

# 8 Distressed migrants

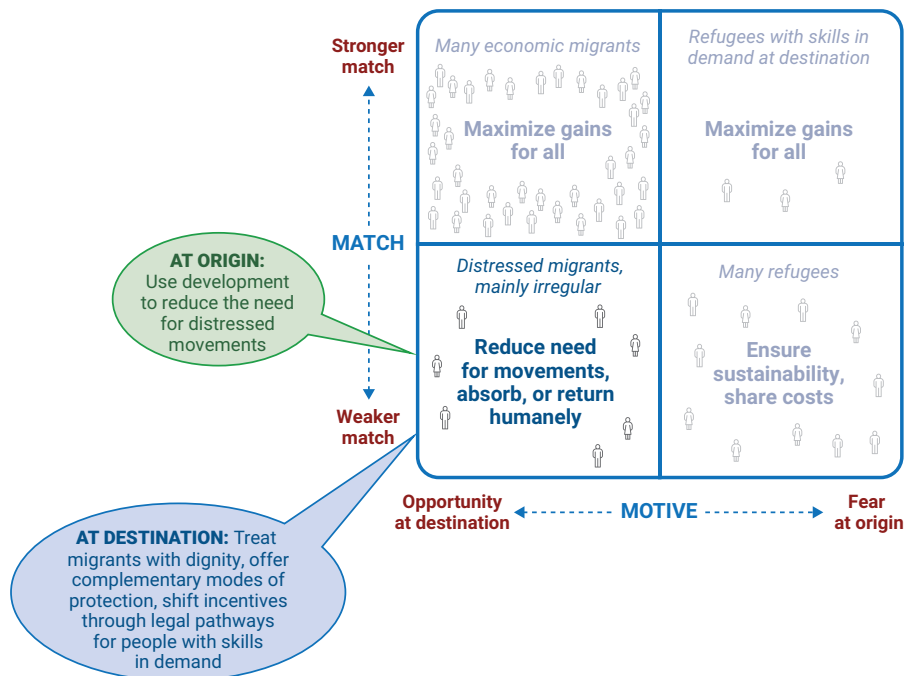
## Preserving dignity



### Key messages

- The circumstances surrounding distressed migration are often irregular and painful. This type of migration also entails costs for destination countries, but these countries have no international legal obligation to host distressed migrants. Many countries seek to prevent the entry of distressed migrants, but restrictive policies often undermine migrants’ dignity, which creates difficult policy trade-offs.
- In this context, the challenge is to reduce the need for distressed migration, including by extending the scope of international protection, shifting incentives through the establishment of legal entry pathways, and strengthening the match of migrants’ skills and attributes with the needs of destination economies through development.
- Transit countries face particular issues, which can be addressed only through bilateral and multi-lateral cooperation.
- Overall, migrants’ inherent dignity should be the yardstick of migration policies (figure 8.1).

**Figure 8.1** The policy challenge is to reduce distressed movements while treating migrants humanely



Source: WDR 2023 team.

Note: Match refers to the degree to which a migrant’s skills and related attributes meet the demand in the destination country. Motive refers to the circumstances under which a person moves—whether in search of opportunity or because of a “well-founded fear” of persecution, armed conflict, or violence in their origin country.