SCALING FENCES:
VOICES OF IRREGULAR AFRICAN MIGRANTS TO EUROPE

‘Migration is a historic and multifaceted phenomenon involving humanitarian, human rights, and demographic issues. It has deep economic, environmental and political implications. It generates many different, legitimate and strongly held opinions. Not always the strongly held are legitimate; not always the legitimate are strongly held.’

38°43′N 9°09′W *to* 40°70′N 73°90′W

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES
United Nations Secretary-General[1]

37°15′N 7°12′W
MIGRANT SETTLEMENT
Lepe, Spain


BURGER KING
AUTOKING
PLAY KING

FOREWORD

‘The core message arising from this study, that migration is a reverberation of uneven development and particularly of a development trajectory that is failing young people, sends a strong signal to policymakers.’

UNDP's Human Development Report 2009, *'Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development'*, offered a human development lens on migration, analysing the ways in which, in an unequal world, human mobility is a fundamental driver — and consequence — of development. Published at the height of the global financial crisis, it asked: *'Will the economic crisis raise protectionist barriers against immigration, or will it serve as an opportunity to rethink the role of movement in fostering social and economic progress?'*

A decade on, migration has indeed become a defining issue of political contest in Europe's democracies and elsewhere. The movement of peoples across sovereign borders often triggers a deep sense of fear and uncertainty. Yet, given its fundamental link to the development process, and other trends, it is set to expand in absolute terms as the world's population increases.

How we respond as a global community will have decisive implications: not only for individuals on the move, but for development outcomes in origin countries and for societies in destination countries.

Scaling Fences: Voices of Irregular African Migrants to Europe is a contribution to the effective operationalization of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. It seeks to help broaden and better inform public debate, and to support policymakers in forging evidence-based, humane and productive long-term approaches to the phenomenon of migration. The study draws on the most extensive and intensive survey ever undertaken of Africans who had migrated to Europe through irregular means from multiple African countries. It follows the *Journey to Extremism: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment* report published by UNDP in September 2017.

The voices reflected in the *Scaling Fences* report are those of people who have chosen to migrate in the context of being relatively more educated and better off than their peers. They are overwhelmingly young and have, in a number of ways, manifestly gained from development progress on the African continent in recent decades. Yet they share a widespread perception that opportunities to build on this progress and fulfil their aspirations at home are closed. This perception is held so profoundly that it has led to a radical rejection of their circumstances in favour of a potentially perilous and irregular journey to an unknown future in Europe.

The core message arising from this study, that migration is a reverberation of uneven development and particularly of a development trajectory that is failing young people, sends a strong signal to policymakers. We must not become distracted by the false promise of short-term fixes: unnecessarily harsh domestic policies and diverting much needed development assistance from core priorities. Doing so may only serve to further circumscribe the ambitions of young Africans instead of fostering and harnessing their potential as an engine of transformative change. I welcome you to read on.

28°17′S 52°47′W *to* 40°70′N 73°90′W

ACHIM STEINER
UNDP Administrator