is thus necessary to **understand the dynamics at the local level** and to engage communities on the ground. Part of this is to improve their living conditions and prospects

as well as using existing local networks to raise awareness and disseminate information on the risks of migrant journeys. The protection of refugees also has implications for local communities as they are tasked with responding and integrating new arrivals. In order to address the negative aspects of migration while harnessing its positive impacts one needs focus on the local dimension and make use of existing structures as argued by some participants. As an example, joint task forces that could join local communities in addressing short-term perception risks as regards new arrivals in communities were mentioned.

At the same time, though engagement of local structures are important, the **international processes and drivers** that at times contribute to refugee situations and migration flows should not be ignored. International drivers are often interwoven with conflicts and thus also with displacement and migration. Identifying which current international political economy factors contribute to structural issues underlying conflicts and development issues and resulting migration and mobility trends is thus crucial.

Changing the narrative on migration

Both, Africa and Europe seem to be oblivious to the migration challenges that the other is facing. While Europe is currently preoccupied with migration flows towards its borders, there is less public political discourse on intra-African flows of migrants. Indeed, most Africans migrate within the continent quite often challenging capacities of host countries to deal with the issues arising from these movements. African states on the other hand, seem less interested in the challenges Europe is facing through high

numbers of irregular migrants and refugees and is almost exclusively interested in issues from an intra-African migration angle. If the partners are not paying more attention to each other it will be challenging to find common ground and make migration beneficial to both.

Participants further discussed and challenged predominant narratives that exist in the current discourse on migration. Some questioned the often-heard assertion that all migrants from Africa want to move to western countries. One participant cited a study by the University of Sussex, which carried out research in the Horn of Africa interviewing about 100 migrants. According to the participants, 90% of the interviewed migrants would have moved to other African countries if they were given the opportunity to settle and work rather than moving towards the Mediterranean.

Given the example of Somalis, a participant referred to own research showing that, though there is still a desire to migrate to the West, Somalis view this as not necessarily the first option. Instead they felt that other destinations are also attractive depending on the familiarity of the cultural context and the ability to secure asylum and protection. Asian countries that have an open migration system and can give access to education were mentioned. Also countries like Uganda – a role model in the region allowing refugees to work was also pointed out as an example.

Overall, more efforts should go into portraying migration not only as a challenge but viewing it also in a more positive light of its economic and development potential. One participant highlighted: "Migration is about regional integration and development as is trade and econo-

mic cooperation. Yet, migration is usually not discussed in these terms.”

The development-migration nexus.

Many participants referred to the relationship between migration and development and noted that this dimension should receive more attention. Especially, migrant labour has historically contributed to development, though there are also problems of cheap labour exploitation. Labour migration through the ILO framework is an example of how countries of origin and host countries can work together. Migration also presents opportunities for technology and skills transfers for receiving countries while for the origin countries it could potentially result in the loss of skilled individuals.

The diaspora can play a very important part in contributing to achieving development objectives. It was highlighted that most attention so far has been put on the North-South context. Yet, diaspora contributions in the South-South migration context are becoming more important. Diaspora is important through sending remittances, investment, contributing to donor trust funds. While the diaspora can also play a significant role in post-conflict and crisis situations, it is important to keep in mind the political dimension and that diaspora groups may be politically divided along lines that fuel conflicts. This makes the choice of which groups to engage more challenging.

III. Recommendations for Africa-Europe engagement on migration

The following non-exhaustive list of key policy recommendations emerged from the discussions at the seminar.

Focus on implementation and make use of and link to existing systems, frameworks and strategies without duplicating them

1. The Valletta summit should build on, rather than undermine **existing dialogue and implementation frameworks**, such as the joint Africa EU strategy and the Regional Dialogue processes. Continuous political dialogue on migration and related issues is a crucial part of overseeing implementation and should be enhanced between the AU, EU and the RECs.
2. The Action Plan emerging from Valletta and actions towards addressing the root causes of irregular migration should link to and work in tandem with the African Union's **Agenda 2063** and **relevant regional integration and development strategies**. Accordingly the implementation of the plan should take place in cooperation with the AU and RECs.

Strengthen legal migration and mobility

3. **Migration policy should aim at increasing regular mobility channels to enable voluntary migration rather than aiming at curtailing the movement of people.** The current migration governance architecture between Africa and Europe as well as within Africa is still restrictive and does not provide sufficient regular channels for movement. This not only discourages mobility and migration but leaves only irregular ways for those wanting to move.
4. African efforts to strengthen **migration governance** in order to foster **regional integration in the area of migration and mobility** should be supported. This also pertains to efforts of strengthening regional labour migration systems that promote freer movement. Political economy bottlenecks that impede progress in this area within Africa need to be identified, addressed and taken into account in the design of policies and support programmes.
5. Interventions to achieve strengthened border management and security should balance potentially competing objectives relating to mobility. It should not undermine goals on enhancing legal mobility channels.

Balance the response towards long-term development aspects, human rights of migrants and the migration and development nexus

6. Greater emphasis should be put on **finding long-term solutions** and addressing some of the root causes of displacement **proactively** instead of short-term and reactive measures aimed at containing flows.

7. Responses to the current situation should take place in a **human rights** framework. Policies on tougher border restrictions and controls should not compromise responsibilities of international protection and the rights of refugees and migrants.
8. Employment creation and socio-economic development is essential in order to address some of the root causes. This could for example be achieved through strengthening support to **small to medium enterprises (SMEs)**. As local communities are at the front-line of receiving migrants and refugees, attention to the socio-economic development of local communities is key.
9. The interrelation between migration and development should be enhanced, notably by:
 - a. Focusing on the **development dimension of migrant workers rights**; such as portability of social security etc. these can strengthen development aspects of migration
 - b. Further **supporting diaspora** platforms building on existing programmes can strengthen the development impact of diaspora support. This should not be restricted to African diaspora in Europe but also South-South diaspora. Setting up a Diaspora Development Fund could be considered. Engaging various diaspora groups can be a sensitive and political matter. This should be kept in mind when approaching and working with diaspora.

Focus on the local level

10. Local governments and local communities and institutions (both formal and informal) are important for implementation and should be included beyond the level of states in the implementation of strategies in Europe and Africa. Local communi-

ties, structures and networks should especially be engaged for providing information about opportunity and risks of journeys as they may have greater impact on decision-making.

Address international drivers of displacement and irregular migration

11. There is need to address the international drivers of conflict and displacement as well as poverty and work on **policy coherence for international peace, stability and development** in this regard. Not all of the stress drivers are found only in the countries of origin of refugees and migrants. External stress factors that need to be addressed relate to proliferation of arms, drug trafficking and other conflict commodities as well as illicit financial flows (IFF), which can be a threat to socio-economic and democratic development.

12. Structural factors for inequality at the international level e.g., international political economy, trade relations, global financial architecture can play a role as drivers for migration more indirectly. How these interrelate with mobility and migration should be further explored and be part of the discourse on migration and mobility and addressing the root causes of irregular migration.

Contributing Organisations



The **European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)** is an independent think and do tank specialising in the political and economic aspects of EU-Africa relations. The Centre facilitates policy dialogs, provides tailor made analysis and advice with partners from the South and participates in North-South networks. The Centre also supports institutions in Africa to define their own policy and development agendas. ECDPM operates from Maastricht (NL) and Brussels (B) and has some 50 staff members of more than 20 different European and African nationalities.

For more, please visit www.ecdpm.org



The **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)** is a private, non-profit organisation committed to the values of Social Democracy. It is the aim of FES to facilitate the political and social education of individuals from all walks of life in the spirit of democracy and pluralism as well as to contribute to international understanding and cooperation. FES carries out its mission in Germany and internationally through its programmes of political education, international cooperation, study and research. At present, FES maintains around 100 offices worldwide, of which 19 are in sub-Saharan Africa.

For more, please visit www.fes.de/afrika/content/



The **Southern African Liaison Office (SALO)** is a South African-based civil society organization which contributes to building peace and security in Africa and the Middle East through facilitating dialogue and consensus between national, regional and international actors. SALO's approach to building international consensus includes creating 'safe spaces' for formal and informal dialogues among and between state and non-state actors, informing key policy makers, and generating in-depth research and analysis.

For more, please visit www.salo.org.za.

Feedback on this note can be given collectively to:

Florian Koch, Director, African Union Cooperation, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Ethiopia, e-mail: fk@fes-ethiopia.org

Anna Knoll, Policy Officer, ECDPM, email: ak@ecdpm.org

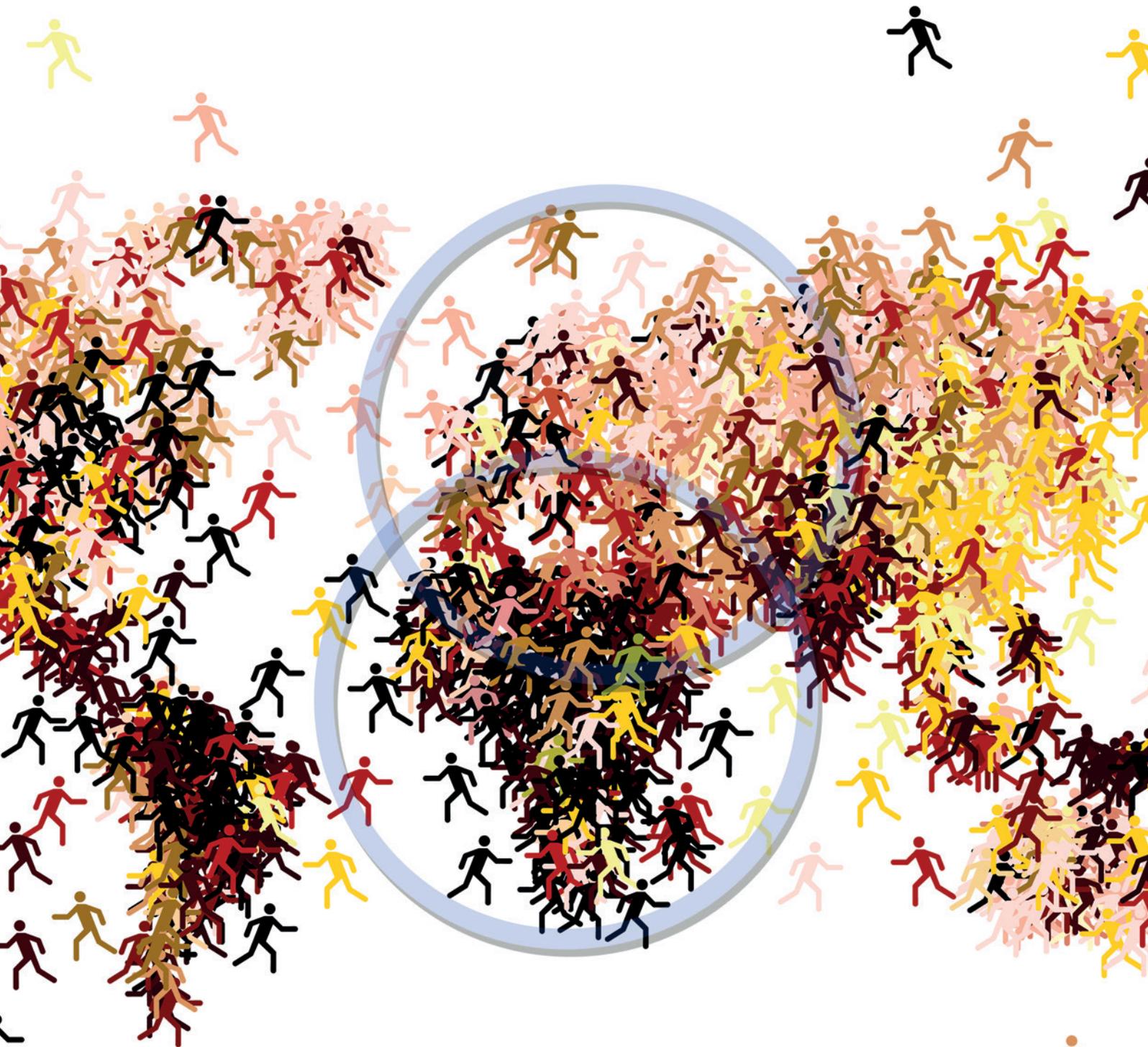
Dr. Showers Mawowa, Research and Development Manager, SALO, e-mail: mawowa@salo.org.za

ISBN: 978-3-95861-337-9

Published 2015 by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Division for International Cooperation, Africa Department.

Commercial use of all media published by the FES, ECDPM and SALO is not permitted without the written consent of the FES, ECDPM and SALO.

Layout: Timo Lowinger; Bildursprung: [iStock.com/illureh](https://www.istock.com/illureh)



**FRIEDRICH
EBERT** 
STIFTUNG

European Centre for Development
Policy Management

ecdpm

SAL 

International liaison, dialogue and research