



## REPORT OF 2020 NATIONAL MIGRATION DIALOGUE



Ladi Kwali Hall, Sheraton Hotel, Abuja  
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## **A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The National Migration Dialogue (NMD), an annual event in Nigeria is a strategy and platform to mark the global International Migrants Day (December 18<sup>th</sup>) set aside by the United Nations.

Since 2014, Nigeria has continually celebrated the International Migrants Day using the NMD platform where key stakeholders on migration discuss migration issues, the gains in the preceding year, its challenges and ways to achieve better migration governance in Nigeria. The event is convened within the platform of the Technical Working Group (TWG) of the National Migration Management Architecture under the auspices of the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), the coordinating agency of migration.

In discussing and proffering ways for better migration governance in Nigeria, the 2020 NMD with the theme, **Providing Protection and Assistance to migrants during and post COVID-19 Pandemics: Strategies and Actions**, created an ample opportunity for migration stakeholders to converse on recent migration issues in the light of the pandemic currently ravaging the world.

The event was held on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2020 at Ladi Kwali Hall, Sheraton Hotel, Abuja. In attendance at the event were key stakeholders on migration, including state and non-state across the 6 geopolitical zones of Nigeria. International partners such as International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Health Organization (WHO), European Union (EU), and Swiss Embassy were also in attendance.

## **B. ABBREVIATIONS/ACCRONYMS**

CSOs -	Civil Society Organizations
EU-	European Union
FEC-	Federal Executive Council
FMHADMSD-	Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development
FMLE-	Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment
FMOH-	Federal Ministry of Health
GCM-	Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration
HuCaPAN-	Human Capital Providers in Nigeria
IOM-	International Organization for Migration
NCFRMI-	National Commission for Refugees Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons
NIS-	Nigerian Immigration Service
NMD-	National Migration Dialogue
NMP-	National Migration Policy
TWG-	Technical Working Group
WHO-	World Health Organization

## **C. BACKGROUND**

The outbreak and unresolved nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has posed and continues to pose challenges on all including migrants.

Globally, migration activities in the major part of 2020 were on a standstill as a result of the pandemic. Prior to this time, little or no attention was paid to migrants' health in the world. The emergence of COVID-19 exposed migrants to situations of border closure, violation of migrants' rights, inaccessibility of migrants to various health and social services, strict and restrictive visa policies were enacted and implemented across nations of the world.

Nigeria, a country with migrants (both internal and international) was also affected by the pandemic. Precautionary measures which included border closure, restriction of movement and lockdown were also deployed by the government of Nigeria to reduce the spread of the virus within the country. The circumstances further exacerbate the hardship experienced by many people and the vulnerability of migrants who are always the most affected in such situations. The government of Nigeria undertook some palliative activities to reduce the effect of the pandemic and the precautionary measures on its populace, with little on attention to the migrant community.

Nevertheless, Nigeria aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which states that no one is left behind" including migrants; Objective 15 and 16 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) also calls for the provision of access to basic services, including comprehensive healthcare, education for all migrants and their full inclusion and social cohesion irrespective of their status.

The National Migration Policy (NMP) which is a veritable tool in coordinating migration activities in Nigeria including migrants' protection, does not provide for emerging issues of migrants' assistance and protection during pandemics.

Thus, in ensuring the vulnerable population of migrants (including refugees, asylum seekers and Internally Displaced Persons) are not left behind during pandemics, the 2020 NMD aimed at advocating for the mainstreaming of migrants' protection and assistance into national policies, plans and strategies, addressing issues of migrants' vulnerability during and post COVID-19, and discussing mechanisms for their assistance and protection. This focus is very apt bearing in mind that the NMP is nearing its review.

## **D. OBJECTIVE**

### **Overall Objective**

- To elaborate existing migration mechanisms and ensure access to healthcare, human rights and social protection to migrants in Nigeria, as provided by the GCM and the framework of its national implementation

## **Specific Objectives**

- To provide a platform for in-depth discussion on migrants' healthcare, education and social protection and explore ways to address the fact that migrants are still denied access to essential services
- To ensure the realization of the commitments of GCM objectives 15 and 16 to the provision of access to basic services to all migrants, their full inclusion and social cohesion using the framework for the national implementation of the GCM
- To share lessons learned, good practices and identify gaps, opportunities and new challenges
- To engage multi-sectoral partners at a policy level for a sustained national dialogue and an enabling policy environment for positive change
- To reach consensus on key policy strategies and benchmarks that will create a unified agenda on the health, educational and social protection of migrants in Nigeria and make recommendations for policy actions

## **E. METHODOLOGY /ACTIVITIES**

The 2020 NMD was a 2-day event with 2 activities: Press Conference and Consultative meeting/dialogue

### **Press briefing**

The press briefing by the Honorable Federal Commissioner of NCFRMI Sen. Basheer Garba Mohammed and Ms Prestage Murima, representative of the IOM Chief of Mission held at the at the Obasanjo hall in the Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation (OHCSF) on 17/12/2021. The event was well attended by members of the press and enthusiastic audience drawn from representatives of various stakeholders in the national migration governance. The conversation focused on advocating and raising awareness on the importance of mainstreaming migrants' protection and assistance into national policies, plans and strategies (see annex for details).

### **NMD Consultative meeting/dialogue**

The consultative meeting/dialogue brought together state and non-state actors on migration across the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The consultative process featured 2 sessions – opening and technical session.

#### **1. Opening session**

The session featured opening remarks, speeches, goodwill messages and highlighted actions of key government agencies on in response to the COVID-19 from the perspective of migrants' protection and assistance.

#### **Speeches**

**i.** The Honourable Federal Commissioner (HFC) of NCFRMI – Sen. Basheer Garba Mohammed in his opening remarks confirmed that migrants contribute immensely to the country of origin, transit and

destination. However, these contributions have been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with evidence of reduced remittances, little or no usual diaspora medical missions and discriminatory treatments against migrants. He stated further that the pandemic has exposed gaps in migration management and thus, the interest of migration stakeholders should lie in the impact of the pandemic on migrants, and ways to fill up the identified loopholes. The HFC reiterated in his remarks that even though Nigeria has had a fair share of the pandemic, NCFRMI made tremendous efforts of care towards Persons of Concern (POCs) and migrants to ensure no one is left behind in the distribution of palliatives and intensified effort to protect migrants.

**ii.** The representative of the IOM Chief of Mission, Ms Prestage Murima, applauded the NCFRMI for the apt theme of 2020 NMD as the discussions would reflect on the impact of the pandemic on migrants especially migrants in minority populations that encounter unique challenges. She stated that a resilient society is built when the rights of migrants are respected. Hence, the NMD and its theme are apt as it would provide an opportunity to examine strategies already in place, and decipher practical suggestions for audacious steps in achieving development. IOM thanked the European Union (EU) for its continuous support in implementing migration projects in Nigeria.

**iii.** The representative of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Nura B. Aliyu acknowledged the fact that migrants are usually worst hit by pandemics due to policy gaps. NEMA stated its collaborative efforts with NCFRMI in reintegrating stranded migrants from neighboring countries by providing healthcare, education and social protection.

**iv.** The World Health Organization (WHO) represented by Dr. Luka Ibrahim in his speech mentioned that the least protected migrants are, the more vulnerable they are to diseases. He stated that the responsibility of WHO is to protect and promote life, promoting and achieving health for all as enshrined in the 2030 SDGs, but this cannot be achieved if migrants are left behind. The WHO pledged its continuous support to migrants' cause and looked forward to actionable good policies to promote the lives of migrants.

**v.** The European Union (EU) representative, Alexandre Borges, reiterated that migration and mobility are integral parts of human life. EU welcomed the initiative of the 2020 NMD's theme and it is pleased to see that discussions are focused on the current issues rather than the general context of the NMP but however advised that response should be in line with international standards. The EU pledged its continuous support to help strengthen Nigeria migration governance structure.

**vi.** The representative of the Swiss Embassy, Mühlebach Manuel, applauded the TWG and the NCFRMI for sustaining the NMD since its inception in 2014. He however stated that more needs to be done to provide adequate assistance (adequate healthcare and services) to migrants.

**vii.** The Comptroller General of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) through his representative Jacobs Akin T. confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic can be said to be migration pandemic as it spread because of human mobility. The NIS aligned with the theme of the dialogue given the emergence of the second wave of the pandemic. Its responsibility at a time like this includes ensuring the wellbeing of migrants without compromising national security. In order to minimize contacts in reducing the spread of the virus, the NIS implements online services in granting visa on arrival and temporal work permit.

**viii.** The representative of the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development (FMHADMSD), Director Humanitarian and Disaster Dept. Mr. Greema A. A. stated clearly that migration has become a critical issue in the world as migration and movement of people brings development hence migrants are entitled to their fundamental human rights. Commendably, migration governance in Nigeria has witnessed an improvement since the mandate of NCFRMI was expanded. FMHADMSD also informed stakeholders at the dialogue that the National IDP policy will soon be adopted by the Federal Executive Council (FEC). The Ministry also used the opportunity to advise youths to desist from irregular migration.

## **2. Technical Session**

### **2.1 Setting the stage**

To ensure a better understanding of the technical session, the head of migration division, Ms. Joyce Opara, informed stakeholders that the 2020 NMD is set to ensure that thoughts and perspective are shared to make recommendations for policy actions, and the outcome of the dialogue would be used to update the NMP and elaborate other existing management mechanism to ensure migrants' access to health care, education, human rights and social protection.

### **2.2 Plenary Session**

To highlight experiences, challenges, impact, lessons learnt in key migration stakeholders' response to migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic, and proffer recommendations, a panel session was conducted with representatives from state and non-state actors.

#### **2.2.1. Experiences/response/impact**

- **Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development – represented by Deputy Director, Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Charles Anaelo**

The ministry which is a novel one is borne out of the necessity of coordination, achieving coherence in humanitarian response and ensuring no one is left behind. Prior to COVID-19, the ministry was already overwhelmed with humanitarian responses but it however took proactive steps in implementing social programs targeting citizens such as the setting up of a Technical Working Group (TWG) of all agencies whose mandates include humanitarian responses. The ministry further developed in collaboration with partners and agencies a context specific intervention targeting POCs. The context specific intervention focused on indigenes hence it was not inclusive of all; however, in collaboration with the World Food Program (WFP), the ministry carried out an area based approach intervention



which focused on ensuring every household gets involved. The ministry is also working with partners to ensure the decongestion of IDP camps.

- **African Youth Growth Foundation (AYGF) – Dr. Arome Salifu**  
In response to experiences and observation on how Nigeria responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, AYGF observed that the pandemic increased the vulnerability, suffering and exposure of migrants to exploitation. It was further observed that government intervention was not mainstreaming the migrants but with constant advocacy, it was eventually ensured. The impact assessment revealed that IDPs who live in concentrated settlement had huge challenges in observing social distancing and proper ventilation.
- **International Organization for Migration (IOM) – Ukamaka Osigwe**  
IOM in its intervention implemented specific actions for migrants in response to the pandemic. Irrespective of the stringent policies which affected migration such as the closure of international borders and airports, IOM ensured a voluntary return of stranded Nigerian migrants in African countries, safe return of migrants without breaching the safety measures put in place, ensured a COVID-19 test and quarantine for the returned migrants and have eventually carried out series of re-integration following the ease of the lockdown. The impact assessment carried out revealed that the vulnerable status of migrants was put in greater risk during the lockdown as there was no access to health in terms of health insurance, and also lack of opportunity on economic sustenance.
- **Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE) – Gloria Onifo**  
FMLE has the mandate to ensure everyone has the right to decent work, protection and freedom of association. Prior to the pandemic, FMLE has battled with the rate at which Nigerians move out of the country. This is evidenced in the fact that 90% of migration is labour driven. Conscious efforts are taken by the Technical Working Committee (TWWC) on migration to ensure migrant workers access decent work. It achieves this by the existence of Job Centres across the 6 geopolitical zones and establishment of Migrant Resource Centres (MRC).
- **Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) – Dr. Sahidu Abdulahi**  
The FMOH responded promptly with regards to the pandemic with the establishment of Emergency Response Centres for testing and tracing. So far, Nigeria has over 70 laboratories for testing, and these Centres are accessible to all including migrants as nationality is not used as a barrier in accessing healthcare services unless on insurance basis.
- **National Commission for Refugees Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) – (Hassan Tai Ejibuna Director, Refugees and Migration)**  
NCFRMI experience during the COVID-19 response was limited as a result of inadequate funding but it has however started the implementation of projects to resolve the over population of IDP camps across the country with the establishment of Resettlement cities for IDPs.

### 2.2.2 Lessons Learnt

- In operationalizing the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), the need to work together by stakeholders is necessary to achieve the goal.
- Establishment of government protocols to have a broader engagement with stakeholders to address POCs especially stranded migrants
- Synergy and holistic coordination of migration stakeholders and activities
- Ensuring a bottom-top approach in policy formulation
- Reviewed pattern of coordination
- Re-orientation of the citizens to accept government response
- End inter-agencies rivalries
- Labour migrants should be referred to the FMLE by NIS for certification
- Collaboration of migration stakeholders to have a doable migration policy
- Deliberate effort by migration stakeholders to ensure inclusiveness of migrant population
- Ensure migrant population are involved in government intervention
- Technical assistance is needed to ensure a reduction in the way Nigerians leave the country
- Government needs to include stakeholders on the grassroots with reference to its intervention
- There is need for synergy/cooperation among Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to promote referral remedy among agencies
- Involvement of State Governments in migration activities
- Establishment of migration help desk in the FMOH to create a synergy between the ministry and NCFRMI
- Investigation into the activities of HuCaPAN by the FMLE
- An inclusive distribution of palliatives ensuring no one is left behind including youths

### **2.2.3 Way forward**

- The revised policy should be decentralized to local level
- Specific migration responsibilities to State government
- Developing a social protection manual to foster inclusiveness of migrants
- Human rights of women and girl migrants should be adequately addressed
- Ensure serious data collection on emergency situations
- Monitoring of policies to ensure migrants become members of trade union
- Identify the inclusion of migrant community
- The revised policy should be in line with education and migration study Centres
- Creation of TWG at the state level
- Creation of multi sectoral committees at the state level to protect the interest of migrants
- More advocacy at the rural level
- Adequate psychosocial support for migrants
- Re-integration of returnees at the local level – mainstream local involvement
- Human right should be mainstreamed into every aspect of the reviewed NMP
- Proper coordination and partnership

- Collaboration between the Government, international organizations and CSOs
- Ensure recommendation of the UN open government partnership to include CSOs from policy design to implementation
- Mapping to ensure all stakeholders are involved in the process of policy review
- Decentralization of the migration governance structure
- The NMP should key into the ongoing review of the Social Protection Policy
- The reviewed NMP should also address issues of immigrants

#### **F. CONCLUSION: RECOMMENDATION AND EVALUATION**

The theme of the 2020 NMD was a timely response to the emerging issues of migration considering the emergence of the second wave of the pandemic. The lessons learnt from the first wave as highlighted during the course of the dialogue, would assist in tackling and covering the identified loopholes in the first wave of the pandemic for better protection and assistance of all including migrants thereby leaving no one behind in response to the pandemic. However, in subsequent dialogues like the NMD 2020, which affects migrants directly, migrants should be invited to highlight their experiences. This would give stakeholders more workable ideas and leeway on how to better protect them.