

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a white short-sleeved button-down shirt, is laughing joyfully with her eyes closed and her arms raised. She is positioned in front of a large mural. The mural features a bright yellow sun with a glowing orange and red aura, surrounded by stylized blue and white clouds. The woman's expression is one of pure happiness and freedom.

MIGRATION AND YOUTH: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES*

Conclusion

The chapters of this report present a comprehensive picture of the situation that millions of young people face as migrants, potential migrants, or as sons and daughters of migrant parents. Overall, the report shows that international youth migration presents opportunities, risks and challenges.

Migration widens youth opportunities by expanding educational and employment horizons and allowing young people to acquire and use new technologies and skills. It often permits them to secure employment and thus to contribute to development both in the country of destination and in their country of origin.

Young migrants encounter a wide variety of risks, exclusions and rights' violations en route to and in destination countries, including exploitation, gender-based violence and trafficking as well as xenophobia and discriminatory attitudes, practices and actions that marginalise and exclude them from school, internships, jobs, access to healthcare, housing, social protection and cultural life.

With the right policies in place, migration can become an empowering experience that helps young people to develop the assets and skills they need to succeed. Thus enabled, young migrants will contribute significantly to economic and social development and well-being in their countries of origin, destination and transit.

AN AGENDA FOR MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

A general conclusion is that governments should establish a comprehensive migration governance agenda that explicitly incorporates youth migration into national development and other relevant policies, institutions, and practical measures. Targeted policies and actions focused on youth migration, and which take into consideration the specific needs and contributions of both young women and men, should be developed at the local as well as national levels, and be reinforced by global governance mechanisms developed within a human rights-based institutional framework for migration. Hence, the contributions presented in this report highlight practical ways of protecting, supporting and empowering migrant youth.

The foundation of any policy addressing youth migration must be anchored in respect for the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their status, and based on general principles of social protection. States that have not yet done so are urged to ratify and effectively implement the relevant international human rights instruments and international labour standards.

All concerned stakeholders, especially social partners, civil society organisations and young migrants themselves, both women and men, should be involved in designing and implementing migration policies and measures. Key to the engagement of migrant youth and adolescents and adolescents is enabling and facilitating their participation in civil society organisations, particularly youth groups, unions, and community organisations, in accordance with their capacities.

To help ensure that migration is an informed choice, rather than a necessity, policies designed to improve the outcomes of youth migration need to address the root causes of migration in countries of origin, incorporating policies specifically targeted to young children and adolescents, girls and young women, and vulnerable populations, including those left behind when family members migrate. Policies and measures are needed to strengthen rural and pro-poor development, address structural poverty and gender inequality by investing in rural infrastructure and agriculture, and to expand access to land and property, education, apprenticeships, decent work opportunities and financial services for young men and young women.

Stakeholders in countries of origin, transit and destination should work in partnership to enhance regular migration channels and reform restrictive migration policies.

LESSONS FOR ACTION

A primary lesson in this report is the necessity of investing in the collection, analysis and dissemination of data –disaggregated by age and sex—as well as research on youth migrant stock and migration flows and on the conditions and needs experienced by young migrants. Strengthening the evidence base also includes qualitative research. Data collection and analysis will facilitate more accurate, timely and accessible information and provide for evidence-based policy-making and informed public debate.

- There is a critical need for enhanced mechanisms to ensure that displaced adolescents and youth asylum seekers are identified, screened and provided access to international protection.
- Immigration detention of asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons is inherently undesirable, especially for young people and unaccompanied or separated children.

Efforts to extend and expand decent work, workplace labour protections and respect for contractual obligations for young migrants are especially important to realising their own welfare as well as their contributions to economic and social development in both destination and origin countries.

Moreover, policies that promote social inclusion, extend coverage and portability of social security, ensure the provision of social services and offer opportunities for successful transition from school to work for adolescent and youth migrants should be adopted and implemented. Specific and deliberate policies are required to maximise beneficial aspects of migration for adolescent and young women while minimising potential harms.

An inclusive approach calls for overcoming xenophobia and discrimination in the larger society, educating the public and social service providers about the value of cultural diversity and the special needs of migrant youth, and ensuring that any data obtained by service providers including on migration status remains confidential.

Ensuring protection for young asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons and unaccompanied minors remains a major challenge, urging protection sensitive border control, differentiated procedures, alternatives to detention, and provision of non-discriminatory access to essential services and national protection systems.

In the face of looming global shortages of persons with needed tertiary education, qualifications and vocational and technical skills, efforts to improve access to skills training and education are fundamental, including cross-border higher education. In addition, international standards for and recognition of educational attainment, skills qualifications and work experience are urgently needed.

Health is a vital policy concern, not least to ensure public health in host communities and the ability of young and adolescent migrants to live healthy lives and work productively. Deliberate public health policy and interventions are required to reach adolescent and young men and women migrants, to provide culturally and gender appropriate health information and services, and to obtain relevant data.

Environmental degradation and climate change affect youth displacement and migration and lead to large-scale displacement of families and communities. They especially impact women who are highly dependent on local natural resources. Young men and women have to be empowered to mitigate the effects of environmental degradation, lead innovation in the “green economy” and contribute to sustainable development through knowledge and skills. New migration policies that take the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation into account are needed.

THE DEVELOPMENT POLICY CHALLENGE

Few countries have taken the steps needed to mainstream youth migration issues into their national governance and particularly development policies. The report underlines that new policies and programmes need to be incorporated into larger, multi-level development planning efforts, to ensure efficiency and sustainability. A major challenge is that, too often, especially in developing countries, young people face knowledge, skills and education gaps that make them unemployable both at home and abroad.

This report argues that policy measures addressing international migration by adolescents and youth should be an essential part of a global approach that promotes sharing the benefits of development and globalisation among nations and generations, and righting economic and democratic inequities. Given the magnitude of the risks, challenges and opportunities highlighted in the report, a focus on youth migration is critical to the post-2015 UN development framework, as underlined in the GMG Position Paper on Integrating Migration in the post- 2015 UN Development Agenda. Achieving this objective calls for a distinct set of measurable goals and targets related to: poverty eradication; rights protection; access to quality education, health, housing, food and productive employment and decent work for all; gender equality; and environmental protection and climate change adaptation/mitigation. Such goals and targets would require measurement indicators disaggregated by age and gender and

including migrants and the foreign born. Another promising option is the inclusion of migration as part of a renewed Global Partnership goal. Such a partnership would magnify the impact of human mobility as an enabler of development.

The following Key Messages and Policy Recommendations provide a detailed summary of the findings, analytical conclusions and recommendations drawn from the respective chapters.