

The world's approach to migration is painfully broken. The Global Compact can fix it.

by [Francesco Rocca](#) | IFRC

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*** Any views expressed in this article are those of the author and not of Thomson Reuters Foundation.**

Our message is crystal clear: save lives, protect human dignity, and seize this opportunity to make a difference for millions of people

Francesco Rocca is the IFRC president.

At the beginning of next week, the international community will gather in Marrakech to discuss and hopefully adopt a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

I say “hopefully” because after 18 months of engagement, dialogue and discussions, the past few weeks have seen several governments either withdraw from or put on hold their involvement in this important process.

The Global Compact for Migration is an opportunity to fix a global approach to migration that does not work; that is simply, and painfully, broken.

Too many people are dying every day. Too many people are suffering. Too many children face abuse and violence. And too many people are being exploited by traffickers and smugglers who are all too happy to exploit this massive international gap.

We hope that governments will come together and sign this agreement. The principles of the Global Compact for Migration, at least from a humanitarian perspective, are absolutely fine: it is an important framework to protect lives and human dignity. But signing it won't be enough. The next and more important step is to turn the ambitions of this document into concrete actions that make a difference on the ground.

This won't be easy. There is a disconnect between the laudable language of the Global Compact, and a hardening of hearts and policies in some parts of the world. Earlier this year, my organization (the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) documented the emergence of a "New Walled Order" - a world where arbitrary barriers to basic services have turned migration into a humanitarian crisis.

These barriers - that include the criminalization of humanitarian assistance, the withholding of critical information, legal advice, health care or shelter, and the failure to address indirect blockages to these services, such as language issues - increase suffering unnecessarily. They are also a boon for traffickers, who are all too keen to peddle "solutions" to desperate people. Every new barrier, new wall, new draconian policy is a business opportunity for these peddlers of human misery.

These are the messages that IFRC will be taking to Marrakech. But we will also be coming with solutions. As recommended by the Global Compact, we want to work with governments to create a network of "humanitarian service points" (also known as "safe spaces" or "information points") where migrants can access basic services and information, without fear of reprisal. This point is crucial: experience has shown time and again that people will only reach out for support if they know they can do so without being approached by immigration services.

These service points already exist in many places - in Mexico, Italy, Niger, Sweden and Austria, to name just a few examples. With support from governments, we can quickly expand these and help them deliver on some of the core Global Compact ambitions and commitments.

We are not naive. We know that migration is a complex and often divisive issue. But we also know that there are activities that can be implemented now and can make the difference for the lives of thousands of people.

Governments have the right to set migration policies and to manage their borders. We are not questioning this. However, what we are saying is that they do not have the right to implement migration policy in a manner that needlessly increases suffering.

Our message is crystal clear: save lives, protect human dignity, and seize this opportunity to make a difference for millions of people.

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With scratch-card savings, Senegalese farmers dodge drought

by [Nellie Peyton](#) | [@nelliepeyton](#) | Thomson Reuters Foundation

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As rains become more erratic, growers put away small amounts of cash via their cellphones so they can afford fertiliser and harder seeds

By Nellie Peyton

TOUBA TOUL, Senegal, Dec 19 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Farmer Adama Faye holds out two handfuls of peanuts - in one weathered palm, the nuts are round and smooth, in the other, they are small and shrivelled.

The weaker crop was grown by her son without fertiliser, using methods typical of their village in western Senegal, where farm supplies are expensive and hard to come by.

The large peanuts were grown on her plot, using fertiliser from a start-up that helps farmers save money throughout the year to pay for quality products and agricultural training.

"It's a good lesson for him," said Faye, 55, laughing and shaking her head in a yellow dress and head scarf, at home in Keur Lamane village in the district of Touba Toul.

Her son had thought the "**myAgro**" service was too expensive when she told him to sign up last year. Now that her yield is three times bigger than his, he has changed his mind, she said.

Smallholder farmers across sub-Saharan Africa struggle to buy seeds and fertiliser every year, with low incomes and a lack of bank accounts making bulk purchases difficult, experts say.

But a mobile savings model gaining popularity in Senegal and Mali allows farmers to put away small amounts of cash whenever they can - a potentially life-changing innovation for families struggling with shrinking yields amid climate change.

As the planet warms, rainfall in West Africa is becoming more erratic, making access to fertiliser, drought-hardy seeds and other technology all the more necessary, farmers say.

"Every year we see the difference. The plants (with fertiliser) are bigger and taller," said Faye.

She does not notice the added cost because she pays in increments of \$1-\$2 spread through the year.

This season, rain was scarce, and only the plot with fertiliser produced enough to keep the family from pulling children out of school and skipping meals, she said.



MyAgro farmer Fatou Diouf poses for a portrait with peanuts she has harvested, Touba Toul, Senegal, December 11, 2018. HANDOUT/Natalie Brown/myAgro

SPENDING CULTURE

MyAgro, a social enterprise, has grown from working with 240 farmers in Mali in 2011 to 45,000 clients across Mali, Senegal and Tanzania, where it launched

this year.

The group sells packages of supplies based on plot size. To pay, farmers buy scratch cards for small amounts from local vendors, who punch a code into their phones to register the money as savings in the farmers' accounts.

If they reach their payment goal, the seeds and fertiliser are delivered just ahead of the first rain.

"Before, if we started saving money there were always family needs, and we would have to spend it," said Faye, who has seven children and an extended family to support.

In Senegalese culture, when you have money, you share it - pitching in for weddings, babies and medical bills.

That made putting away cash from the October harvest to June planting nearly impossible, farmers said.

Now Faye buys a card whenever she has a good market day, and has no problem accumulating 25,000 CFA francs (\$44) to buy fertiliser for her half-hectare of peanuts once a year.

Getting financial services to poor farmers across the developing world is a "massive problem", said Steve Wiggins, an agriculture researcher at the London-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Many need a basic way to save rather than credit or insurance, which are riskier, he said.

There are local savings groups all over Africa, sometimes supported by aid agencies, he noted.

But MyAgro says it is a pioneer of the "mobile layaway" model, which mimics the popular practice of buying small amounts of cellphone credit on scratch

cards.

IN THE KNOW

Moustapha Diouf, a 68-year-old peanut farmer in Touba Toul, said the rains had been irregular for the past three years.

Senegal touches West Africa's Sahel, a semi-arid belt below the Sahara desert, where frequent droughts have caused widespread hunger in recent years.

Climate change is driving much drier conditions in the Sahel, which experienced a 50-percent hike in record dry months from 1980-2013, **scientists said** this month.

Innovations like drought-resistant seeds, insecticides and fertilisers are not available in many parts of the region, even if farmers could afford them, said Wiggins of ODI.

"Despite there being plenty of technology on the shelf by now, frustratingly rather few of them have got it," he said.

MyAgro aims to close this supply gap, and teach farmers tricks for dealing with climate extremes - which it says can be even more valuable than the supplies.

Before joining, Diouf said he used manure as fertiliser and would spread it all over his field after the first rain.

Now he knows to wait to plant until the second or third rain to make sure the moisture will last, and to put fertiliser in small doses around each seed.

"There is no comparison" in terms of yields, he said. "You invest a little bit and earn more."

(\$1 = 573.0000 CFA francs)

(Reporting by Nellie Peyton; editing by Megan Rowling. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women's and LGBT+ rights, human trafficking, property rights, and climate change. Visit <http://news.trust.org/climate>)

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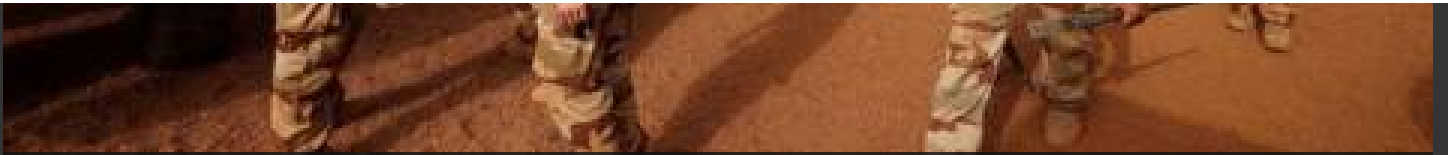
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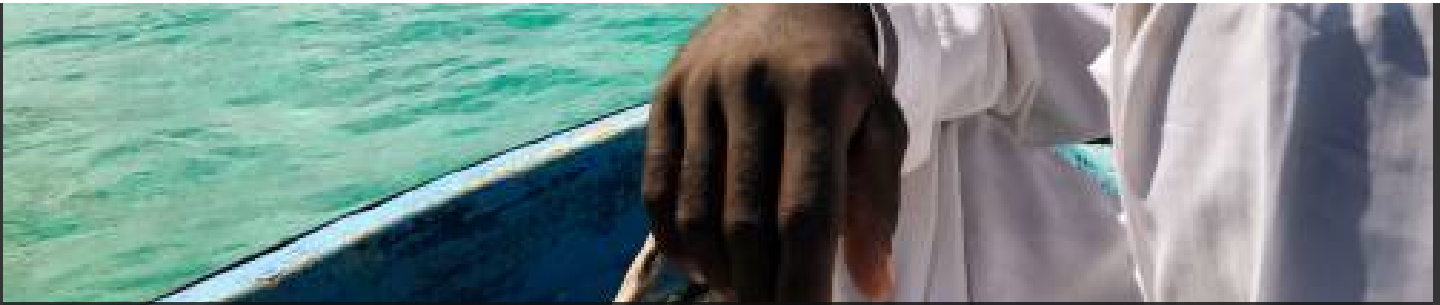
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