Migration Factsheet No. 5 – Supporting Migrants’ Integration

Synthesis analysis drawing on IOM’s World Migration Report series

Why is migrants’ integration important?

For everyone, it is essential to be included in our society and community from an economic, social, political and cultural perspective. Exclusion can have detrimental effects on one’s mental and physical well-being and ultimately lead to marginalization.

More broadly, exclusion of part of the population, such as migrants, may negatively impact on social cohesion within a given society, that is, harmonious coexistence.

In other words, migrants’ integration is not only important for migrants themselves, but also to maintain an harmonious coexistence within the receiving society. Integration does however not necessarily entail to relinquish one’s identity, such as that of a migrant’s country of origin. Rather, it is a two way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the society in which they live.

Language

Language is considered one of the most central aspects for migrants’ inclusion by both the receiving society and migrants’ themselves. In addition to facilitating social interactions, language is important for helping migrants navigate a new environment, including education, access to healthcare, housing and employment.

Smartphone applications such as Google translate or YouTube tutorials are particularly useful for migrants to get immediate translations and learn a new language.

Education

Accordingly, “[e]ducation emerges as the greatest weakness in integration policies in most countries”. This is especially striking for refugee children.

More than half of all refugee children worldwide were out of school in 2017 among school age children. As for migrant children, their full inclusion in national education systems is important, including for those whose education tends to be left to the humanitarian sector in countries with high numbers of refugees.

Did you know?

Cities have an important role to play as spaces of inclusion, because they are the main sites of migration/integration policy implementation. Urban areas are the main destinations for migrants across the world, given the high return for migrants’ human capital.

Gathering more than 130 cities, the Intercultural Cities programme of the Council of Europe supports cities in realizing the ‘diversity advantage’ including in business.
Economic inclusion

Economic inclusion consists of different dimensions, ranging from access to employment and general or targeted support, to recognition of qualifications and protection of migrant workers. Examples of support measures which have found to have a positive impact include:

⇒ Vocational training, especially with practical on-the-job component
⇒ Job search assistance programmes
⇒ Subsidized employment in the private sector

Since the 2015 ‘migration crisis’ in Europe, tech companies have been increasingly offering tech courses to migrants, including refugees, especially in digital coding. Employing migrants in the tech sector arguably corresponds to labour market needs, only requires English as a working language and improves sustainability of migrants’ employment.

Connecting with loved ones

Connections with family and friends in the country of origin or elsewhere is important for fostering migrants’ integration as they represent a source of emotional support, comfort and encouragement.

This explains migrants’ attachment to their smartphones as they offer means to connect easily and for relatively low costs via instant messaging, (video) calls or social media platforms.

Health

At the global level, improvements in understanding of the implications of human mobility in order to support and improve public health preparedness planning – including developing responses to infectious disease outbreaks or other health emergencies – are needed, requiring investment in building research capacity.

The role of the private sector in the governance of migration and health can include, among many other innovative roles

⇒ sponsorship for building research capacity
⇒ interventions designed to address the health needs of migrant workers.

Such programming will benefit the health of both individual migrant workers and their families, both in the origin and destination countries.

"My home could be a Guatemalan territorial space but with windows and doors open to Costa Rica. My home became a place where both visions and cultures can grow and live together."

Daniel from Guatemala who has been living for 30 years in Costa Rica