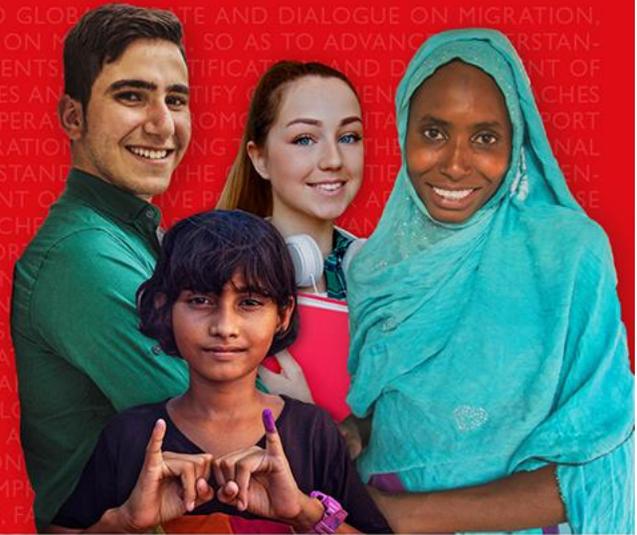


INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION 2019

Youth and migration:
Engaging youth as key partners
in migration governance

#IDM2019 #ForMigration



28 FEBRUARY 2019

CONFERENCE ROOM 2
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The first session of IOM's International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) in 2019 was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA, on February 28th under the title: ***Youth and Migration: Engaging youth as key partners in migration governance.***

This IDM session was organized as part of the “migration week” which also involved the events organized by the President of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). It gathered more than 300 participants from high-level government officials, youth, NGOs and academia representatives.

Ministers, Ambassadors, youth delegates and other policy-makers together with the President of the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly, high-level UN Officials including the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the first African Union Youth Envoy met to discuss the role of youth in determining the future of migration governance around the world.

The session was structured in four panels led by 20 speakers representing a balanced mix of youth representatives, government officials and policy-makers from countries of origin, transit and destination, representatives of partner United Nations agencies, experts in the areas of youth, migration and human rights, civil society, academia and young migrants. The first three panels were led by female youth representatives and the last and closing panel was moderated by the IOM Deputy Director General, Laura Thompson.

The meeting was opened by the IOM Director General, Mr. António Vitorino, and featured keynotes addresses by Her Excellency Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly, and the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, in recognition of the UN Youth Strategy, Youth2030, launched by UN Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres in September 2018.

In his opening remarks, Mr. António Vitorino, Director General, IOM, highlighted the potential that young people represent for the societies and how migration can be an important driver for their development and empowerment. The Director General also highlighted that, “[...] many young migrants experience discrimination – in their schools, or in their communities – that reduce their prospects for growth, as well as their self-esteem. This is a dangerous cycle that we must avoid: unduly limiting the potential of a generation who encapsulate a diverse experience and skills. Governments must work to welcome those who are in their societies regularly, and ensure that they are treated equally, and with dignity and full respect for their human rights.”

In her keynote remarks, Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly (PGA), noted that, “[...] we must create positive migratory experiences that can project young people into a better future to contribute to sustainable development in their countries of origin and destination. Protecting their rights is fundamental: guaranteeing access to health, quality education, housing and basic services.” The PGA expressed her absolute commitment to listen to young people’s voice and promote their inclusion at the heart of the United Nations.

Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth noted in her keynote remarks in the opening session that, “the need to empower and create the space for young people to participate in civic and political debates” is at the core of her mandate. The Envoy on Youth expanded on how youth can meaningfully engage in global policy-making and emphasized that “dedicating policy discussions like this International Dialogue on Migration to youth issues is an important step on the way.”

The session was also the venue of a side event: ***Youth Leadership in 21st Century Migration Governance***. The all-female youth panel presented an opportunity to review the key outcomes and recommendations from the Youth Forum that took place in Marrakech (December 2018), and to begin looking at how and where youth can actively influence discussion on migration, as part of a whole-of-society approach.

The IDM session addressed four main themes:

- 1) Understanding youth migration beyond facts and figures;
- 2) Addressing specific challenges and vulnerabilities of young people: what role, which partners;
- 3) Empowering youth to become actors of change;
- 4) Mainstreaming youth migration into development policies: recommendations to move forward.

The four panels discussed trends of youth migration, emphasized the many challenges faced by young people worldwide and the policy gaps in addressing them, and presented global, regional and national strategies and partnerships in the area of youth mobility as well as best practices for youth engagement in policy and decision-making processes. Adaptation, integration, and empowerment of young migrants were explored through the exchange of good practices, lessons learned, and recommendations made by representatives from all relevant sectors, including youth representatives and young migrants themselves.

The main outcomes and conclusions of the discussion are summarized below:

1. The evidence on youth migration is incomplete and can negatively impact migration policies

- Evidence on youth migration is key to raising awareness of the challenges and opportunities they face in the context of migration and their role and contribution in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and, in particular, SDG 4 (Education), 8 (Employment) and 10 (reducing the gap of

inequalities) as well as their contribution to development in communities of origin and host societies.

- It is very important to understand the push and pull factors of migration. Most migration is safe, regular and occurs within regions. The reasons for leaving behind their homes are varied, including studying, searching for working opportunities, setting up a business, reuniting with family, building a new family, seeking refuge and escaping from poverty, environmental degradation, violence or conflict.
- **“Numbers define policies”** as Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development of UNDESA underlined. Data on the impact of migration on young people is lacking yet it is essential to enhance policy processes by providing reliable data, trends and information on youth and migration. Reliable, gender-and-age disaggregated timely and accessible data is key to identifying and effectively addressing the needs of young migrants. The absence of a universally agreed legal definition of “youth” makes it hard to find accurate data related to youth. Moreover, the information on migration is gathered as part of the population censuses or through administrative surveys and can differ from one country to another.
 - The evidence on young people and children affected by migration and displacement, human trafficking, access to education, health, nutrition and other essential services needs to be developed.
 - Bridging the large gaps in data availability and addressing data inequalities between and within countries will require significant capacity-building, substantial financial investment, and innovative approaches to the collection, utilization and dissemination of accurate and timely data, especially in the least developed countries.
 - There is a need to make better use of existing data, and to develop new norms, practices and innovative approaches for data sharing across sectors and agencies, encouraging further sharing on a local, national, regional and international levels.

2. Social and economic exclusion often disproportionately impact those on the move

- In their new communities, young migrants may become victims of social marginalization and face difficulties and restrictions in accessing education, employment, social protection and other basic rights. But at the same time, they are extremely resilient, determined, strong and resourceful in facing challenges and crises. They possess valuable skills and voices to contribute to their origin and destination communities and to help build solutions to problems.
- Bringing them to the center of policies and processes may reduce the likelihood of marginalized youth falling through the cracks when these policies are implemented.
- Young migrants face difficulties to find employment, especially depending on their migration status. Informal and degrading work is often their only employment choice. Decent work opportunities for youth can not only encourage social inclusion and integration in labour market, but also prevent risks of abuse and exploitation.
- There is also a need to address gender equality and the empowerment of young women. Even if policies exist, they tend to be gender-blind.
- Fighting racism, xenophobia and discrimination should be a priority for all actors as a step to promote social integration and empowerment of youth. One of the biggest challenges for

integration is helping locals/citizens understand that refugees and migrants who have been properly integrated are in fact beneficial to the economies and societies. Social media and campaigns can be powerful tools in this respect by promoting migrant voices and engagement of youth. As young people possess digital literacy and the critical knowledge of new technology, youth themselves should be engaged in producing and sharing evidence-based counter-narratives which can inform responsive policies on migration. Young people are the best advocates for an evidence-based counter-narrative that can inform migration policies.

- Young migrants need better access to education and employment opportunities to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to become future leaders and entrepreneurs. Reforms and actions are needed to support young migrants to achieve their educational and career goals. This includes both hard and soft skills as expressed in SDG 4 (Education) which includes life-learning education.
- Young migrants need an environment that supports their economic and social integration and protects them from exploitation. The creation of such an environment needs a direct dialogue between stakeholders, decision-makers and youth.
- Technology provides many challenges and opportunities. The challenges are in terms of the inequality and gaps that technology may create among countries and societies, and the opportunities are the offering of alternatives and enhancements in education, social connection, network and development. In the countries of destination, youth migrants can contribute to development by bridging the need gap through the transfer of skills and knowledge. To support them in this endeavor, technology can be made more readily available to them through maintaining price policies that apply to nationals, as well as introducing applicable/special purchasing or payment plans.

3. Young migrants are at particular risk of exploitation

- As young migrants are a very diverse group of people on the move, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to their challenges and responses should be tailor-made. It is therefore important to distinguish the needs of young migrants from the general needs of all migrants.
- Specific attention is required for unaccompanied children and adolescents.
- Young women and girls are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation during their migration journey. It is important to recognize the elements of disadvantage and the triple marginalization that young migrant women and girls often face: being a woman, a migrant and a young person. Specific actions are needed to ensure their protection, address gender equality and empower young women while trying to understand gender-specific drivers of migration.
- Young people are facing the challenges of migration and displacement at a time of intense cognitive, physical and social development. The tremendous psychological stress and trauma they might be exposed to during the migration process, coupled with the negative impact of pre-existing issues faced by young migrants can seriously undermine their mental health status and overall well-being. Therefore, policies and strategies targeted at supporting young migrants must pay attention to their mental health and well-being and need to include the experiences and input of migrant youth.
- We need to consider the needs for protection of young people who move due to climate change. We need to look at how environmental change has exacerbated poverty. Young people may

become worn down so that their capacities to migrate erode, thus limiting their opportunities for personal and professional development. Youth can also be effective partners in addressing climate-change-induced migration, so there is a need to ensure their involvement in the response.

- We need to consider the transition that young people experience as they reach the age of maturity. As adolescents turn into legal adults at the age of 18, as per applicable international law, they lose certain rights and protection available to them as children, such as access to welfare assistance, education, healthcare, and housing assistance, and in some cases, protection from detention and deportation. At present, there are no legal instruments designed to protect these migrants and accompany their transition to adulthood.
- All efforts need to be taken to address young migrants' vulnerabilities and enhance protection and empowerment of youth. The protection of rights of migrants and the provision of a safe and dignified means of migration will ensure that young migrants are not vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. This includes providing safe means of migration for young people to protect them from human trafficking and smuggling. National child protection and youth empowerment strategies and action plans that mainstream youth needs are required.

4. It is urgent that all relevant actors include youth voices in their policy and decision-making processes

- Youth possess valuable skills and voices to contribute to their community and to help build solutions to problems. Nearly 4.3 million of young people study in universities outside their countries of origin and many others migrate and bring to their destination countries considerable knowledge and skills. The recent trends in youth migration are determined by a "trinity of drivers" which Professor Binod Khadria defines as Age, Wage and Vintage, and namely: counter the aging of local labour force, minimize the labour costs through lower wages bill of the migrant youth, and an accumulation of frontier knowledge embodied in migrant students.
- Young migrants have an incredible capacity for adaptation and resilience and can be agents of change while playing a pivotal role in fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. They are key players in building peaceful and inclusive societies. Giving voice to youth is important and amplifying the voices of migrant youth is essential. There are no better advocates for youth causes than youth themselves.
- The Youth Forum on Migration convened by the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, during the Marrakesh Conference (December 2018) highlighted the importance of involving youth in every decision-making process and made three important calls for action: "Engage with us; Invest in us; and Count us in."
- Discussing youth migration strengthens the feeling of inclusion in young migrants and will increase their engagement. It is, therefore, important to use the knowledge, the dynamism, the innovative ideas and expertise of young people in the design, implementation, and evaluation of youth policies.
- People-to-people contacts and exchanges between young migrants and their peers ultimately foster mutual understanding and counter prejudice and stereotypes, thereby contributing to building more inclusive societies. It is demonstrated that a satisfying coexistence between local community members and refugees and migrants could be achieved by co-designing economic integration solutions that are involving and are beneficial to all groups. Projects that are co-

designed and co-implemented by the local community and refugees and migrants tend to work better and in the long-term to lead to more projects of economic integration.

- Young diaspora has a key role in empowering young people, enabling development back in their communities of origin, and fostering collaboration and development in the communities they are living in. There is a need for an inter-diaspora cooperation that could act in this sense.
- Integration of young people takes place mainly in cities. Local authorities have a key role in creating spaces of social cohesion, in supporting youth entrepreneurship through identifying ways in which young migrants can be partners in migration governance, addressing youth-specific challenges, and empowering them to have greater influence in designing policies that address their challenges. There is a need to increase the capacity of local authorities to engage youth.
- Enhance the inclusion of youth migrants in the host societies and promote youth empowerment by:
 - Promoting cultural diversity in host societies, supporting social inclusion of newcomers (including language acquisition, equal access to services and exercise of rights), promoting dialogue at community level and combatting of xenophobia and discrimination.
 - Promoting and encouraging young migrants' active involvement as social innovators and social entrepreneurs by increasing investment and programs promoting entrepreneurship and innovation among youth.

5. Recommendations for the way forward

The importance of coordinated action in engaging and empowering young people in migration governance was recurrently emphasized by speakers. Many participants called for building partnerships between different actors, with youth playing a key role in developing policies and programmes that promote good migration management and advance sustainable development goals. It was agreed that a better framework for migration management must reflect the needs and views of all concerned actors with a particular attention given to the youth.

Strong calls were made during the interactive debate to:

- Support member states to develop national youth protection and empowerment strategies and action plans and to mainstream migration and migrant youth in these strategies.
- Promote targeted policies that strengthen cooperation between countries of origin and destination and stimulate active involvement of young people to maximize the benefits of youth migrants to the society.
- Promote initiatives aimed at enhancing inter-governmental cooperation and inter-agency and civil society partnerships on youth migration and employment.
- Promote participation and empowerment of youth in the development of national migration policies and the implementation process.
- Support the development of “youth-friendly” national diaspora strategies and encourage governments in involving youth in the development and design of migration related strategies.

- Involve the private sector through public-private partnerships to increase job opportunities. Engage the private sector, especially key companies and employers in the discussion while continuing building a conducive and enabling environment that reduces bottlenecks and encourages jobs and entrepreneurship development.
- Intensify advocacy mechanisms for young migrants to know their rights, including the right to access quality and relevant education, the right to informed choices, protection, equality, and non-discrimination. Encourage young migrants to participate in decision-making processes to prevent abuse and exploitation.
- Utilize the knowledge, experience, and expertise of young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of youth policy; mainstream and integrate youth policies across sectors; take into account the linkages and impacts of policy objectives; and develop transparent monitoring and accountability framework.

“Nothing for young people without young people” as highlighted by Ms. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly in her keynote remarks.

Engaging with youth is a priority for IOM. The Organization has been committed to developing specific activities targeting the youth and addressing their needs and vulnerabilities. More recently, IOM developed an Action Plan, aligned with the UN Youth Strategy and Agenda 2030, in which initiatives, programmes and activities are proposed for young people on the move. This IDM is part of this strategy, focusing on gathering knowledge and expertise on youth, facilitating evidence-based global awareness on youth, and encouraging collaboration and partnerships between youth and key actors.

This summary is not exhaustive. A more comprehensive report that will highlight the messages and specific good practices shared during this session and the second session scheduled for 15 and 16 October in Geneva will be available in due course.