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ECOWAS LABOUR MIGRATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2025–2035)

DRAFT REPORT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BLMA	Bilateral Labour Migration Agreement
COD	Country of Destination
COO	Country of Origin
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EC	ECOWAS Commission
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FMM West Africa	Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization

ILS	International Labour Standards
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JLMP	Joint Programme on Labour Migration Governance for Development and Integration in Africa
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LFS	Labour Force survey
LMMIS	Labour Market and Migration Information System
LMSAP	Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCLE	Ministerial Conference on Labour and Employment
MIDWA	Migration Dialogue in West Africa
MPFA	Migration Policy Framework for Africa
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement
MS	Member State
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLMC	National Labour Migration Committee
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PWDs	People with Disabilities
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RF	Results Framework
RISDP	Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RLMCU	Regional Labour Migration Coordination Unit
RLMIS	Regional Labour Market Information System
RMLSPF	Regional Ministerial Labour and Social Protection Forum
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework

SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDF	Social Dialogue Forum
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TSDF	Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN General Assembly	United Nations General Assembly
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNSD	UN Statistics Division

GLOSSARY OF TERMS/DEFINITION OF TERMS

An **international migrant** is “any person who changes his or her country of usual residence” (United Nations, 1998; IMF, 2009).

Migrant stock is a static measure of the number of persons who can be identified as international migrants at a given time.

Migrant stocks are defined as “the total number of international migrants present in a given country at a particular point in time” (UN SD, 2017: 9).

The **immigrant stock** is defined as the total number of international migrants present in a given country at a particular point in time.

The **emigrant stock** is the total number of emigrants from a given country at a particular point in time.

International labour migration is defined as the movement of persons to a State in which he or she is not national for employment.

A **migrant worker** is defined as a person who migrates from one country to another with a view to being employed otherwise than on his own account and includes any person regularly admitted as a migrant for employment (ILO Convention No. 97).

1. CONTEXT

1.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT OVERVIEW

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Member States has experienced dynamic labour migration patterns shaped by socio-economic, political, and environmental factors. Migration within the region is primarily intra-regional, with Member States serving as both countries of origins and destinations for labour migrants.

Labour migration within the ECOWAS region is a significant and vital component of regional integration and economic development in West Africa. Current strategic priorities of the Commission, though not framed as labour migration issues, offer channels through which to introduce labour migration-specific initiatives. The areas of social protection, small-scale cross-border trade, youth employment and social dialogue all have relevance for labour migration and benefit from momentum that can be capitalized on (ILO 2015). While there are many benefits in terms of economic growth and cultural exchange, issues such as inconsistent policy implementation and migration-related risks (dangers during transit, exploitation, health issues, and social tensions) remain a challenge. As such, addressing these issues through stronger governance, better coordination, and protective measures is crucial for maximizing the potential of labour migration in West Africa. Therefore, it cannot be overemphasized that labour migration plays a key role in this process by facilitating the mobility of the workers across Member States, helping to balance labour supply and demand, and promoting shared economic growth and integration.

Labour migration takes many forms, including temporary, seasonal, and permanent migration (ICMPD and IOM, 2015 and ILO, 2025), and its rate in the ECOWAS region is continuously increasing with different labour migration corridors in the region. Over ten years ago, migrant workers in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire were particularly concentrated in agriculture, including livestock, fishing and fish farming (Awumbila, 2014). While those in Mali are largely engaged in three sectors, agriculture, trade and non-agricultural manual labour activities. However, their counterparts in Ghana are mostly in the artisanal, fishery and trade sectors. Niger, Nigeria and Senegal migrant workers are engaged in trading of goods (Awumbila, 2014). Adepoju (2003) and Teye & Awumbila (2022) observed labour migration between countries and sectors on concentration: Burkina Faso to Côte d'Ivoire (agriculture, cocoa production, domestic work); Niger to Nigeria (construction, informal trade, services); Mali to Senegal (fishing, manufacturing, textile industry), and Ghana to Nigeria (oil & gas, finance, education).

The number of international migrant workers in the ECOWAS region in 2017 was 3.74 million an increase of 26.2 per cent from the year 2008 when there were 2.97 million migrant workers in the region (African Union Commission, 2020) and 4.3 million in West Africa which hosts the largest number of migrant workers (ILO, 2024). Out of the 3.7 million international migrant workers in West Africa, 1.6 million were women and young migrants (15-35 years old) made up 46 per cent of all migrant workers (AUC, 2020).

The main reason behind the increasing rate of labour migration across the ECOWAS Member States could be traced to the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, relating to the Rights of Entry, Residence and Establishment. This Protocol grants ECOWAS citizens the right to enter, reside, and establish themselves in other Member States. Although, other ECOWAS frameworks such as the Labour and Employment Policy, the General Convention on Social Security, the Recognition and Equivalence of Certificates in the Region, the Decent Work Programme, Gender and Migration Framework and Plan of Action and the Regional Migration Policy exist however, their implementation appear to be weak across Member States. This necessitates the introduction of an ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy that harmonizes and facilitates the implementation of ECOWAS instruments that are relevant to labour migration.

Urban cities play a significant role in engendering labour migration, primarily due to the perception of better economic opportunities, access to services, and improved living conditions, which attract people from rural areas seeking employment and a better quality of life. More than half of the world's population now live in towns and cities, and the figure is projected to rise to 75 per cent by 2050 (UN DESA, 2015), with most of this urban growth concentrated in Africa and Asia. In 2010, more than 200 million people, equal to about 3 per cent of the world's population, lived in a country different from where they were born, and migration within countries continue at high levels. Thus, the desire to migrate to urban cities might have contributed to the increase in labour migration in the ECOWAS region.

The increase in labour migration in the region has also brought to the limelight some challenges with regard to labour migration governance. These challenges include irregular migration such as unauthorized border crossings, the use of falsified travel documents, no documents or overstaying a visa. In addition, low employment probabilities, wage disparities, inadequate recognition of skills and academic qualifications, and skills mismatches are factors leading to existing labour market gaps. Also, other challenges include high rates of informality leading to underemployment, gender equality, and equity issues, exploitation of both women and men migrants, trafficking in persons, limited access to social security for migrant workers. These include healthcare, pensions, and workers' compensation, exclusion from trade unions and labour representation, inadequate data on labour migration, and poor harmonization of policies and legal frameworks across Member States. In addition, it is imperative to highlight

gaps in governance, infrastructure, and inter-state coordination in the management of labour migration in the region.

The impacts of extreme climatic events such as floods, drought, erosion, rising temperatures, and sea level rise are already significantly impacting people's livelihoods in West Africa (Osei-Amponsah et al., 2023). Many people who depend on rainfed agrarian livelihoods consider migration as a climate adaptation response (Bosetti et al., 2021). Models project that up to 32 million people in West Africa will move within their countries by 2050 due to the impacts of climate change (Rigaud et al., 2021). In 2024, more than 1.2 million people were displaced by flooding in West Africa (Summer, 2025). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2022) report, at 2°C global warming, West Africa is projected to experience a drier, more drought-prone and arid climate, especially in the last decades of the twenty-first century. Drought pushes pastoral farmers to new regions while flooding forces other individuals to abandon their homes.

Labour Migration in the ECOWAS region has also been affected by the displacement of persons as livelihoods are disrupted by insecurity and violence. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) by conflicts and climatic shocks in Burkina Faso was 1.1 million, Mali was 331,206, and Niger recorded 138,229 persons by mid-2021 (IOM, 2021b). As of April 2021, more than 2.9 million people were internally displaced across Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria due to the decade-long Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria (IOM, 2021b).

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) report on women migrant workers' labour market situation in West Africa identified that women migrants are more vulnerable in the migration process as they are at greater risk of human trafficking, gender-based violence, and forced labour. They frequently lack access to skills training, financial inclusion, pathways to high-paying jobs, less-precarious and more diversified work. Many face cultural and legal barriers, limiting their ability to negotiate fair contracts or seek legal recourse for labour rights violation and/or other forms of abuse.

Despite the increasing flow of migrant workers, the absence of a comprehensive and harmonized Labour Migration Strategy in the ECOWAS region is a pressing issue that has contributed to irregular migration, labour exploitation, and limited social protection for migrant workers. Therefore, to address these challenges and maximize the potential opportunities, it is imperative to develop a Regional Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan that aligns with the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Regional Migration Policy, Common Approach on Migration, the Labour and Employment Policy, African Union's Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA), the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) Strategic Framework, Agenda 2063, and

draws from global frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ILO's standards, with a focus on inclusive growth and sustainable development.

1.2 GLOBAL AND CONTINENTAL CONTEXT

Globally, labour migration, driven by economic disparities and other factors, indicates that international labour migration is likely to increase in the future. Thus, the challenge is how to manage migration in such a way that its positive effects are maximized, making it a win-win phenomenon for all concerned. Consequently, policies and activities that govern labour migration have been the focus of international partners like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and ILO whose mandate involves the protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own (ILO, 2025b).

The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) is the first-ever inter-governmentally negotiated UN agreement on a common approach to managing international migration (UN General Assembly, 2019). It is based on a collective realization that no single government can effectively govern migration alone - whether fully realizing the potential of global mobility or protecting people from the most pernicious aspects of migration - without cooperation, whether bilaterally, regionally, or globally. The GCM has 23 objectives covering all aspects of migration with possible actions, drawn from best practices, that States may choose to utilize to implement their national migration policies. While not legally binding, the GCM's guiding principles, objectives, and actions find their root in established obligations and principles, underpinned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and international law.

Another relevant migration policy framework is the African Union Commission's (AUC) Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) and Plan of Action (2018 – 2030). This revised MPFA takes into account AU priorities, policies, Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8,10 and 17, and international migration management policies and standards. It provides Member States (MSs) and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) with comprehensive policy guidelines, principles, and action plans to assist them in the formulation and implementation of their own national and regional migration policies following their priorities and resources (AUC, 2018). Furthermore, the 1949 International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 97 on Migration for Employment was aimed at encouraging fair treatment for migrant workers. Likewise, the ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrant Workers focused on preventing irregular migration and exploitation, as well as the AUC's MPFA. Similarly, the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Protection of Rights of all Migrant Workers and their families

establishes the fundamental human rights protection of migrant workers and their dependents.

These international agreements and policies guide labour migration governance. If they are efficiently implemented, they will result in maximizing the positive impact of migration in the 21st century. As a regional economic bloc, ECOWAS recognizes the need to align its Labour Migration Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan with these global commitments while addressing region-specific challenges. Therefore, the ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and its Action Plan will be a comprehensive framework aimed at promoting well-managed migration, protecting migrant workers, and maximizing the developmental impact of migration for both sending and receiving countries. By addressing governance, rights protection, and regional cooperation, the Strategy aims to create a more integrated, equitable, and prosperous West Africa.

1.2.1 Labour Migration Statistics and Dynamics in the ECOWAS Region

International labour migration refers to the movement of persons to a State in which he or she is not national for employment. It is the involvement of men and women filling vital labour shortages while also gaining skills and experiences. Also, it is the process of individuals (or groups) moving to constitute the labour force at different destinations concerning physical location. A migrant worker is a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national (UN ICMW, 1990, Art 2.1).

The estimated number of international migrants was 304 million in 2024 (UN DESA, 2025). In 2022, there were 284.5 million international migrants globally, with 255.7 million of them of working age (15 and over), making up 4.7 per cent of the global labour force (ILO, 2024). Of the 167.7 million international migrants in the labour force, 155.6 million were employed, while 12.1 million were unemployed (ILO, 2024). These international migrant workers made up approximately 65.6 per cent of the world's international migrant population of working age (aged 15 and over) as of 2022 (ILO, 2024). Between 2010 and 2019, the number of international migrant workers in Africa increased from 9.6 million to 14.5 million respectively, while the average annual growth rate among migrant workers (4.8%) is higher than that of the overall African population (2.7%) (AU, 2024; AUC and JLMP partners, 2021). In 2019, international migrant workers accounted for 2.8 per cent of the total labour force in Africa (AUC, 2020).

The international migrant workers in Africa are unevenly distributed across the economic communities, with the Community of Sahel-Saharan States and Arab Maghreb Union recording the highest and lowest numbers of migrant workers aged 15 years and above in 2017, at 6 million and 800,000 respectively (AUC, 2020). The ECOWAS region was somewhere in the

middle with 3.7 million international migrant workers (AUC, 2020). In ECOWAS Member States, the share of migrant workers who managed to be employed was 94.6 per cent in Ghana and 90.1 per cent in Nigeria. In recent times, Western Africa has long been characterized by high levels of mobility facilitated by regional policies of the ECOWAS region, notably the Free Movement Protocol, Regional Migration Policy, and Common Approach on Migration. While more than five out of eight migrants from Western Africa stay within the region, increasing numbers are also moving to different destinations in Africa and beyond in search of job opportunities and better economic prospects (UN DESA, 2020).

Labour migration is a critical driver of economic development in West Africa, supporting regional trade, employment, and poverty reduction. Migration enhances workforce mobility, allowing economies to fill labour shortages, transfer skills, and enhances economic competitiveness. Many sectors, such as agriculture, construction, mining, and services, rely heavily on migrant labour to sustain productivity. According to the World Bank (2023), remittance inflows to ECOWAS countries exceeded \$40 billion annually, playing a vital role in household income, education financing, healthcare access, and small business growth. Remittances account for a significant source of financing in countries like Nigeria where flows are close to USD 21 billion per year (UN, 2024). Even with lesser amount of flows, remittances represent an important share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in countries such as, The Gambia (28.3%), Cabo Verde (18.2%), Guinea Bissau (11.0%) and Liberia (9.0%), demonstrating the financial importance of migrant earnings in supporting the development of their countries of origin (UN, 2024).

1.2.2 Migrant Workers in the Informal Sector of the ECOWAS Region

West Africa is one of the most mobile regions globally, with intra-regional migration constituting over 80 per cent of total migration flows (FMM West Africa Phase I, 2021). Migration is a historical and economic necessity in the ECOWAS region, driven by employment opportunities, climate change, demographic trends, and regional trade integration. Rapid urbanization across ECOWAS Member States also spurred migration to major cities such as Lagos (Nigeria), Accra (Ghana), and Dakar (Senegal). Environmental factors such as desertification and drought have intensified migration trends in Sahelian countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, as migrants seek stable living conditions in coastal regions or urban areas (Teye and Nikoi, 2022).

The informal economy accounts for approximately 90% in low-income countries, 67% in middle-income countries, and 18% in high-income countries, representing 62% of all workers worldwide (ILO, 2020b). In Sub-Saharan Africa, most people are employed in the informal

economy. Even when agriculture is excluded, informality still dominates employment: 78.8% in Central Africa, 76.6% in Eastern Africa, and 87% in Western Africa. Women are more likely to be working in the informal economy and, discounting South Africa, more than 90% of women work in informal employment in Sub-Saharan Africa, as compared to 86.4% of men (ILO, 2018). The common reasons for women's dominance in the informal sector include lower levels of education, care responsibilities, flexibility of informal work, traditional gender roles, discrimination, and gender-biased laws (Malta et al., 2019; Barry, 2021).

Migrants work predominantly in informal and unprotected settings affected by temporality, low wages, and an absence of social protection. Migrant workers are majorly found in the informal sectors such as agriculture, construction, mining, caregiving, and domestic services. For instance, informal trading is primarily done by women, representing as much as 70 to 80 per cent of such traders in some African countries (AU, 2020). Although migrant workers contribute between 10 to 30 per cent of GDP in their countries of origin through remittances (AU, 2020), they are confronted with significant challenges in their destination countries, including precarious work environments, overcrowded transportation living conditions, lack of access to preventive information and healthcare. A reduction in remittances would have a profound impact on livelihoods, food security, and nutrition in both rural and urban areas of origin, as well as on the well-being of migrant workers in destination countries.

The issue of extending social protection to migrant workers should be a priority of the region. ECOWAS Member States should adopt policy options to tackle discrimination and women's overrepresentation in the informal economy, such as investing in the physical and human capital needed for quality education, removing discriminatory barriers from the legal framework, providing family planning to women and families that desire it, and improving infrastructure. Furthermore, there is a need to extend social protection mechanisms to the informal economy. This can be done by providing access to healthcare, education, and other benefits lacking in the informal sector as a means to encourage formalization.

1.2.3 Labour Migration and Human Security

The human security approach conceives individual security beyond the physical safety of lives and broadly as the ability to secure and access basic human needs that enable people to live with dignity and achieve self-actualization and well-being (Badewa and Dinbabo, 2021; Adaawen, 2024). Urbanization, favourable economic conditions, policies, industrialization, and employment opportunities in major urban settings arguably serve as pull factors of international migration. Contrariwise, climate change, rising inequalities, unemployment, poverty, income gaps, weak institutions, lack of rule of law, natural resource governance,

conflicts, and difficulties in accessing opportunities have driven local and international migration in West Africa (European Commission, 2021; Badewa and Dinbabo, 2021; Adaawen, 2024). Badewa and Dinbabo (2021) found that irregular migration is indicative of the smuggling and trafficking of humans and illicit commodities pervading the Sahel-Lake Chad corridor, particularly the vast desert areas of Chad, Niger, and Libya. Consequently, IOM (2018) estimated an annual profit of \$150 million as the proceeds of irregular migration on the West Africa-Europe route across the Sahel.

Migrants with irregular status are more susceptible to exploitation, including human trafficking, exploitation and abuse, violent extremism, xenophobia, terrorism, and social exclusion which are evident in West Africa (Omoyeni, 2023). Security actors have obligations to protect the rights of migrants in countries of origin, transit, and destination (IOM, 2022). This means that security forces, law enforcement services and other concerned authorities need to uphold migrants' rights, needs (safety and security arrangements) and access to justice.

1.2.4 Labour Migration and Gender in West Africa

Labour migration reflects a gendered dimension as it grows in complexity. The ageing populations in many countries is resulting in labour shortages and creating a growing demand for care services, while countries with youthful populations struggle to create decent jobs for growing workforces. The significant demand for migrant workers in the care economy is evidenced by their strong representation in that sector, where one in three employed migrant women work in the care economy, compared to one in five non-migrant women (ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers report for 2024).

According to the 2nd edition of the ILO's Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers (ILO 2018a), women migrant workers represented 3.6 million workers in Sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for almost 30 per cent of migrant workers, and have a labour force participation rate of 47.3 per cent. In some countries, these figures are even higher; according to UNCTAD's Economic Development in Africa 2018 Report (UNCTAD 2018), almost 50 per cent of international migrants from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya and Senegal are women.

Among all migrant workers worldwide in 2022, 64.9 million, or approximately 38.7 per cent were female (ILO, 2024). Men migrant workers were 102.7 million or 61.3 per cent of the total (ILO, 2024). In Africa, women accounted for 39 per cent of migrant workers in 2019, slightly lower than the share of women in the total labour force (45%), but an increase from 27 per cent in 2010 (IOM, 2024). Similarly, in the ECOWAS region, there are more men migrant workers than females. In 2017 there were 2.14 million male international migrant workers compared to 1.60 million female international migrant workers (AUC, 2020).

1.3 ECOWAS POLICY FRAMEWORKS TO MANAGE LABOUR MIGRATION

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has established several protocols, frameworks, and policies on labour migration. These documents help facilitate labour migration and foster regional integration among its Member States. Accordingly, the policy frameworks include the Free Movement Protocol, Common Approach on Migration, the Labour and Employment Policy, the General Convention on Social Security, the Recognition and Equivalence of Certificates in the Region, the Decent Work Programme, and the Regional Migration Policy exist and, lastly, the Gender and Migration Framework and Plan of Action. However, implementation remains inconsistent, requiring stronger coordination and enforcement mechanisms. Measures such as strengthening regional dialogue, improving labour market information systems, enhancing social security for migrant workers, combating trafficking and child labour, capacity building and training including monitoring and evaluation need to be considered to manage labour migration in the region.

Table 1: ECOWAS Policy Frameworks to manage labour migration

SN	ECOWAS Instruments	Year	Context (major focus)
1	Protocol to the treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the free movement of persons, rights of residence, and right of establishment	2018	Promote legal and safe migration
2	ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment	1979, 1985, 1990	Promote free movement of persons, guarantee residence and establishment of economic activities
3	ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration	2008	Facilitate orderly, legal, and safe migration
4	ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security	1993	Guarantee of social security benefits
5	Supplementary Act A/Sa.5/07/13 Relating to The General Convention on Social Security of Member States of ECOWAS	2013	Guarantee of social security benefits
6	ECOWAS Labour and Employment Policy	2009	Full, productive, continuous, and freely chosen employment, and protection of workers/Employment
7	General Convention on the Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates, and Other Qualifications in ECOWAS Member States	2003	Support the recognition of skills and qualifications among Members
8	Supplementary Act on the Establishment of a Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum	2010	Functional tripartite social dialogue
9	ECOWAS Youth Policy and Strategic Plan of Action	2010	Youth Development

11	ECOWAS Gender and Migration Framework and Plan of Action (2015–2020)	2005	Equal opportunities for men and women
12	Decision relating to the Illegal Trafficking in Children	2000	Eradicate the illegal trafficking of children
13	ECOWAS Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2018-2022)	(2018-2022)	Eradicate illegal trafficking of women and children
14	ECOWAS Regional Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour in West Africa, 2021-2030	2021-2030	Eradicate child and forced labour
15	ECOWAS Regional Migration Policy	2018-2028	Regular migration
16	ECOWAS Vision 2020	2022	Growth and development
17	ECOWAS Social Protection Framework and its Operation Plan	2023	Portability of social protection

1.3.1 Lessons Learned from ECOWAS Labour Migration Frameworks

Some key findings and lessons to be learnt on the implementation of ECOWAS migration instruments, policies or frameworks are:

- a. The ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol (1979–Present)
 - While the Right of Entry, Residence, and Establishment is legally recognized, many Member States still impose administrative and legal restrictions.
 - Border management remains weak, leading to irregular migration challenges (WATHI, 2020; IOM, 2020).
- b. ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration (2008–Present)
 - Designed as a comprehensive migration framework but limited national implementation due to lack of financial and institutional support.
 - Gender considerations remain weak, as women migrants face significant barriers in accessing legal migration pathways (IOM, 2020; WATHI, 2020).
- c. ECOWAS Labour and Employment Policy (2009)
 - The implementation of the Labour and Employment Policy has been slow after its adoption.

- The ECOWAS Labour Market and Migration Information System (ELMMIS) is yet to be established and made operational, although feasibility studies have been conducted, and some Member States have served as pilot countries to produce certain indicators (ECOWAS Commission, 2020; ILO, 2021c).
- General Convention on Social Security: The General Convention on Social Security entered into force by adoption of the Supplementary Act relating to the General Convention on Social Security of Member States of ECOWAS, however Member States have been slow in meeting its demands.
- There is no universal pension portability framework in the ECOWAS region.

2. LABOUR MIGRATION STRATEGY

2.1 OVERVIEW

A comprehensive Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan is essential to address the challenges of labour migration and unlock its potential benefits for the socio-economic development of the ECOWAS region. Such a Strategy would ensure that labour migration contributes to economic growth, social inclusion, and regional integration while mitigating its potential risks. Thus, this ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan (LMSAP) is critical to promoting free movement and labour mobility, protecting men and women migrant workers' rights, improving data management and research, fostering labour market integration and development, and facilitating regional cooperation and partnerships.

2.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2.2.1 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: PROMOTE REGULAR MIGRATION, LABOUR MOBILITY, AND HUMAN SECURITY

The free movement of persons within the ECOWAS region is one of the fundamental priorities for promoting economic integration across the region, which is the mission of ECOWAS. The ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan will target strengthening labour migration governance in the ECOWAS region. The Strategy and Action Plan will ensure that labour migration is governed by clear, coherent, harmonized policies and legal frameworks across Member States.

The security of migrant workers in destination countries is paramount. Security involves individual security beyond the physical safety of lives and broadly as the ability to secure and access basic human needs that enable people to live with dignity and achieve self-actualization and well-being. This is necessary because of the drivers of international labour migration such as climate change, rising inequalities, unemployment, poverty, income gaps, weak institutions, lack of rule of law, natural resource governance, and conflicts. Likewise, because irregular labour migration is indicative of the smuggling and trafficking of persons, it is imperative to have a Strategy that addresses human and economic security holistically.

Specific objective 1.1: Ensure equitable access to and participation in safe and regular migration opportunities and mobility pathways through the effective implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol

Despite the ratification of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol by all Member States, inconsistent enforcement remains a challenge. Restrictive residency laws, administrative and practical barriers, and inadequate border management practices hinder the Protocol's objectives. This Strategy will bridge the gap of ineffective implementation of the Free Movement Protocol within the region. The effective implementation of the ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration should be a top priority for Member States.

Over the years, Member States have faced some challenges to the full implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol as National Laws take precedence. The implementation of the protocol has been uneven among Member States, with some making more progress than others. Some of the challenges include inadequate infrastructure, resources, and personnel. Others are plagued with corruption and border control issues that hinder the free movement of persons and goods within the ECOWAS region. This Strategic objective seeks to ensure equitable access to and participation in safe, orderly, regular migration opportunities and mobility pathways through the effective implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol.

Main Activities

- 1.1.1 Improve and strengthen the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, relating to the Rights of Entry, Residence, and Establishment.
- 1.1.2 Simplify procedures for migrant workers to obtain residence permits, work permits, and other necessary documents.
- 1.1.3 Develop a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track Member States' compliance with the Free Movement Protocol.

- 1.1.4 Raise awareness on the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol and its provisions across all Member States.

Specific objective 1.2: Ensure that labour migration is governed by clear, coherent, harmonized policies and legal frameworks across Member States.

While the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement, aims to promote regional integration and economic development, there are policies and regulations among Member States that contradict this protocol. For instance, some Member States have implemented their residency permits and work permits, which can hinder the free movement of people within the region. Additionally, some Member States have restrictive policies regarding the right of establishment, making it difficult for community citizens to set up businesses or invest in their territories. Thus, Member States need to be more decisive and proactive to fully harmonize their policies and regulations with the ECOWAS Protocols, thereby eliminating inconsistencies and contradictions.

The governance of labour migration has grown in complexity in the ECOWAS region. The need for coherence among key policy areas such as labour migration, employment, education and training has become essential to both the protection of migrant workers' rights, and addressing economic and labour market demands (Popova and Panzica, 2017; ILO, 2020c). Thus, to ensure coherence and harmonization of policies and legal frameworks across Member States, this requires a coordinated approach from the design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation of policies including the ECOWAS LMSAP and putting in place the necessary institutional arrangements, frameworks, and having the human and financial resources to guarantee effective coherence. Policy coherence can ensure better protection of migrant workers' rights, reducing abuse and exploitation in recruitment, and adequately matching jobs with skills, leading to a greater potential for the positive contribution of labour migration to development.

Main Activities

- 1.2.1 Develop, review, and harmonize national labour migration laws to ensure consistency with the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols and other legal instruments of the AU and International Labour Organization.
- 1.2.2 Encourage full implementation of the ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan by national governments.
- 1.2.3 Promote bilateral cooperation on labour migration through Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs).

Specific objective 1.3: Support development and the recognition of skills, qualifications, and experience across borders to facilitate better labour market integration and enhance employability of migrant workers in the labour markets of Member States

Labour migration facilitates the acquisition of new skills, training, and experiences by the migrants while it addresses the skill shortages in destination countries, supporting their economic growth and competitiveness. However, without a standardized mechanism for recognizing skills, qualifications, or work experience across the ECOWAS Member States, the consequence is underemployment or deskilling of skilled migrants. Although the General Convention A/C.1/1/03 on the Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates and Other Qualifications in ECOWAS Member States was adopted in 2003, implementation has remained insufficient. The ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan will focus on supporting the recognition of skills, qualifications, and experience across borders to facilitate better integration of migrant workers into the labour markets of Member States. This facilitates the development of regional frameworks for skills portability, including harmonizing qualifications and establishing Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs).

Main Activities

- 1.3.1 Promote the full implementation of the General Convention A/C.1/1/03 on the Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates, and Other Qualifications in ECOWAS Member States
- 1.3.2 Operationalize the ECOWAS Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) to support labour mobility, ensuring that qualification recognition processes are accessible to both men and women workers.
- 1.3.3 Harmonize Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula to create a seamless, gender-responsive training and certification process.
- 1.3.4 Develop sectoral Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for professional and vocational qualifications that address skills gaps and gender disparities.
- 1.3.5 Support the establishment of Tripartite Committees on Skills at the ECOWAS level and promote inter-Regional Economic Community dialogue and sharing experiences on skills for migration and mobility.
- 1.3.6 Provide targeted upskilling and reskilling initiatives/skills development programs for low-skilled migrant workers to enhance their employability.
- 1.3.7 Strengthen linkages between training institutions and employers to facilitate job placement of migrant workers.

Specific objective 1.4: Develop and operationalize a Labour Market and Migration Information System (LMMIS) to produce comprehensive, accurate and harmonized data on labour market, including labour migration

Migrant workers often struggle to access reliable data on job opportunities, wages, and working conditions, limiting informed decision-making (World Bank, 2021). This is due to several factors including ineffective systems for collecting and sharing labour market information, limited access to online resources, language and cultural barriers, restrictive and bureaucratic policies, limited social networks, limited financial resources, lack of awareness, limited access to education and training.

The ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan will focus on the improvement of availability and quality of labour migration data in the ECOWAS Member States by advocating for the use of international labour migration indicators (including ICLS guidelines, module on collection of SDG10.7.1 and AU guidelines). At the country level, the focus will be to improve labour migration data, administrative records on migrant workers' consistency and alignment to international concepts and definitions.

Furthermore, it will involve establishing a labour migration statistics system integrated with the different national statistics systems to establish a coordinating reporting mechanism regularly (at least every two years) on key labour migration statistical indicators. Work will also include strengthening labour market needs assessments, particularly linked to the identification of labour market supply, and demand (labour shortages) for migrant workers.

Main Activities

- 1.4.1 Establish a standardized system for collecting and sharing migration data across ECOWAS Member States for consistency and comparability.
- 1.4.2 Conduct regular research and labour market analysis on labour migration trends, patterns, and impacts to inform policy decisions.
- 1.4.3 Upgrade and fully operationalize the ECOWAS Labour Market and Migration Information System (ELMMIS) to track migration trends, including gender-disaggregated indicators.

Specific objective 1.5: Develop and implement strategies to address forced labour of migrant workers and linkages with smuggling, and trafficking in persons, while providing protection and assistance to victims

Many migrants are unaware or face barriers to access of regular migration pathways or the risks associated with irregular migration. This knowledge gap increases vulnerability to trafficking,

smuggling, and exploitation (IOM, 2022). ECOWAS has two legal instruments on trafficking, which are “*Decision relating to the Illegal Trafficking in Children*” and “*Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2018-2022)*”. The full implementation of these instruments will contribute towards reducing the cases of trafficking in persons, especially women, children, and vulnerable groups. However, this Strategy complements the other relevant legal instruments by addressing the gaps in their implementation.

Main Activities

- 1.5.1 Promote awareness-raising campaigns and information dissemination on safe migration practices and risks associated with irregular migration, incorporating messages that address gender-specific challenges.
- 1.5.2 Strengthen cooperation between national law enforcement agencies and regional anti-trafficking task forces to combat trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, and protecting migrant workers from exploitation and abuse.
- 1.5.3 Strengthen the capacity of State and Non-State Actors to respond effectively to TIP issues through specialized training.
- 1.5.4 Allocate financial resources/budget to ensure that migrant workers' protection needs are met in terms of legal assistance, emergency shelter, health, return, and reintegration.
- 1.5.5 Engage the Civil Society Organizations (CSO), traditional and religious leaders, and social workers' organization as well as other collectives in community outreach programs to raise awareness about the risks of irregular migration and advocate for gender-sensitive safe migration practices.
- 1.5.6 Establish community reporting mechanisms and hotlines for cases relating to trafficking in persons.

2.2.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS

The ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan (LMSAP) will advocate for the ratification and effective implementation of International Labour Standards on the protection of migrant workers and will contribute strongly to defusing misconceptions and combating discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance against migrant workers.

The Strategy will involve the media to promote balanced and ethical reporting on labour migration aimed at combatting sensationalism in migration discourse and raising awareness of the risks and challenges of labour migration as well as the positive contributions migrant workers make to their communities in host and origin countries.

Specific objective 2.1: Promote the rights and welfare of migrant workers and their families through ensuring fair and ethical recruitment and access to decent work

As labour migration expands, the need for fair and ethical recruitment increases in order to avoid abuses and improve working conditions. In addition to the three important ILO Conventions (Employment Service Convention, 1948 (88), Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (97), and Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (181)), considerations will be given to fair and ethical recruitment of migrant workers in the region in line with the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines on Fair Recruitment and Definition of Recruitment Costs and Related Fees and IOM's flagship initiative on International Recruitment Integrity Standard (IRIS).

In addition to the aforementioned and the AU Fair and Ethical Recruitment Strategy for Africa, this LMSAP aims to create opportunities for decent work for all individuals, including migrants, promoting social justice and breaking down barriers to equality in the world of work.

Main Activities

- 2.1.1 Promote fair and ethical recruitment, labour standards, including minimum wage, working hours, non-discrimination and social security benefits for migrant workers.
- 2.1.2 Develop a regional roadmap or action plan to promote fair recruitment.
- 2.1.3 Establish and strengthen the labour inspectorates in Member States to increase workplace inspections and compliance mechanisms to ensure safe working conditions, with gender-disaggregated reporting to identify and address the specific risks faced by workers.
- 2.1.4 Promote fair and ethical recruitment practices through the review of laws, policies, regulations and enforcement on recruitment agencies and the implementation of awareness raising activities within ECOWAS Member States
- 2.1.5 Fair business practices are expanded and consolidated in selected labour migration corridors and sectors
- 2.1.6 Ensure migrant workers have greater access to reliable information and improved services throughout the recruitment process through comprehensive orientation programmes.
- 2.1.7 Strengthen capacities of public and private employment agencies to implement fair and ethical recruitment process

Specific objective 2.2: Protection against exploitation and labour rights violations through strengthening of support and social services

The strengthening of support and social services is crucial to protect migrant workers against exploitation and labour rights violations, including child labour. This can be done by providing access to essential services, promoting social justice, and empowering migrant workers through collective bargaining and trade unions. Social services, like healthcare, education, and social protection, are vital for improving the well-being of migrant workers and their families, making them less vulnerable to exploitation. Social service workers are often the first line of response for individuals at risk of exploitation and help in identifying and managing those risks.

They can challenge harmful norms and behaviours that contribute to exploitation, discrimination, and promoting social justice. Thus, the need for Member States to strengthen their social workforce/support services mechanisms to be able to respond to the needs of migrant workers. This Strategy will explore the strengthening of services that are essential to support migrant workers in their journey to make a living outside their home countries.

Main Activities

- 2.2.1 Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to prevent labour exploitation, discrimination, and human trafficking.
- 2.2.2 Promote awareness campaigns on the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers.
- 2.2.3 Establish migrant resource centres to provide support services for migrant workers information and assistance on social services.
- 2.2.4 Strengthen legal frameworks and law enforcement to combat child and forced labour.
- 2.2.5 Establish hotlines and reporting mechanisms for migrants facing abuse or exploitation.
- 2.2.6 Foster partnerships with civil society organizations and trade unions to provide support and advocacy for migrant workers.

Specific objective 2.3: Ensure access to social protection and portability of benefits for migrant workers including those working in the informal sector

Social protection, or social security, is a human right defined as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout the life cycle (ILO, 2024). Social protection includes nine main areas: child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits,

sickness benefits, health protection (medical care), old-age benefits, invalidity/disability benefits, and survivors' benefits.

According to the ILO (2024), 3.8 billion individuals lack access to social protection globally and in Africa about 19% of the population is covered by at least one social protection benefit. Even though social security is a fundamental human right established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), important social protection coverage gaps remain for nationals and non-nationals. The ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan will support the extension of social protection to migrant workers and their families in the region

Many factors influence migrant workers' access to social protection benefits including: their migratory status, nationality, type of employment, duration of stay, skills set, as well the sector in which they work. Many occupy low-skilled jobs in sectors such as agriculture, construction, informal trading, and domestic services which are characterized by a high-level of informality. According to the ILO, countries in West Africa are among those with the highest rate of workers in the informal economy.

In ECOWAS Member States, migrant workers' legal access to social protection is quite widespread for all existing branches, with rare exceptions. The main exception pertains to migrant self-employed workers, who often do not have legal access to social protection or can sometimes enrol voluntarily. Nevertheless, migrants in the region continue to face both legal and practical obstacles to accessing contributory and non-contributory social protection. The ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security adopted in 2013 provides an essential framework to ensure the portability of benefits across ECOWAS Member States, although significant implementation challenges remain to be addressed. In this context, this output seeks to support ECOWAS Member States in progressively building more inclusive social protection systems and in implementing the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security.

Main Activities

- 2.3.1 Ensure full implementation of the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security
- 2.3.2 Develop and implement ECOWAS Guidelines on the Portability of Social Security Benefits.
- 2.3.3 Promote Social Security Agreements (bi/multi) between Member States to ensure the portability of benefits across the region Member States and between other Regional Economic Communities (RECs).
- 2.3.4 Organize capacity building and training workshops on the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security

- 2.3.5 Promote access to legal identity for migrant workers as a crucial step to accessing social protection.
- 2.3.6 Organize regional meetings and dialogues of the ECOWAS Committee of Experts on Social Security for the development of inclusive social security systems, and portability of benefits that extend protection to migrant workers and their families
- 2.3.7 Support assessments and/or actuarial studies of ECOWAS Member States Social Security Schemes to set up complementary measures addressing the administrative & practical obstacles faced by migrant workers and refugees.
- 2.3.8 Support ECOWAS Member States in adopting other unilateral measures, or mechanisms that allow for flexibility in the design of the schemes and assistance with regards to qualifying conditions and minimum requirements.

Specific objective 2.4: Enhance Migrant Workers' Access to Information

This strategic objective is in line with the GCM Objective 3, to provide, make available and disseminate accurate, timely, accessible and transparent information on migration-related aspects for and between States, communities and migrants at all stages of migration. The enhancement of migrant workers' access to information is crucial for their protection, empowerment, and the success of their labour migration endeavors. Migrant workers could access relevant information through Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) programmes, national campaigns and migrant resource centres (MRC) in origin countries at information points that make available relevant information on appropriate protection and assistance, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the various pathways for regular migration. In destination countries, migrant workers also benefit from continuous access to information points throughout the migration cycle, facilitated by community welfare attachés and overseas employment promoters.

The ECOWAS Member States need to leverage technology to make information easily accessible in various formats and languages, including print materials (handbooks, pamphlets, and brochures), online platforms (websites, mobile apps, and social media), and helplines and call centers.

Main Activities

- 2.4.1 Develop multilingual resources, national campaigns, PDO and outreach programs on job/business opportunities, pathways for regular migration, labour rights and privileges to reach diverse migrant communities.

- 2.4.2 Strengthen migrant associations and self-help groups to enhance migrant workers' access to accurate information regarding recruitment and employment process.
- 2.4.3 Work with national and regional workers' organization /trade unions to enhance migrant workers' freedom of association rights and their collective bargaining power.
- 2.4.4 Leverage on digital and social media platforms to disseminate information on migrant rights and well-being.
- 2.4.5 Strengthen capacity of national and regional media to produce accurate and balanced reporting on labour migration.
- 2.4.6 Establish migrant resource centres (MRC), community welfare attachés and overseas employment promoters in Member States

Specific objective 2.5: Promote access to justice for migrant workers

Migrant workers should be able to access legal proceedings and enjoy the enforcement of their rights. Also, adequate sanctions should be available and implemented in respect of labour migrants in abusive conditions. This contributes to safe and orderly labour migration and ensures that the vulnerable are protected. This Strategy will ensure accessible complaint mechanisms are put in place to allow migrant workers to lodge complaints and seek justice without discrimination, intimidation, or retaliation.

Main Activities

- 2.5.1 Establish Migrant Resource Centres to provide legal aid, counselling, welfare assistance to address grievances and disputes.
- 2.5.2 Establish national-level reporting mechanisms for labour rights violations, including mechanisms to capture gender-specific challenges.
- 2.5.3 Promote access to complaint mechanisms and justice for men and women migrant workers
- 2.5.4 Advocate for the ratification and domestication of international labour migration conventions. (ex: ILO Convention 97, 148, 181, 189, 190)
- 2.5.5 Establish cross-border grievance redress mechanisms accessible to migrant workers
- 2.5.6 Foster collaboration between unions in countries of origin and destination to support migrant workers

2.2.3 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: MAXIMIZE THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT OF LABOUR MIGRATION

Despite the significant strides made in labour migration governance in the ECOWAS region, notable gaps persist, preventing the leveraging of labour migration for sustainable development and hindering its full potential in contributing to socio-economic development. Labour migration can help receiving countries address demographic challenges, such as aging populations or low fertility rates. It increases cultural diversity, which leads to increased innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship.

Remittances from migrant workers significantly contribute to economic development in their home countries by financing education, healthcare, and infrastructure. In West Africa, remittances account for a substantial share of GDP in several Member States, serving as a critical source of foreign exchange (World Bank, 2021). This Strategy will explore ways that will make Member States maximize these benefits of labour migration.

Specific objective 3.1: Leverage remittances and diaspora contributions for socio-economic development, including investment in key sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure

Remittances by migrant workers can significantly increase their family's household income in their countries of origin, enabling families to meet their basic needs, invest in education and healthcare, and contribute towards improving the overall standard of living of communities. Diaspora contributions can provide capital for entrepreneurs to start or expand businesses, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth.

Remittances and diaspora contributions may be used to finance infrastructure projects, which can improve access to markets, services, and opportunities. Deliberate actions should be undertaken to enhance the flow of remittances and diaspora contributions for the socio-economic development of Member States.

Main Activities

- 3.1.1 Improve collection of disaggregated data on remittances to assess the potential impact of remittances on social and economic development.
- 3.1.2 Develop and synergize policies to enhance financial inclusion for migrant workers through expanded access to banking services and digital remittance platforms, with initiatives to reach women migrants.

- 3.1.3 Encourage diaspora investment in key development sectors through targeted incentives and business-friendly policies that address administrative as well as gender-specific barriers.
- 3.1.4 Promote formal channels for remittances, and reduce the cost of transactions
- 3.1.5 Support the return and reintegration of migrants with entrepreneurship training/programmes and access to finance to start businesses, with tailored support for female entrepreneurs.
- 3.1.6 Conduct research and impact assessments to measure the economic benefits of labour migration and development of mechanisms to leverage the human, social, and cultural capital of migrant workers.

Specific objective 3.2: Encourage the circulation of skills and knowledge between countries through programmes that support the return migrants and brain gain.

There are a number of structural and circumstantial challenges that can prevent the socio-economic reintegration of migrant workers. A prolonged stay abroad often creates challenges for returnees to find employment opportunities, primarily due to the loss of contact with prior networks in their home country. Other factors relate to the capacity of the country to facilitate the reintegration process. Often countries that are producing large migrant populations are unable to support their effective reintegration, principally due to the lack of institutional capacity, as well as human and financial resources. Returnees may not have access to up-to-date information about employment services and current labour market situation. As a result, many returnees are concentrated in low-skilled informal employment or under-regulated sectors. The absence of sustainable reintegration increases the likelihood of these populations falling into poverty and/ or engaging in secondary migration.

Returning migrants can play an important role in facilitating the transfer of qualifications and skills to origin countries as they bring back skills, experience and entrepreneurship abilities which contributes to rebuilding their home countries. Returning migrants may experience a wide variety of needs, requiring programmes that address those seeking assistance with unemployment, lack of savings, business development, job-matching, or issues with psychosocial trauma or difficulty reintegrating into their communities (Wickramasekara, 2019).

Integrated and targeted programmes could assist migrant workers return to their local community as well as optimize their contribution to their communities and labour markets (Wickramasekara, 2019). This Strategy recommends that ECOWAS Member States provide

operational support through income-generating opportunities for returning migrant workers to help them with the reintegration process.

Main activities

- 3.2.1 Establish a regional coordination mechanism to facilitate cooperation and information-sharing on employment and business opportunities for returning migrant workers.
- 3.2.2 Encourage partnerships with international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to leverage on resources, expertise, and best practices of returning migrant workers' to their reintegration processes.
- 3.2.3 Strengthen linkages between diaspora communities and their home countries to facilitate knowledge, skills transfer, foster economic collaboration, and ensure inclusion of women in diaspora networks.
- 3.2.4 Promote targeted skills training programs for migrants and returning workers to improve employability, with modules specifically designed for women.
- 3.2.5 Enhance the recognition of migrant workers' qualifications through robust certification and Mutual Recognition Agreements and systems that will include gender considerations.
- 3.2.6 Encourage migrant cooperatives and business networks to foster economic inclusion.

2.2.4 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: PROMOTE REGIONAL COOPERATION AND STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE CAPACITIES

The fundamental objective of ECOWAS is to promote integration and economic development. This objective can be achieved by improving the long-term efficiency of resource allocation such as people, products, technology, and infrastructure within the region, or by creating special incentives for such flows. However, it is not easy to achieve regional integration and economic development without orderly and well-managed labour migration across the Member States. Many Member States have inadequately resourced institutions to manage labour migration effectively. Coordination between national Labour Ministries, Justice Departments, and Border Agencies remains weak (ILO, 2021).

In addition, IOM reported that limited capacities in terms of human, technical, infrastructure, technology, and financial resources were part of the gaps and challenges of the ECOWAS Commission and Member States that might negatively impact the governance and coordination of regular labour migration in the ECOWAS region (IOM, 2024). This Strategy has

highlighted activities that will fill these gaps and provide practical ways to promote regional cooperation and strengthen governance capacities.

Specific objective 4.1: Build the capacity of Member States to manage labour migration effectively through evidence-based policy development, and enhanced coordination

Enhanced capacity of Member States and relevant stakeholders is a key factor for effective governance of labour migration in the region due to its fast-changing trends and dynamics. Training and capacity building are a prerequisite to equip key actors (labour institutions/departments/units) at the national and regional levels with the technical skills to ensure the proper implementation of the components of the ECOWAS LMSAP. Thus, the development and implementation of training and capacity building programmes on labour migration governance will be a major component of the strategy. Enhance migration data collection, analysis, and policy formulation to ensure that labour migration policies are informed by reliable, real-time data that are disaggregated by gender, thereby promoting evidence-based decision-making across the ECOWAS region.

Main Activities

- 4.1.1 Conduct regular capacity needs assessment survey for the departments and/or institutions involved in labour migration governance both at the ECOWAS Commission and Member States.
- 4.1.2 Conduct capacity-building workshops/training for labour institutions and NGOs/CSOs on the various labour migration issues.
- 4.1.3 Strengthen national statistical institutions and data collection mechanisms as well as cooperation on exchange and analysis to inform policies and labour migration governance
- 4.1.4 Establish a Regional Labour Migration Coordination Unit within ECOWAS to oversee policy implementation and ensure gender-inclusive practices.
- 4.1.5 Create a regional framework for monitoring and evaluation of migration governance performance that incorporates gender-disaggregated data.
- 4.1.6 Develop comprehensive training materials for government agencies and the private sector to ensure coherent, gender-responsive policy implementation.

Specific objective 4.2: Enhance the role of ECOWAS institutions in monitoring labour migration trends and ensuring compliance with Regional, Continental and International Agreements.

ECOWAS Institutions lack robust systems for monitoring migration trends and ensuring Member States compliance with regional agreements (ECOWAS Commission, 2021). To address these challenges, ECOWAS Institutions shall enhance their capacity to handle migration, including regulating labour and employment relations, and monitoring and implementing labour migration policies across Member States. This ECOWAS LMSAP has highlighted ways to improve the capacity of ECOWAS Institutions to undertake their obligations.

Main Activities

- 4.2.1 Ensure that all ECOWAS countries align their national labour migration policy frameworks with regional instruments, including provisions addressing gender-specific needs.
- 4.2.2 Institutionalize regular intergovernmental forums to facilitate regional dialogue on effective labour migration governance and share best practices
- 4.2.3 Encourage Member States to ratify and domesticate relevant international labour standards and UN conventions, ensuring a strong focus on rights-based and gender-responsive labour migration governance.
- 4.2.4 Facilitate knowledge-sharing workshops on best practices in migration governance, with a strong emphasis on integrating gender perspectives.

Specific objective 4.3: Foster regional dialogue and cooperation among ECOWAS Member States to address common migration challenges and opportunities

The ECOWAS LMSAP encourages synergies and cooperation among Member States, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and resources in addressing common labour migration challenges and opportunities. By leveraging on collective expertise and resources within the region harnessed through regional dialogue, Member States will benefit from the effectiveness of labour migration interventions and contribute to regional development goals. Member States will strengthen the governance of labour migration, and contribute to socioeconomic development by pooling resources, coordinating efforts, and harmonizing approaches.

Main Activities

- 4.3.1 Strengthen interagency/interministerial coordination mechanisms to ensure alignment and collaboration in labour migration governance, ensuring that gender perspectives are integrated into all processes.
- 4.3.2 Institutionalize regular intergovernmental fora to facilitate regional dialogue on labour migration policies, share best practices on gender integration, and ensure the meaningful participation of women migrant workers and or their representative organizations.
- 4.3.3 Develop a model framework for bilateral social security agreements between Member States by adapting the guidelines on BLA prepared by both AU and UN for better protection of men and women migrants.
- 4.3.4 Ensure open data-sharing and data protection agreements among ECOWAS Member States to support effective, evidence-based policy planning that addresses gender-related migration issues.

Specific objective 4.4: Strengthen partnerships with international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to enhance the governance of labour migration

There is an urgent need for regular migration pathways and stronger international cooperation to ensure migration is safe, orderly, and humane. International organizations such as IOM and ILO are focused on maximizing the benefits of labour migration for migrants, their families, and both origin and destination countries. To achieve this, these international organizations work closely with RECs, governments, the private sector, migrants and local partners to create effective labour migration policies and support migrant integration and inclusion.

This ECOWAS LMSAP recognizes the need to strengthen partnerships with international organizations, social partners, and academic institutions to ensure the dignity, safety and protection of migrant workers in the ECOWAS region. Thus, necessary steps and actions have been highlighted in this document to ensure the needed partnership and collaboration for regular labour migration in the region.

Main Activities

- 4.4.1 Sustain a functional tripartite Social Dialogue Forum within ECOWAS as supported by the Supplementary Act A/SA.1/07/10.
- 4.4.2 Provide technical support and capacity building to sub-regional workers and employers organizations to facilitate regional tripartite dialogue on labour migration governance

- 4.4.3 Develop comprehensive training materials for government institutions, workers' organization, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to ensure coherent, gender-responsive policy implementation
- 4.4.4 Enhance partnerships, and collaboration between ECOWAS, AU, UN agencies, and social partners to improve migration governance with integrated gender measures.

2.2.5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: ENSURE GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN MIGRATION POLICIES

The ECOWAS LMSAP will prioritize gender-responsive issues at the regional level, ensuring that gender considerations are fully integrated into all aspects of labour migration, policies, and interventions. The Strategy will focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women migrant workers by enhancing the protection of their labour rights and ensuring gender responsiveness. This includes enhancing knowledge of the unique aspects of women's labour migration, identifying the specific challenges they face, and developing policy responses that ensure migration is fair, safe, and responsive to the needs of both women and men migrant workers.

The Strategy will strengthen migrant inclusion, promote cultural diversity, prevent xenophobia and discrimination in host communities by fostering social integration and cross-border cultural exchange.

Specific objective 5.1: Integrate gender-responsive approaches in labour migration policies and programmes to ensure that the gender-specific needs as well as the needs of youth, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups are addressed

A gender-responsive approach to migration governance entails adopting and implementing transformative policies and programming that tackle not only gender discrimination experienced by migrant workers but also the underlying structural gender inequalities. Current policies often fail to address the specific needs of women and other vulnerable groups, leaving them disproportionately exposed to exploitation (ILO, 2021). However, this ECOWAS LMSAP embraces a gender-responsive approach by not only addressing the unique challenges faced by all migrant workers but also confronting the structural drivers of gender discrimination in

labour migration. Through this approach, it aims to transform systems, norms, policies, and structures to create a more equitable migration landscape.

Main Activities

- 5.1.1 Conduct a gap analysis to determine the gender-responsive needs that requires attention across the ECOWAS region
- 5.1.2 Mainstream and integrate gender-responsive provisions into all ECOWAS labour migration policies and strategies.
- 5.1.3 Implement the ECOWAS Gender Policy.
- 5.1.4 Develop targeted legal and welfare services for women and men migrant workers and PWDs, including those in informal employment, with gender-specific interventions.
- 5.1.5 Develop comprehensive support programmes for women migrants and vulnerable groups, ensuring access to education, social services, health, housing, financial services, and social security.
- 5.1.6 Review and update national labour migration policies to integrate gender and social inclusion perspectives.
- 5.1.7 Develop disability-friendly workplaces and support services for migrant workers.
- 5.1.8 Advocate for the ratification and implementation of international conventions on gender and labour migration.
- 5.1.9 Establish migrant women's associations, mentorship platforms, and networks for peer support and empowerment.
- 5.1.10 Organize regional conferences and knowledge-sharing initiatives on gender-sensitive/ responsive migration policies and critical welfare needs of migrant workers.
- 5.1.11 Promote research and data collection on gender-disaggregated migration trends for evidence-based policymaking.

Specific objective 5.2: Promote social inclusion by reducing discrimination against migrant workers based on gender, ethnicity, or legal status

Migrants, especially women, youth, and marginalized groups often face discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, or legal status, limiting their access to employment, social services, and other resources (UNDP, 2020; AU, 2020). Migrant women are at greater risk of discrimination, as laws and policies often reproduce or reinforce existing inequalities in countries of origin, transit, and destination. Labour markets remain highly segregated and women's access to

information, decision-making power and control over resources due to deep- rooted structural inequalities. To address these challenges, the ECOWAS LMSAP has taken targeted measures to close these gaps and strengthen labour migration governance in the region by highlighting the main activities below.

Main Activities

- 5.2.1 Expand access to social services—including housing, education, and healthcare—for migrant families, ensuring that gender-specific needs are met.
- 5.2.2 Promote awareness campaigns to address xenophobia and discrimination against women migrants and to facilitate participatory decision-making processes that include migrant voices in policy formulation.
- 5.2.3 Establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with gender and social inclusion policies.
- 5.2.4 Promote fair and ethical recruitment practices that prevent discrimination, exploitation and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to protect women and vulnerable migrants from workplace abuse.
- 5.2.5 Provide specialized legal aid and support services for migrant women and socially excluded groups.
- 5.2.6 Develop multilingual information materials on legal rights, workplace safety, and social services.
- 5.2.7 Organize leadership and advocacy training for migrant women and marginalized groups to facilitate representation of women and their effective participation in social dialogue, debates and the establishment of policies.
- 5.2.8 Leverage digital platforms and media to amplify the voices of women and marginalized migrants.
- 5.2.9 Foster collaboration with civil society organizations and international bodies working on gender and migration.
- 5.2.10 Establish dedicated social protection funds for migrant workers with disabilities.

3. INSTITUTIONAL AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

This chapter outlines the institutional framework, resource mobilization strategy, implementation mechanisms, and sustainability measures for the ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan (2025–2035). The structure ensures clear roles and responsibilities, financial viability, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and long-term sustainability. In addition, all strategic objectives are integrated with gender-responsive lenses, both as a standalone focus and as a cross-cutting theme.

3.1 Responsibilities of Key Stakeholders

Successful implementation of the ECOWAS LMSAP requires strong institutional coordination, policy enforcement, and multi-stakeholder engagement. The following are the key stakeholders and their distinct roles and responsibilities.

3.1.1 Establishment of the Internal ECOWAS Technical Coordination Committee on Migration

The ECOWAS Technical Coordination Committee on Migration, comprises of representatives from the key directorates within the Commission. This Committee coordinates all internal actions related to migration, such as MRAs, labour mobility, labour migration governance etc. It will also consolidate all migration related activities for discussion at the expert level. The Committee shall ensure the harmonization and alignment of migration-related activities of the Member States emanating from the ECOWAS protocols and agreements, regional integration goals and International standards and best practices.

Roles and Responsibilities

The committee shall be responsible for the following:

- I. Coordinate migration management efforts among Member States.
- II. Coordinate the implementation of the ECOWAS LMSAP, and track and report progress made annually by Member States.
- III. Collect and analyze data on migration trends, patterns, and impacts to inform policy decisions.
- IV. Provide capacity-building support, including technical assistance to member states to enhance their migration management capabilities.
- V. Monitor and evaluate progress in implementing migration policies and programs especially this Strategy.

3.1.2 Establishment of the ECOWAS Labour Migration Technical Working Group

ECOWAS Member States, regional employers, international partners and organizations, and stakeholders, shall convene annually to review the strategies' progress, coordinate implementation, and make policy recommendations. This Committee should be gender balanced in terms of representation. The meetings shall be held regularly, twice a year, but in exceptional circumstances additional meetings shall be convened. The minutes of the committee meetings shall be disseminated to all members and the ECOWAS Commission. Individual members are expected to brief their Heads of organizations on further details depending on particular activities and required levels of participation.

Roles and Responsibilities

The committee shall be responsible for the following:

- I. Engage in the planning, managing, and monitoring of the ECOWAS LMSAP at both national and regional levels.
- II. Facilitate the harmonization of labour, social security, and fiscal frameworks that promote regular migration, labour mobility, and human security.
- III. Undertake periodic assessments on issues and challenges affecting the rights of migrant workers and their families.
- IV. Promote gender equality and social inclusion in all labour migration policies and programmes.
- V. Develop policy and programme recommendations to strengthen governance capacities in labour migration management.

3.1.3 ECOWAS Commission

Roles and Responsibility

- I. Provide overall leadership and strategic policy direction for the implementation of the strategy.
- II. Coordinate with national governments, social partners, and development organizations.
- III. Establish a well-structured and dedicated budget for its effective implementation.
- IV. Creating awareness on the Strategy and build the capacities of Member States to implement it.

- V. Ensure Member States develop national action plans for the implementation of the ECOWAS LMSAP
- VI. Ensure alignment with ECOWAS Vision 2050, AU Agenda 2063, and international labour migration frameworks.
- VII. Integrate gender-sensitive policies across all initiatives, ensuring that men and women migrant concerns are addressed.
- VIII. Establish/Strengthen a dedicated M&E unit to oversee the collection, analysis, and reporting of migration-related data.
- IX. Organise biannual meetings to review progress against performance indicators, share findings and discuss the implementation challenges with stakeholders.
- X. Coordinate and collaborate with other RECs in Africa to address irregular migration of many migrants into the ECOWAS region using dangerous migration routes
- XI. Establish a Labour Migration Unit with dedicated expert personnel on labour migration

3.1.4 **ECOWAS Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate**

Roles and Responsibilities.

- I. Oversee the harmonization of labour migration policies and provides technical guidance to Member States.
- II. Lead the development of regional labour migration, frameworks, and bilateral agreements that integrate gender-responsive provisions.
- III. Coordinate capacity-building programs and provide technical assistance to national institutions to improve migration governance.
- IV. Ensure the full implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol, with special attention to equitable access for both genders.
- V. Monitor compliance with labour mobility provisions and border management policies.
- VI. Work in close collaboration with law enforcement agencies to combat irregular migration and trafficking in persons, ensuring that protection measures address the vulnerabilities of women and girls.
- VII. Conduct periodic evaluations of the impact of the strategy on labour migration.
- VIII. Conduct regular audits of the M&E system and the programs and activities in the plan of action implemented to ensure that the rights of migrant workers are protected.

3.1.5 National Governments (Ministries, Departments and Agencies linked to labour migration governance)

Roles and Responsibilities

- I. Promote implement ECOWAS Migration Policy and Labour Migration Strategy at the national level.
- II. Strengthen institutional capacity for labour migration governance, including gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting systems.
- III. Establish National Coordination Mechanisms on Migration and Labour Migration Committees (NLMCs) to coordinate policy execution, ensuring that gender perspectives are mainstreamed.
- IV. Serve as the primary coordination body for labour migration governance at the national level.
- V. Collect, analyze, and report labour migration data—including gender-disaggregated information—to ECOWAS institutions.
- VI. Designate national M&E focal points within the relevant ministry (e.g., Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Migration) responsible for coordinating data collection and reporting to the ECOWAS Commission.
- VII. Submit annual national M&E reports on labour migration to the ECOWAS Commission for regional aggregation and analysis.

3.1.6 Social Partners (Employers Organizations and Civil Society Organizations)

Roles and Responsibilities

- I. Advocate for the protection of migrant workers' rights and social inclusion.
- II. Support the negotiation of fair labour agreements and BLMAs that include gender equality.
- III. Facilitate support services, including legal aid services, migrant integration programs, and worker training initiatives on the needs of women and men migrant workers.
- IV. Conduct research, advocacy and awareness raising activities on the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers.
- V. Facilitate migrant workers' rights to collective bargaining, social dialogue, and representation of workers' voice, etc.

3.1.7 Social Partners (Trade Unions)

Roles and Responsibilities

- I. Facilitate migrant workers' rights to collective bargaining, social dialogue, and representation of workers' voice, etc.
- II. Advocate for the protection of migrant workers' rights and social inclusion.
- III. Support the negotiation of fair labour agreements and BLMAs that include gender equality.
- IV. Facilitate support services, including legal aid services, migrant integration programs, and worker training initiatives on the needs of women and men migrant workers.
- V. Conduct research, advocacy and awareness raising activities on the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers.

3.1.8 Private Sector, Private Employment Agencies and Employers' Federations/Associations

Roles and Responsibilities

- I. Ensure ethical recruitment, decent work conditions, and fair treatment of migrant workers.
- II. Ensure Employers' organizations, their sectoral members and representative organizations of private employment agencies (PrEA) participate in law and policy making on the regulation of private employment agencies, the design of and collaboration with public employment services and other recruitment-related policy dialogues
- III. Collaborate on the mutual recognition of skills and qualifications to foster workforce integration.
- IV. Promote Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs that support migrant integration and include gender-sensitive employment practices.

3.1.9 International and Development Partners

Roles and Responsibilities of the

- I. Provide technical assistance, funding, and policy guidance for the implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan.
- II. Facilitate knowledge-sharing and the dissemination of best practices in migration governance. Support the development of labour migration databases, skills recognition frameworks, and migrant support programs, ensuring these tools incorporate gender-disaggregated data.

3.1.10 Coordination Platform and Communication Framework

Member States will implement the Strategy and its Action Plan through an effective coordination mechanism. This mechanism will facilitate effective and efficient communication, cooperation, and resource mobilization among ECOWAS institutions.

The key components of the coordination platform and communication framework include:

- I. Create a centralized online platform to facilitate information exchange, document sharing, and updates on progress and challenges in implementing the strategy.
- II. Hold annual meetings to ensure on-going coordination and collaboration among ECOWAS institutions, national governments, social partners, and other stakeholders.
- III. Establish clear reporting lines and timelines for progress reporting to ensure transparency and accountability among the Member States and stakeholders.

3.2 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The estimated regional coordination budget for implementing the ECOWAS LMSAP will be determined. The Member States shall allocate funds within their national budgets to support the implementation of the national-level activities. Further, Member States will indicate their committed resources in the annual work plans formulated by the ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy Technical Committee. Member States' Ministries/Departments responsible for labour employment and migration will integrate the Strategies into their national development plans and budgetary frameworks.

The successful implementation of the ECOWAS LMSAP requires sustainable funding mechanisms that ensure long-term viability. Funding shall be sourced not only from the Member States but also through ECOWAS contributions, national budgets, private-sector partnerships, and development aids.

3.2.1 ECOWAS Budgetary Allocations

- a. The ECOWAS Commission shall allocate annual budgetary provisions for key migration programs, including capacity building, data collection, and migrant protection.
- b. Funding distribution shall prioritize projects that incorporate clear gender-sensitive components.

3.2.2 National Government Funding

- a. ECOWAS Member States shall commit national budgets to support labour migration governance programs.
- b. Each country is encouraged to establish dedicated national migration funds to finance migrant services, skills development, and legal aid, ensuring that these funds support gender-targeted initiatives.

3.2.3 Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

- a. Engage private sector stakeholders, including employers and recruitment agencies, to co-finance migration initiatives.
- b. Develop sustainable investment models for diaspora engagement and remittance-driven development projects with specific incentives for female-led enterprises.

3.2.4 International and Development Partner Support

- a. Mobilize financial assistance from organizations such as the ILO, IOM, UNHCR, World Bank, African Development Bank, and EU.

- b. Strengthen cooperation with bilateral donor agencies for technical support and direct funding, ensuring that these partnerships include gender-responsive criteria.

3.2.5 Migrant Welfare Funds

- a. Establish national Migrant Workers Welfare Funds to finance unilateral social protection for migrant workers.
- b. To facilitate the migration of migrant workers for employment abroad and protect them in vulnerable circumstances

3.2.6 Migrant Workers' Social Protection Contributions

- a. Promote remittance-backed financial products and savings schemes that secure long-term financial security for migrants, with special provisions for women migrants.

3.3 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION (M&E)

The ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy Technical Committee will prepare an annual implementation plan in alignment with the Action Plan of the ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy. Monitoring and Evaluation will be a key component of the implementation, with shared responsibilities among Member States, social partners, the ECOWAS Commission, and cooperating partners.

The ECOWAS Commission will facilitate regional-level M&E, generate progress reports, and coordinate knowledge management. During the implementation period, ECOWAS will commission two independent evaluations, including a mid-term review in 2028 and a final evaluation in 2030, to assess the progress and identify lessons learned.

The M&E will help track the progress of the implementation of the strategy, it will aid in providing data-driven insights into the outcomes and impacts of labour migration strategies and programs and it will ensure accountability, transparency, and improvement in the management of labour migration.

A robust M&E framework is critical to effectively track policy implementation, assess performance, and measure impact. The framework is designed with clear, quantifiable, and gender-disaggregated key performance indicators (KPIs).

3.3.1 Reporting Mechanisms

- The ECOWAS Commission will publish an Annual Labour Migration Report consolidating data and findings from all Member States.
- National governments shall submit biannual progress reports to the ECOWAS Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate.
- Regional review meetings will be held quarterly and annually to discuss progress, challenges, and corrective actions.

3.3.2 Mid-Term and Final Evaluation

- A mid-term review (Year 5) will assess the overall effectiveness of the strategy, evaluate the implementation and recommend policy adjustments.
- A final evaluation (Year 10) will measure the impact of the strategy, review the Theory of Change, and determine future strategic directions.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

The long-term sustainability of the ECOWAS LMSAP requires strong institutional capacity, continuous funding, and integration into national and regional economic plans.

3.4.1 Institutional Sustainability

- Establish permanent migration governance structures at both national and regional levels.
- Strengthen ECOWAS and Member States' institutions through continuous capacity-building and knowledge-sharing initiatives ensuring gender integration.

3.4.2 Financial Sustainability

- Secure dedicated ECOWAS and national budget allocations for labour migration initiatives.
- Expand public-private partnerships and diaspora investment programs to ensure ongoing financial support.

- Develop innovative financing mechanisms (e.g., remittance-backed bonds) to support migrant welfare funds.

3.4.3 Policy and Legislative Sustainability

- Integrate labour migration governance into ECOWAS Vision 2050 and national development frameworks.
- Establish a continuous review process for migration policies to ensure they remain aligned with global best practices and gender equality standards.
- Institutionalize periodic policy updates and stakeholder consultations to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

Sustaining the outcomes of the ECOWAS LMSAP will require strengthened partnerships between Member States, international partners, social partners, and other stakeholders. Implementation will prioritize joint ownership of the plan through the inclusive participation of all stakeholders. The ECOWAS Commission will enhance the Secretariat's capacity to ensure continued coordination and knowledge management beyond the lifespan of the Labour Migration Strategy.

A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach will be employed, involving various ministries, civil society, academia, media, and other actors in migration management. Emphasis will be placed on gender and social inclusion, ensuring that the needs of women, youth, people with disabilities, and vulnerable groups are fully integrated into the labour migration strategy. This strategy will contribute to inclusive and sustainable development across the region by promoting regular migration, protecting migrant workers' rights, maximizing the impact of labour migration on development, and strengthening governance capacities.

This institutional and implementation framework ensures that the ECOWAS Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan (2025–2030) is effectively governed, properly financed, continuously monitored, and sustainably executed.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: ACTION PLAN FOR ECOWAS LABOUR MIGRATION STRATEGY

Strategic Objective 1: Promote Regular Migration, Labour Mobility, and Human Security					
Specific Objectives	Activities	Performance Indicators	Implementing Bodies	Timelines	Expected Outcome
1.1: Ensure equitable access to and participation in safe and regular migration opportunities and mobility through the effective implementation of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol	1.1.1 Improve and strengthen the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence, and Establishment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of border/immigration officials (M, F) trained in migration governance Increase the number of MS fully implementing the right of establishment 	ECOWAS Commission, Member States	2025 – 2027	Enhance the implementation of the ECOWAS Protocol
	1.1.2 Simplify procedures for migrant workers to obtain work permits, residence permits, and other necessary documents.	Percentage reduction of border restrictions affecting regular migrants	ECOWAS Commission, Member States	2025 – 2027	Reduction in work permit processing time
	1.1.3 Develop a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track Member States' compliance with free movement protocol	Number of ECOWAS countries fully implementing the Free Movement Protocol (rights of	ECOWAS Free Movement Directorate, National Immigration	2025 – 2026	Enhanced compliance with the Free Movement Protocol,

		entry, residence and establishment)	Agencies, IOM, ILO		reducing barriers to legal migration
	1.1.4 Raise awareness of the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol and its provisions across all Member States	Number of awareness campaigns conducted	ECOWAS Commission, National Labour and Migration Ministries, Border Control Agencies	2025 - 2026	Increased compliance with Protocols, enhanced regional labour market integration
	1.1.5 Review and update the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol to explicitly include provisions for persons with disabilities (PWDs)	Number of Member States adopting disability-inclusive labour migration policies	ECOWAS Commission, Ministries of Labour, Border Control Agencies, Disability Rights Organizations	2025 – 2028	Enhanced access to labour mobility for persons with disabilities, promoting inclusivity in migration governance
1.2: Ensure that labour migration is governed by clear, coherent, and harmonized policies and legal frameworks across Member States	1.2.1 Develop, review, and harmonize national labour migration laws to ensure consistency with the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols and other legal instruments of the AU and International Labour Organisation	Number of MS having national labour migration policies Number of Member States with amended laws and policies to give effect to key global, continental, and regional	ECOWAS Commission, Member States, national labour ministries, ILO, IOM	2025 – 2027	Reviewed and harmonized national labour migration policies

		migration instruments			
	1.2.2 Encourage full implementation of ECOWAS labour migration strategy and action plan by national governments	Number of legal frameworks harmonized Number of labour migration policy progress implementation reports from Member States and social partners	ECOWAS Commission, AUC, National Governments, ILO, IOM	2025 – 2027	Enhanced policy coherence between national, regional, continental, and international policies on labour migration
	1.2.3 Promote bilateral cooperation on labour migration through Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs).	Number of BLMAs	ECOWAS Commission, AUC, National Governments, ILO, IOM	2025 – 2027	Increased safe and regular migration
1.3: Support the recognition of skills, qualifications, and experience across borders to facilitate better integration of migrant workers into the labour markets of Member States	1.3.1 Promote the full implementation of the General Convention A/C.1/1/03 on the Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates, and Other Qualifications in ECOWAS Member States	Number of partnerships between ECOWAS universities and diaspora professionals	ECOWAS Commission, AUC, MS, National education bodies, Education and employment institutions	2025 – 2026	Increased mobility and skills matching

	1.3.2 Operationalize the ECOWAS Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) to support labour mobility, ensuring that qualification recognition processes are accessible to both male and female workers.	Number of symposia held on the promotion of labour mobility in Member States Increase in skilled workers benefiting from cross-border employment	ECOWAS Commission, AUC, MS, National education bodies, Education and employment institutions	2025 – 2026	Increased mobility and skills matching
	1.3.3 Harmonize Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curricula to create a seamless, gender-sensitive certification process.	Number of TVET curricula harmonized by MS	ECOWAS Commission, AUC, MS, National education bodies	2025 – 2026	Increased mobility and skills matching
	1.3.4 Develop sectoral Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for professional and vocational qualifications that address skills gaps and gender disparities.	Number of skill recognition agreements signed	ECOWAS Labour and Education Directorates, National Skills Development Agencies, Private Sector.	2025 – 2027	Improved skill mobility and workforce competitiveness across ECOWAS
	1.3.5. Support the establishment of Tripartite Committees on Skills at the ECOWAS level and promote inter-Regional Economic Community dialogue and	Number of tripartite meetings held with MS and Representatives of RECs	ECOWAS Labour and Education Directorates, National Skills Development Agencies, Private Sector.	2025 – 2026	Improved skill mobility and workforce competitiveness across ECOWAS

	sharing experiences on skills for migration and mobility.				
	1.3.6 Provide targeted upskilling and reskilling initiatives/skills development programs for low-skilled migrant workers to enhance their employability.	Number of skills development programs/initiatives conducted by MS and EC	ECOWAS Labour and Education Directorates, National Skills Development Agencies, Private Sector.	2025 – 2026	Improved skill mobility and workforce competitiveness across ECOWAS
	1.3.7 Strengthen linkages between training institutions and employers to facilitate job placement of migrant workers.	Number of MOUs between training institutions and private organisations	ECOWAS Labour and Education Directorates, National Skills Development Agencies, Private Sector.	2025 – 2028	Improved skill mobility and workforce competitiveness across ECOWAS
1.4: Develop and operationalize a Labour Market and Migration Information System (LMIS)	1.4.1 Establish a standardized system for collecting and sharing labour migration data across ECOWAS Member States for consistency and comparability.	Increase in data availability for policy planning.	ECOWAS Commission, AUC, MS, National immigration bodies, National statistical institutions	2025 – 2027	Increased data availability and accuracy
	1.4.2 Conduct regular research and labour market analysis on labour migration trends, patterns, and impacts to inform policy decisions.	Number of published research papers	Labour & Employment ministries, research institutions	2025 – 2030	Accurate and increased publications on labour migration

	1.4.3 Upgrade and fully operationalize the ECOWAS Labour Market and Migration Information System (RLMMIS) to track migration trends, including gender-disaggregated indicators.	Number of MS accessing the RLMMIS Number of MS submitting reports to EC based on the RLMMIS indicators	EC, MS, Labour & Employment ministries	2025 - 2026	Proper and improved job placement
	1.4.5 Establish migrant resource centers in high-migration areas to provide employment opportunities information and job guidance	Number of migrant resource centers (MRCs)	EC, MS	2025 – 2026	Increased MRCs
1.5: Develop and implement strategies to address forced labour of migrant workers and linkages with smuggling, and human trafficking, while providing protection and assistance to victims	1.5.1 Promote awareness-raising campaigns and information dissemination on safe migration practices and risks associated with irregular migration, incorporating messages that address gender-specific challenges.	Number of awareness-raising campaigns	EC, MS, CSOs	2025 - 2026	Regular labour migration
	1.5.2 Strengthen cooperation between national law enforcement agencies and	Number of arrests and persecutions of defaulters	National law enforcement agencies,	2025 - 2028	Reduction in trafficking and exploitation

	regional anti-trafficking task forces to combat human trafficking and smuggling, protecting migrant workers from exploitation and abuse		regional anti-trafficking task forces		
	1.5.3 Strengthen the capacity of State and Non-State Actors to respond effectively to TIP issues through specialized training.	Number of Member States represented in capacity building workshops	EC, MS, development partners	2025 - 2028	Stakeholders with strengthened capacities
	1.5.4 Allocate financial resources/budget to ensure that migrant workers' protection needs are met in terms of legal assistance, emergency shelter, health, return, and reintegration.	Number of MS with dedicated funds to protect migrant workers	EC, MS	2025 - 2028	Increased and consistent budgeting for labour migration
	1.5.5 Engage the CSOs, traditional and religious leaders, and social partners in community outreach programs to discourage irregular migration and advocate for gender-sensitive safe migration practices.	Number of outreach programs done in selected communities	EC, MS, traditional and religious leaders, social partners	2025 – 2027	Reduced irregular migration
	1.5.6 Establish community reporting mechanisms and hotlines for human trafficking cases.	Number of MS having hotlines for human trafficking cases.	EC, MS, traditional and religious leaders, social partners	2025 - 2026	Reduced irregular migration

	1.5.7 Promote bilateral cooperation on labour migration through BLMAs	<p>Number of Member States having bilateral cooperation agreements on labour migration in the region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of bilateral meetings held on labour migration cooperation 	EC, MS	2025 - 2028	Regular and safe labour migration

Strategic Objective 2: Protect the Rights of Migrant Workers					
Specific Objectives	Activities	Performance Indicators	Implementing Bodies	Timelines	Expected Outcome
2.1: Promote the rights and welfare of migrant workers and their	2.1.1 Promote fair labour standards, including minimum wage, working	Number of workplace	ECOWAS Commission, Labour Ministries,	2025 – 2030	Improved working conditions for migrants, stronger

families by ensuring fair and ethical recruitment and access to decent work	hours, and social security benefits for migrant workers.	inspections conducted	Trade Unions, Employers' Federations		enforcement of labour laws
	2.1.2 Develop and enforce a regional roadmap or action plan to promote fair recruitment	Develop a model framework for fair employment practices	ECOWAS Commission	2025 – 2027	Fair employment practices
	2.1.3 Establish migrant support centres to provide information and assistance on social services.	Increase funding for legal aid and advocacy services for migrant workers	EC, MS	2025 – 2026	Increased MRCs and legal support for migrant workers
	2.1.4 Promote fair and ethical recruitment practices through the review of laws, policies, regulations and enforcement on recruitment agencies and the implementation of awareness raising activities within ECOWAS Member States	Number of national labour migration policies reviewed	EC, MS	2025 – 2027	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.1.5 Fair business practices are expanded and consolidated in selected labour migration corridors and sectors	Number of workplace inspections	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 – 2026	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.1.6 Ensure migrant workers have greater access to reliable information and improved services throughout the recruitment process through comprehensive orientation programmes.	Number of organizations in compliance Number of platforms projected to migrant workers	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 - 2026	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.1.7 Strengthen capacities of public employment agencies and private employment agencies to implement fair and ethical recruitment process	Number of training activities and personnel	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 – 2026	Reduction in labour abuses

2.2: Protection against exploitation and labour rights violations through strengthening of support and social service	2.2.1 Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to prevent labour exploitation, discrimination, and human trafficking	Number of workplace inspections	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 – 2030	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.2.2 Promote awareness campaigns on the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers	Number of awareness campaigns held in selected corridors	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 – 2026	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.2.3 Establish migrant resource centres to provide support services for migrant workers information and assistance on social services	Increase budget Number of support services introduced	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 – 2027	Improved labour migration governance
	2.2.4 Strengthen legal frameworks and law enforcement to combat human trafficking and forced labour	Increase funding for legal aid and advocacy services for migrant workers	EC, MS, National labour ministries, law enforcement agencies	2025 – 2029	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.2.5 Establish hotlines and reporting mechanisms for migrants facing abuse or exploitation	Increase in cases of legal redress for migrant workers	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 – 2026	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.2.6 Train labour inspectors, border officials, and law enforcement agencies on migrant protection	Number of trained personnel	EC, MS, National labour ministries	2025 – 2026	Reduction in labour rights violations reported
	2.2.7 Foster partnerships with civil society organizations to provide support and advocacy for migrant workers	Number of joint programs	EC, MS, National labour ministries, social partners	2025 – 2026	Improved labour migration governance
2.3: Ensure access to social protection and portability of benefits for migrant workers including those working in the informal sector	2.3.1 Ensure full implementation of the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security	Number of MS implementing the Convention	EC, MS	2025 – 2026	Increased social security

	2.3.2 Develop and Implement ECOWAS guidelines on portability of social security benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage increase in migrants accessing social security benefits • Develop awareness programs on the social security rights of migrants. • Number of Member States implementing portability schemes in terms of the Guidelines 	EC, MS, National labour ministries, social partners	2025 – 2027	Reduction in reported cases of loss of benefits due to migration
	2.3.3 Promote social security agreements (bi/multi) between Member States to ensure the portability of benefits across ECOWAS countries and between ECOWAS countries and other RECs	Number of BLMAs signed and that have portability schemes	EC, MS, AUC, RECs	2025 - 2029	Increased BLAs
	2.3.4 Organize capacity building and training workshops on the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security and social security agreements	Number of training/entrepreneurial programs	EC, MS, National labour and Education agencies	2025 - 2026	Enhanced migrant workers' employability
	2.3.5 Promote access to legal identity for migrant workers as a crucial step to accessing social protection	Number of MS granting migrant workers legal identity	EC, MS, National labour	2025 – 2027	Increased access to social protection
	2.3.6 Organize regional meetings and dialogues of the ECOWAS Committee of Experts on Social Security on developing inclusive	Number of meetings and agreements made	EC, MS, National labour and education agencies, private employers	2025 - 2026	Enhanced migrant workers' employability

	social security systems that extend protection to migrant workers and their families and include provisions for portability of benefits				
	2.3.7 Support assessments and/or actuarial studies of ECOWAS Member States social security schemes to set up complementary measures addressing the administrative & practical obstacles faced by migrant workers and refugees.	Number of ECOWAS states enforcing social security portability	ECOWAS Labour and Employment Directorate, National Social Security Institutions, ILO, IOM	2025 - 2026	Increased access to social protection for migrant workers, reduced economic vulnerability
	2.3.8 Support ECOWAS countries in adopting other unilateral measures, or mechanisms that allow for flexibility in the design of the scheme and assistance with regards to qualifying conditions and minimum requirements.	Number of ECOWAS states adopting unilateral measures in enforcing social security portability	ECOWAS Labour and Employment Directorate, National Social Security Institutions, ILO, IOM	2025 - 2026	Increased access to social protection for migrant workers, reduced economic vulnerability
2.4: Strengthen social protection mechanisms for migrants in line with international and regional human rights conventions	2.4.1 Develop multilingual resources, national campaigns, PDO and outreach programs on job/business opportunities, pathways for regular migration, labour rights and privileges to reach diverse migrant communities.	Number of PDO programs and national campaigns	EC, MS, National labour and Education agencies	2025 - 2026	Enhanced migrant workers' employability
	2.4.2 Strengthen migrant associations and self-help groups to enhance their collective bargaining power.	Number of registered migrant associations	EC, MS, National labour and Education agencies	2025 - 2027	Enhanced migrant workers' recruitment
	2.4.3. Work with national and regional workers' organization /trade unions to enhance migrant workers' freedom of association rights and their collective bargaining power	Number of meetings with workers' organization /trade unions	EC, MS, National labour and Education agencies	2025 - 2027	Enhanced migrant workers' recruitment

	2.4.4 Leverage digital platforms and social media to disseminate information on migrant rights and well-being.	Training of desk officers of labour agencies	EC, MS, National labour and Education agencies	2025 - 2027	Increased recruitment of migrant workers
	2.4.5 Strengthen capacity of national and regional media to produce accurate and balanced reporting on labour migration.	Number of media channels that broadcast relevant information	EC, MS, National media agencies	2025 - 2027	Increased access to information by migrant workers
	2.4.6 Establish migrant resource centres (MRC), community welfare attachés and overseas employment promoters in Member States	Number of MRCs, community welfare attachés and overseas employment promoters	EC, MS	2025 - 2028	Increased access to information by migrant workers
2.5: Promote access to justice for migrant workers	2.5.1 Create migrant support centres to provide legal aid, counselling, and welfare assistance, and to address grievances and disputes	Number of migrant workers' support centre in the region	EC, MS, National labour agencies	2025 - 2026	Prevention of abuse and exploitation
	2.5.2 Establish national-level reporting mechanisms for labour rights violations, including mechanisms to capture gender-specific challenges.	Number of migrant workers' complaints	EC, MS, National labour agencies	2025 - 2027	Prevention of abuse and exploitation
	2.5.3 Promote access to complaint mechanisms and justice for men and women migrant workers	Number of migrant workers' complaints and cases treated	EC, MS, National labour and Judicial agencies	2025 - 2028	Prevention of abuse and exploitation, and justice for migrant workers
	2.5.4 Advocate for the ratification and implementation of international labour migration conventions	Number of sessions held to promote ratification and implementation of instruments on migration management	EC, MS, National labour agencies	2025 - 2026	Improved access to justice

		Number of reports submitted ratification and implementation of labour migration instruments			
	2.5.5 Establish cross-border grievance redress mechanism accessible to migrant workers	Number of MS with cross-border grievance redress mechanisms	EC, MS	2025 - 2028	Improved access to justice

Strategic Objective 3: Maximize the Development Impact of Labour Migration					
Specific Objectives	Activities	Performance Indicators	Implementing Bodies	Timelines	Expected Outcome
3.1: Leverage remittances and diaspora contributions for socio-economic development, including investment in key sectors such as education, health, and infrastructure	3.1.1 Improve remittance data for the potential impact of remittances on social and economic development.	Percentage increase coverage of remittance flows	EC, MS, Financial institutions	2025 - 2035	Improved remittance data availability and accuracy
	3.1.2 Develop policies and synergize with existing policies to enhance financial inclusion for migrant workers through expanded access to banking services and digital remittance platforms, with initiatives to reach women migrants.	Growth in remittance inflows as a percentage of GDP The percentage of persons using formal remittance channels increased	ECOWAS Commission, National Financial Institutions, African Institute for Remittances, World Bank	2025 - 2026	Increase in financial inclusion of migrant workers
	3.1.3 Encourage diaspora investment in key development sectors through targeted incentives and business-friendly policies that address gender-specific barriers.	Number of financial literacy programs for migrants and their families Number of investment incentives for diaspora contributions	EC, MS, Financial institutions, diaspora organizations and committee	2025 - 2030	Growth in diaspora investment in productive sectors
	3.1.4 Promote formal channels for remittances, reduce cost of remittance	The number of persons using	EC, MS, Financial institutions,	2025 - 2027	Improved remittance flows

	transactions and improve their developmental impact	formal remittance channels increased. Number of financial incentives and financial education given to migrant workers Percentage Reduction in remittance transfer fees	Diaspora Networks, Private Sector		
	3.1.5 Support returning migrants with entrepreneurship training/programs and access to finance to start businesses, with tailored support for female entrepreneurs.	Number of government agencies, private sector actors, and CSOs providing training	EC, MS, Employment, and labour agencies	2025 - 2035	Effective Labour Market Reintegration and transfer of skills and knowledge
	3.1.6 Conduct research and impact assessments to measure the economic benefits of labour migration and development of mechanisms to leverage the human, social, and cultural capital of migrant workers.	Number of studies undertaken and published	EC, MS	2025 - 2035	Increased impact of labour migration
3.2: Encourage the circulation of skills and knowledge between countries through programs that support return migration and brain gain	3.2.1 Establish a regional coordination mechanism to facilitate cooperation and information-sharing on employment and business opportunities for returning migrant workers.	Number of meetings of MS representatives	EC, MS, Employment, and labour ministries	2025 - 2026	Increased return migration and transfer of skills and knowledge
	3.2.2 Encourage partnerships with international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to	Number of meetings of MS representatives	EC, MS, national labour ministries,	2025 - 2026	Increased return migration and

	leverage resources, expertise, and best practices on the reintegration of returning migrant workers.		International and social partners		transfer of skills and knowledge
	3.2.3 Strengthen linkages between diaspora communities and their home countries to facilitate knowledge and skills transfer and foster economic collaboration, ensuring inclusion of women in diaspora networks	Number of meetings with diaspora communities Skills mapping among the Diaspora to be undertaken to guide the exercise	EC, MS, national labour ministries, diaspora communities, International and social partners	2025 - 2026	Increased return migration, and transfer of skills and knowledge
	3.2.4 Promote targeted skills training programs for migrants and returning workers to improve employability, with modules specifically designed for women	Number of training programs	EC, MS, national labour ministries, International and social partners	2025 - 2026	Increased return migration
	3.2.5 Enhance the recognition of migrant workers' qualifications through robust certification and mutual recognition systems that include gender considerations.	Percentage of ECOWAS Member States adopting a mutual recognition framework.	EC, MS, Employment, and labour ministries	2025 – 2027	Increased return migration and transfer of skills and knowledge
	3.2.6 Encourage migrant cooperatives and business networks to foster economic inclusion	Number of migrant cooperatives and business networks	EC, MS, Employment, and labour ministries	2025 – 2026	Increased return migration and transfer of skills and knowledge
3.3: Strengthened Border Management and Migration Control Measures	3.3.1 Improve intelligence-sharing mechanisms and use of technology among ECOWAS countries to track irregular migration trends and trafficking patterns, with attention to gender-specific risks.	Number of MS engaged in information sharing to mitigate irregular labour migration.	EC, MS, Immigration, and labour agencies	2025 - 2027	Improved labour migration

	3.3.2 Develop and implement a regional anti-trafficking task force that specifically targets vulnerable migrant workers.	Number of meetings by regional anti-trafficking task force	EC, MS, Immigration, and labour agencies	2025 - 2027	Improved labour migration
	3.3.3 Improve labour migration risk assessments and early warning systems to detect and respond to trafficking networks with a gender lens.	Number of labour migration risk assessment reports	EC, MS, Immigration, and labour agencies	2025 - 2026	Improved labour migration
	3.3.4 Capacity building of the border personnel with modern equipment	Number of Member States represented in capacity building workshops	EC, MS, Immigration, and labour agencies	2025 - 2026	Improved labour migration

Strategic Objective 4: Promote Regional Cooperation and Strengthen Governance Capacities					
Specific Objectives	Activities	Performance Indicators	Implementing Bodies	Timelines	Expected Outcome
4.1: Build the capacity of Member States to manage labour migration effectively through data collection, policy development, and inter-agency coordination	4.1.1 Establish ECOWAS Labour Migration Development Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of funds mobilized by MS for labour migration programs • Number of co-funded migration initiatives • private sector co-financing of migration support programs 	ECOWAS Commission, Development Partners, Private Sector	2025 - 2027	<p>Sustainable financing of labour migration initiatives, reduced funding gaps</p> <p>Reduction in reliance on external donor funding</p>
	4.1.2 Conduct regular capacity needs assessment survey for the departments and/or institutions involved in labour migration governance both at the ECOWAS Commission and Member States	Number of MS that participate in the survey	EC, MS	2025 - 2026	Improved labour migration governance
	4.1.3 Conduct capacity-building workshops/training for labour institutions/departments/units and NGOs/CSOs on the various labour migration issues	<p>Number of Member States represented in capacity building workshops</p> <p>Number of training and capacity-building workshops held</p>	EC, MS, national labour, and statistical institutions	2025 - 2026	Improved labour migration governance
	4.1.4 Strengthen national statistical institutions and data collection mechanisms as well as cooperation on	Number of Labour Force Surveys conducted by	EC, MS, national labour,	2025 - 2028	Improved labour migration governance

	exchange and analysis to inform policies and labour migration governance	Member States every 2 years The Number of statistical reports on labour migration disseminated Number of Member States with dedicated funding to implement the Plan	and statistical institutions		
	4.1.5 Establish a Regional Labour Migration Coordination Unit and committees within ECOWAS to oversee labour migration strategy implementation	Number of ministerial meetings on migration governance	EC, representatives of MS	2025 - 2026	Improved implementation of labour migration strategy
	4.1.6 Create a regional framework for monitoring and evaluation of labour migration governance performance that incorporates gender-disaggregated data.	Number of M&E data collection tools	EC, representatives of MS	2025 - 2027	Improved implementation of labour migration strategy
	4.1.7 Develop comprehensive training materials for government agencies and the private sector to ensure coherent, gender-responsive policy implementation.	Number of training materials or modules developed	EC, MS, national labour, and statistical institutions	2025 - 2026	Improved labour migration governance
4.2: Enhance the role of ECOWAS institutions in monitoring labour migration trends and ensuring compliance with regional, continental and	4.2.1 Ensure that all ECOWAS countries align their national labour migration laws with regional instruments, including provisions addressing gender-specific needs	Number of revised labour migration policies	EC, national labour ministries	2025 - 2028	Reviewed labour migration policies

international agreements					
	4.2.2 Institutionalize regular intergovernmental forums to facilitate regional dialogue on labour migration policies and share best practices on gender integration.	Number of regional dialogues on labour migration held	ECOWAS Secretariat, AUC, National Migration Agencies, IOM, ILO	2025 - 2026	Improved migration governance through regional cooperation and policy harmonization
	4.2.3 Encourage Member States to ratify and domesticate relevant international migration conventions, with a focus on gender rights.	Number of ratifications and domestications	EC, MS	2025 - 2030	Improved migration governance
	4.2.4 Facilitate knowledge-sharing workshops on best practices in labour migration governance, emphasizing gender perspectives.	Number of workshops held Number of personnel trained	EC, MS, delegates from relevant institutions	2025 - 2026	Trained personnel
	4.2.5 Upgrade and fully operationalize the ECOWAS Labour Market Information System (RLMIS) to track migration trends, including gender-disaggregated indicators.	Number of ECOWAS countries contributing to LMIS	ECOWAS Secretariat, National Statistics Offices, Labour Ministries	2025 - 2027	Improved evidence-based policymaking, enhanced regional coordination on migration
4.3: Foster regional dialogue and cooperation among ECOWAS Member States to address common migration challenges and opportunities	4.3.1 Strengthen interagency/ interministerial coordination mechanisms to ensure alignment and collaboration in labour migration governance, ensuring that gender perspectives are integrated into all processes.	Number of meetings on labour migration	ECOWAS Secretariat, AUC, National Migration Agencies, IOM, ILO	2025 - 2027	Improved migration governance through regional cooperation
	4.3.2 Institutionalize regular intergovernmental forums to facilitate regional dialogue on labour migration	Number of regional dialogues on labour migration held	ECOWAS Secretariat, AUC, National	2025 - 2026	Improved migration governance

	policies and share best practices on gender integration.		Migration Agencies, IOM, ILO		through regional cooperation
	4.3.4 Develop a model framework for bilateral social security agreements between Member States by adapting the guidelines on BLA prepared by both AU and UN for better protection of men and women migrants.	Number of Member States with BLAs on labour migration Number of bilateral meetings held on labour migration cooperation	ECOWAS Secretariat, National Governments, Labour Ministries, ECOWAS Court of Justice	2025 - 2027	Enhanced access to Social Security
	4.3.4 Ensure open data-sharing agreements among ECOWAS Member States to support effective, evidence-based policy planning that addresses gender-related migration issues	Number of formalized AU-ECOWAS migration governance agreements	EC, MS	2025 - 2028	Improved labour migration governance
4.4: Strengthen partnerships with international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to enhance the governance of labour migration	4.4.1 Sustain a functional tripartite social dialogue forum within ECOWAS as supported by the Supplementary Act A/SA.1/07/10 on the Creation of a Tripartite Social Dialogue Forum within ECOWAS	Number of Member States incorporating labour migration in tripartite consultations and social dialogue processes	EC, MS	2025 - 2027	Improved labour migration governance
	4.4.2 Provide technical support and capacity building to sub-regional workers and employers organizations to facilitate regional tripartite dialogue on labour migration and mobility	Number of regional tripartite dialogue meetings	ECOWAS Secretariat, AUC, National Migration Agencies, IOM, ILO	2025 - 2026	Improved migration governance through regional cooperation
	4.4.3 Develop comprehensive training materials for government institutions, workers' organization, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to	Number of training materials/tool kits developed by ECOWAS and MS	ECOWAS Secretariat, AUC, National Migration	2025 - 2026	Improved migration governance through regional cooperation

	ensure coherent, gender-responsive policy implementation		Agencies, IOM, ILO		
	4.4.4 Enhance partnerships, and collaboration between ECOWAS, AU, UN agencies, and social partners to improve migration governance with integrated gender measures.	Number of meetings on labour migration	EC, MS, International partners, social partners	2025 - 2027	Improved labour migration governance

Strategic Objective 5: Ensure Gender and Social Inclusion in Migration Policies					
Specific Objectives	Activities	Performance Indicators	Implementing Bodies	Timelines	Expected Outcome
5.1: Integrate gender-responsive approaches in labour migration policies and programs to ensure that the gender-specific needs as well as needs of, youth, people with disabilities, and vulnerable groups are addressed	5.1.1 Conduct a gap analysis to determine the gender-responsive needs that requires attention across the ECOWAS region	A gap analysis report	EC, MS	2025 - 2026	A gap analysis report
	5.1.2 Mainstream and Integrate gender-responsive provisions into all ECOWAS labour migration policies.	Number of ECOWAS policies with explicit gender considerations Gender audits of national labour migration frameworks	ECOWAS Gender and Social Affairs Directorate, National Labour Ministries, Women's Rights Organizations, Civil Society Organizations	2025 - 2029	Enhanced protection and opportunities for women migrants, gender-balanced migration governance
	5.1.3 Implement ECOWAS Gender Policy	Number of capacity-building programs for policymakers on gender-responsiveness	EC, MS	2025 - 2027	Gender-responsive laour migration

	5.1.4 Develop targeted legal and welfare services for women and men migrant workers and PWDs, including those in informal employment, with gender-specific interventions.	Number of ECOWAS countries implementing legal protections for PWD migrants	ECOWAS Labour and Employment Directorate, Ministries of Labour, ILO, Trade Unions, Disability Rights Organizations	2025 - 2026	Strengthened legal protections ensuring fair treatment of PWDs in labour
	5.1.5 Develop comprehensive support programs for women migrants and other vulnerable groups, ensuring access to education, social services, health, housing, financial services, and social security.	Number of vocational training programs accessible to women migrants Number of quotas for migrant workers with disabilities	ECOWAS Labour and Employment Directorate, Private Sector, TVET Institutions, Women's Rights Organizations	2025 - 2026	Increased economic empowerment and financial independence for women migrant workers, leading to improved livelihoods
	5.1.6 Review and update national labour migration policies to integrate gender and social inclusion perspectives	Number of reviewed policies	EC, MS	2025 - 2030	Gender-responsive labour migration policies
	5.1.7 Develop disability-friendly workplaces and support services for migrant workers	Increased support services	EC, MS, CSOs and NGOs	2025 - 2032	Social inclusion
	5.1.8 Advocate for the ratification and implementation of international conventions on gender and labour migration	Number of ratifications of relevant policies by MS	EC, MS	2025 - 2026	Improved legal framework
	5.1.9 Establish migrant women's associations, mentorship platforms, and networks for peer support and empowerment	Number of women-led enterprises supported through ECOWAS initiatives	EC, MS, CSOs and NGOs	2025 - 2026	Gender-responsive labour migration
	5.1.10 Organise regional conferences and knowledge-sharing initiatives on gender-sensitive migration policies	financial literacy and	EC, MS, CSOs, NGOs, donor partners	2025 - 2027	Growth in women-led businesses and financial inclusion

	and critical welfare needs of migrant workers	entrepreneurship programs			rates among women migrants
	5.1.11 Promote research and data collection on gender-disaggregated migration trends for evidence-based policymaking	Number of studies undertaken and published	EC, MS, immigration & statistical & research bodies	2025 - 2026	Gender-responsive laour migration
5.2: Promote social inclusion by reducing discrimination against migrant workers based on gender, ethnicity, or legal status	5.2.1 Expand access to social services—including housing, education, and healthcare—for migrant families, ensuring that gender-specific needs are met.	Number of migrant workers accessing social protection	EC, MS	2025 - 2027	Reduction in workplace discrimination cases
	5.2.2 Promote awareness campaigns to address xenophobia and discrimination against women migrants and to facilitate participatory decision-making processes that include migrant voices in policy formulation	Number of awareness campaigns held in selected corridors	EC, MS, National enforcement agencies, social partners	2025 - 2026	Reduction in xenophobic and discrimination cases
	5.2.3 Establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with gender and social inclusion policies	Number of public and private organizations adopting social inclusion policies	EC, MS, National enforcement and labour agencies, social partners	2025 - 2027	Adoption of social inclusion policies by organizations
	5.2.4 Promote fair and ethical recruitment practices that prevent discrimination and exploitation and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to protect women and vulnerable migrants from workplace abuse	The Number of guidelines on fair and ethical recruitment developed Number of pre-departure and post-arrival orientation guidelines developed	EC, MS, National enforcement and labour agencies, social partners	2025 - 2027	Fair and ethical recruitment

	5.2.5 Provide specialized legal aid and support services for migrant women and socially excluded groups	Increase in migrant workers with disabilities accessing legal support services.	EC, MS,	2025 - 2026	Increased access to support services
	5.2.6 Develop multilingual information materials on legal rights, workplace safety, and social services	Number of materials developed	EC, MS,	2025 - 2027	Increased access to support services
	5.2.7 Organized leadership and advocacy training for migrant women and marginalized groups	Number of workshops	EC, MS, donor and social partners	2025 - 2026	Increased social inclusion for migrant workers
	5.2.8 Leverage digital platforms and media to amplify the voices of women and marginalized migrants	Increased participation in labour migration	EC, MS	2025 - 2026	Amplified the voices of women and marginalized migrants
	5.2.9 Foster collaboration with civil society organizations and international bodies working on gender and migration	Increased women and youth participation in labour migration	EC, MS, donor and social partners	2025 - 2026	Increased participation in labour migration
	5.2.10 Establish dedicated social protection funds for migrant workers with disabilities	Increase in PWD migrants benefiting from social security schemes	EC, MS, donor and social partners	2025 - 2028	Increased participation in labour migration

Appendix 2: THE LABOUR MIGRATION POLICIES IN THE ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

Country	Policy	Year of Adoption	Compatibility with ECOWAS Protocol	Context
Benin	No specific Migration Policy			Migration management is handled through various legislative instruments without a unified framework.
Burkina Faso	Migration Management Policy	2018	Partially Compatible	Manage migration flows, protect migrants' rights, and engage the diaspora in national development.
Cabo Verde	National Immigration Strategy	2012	Partially Compatible	It focuses on integrating immigrants into society, managing migration flows, and enhancing migration's benefits for development.
Côte d'Ivoire	Labour Code	2015	Restrictive	Restrictive in practice; complex work permit requirements thus discourage mobility. Labour Migration Strategy undergoing validation
The Gambia	Migration Policy, and Labour Migration Strategy and Action Plan	2020 and 2022	Compatible	Manage migration to enhance economic development while protecting migrants' rights.
Ghana	National Labour Migration Policy	2020	Compatible	Manage migration to enhance economic development while protecting migrants' rights.
Guinea	National Migration Policy	2006	Partially Compatible	Manage migration, protect migrants' rights, and involve the diaspora in national development efforts.

Guinea-Bissau			Restrictive	Address migration matters through general labour and immigration laws.
Liberia	Labour Law	2015	Restrictive	The Minimal focus is on migration, but priority is given to domestic employment needs.
Mali	National Migration Policy	2014	Partially Compatible	Manage migration flows, protect migrants, and leverage migration for development, focusing on diaspora engagement.
Niger	National Migration Policy	2015	Compatible	Focuses on managing migration, combating irregular migration, and enhancing the positive impacts of migration on development
Nigeria	National Policy on Labour Migration	2014	Compatible	Focused on protecting migrant workers, promoting regular migration, and enhancing national development
Senegal	Bilateral Labour Agreements	2008	Compatible	Active bilateral agreements and protections for migrant workers
Sierra-Leone	National Labour Migration Policy	2018	Compatible	Protect migrant workers and promote the benefits of labour migration for national development.
Togo	National Labour Migration Policy	2016	Compatible	Protect the rights of migrant workers and harness labour migration for development.