

# WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2015



## OVERVIEW



International Organization for Migration (IOM)



## OVERVIEW

We live in a world which is becoming increasingly urban, where more and more people are moving to cities. Over 54 per cent of people across the globe were living in urban areas in 2014 (UN DESA, 2014).<sup>1</sup> The current urban population of 3.9 billion is expected to grow in the next few decades to some 6.4 billion by 2050 (ibid.). It is estimated that three million people around the world are moving to cities every week (UN-Habitat, 2009). Migration is driving much of the increase in urbanization, making cities much more diverse places in which to live.

Nearly one in five of the world foreign-born population resides in established global gateway cities (Çağlar, 2014). In many of these cities such as Sydney, London and New York, migrants represent over a third of the population and, in some cities such as Brussels and Dubai, migrants account for more than half of the population. Other cities have seen a remarkable growth in migration in recent years. For example, the number of foreign residents in Seoul has doubled in the last ten years.<sup>2</sup> In Asia and Africa, rapidly growing small cities are expected to absorb almost all the future urban population growth of the world (UN DESA, 2014) and this mobility pattern to cities and urban areas is characterized by the temporality and circularity of the internal migration process (Hugo, 2014).

The fast rate of urbanization, and rising migration to cities, brings with it both risks and opportunities for the migrants, communities and governments concerned. The *World Migration Report 2015 – Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility* explores how migration and migrants are shaping cities, and how the life of migrants, in turn, is shaped by cities, their people, organizations and rules. This report examines the relationships between migrants and cities on such issues as employment, housing and health, and also considers how migrants help to build and revive cities with their resources and ideas, both in the origin and host countries. The report also identifies innovative examples of how some cities are seeking to manage the challenges of increased global mobility and social diversity with varying degrees of success. It will highlight new policy developments concerning urban partnerships among migrant groups, local governments, civil society and the private sector which are designed to meet the challenges posed by migration and cities.

Migration and how it is governed, should be an issue at the frontline of urban planning and sustainable development. However, migration is largely omitted from the global debate on urbanization. There is a glaring absence of the mention of migrants in international planning for a new global urban agenda, such as Habitat III.<sup>3</sup> Many city and local governments also still do not include migration or migrants in their urban development planning and implementation. Migrants are therefore still generally overlooked in global discourses on urbanization and cities.

1 The UN bases its reports on the definition of “urban” by the different national statistical offices as a spatial and demographic concept, which can vary from country to country.

2 Source: Seoul Metropolitan Government. Data taken from the database of Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2014: <http://stat.seoul.go.kr/> (in Korean only).

3 The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) will take place in 2016, as decided in General Assembly Resolution 66/ 207. For details, see: [www.un.org/en/issues/habitat-iii](http://www.un.org/en/issues/habitat-iii).

The present report aims to address this challenge in three distinct ways:

- By documenting how migration is shaping cities and the situation of migrants in cities. Much of the current international discussion about migration trends and migration policy tends to focus on the national level. Taking the migration enquiry to the city level increases our understanding of the local political economies of migration, and the close connection between migration and urban development.
- By drawing attention to the livelihood of migrants in the cities of the Global South. The existing discussions on migrants and cities tend to focus primarily on the Global North and the integration of international migrants.
- By examining both internal and international migration. Cities across the development spectrum have growing mobile and diverse populations to manage. In the developed countries, one of the main sources of population diversity is international migration, while in the developing world it is most likely internal migration<sup>4</sup> and, to a lesser extent, growing international South–South migration.

The key features and messages of this report are presented as a contribution to address this lacuna in the ongoing global debate on urbanization and can be summarized under four key headings:

## Migration is essentially an urban affair

We live in an era of unprecedented human mobility that has been markedly urban as migrants, both internal and international, move to cities and urban areas, bring diversity and connect communities within and across borders to create new linkages among localities. This calls for new approaches to urban governance and migration policies.

There are an estimated 232 million international migrants (UN DESA, 2013) and 740 million internal migrants (UNDP, 2009) in the world.

- About 50 per cent of international migrants reside in ten highly urbanized, high-income countries<sup>5</sup> such as Australia, Canada and the United States, several countries in Europe (France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom), the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UN DESA, 2013). Migrants tend to concentrate in cities of these countries.

Almost all growth in the world's population over the next few decades of another 2.5 billion is expected to be in urban areas in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in Africa and Asia (UN DESA, 2014).

- Although Africa is not the world's fastest urbanizing region, its urban population has been growing at a historically unprecedented rate for decades. In 1960, Johannesburg was the only city in sub-Saharan Africa with a population of over a million; by 1970, there were four (Cape Town, Johannesburg, Kinshasa and Lagos) and, by 2010, there were 33 (UN-Habitat, 2013).
- Every day an estimated 120,000 people are migrating to cities in the Asia-Pacific region and, by 2050, the proportion of people living in urban areas

4 There is a serious lack of consistent, current and comparable data on foreign-born urban populations in most countries of the Global South.

5 <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GNI-per-capita-Atlas-and-PPP-table>

is likely to rise to 63 per cent. The Asia–Pacific region has added nearly 1 billion people to its urban population between 1990 and 2014, about half of whom in China alone (450 million). As part of a long-term trend, the urban population of the region has more than doubled between 1950 and 1975, and again between 1975 and 2000. It is anticipated to almost double once more between 2000 and 2025 (UN ESCAP, 2014).

Increased large scale migration to urban centres is inevitable due to the global realities of aging societies, slow and uneven economic growth among regions in a country and among nations, and environmental and climatic instability. For many cities, migration has become a more important determinant of population growth and age structures than fertility and mortality (Skeldon, 2013). Social networks are located in cities and newly arriving migrants can make use of these for survival and economic opportunities. It is in cities where migrant integration primarily takes place.

The geography of migration flows is changing in line with changes in the global economy. A much wider range of cities around the world have become destinations for migrants. For example, migrants are increasingly attracted to countries experiencing higher economic growth in East Asia, Brazil, southern Africa and western India. Cities everywhere are experiencing a constant ebb and flow of people between urban, regional, national and global communities. Thus cities face growing challenges of managing migration-induced diversity.

However, at the global level, migration policies and urbanization policies tend to be discussed in separate forums, which results in a lack of policy coherence. At the national level, with very few exceptions, there is a disjuncture between national and local policies. National governments may encourage migration to urban areas for economic development without sufficient coordination with local governments on the basic social service needs on the ground.

Cities, in the meantime, have taken their own initiatives to manage migration at the local level and directly interact with migrants, and even with their home communities through transnational partnership arrangements. For a small and growing number of cities, immigration policies and programmes are now integral to their urban development and management.

## Migration to cities brings both challenges and opportunities

Almost all the growth in the world's population over the next few decades will take place in urban centres in low- and middle-income countries where poverty reduction is slow and large deficits in provision of basic services remain (UN DESA, 2012). Strong population growth in cities poses a great deal of pressure on infrastructure, the environment and the social fabric of the city. There is much concern about the pace of urbanization and the capacity of national and local governments among low-income nations to cope with its consequences. Policymakers in these countries tend to consider rural–urban migration as the main contributor to over-crowding, congestion, increasing exposure to environmental hazards and to shortfalls in basic infrastructure and services.

Over the last decades, particularly in the Global South, poorly managed urban migration has often resulted in the development of informal solutions to address



gaps in the provision of basic needs and in the exclusion of migrants from access to formal land, housing and job markets as well as health and education services. UN-Habitat estimates that one out of every three people in cities in the developing world lives in slum areas accommodating migrants and other urban poor (UN-Habitat, 2007).

Migration policies of both origin and destination countries can affect cities in positive and negative ways. Restrictive, inadequate or unclear policies on labour mobility in Africa, Asia and Europe may give rise to irregular migratory flows and the growth of informal urban settlements. Strict border control policies can lead to urban “transit hubs” where migrants become stranded on their way to intended destinations.

Newcomers often have no choice except to settle in hazard-prone and poorly planned areas, where they have limited access to resources and opportunities that are essential for resilience. Furthermore, when disasters strike, they are among the worst affected.

Recent studies indicate that migrants are disproportionately represented among the urban poor in these informal settlements (Hoang, Truong and Dinh, 2013; Rigg, Nguyen and Luong, 2014). For example, in Accra, Ghana, 92 per cent of migrant households live in one slum, Old Fadama, without a ready supply of water or access to toilet facilities (Awumbila, 2014). In many cities in low- and middle-income countries, informal settlements commonly function as entry points for incoming migrants. Despite the hardships of living in such conditions, migrants are still able to find economic activity and opportunities to improve their current well-being and future prospects (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014) in these informal settlements or slums, such as Kibera in Nairobi, Kenya, or Old Fadama.

Moving to cities can greatly enhance people’s well-being. It offers an escape from the impact of the hazards of a fragile rural livelihood, and an access to diverse employment opportunities and better health and education, all of which have the potential to reduce the poverty of the people moving as well as those who stay behind.

Urbanization clearly brings benefits, as it is hard to find sustained economic growth without urbanization. Cities can also turn urban diversity arising from migration into social and economic advantages. Migration can help increase productivity if it is strategically managed and linked to the formal economy. Fostering the inclusion of migrants into the labour market can have positive benefits both for the place of origin and of destination as links are maintained between the two.

Despite innovation in some cities, efforts for poverty reduction through the inclusion of migrants are not yet readily prioritized by city or municipal government authorities. Inclusive local plans, policies and measures, in particular at the city level, are critical in defining the well-being and resilience of migrants, while effective national and international instruments and institutions also need to be put in place.

A recent study found a strong correlation between effective provision of services and urban development in all of the major emerging economies (EPF and CIRD, 2013). In pursuing more inclusive urban governance, cities today link local urban social cohesion to economic growth and global competitiveness (Metropolis, 2011). The participation and inclusion of migrants in their host cities is an



indispensable part of building stable, open and vibrant communities that assure the socioeconomic future of a country.

## Migrants are resourceful partners in urban governance

Migrants make significant and essential contributions to the economic, social and cultural development of their host countries and of their communities back home. Yet oftentimes these contributions go unrecognized or, at best, are measured only in terms of the remittances they manage to send back home.

**Migrants as builders of resilience:** Migrants also play an important role in building the resilience of home and host communities through the exchange of resources and support. They and their networks can contribute to managing risk for the community at large. Migrants are often overrepresented in the healthy, productive age groups and provide diversified skills that can support disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts, particularly in ageing societies.

**Migrants as agents of local development:** Migrants play a central role in forging the links between cities of origin and of destination and in mainstreaming migration into local development planning. City-to-city links are often created or maintained due to the presence of large migrant populations. Migrant and diaspora communities can play an important role in supporting local decentralized development partnerships between cities and in facilitating or undertaking some of the related activities such as the provision of expertise and information on the communities of origin.

**Migrants as city-makers:** Migrants can help strengthen the place of cities in the global economic and political hierarchy. They can do so by promoting historical, cultural, religious and socioeconomic assets of a city if opportunities exist to enable them to do so.

As reflected in the Declaration adopted at the UN High-level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development in New York in 2013, migrants need to be at the centre of national and global migration and development agendas. This has been a key message of international debates on migration since the UNDP *Human Development Report 2009* dedicated to human mobility and development. By examining how migration affects well-being, the WMR 2013 drew attention to the human development of migrants and its significance in policy debate.

Within the context of sustainable development, as identified at the Rio+20 conference in 2012<sup>6</sup> and other major summits including the 2013 UN HLD on International Migration and Development,<sup>7</sup> economic growth should be pursued equitably among all population groups. Sustained and inclusive economic growth is the goal most cities have striven to achieve with practical and innovative solutions. Furthermore, for an increasing number of cities, immigration policies and programmes are integral to their urban development planning and management. UNESCO and UN-HABITAT have undertaken joint research on the importance of migration for the growth of urban areas and how to enhance the inclusiveness of international migrants in cities (UNESCO and UN-Habitat, 2010 and 2012).

6 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 2012: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>

7 See: [www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/](http://www.un.org/en/ga/68/meetings/migration/)



## Migrant-inclusive urban governance is needed

Urbanization is the dominant challenge of the twenty-first century. Most urban growth will come from both international and internal migration. Urban growth, however, can only be sustainable if cities invest in their communities, including migrants. Cities are well positioned to help manage human mobility. They have the authority to develop and implement policy frameworks for the inclusion of migrants. As service providers, they have direct access to migrants and can assess their needs.

Urban migration governance requires, however, a multi-stakeholder approach and governance structure so that diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action taken. It includes formal institutions as well as informal arrangements and the resources of residents including migrants. Partnerships with other cities and local governments, national government, civil society, migrant associations and the cities' own diasporas are necessary to reap the benefits of the human resources of each city. In particular, public-private partnerships involving businesses could foster the integration of migrants in the labour market and help prevent spatial segregation. These partnerships will make urban governance more flexible, cost-effective and increase both social cohesion and the economic competitiveness of cities.

Positive efforts are being made among city policymakers to promote social cohesion. There are good examples of institutional structures being formed with the commitment of federal and local-level authorities in a number of cities in Europe (such as Berlin, Athens, Bilbao and Dublin) and in Asia (Fuzhou in the Fujian Province of China, Singapore and a network of cities in Japan). Cities like Berlin, Dublin and Lille are also forging partnerships with migrant associations to promote citizenship and political participation among migrant groups. Another innovative approach to financing municipal inclusion policies is participatory budgeting. This is widely practiced by over 1,700 local governments in more than 40 countries, especially among low-income countries where municipal budgets remain low despite decentralization.

## Platforms for exchange consultation and cooperation must be developed

As people increasingly live and work in more than one place, cities are challenged to manage their growing diversity and their strategic position within a country and the world at large. For example, openness to ethnic and cultural diversity has become an indicator of a city's ability to do business with the rest of the world along with such indicators of economic, investment and trade links to the global markets.<sup>8</sup> The capacity of a city to attract international populations and enable them to contribute to the future success of the city<sup>9</sup> is considered a key benchmark for a sustainable city of the future.

8 The "Global Cities Initiative" was launched by the Brookings Institution and JP Morgan Chase to strengthen the economic position, investment and trade links of US cities to the global network of metropolitan areas and which features immigration as one of its indicators of globality:  
[www.brookings.edu/about/projects/global-cities/about](http://www.brookings.edu/about/projects/global-cities/about).  
[www.jpmorganchase.com/content/dam/jpmorganchase/en/legacy/corporate/Corporate-Responsibility/globalcities.htm](http://www.jpmorganchase.com/content/dam/jpmorganchase/en/legacy/corporate/Corporate-Responsibility/globalcities.htm)

9 For more details: [www.opencities.eu/web/index.php?why\\_openness\\_matters\\_en](http://www.opencities.eu/web/index.php?why_openness_matters_en)



Unfortunately, migration is still not taken into consideration in most urban development plans and policies, and vice versa; and there is a glaring absence of migrants in the major international planning for a new global urban agenda, such as Habitat III. This is in part a reflection of the chronic gaps and variances in definitions<sup>10</sup> as well as in data and empirical research on migration and urbanization. It may also be a consequence of the lack of coordination between central and local governments. The present report highlights the links between well-governed migration and well-managed development. This, in turn, shows that restrictive policies on migration and urbanization can be damaging for growth and development for both origin and destination cities and countries in a globalized context.

Relatively unencumbered by the lack of policy coherence at the global and national governance levels, cities are nevertheless taking their own initiative to create socially integrative communities and forge new intercity networks of good practice around migration and urban governance. They have been established in order to strengthen relations among local institutions and draw some collective good practices from their individual experiences, with the shared goal of sustainable urban development and governance. They include the Canada-based Maytree Foundation's Cities of Migration<sup>11</sup> and the OPENCities,<sup>12</sup> co-founded by the EU and the British Council.

In addition to these city networks (Eurocities, 2010 and 2014), various international organizations (Price and Chacko, 2012; UNESCO and UN-Habitat, 2010) and political think tanks (Kerr, McDaniel and Guinan, 2014; McHugh, 2014), as well as national and global forums for research and policy on migration and cities (Metropolis, 2011; Cities of Migration, 2012), have already published collections of good practices of inclusion policies, mostly from Europe and North America but also some from Latin America (Collett and Gidley, 2012).

Nevertheless, these efforts by cities and local authorities need to be complemented by action at the international level to ensure that migration is fully taken into account when setting goals for sustainable cities of the future in a post-2015 global urban development agenda.

It would be important to gather available information in a global database and promote more information-sharing and dialogue between cities and between multi-level government stakeholders and other partners. At the same time, an important question should be addressed – namely, can the good practices of more advanced countries be replicated in countries with limited resources which try to adjust to rapid urban transitions? Or, in other words, how far are best practices limited to certain national and regional contexts and to what extent could they be globally applicable?

In 2015, IOM will dedicate its high-level International Dialogue on Migration conference to migrants and cities. It aims to assemble the collective wisdom on migration, mobility and urban transition and, together with city leaders and other experts, to draw a clear policy path towards improved migration management at all governance levels, to benefit both migrants and cities.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1: 1.2. Definitions and Terminology.

<sup>11</sup> See the Cities of Migration Conference in Berlin in June 2014 on "An Agenda for Shared Prosperity". For more details, see: <http://2014conference.citiesofmigration.ca/>

<sup>12</sup> [www.opencities.eu/web/index.php?home\\_en](http://www.opencities.eu/web/index.php?home_en)



A critical area for such a discussion is the improvement of data collection practices. Chapter 1 of this report highlights the paucity of city-level data. There is much work to be done to ensure that migrants are included in data sets covering urbanization and development. Having a clear understanding of where migrants reside and how they are organized is a critical first step in formulating an outreach strategy in order to foster their inclusion in the life of cities. Based on a good set of data on migrants, cities can then develop benchmarks for basic service provision as well as measure their levels of social and economic integration. This, in turn, could help formulate an effective policy from the numerous programmes and practices on the ground. As shown in Chapter 1, knowing the age structure of migrant communities helps a city to identify growing areas of financial and human resources needs.



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Acapulco	Kumashi
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Addis Ababa	Lansing
Agra	Laredo
Aisho	Lattakia
Aleppo	Lausanne
Allahabad	Leipzig
Amman	Lille
Amsterdam	Lisbon
Antwerp	London
Athens	Los Angeles
Atlanta	Los Cabos
Auckland	Lubumbashi
Austin	Ludhiana
Baltimore	Madrid
Bamako	Manila
Bangalore	Mardin
Bangkok	McAllen
Basel	Melbourne
Beijing	Mexico City
Berlin	Miami
Bilbao	Milan
Brisbane	Montreal
Brownsville	Moscow
Brunswick	Mumbai
Brussels	Naga City
Budapest	Nairobi
Buenos Aires	Nashville
Bujumbura	New Orleans
Calexico	New York
Cancun	Nogales
Canterbury	Nyon
Cape Town	Oakland
Casablanca	Ota
Charlotte	Paris
Chetumal	Philadelphia
Chicago	Phoenix
Chihuahua	Pittsburgh
Cirebon	Portland
Cleveland	Porto Alegre
Columbus	Puerto Vallarta
Copenhagen	Rabat
Dakar	Reggio Emilia
Dallas	Renens
Dara'a	Rio de Janeiro
Dayton	Rome
Delhi	Rotterdam
Detroit	San Diego
Dongguan	San Francisco
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Fez	Shanghai
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Ipswich	Turin
Irbid	Vancouver
Istanbul	Venice
Izmir	Veracruz
Jakarta	Vevey
Johannesburg	Vienna
Kavarna	Warsaw
Kibera	Washington D.C.
Kinshasa	Wuppertal
Kobe	Yverdon-les-Bains
Kolkata	Zarqa
Kuala Lumpur	Zurich



## Migrants and cities: At a glance

Cities shaded are on the Global Map

