International Organization for Migration (IOM)

International Dialogue on Migration (IDM)

Societies and Identities:
The Multifaceted Impact
of Migration

19-20 July 2010
International Conference Centre, Geneva

Overarching theme: "Migration and Social Change"

First IDM workshop, 9-10 March 2010: **"Migration and Transnationalism: Opportunities and Challenges"**

Focus on the migrant as actor

Key conclusions:

- Address transnational realities through inter-State cooperation
- Forge diverse partnerships
- Consider the needs of transnational families

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A New Perspective

- A focus on the **social, political and cultural changes** associated with migration in societies of origin, transit and destination

- Migration as **one – but not the only – factor** that impacts societies

- Recognition that change happens at all levels – need to consider **multiple levels** of social life and policymaking

- Focus on how the **image of migrants** in political and public discourse and the media can have serious effects — positive and negative — on social cohesion

- New movements: no longer only uni-directional or permanent, but also **cyclic and multi-staged**

- New migrants: **shifts** in age, gender, education, and family status of migrants lead to a diverse population

- New "**migration identities**" for countries: difficult distinction between transit and destination societies as they experience some of the same impacts, but degree of response may vary

- **Self-reflection** within societies about the questions": identity, belonging, rights and obligations

- Necessitates **pragmatic responses** by national governments, local governments and municipalities, communities and individuals, social institutions, civil society actors and the private sector.

- Active management of relationships between migrants and societies, whether they see themselves as origin, transit or destination countries

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Key areas impacted may include

I. Population distribution and demographic structure

II. Family structure and gender roles

III. Social norms and practices

IV. Diversity and identity

The topics we will discuss will be relevant to most countries, but the type of response necessary may vary depending on the duration of time migrants spend within a country's borders.

I. Impacts on Population Distribution and Demographic Structure

- Depopulation / revitalization

- Rural areas / cities

- Factoring migration into regional and urban planning

- Age distribution, fertility, etc.

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II. Impacts on Family and Gender Relationships

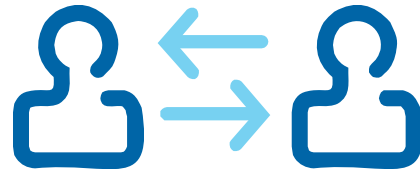- "Care drain" in societies of origin – separation of families can leave care needs unmet, especially in the absence of social safety nets

- "Care chains"– transfer of caregiving tasks both locally and globally

- Role of gender in shaping impacts in societies of origin and destination

- Need for institutional response to evolve to reflect changing patterns of need

III. Impacts on Social Norms and Practices: the Concept of "Social Remittances"

- Transfer of ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital
- Transmitted via communications technologies, through visits and return
- Slow and subtle influence on mindsets, behaviours and practices (e.g. gender norms and relationships, education and human capital development, health)
- Creation of two-way communication channels between migrants and societies of origin

IV. Impacts on Diversity and Identity: the Question of "Integration"

- ⊕ Meaning of "integration" in a more mobile world, and implications for social cohesion

- ⊕ Structural considerations to **facilitate integration** of individuals with different characteristics and needs, at different points in their life course :
  - Positive image of migrants
  - Combatting racism, extremism, xenophobia
  - Inclusion in labour market
  - Access to social services
  - Social and political participation

- ⊕ Focus on migrant children & youth, 1.5th, and second and third generations

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Conclusion

⊕ Migration can result in considerable **social changes,** positive
and negative, in societies of origin, transit and destination

⊕ Goals of the IDM: understanding that managing these changes
requires the adaptation of concepts of social cohesion to
changing migration realities

⊕ Need for **cross-cutting action and policy**
  • Support from a variety of stakeholders
  • Use of a whole-of-society approach
  • Positive visibility of migrants in the media
  • Flexibility and responsiveness of policies
  • Acknowledgement of migrants' positive contributions