

## **SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION**

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Existing policy frameworks and ongoing public discussions largely focus on a few aspects of international migration such as the orderly management of international flows of migrants, the curtailment of undocumented migration or the various forms of discrimination against migrants. Against the current background of contention that revolves around international migration, the human dimension has often been missing from the debate. Three key components of the complex dynamics of social inclusion/exclusion that define the relationships between migrants and host societies are discussed: the public perception of migration; the well-being of migrants and the effect of migration on the social fabric of societies. Specific issues related to migrants who are part of indigenous and tribal peoples are also discussed.

### **A. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND INFORMATION**

contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance found that in most non-Muslim countries, but primarily in Northern America and Europe, violence and discrimination against people originating in the Near East, the Middle East and South-East Asia became more frequent. Although some of the fears raised by Muslim and Arab peoples have receded in many non-Muslim countries, persons with those backgrounds still face discrimination and hostility because of their religious beliefs and ethnic origin.

## *2. The information-policy nexus*

Despite the growing salience of international migration and the concerns it raises, the statistics needed to characterize migration flows, to monitor changes over time and to provide Governments with a solid basis for the formulation and implementation of policies are very often lacking and difficult to compare. In many countries this information is neither available nor produced on a regular basis. Few countries have accurate data both on entries and departures of migrants. Also, the magnitude of undocumented migration, by its very nature, remains difficult to quantify.

In the absence of reliable statistics, the reality of migration is frequently distorted and half-truths or stereotypes guide most the perceptions that most citizens have of migrants. The lack of readily available and reliable information also tends to reinforce the perception that current migration trends are beyond the control of authorities and undermines the credibility of official statements. Moreover, in many countries, the political discourse on international migration is not perceived as being the reflection of a clear, coherent and committed policy, a fact that further undermines its credibility. The formulation of such a policy, while difficult due to the changing nature of migration flows as well as to the fact that many countries are at the same time countries of emigration, immigration and transit, has the potential to steer public opinion away from simplistic and erroneous views.

Undoubtedly the media shapes public views migration. Although the media's propensity to concentrate on worrying trends tends to reinforce prejudice against migrants, it also exposes problems that need to be addressed, such as the poor living conditions of many migrants or the violence and discrimination they face. While the importance of promoting mutual awareness of cultures, civilizations and religions has long been recognized, the need to take action aimed at promoting respect for diversity and cultural, religious and ethnic pluralism has become critical in a globalizing world where international mobility is increasing.

### **B. I**

countries of origin that do not permit them to integr



### C. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The pursuit of a better life is a common feature of human nature. Migrants who leave their homes

## E. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, powerful forces are at work that make the presence of migrants a likely permanent and increasingly significant characteristic of population all over the world. While migrants make largely positive contributions to their host societies, these often seem eclipsed by negative perceptions of migrants based on notions of fear, racism and xenophobia. To a large extent, the lives of migrants illustrate in a magnified way the impact of major social, political and economic trends.

Information on international migration is inadequate to assess the full social impact of migration. In particular, the data available do not permit to quantify the extent to which indigenous people participate in international migration. There is also a dearth of information on South to South migration. Where such data exist, systematic documentation and analysis are essential to facilitate informed discussion of the issues at the policy level. Lack of information notwithstanding, a shift in approach is needed to overcome the attitudinal and cultural obstacles to recognizing that the human and social dimensions of migration warrant greater attention.

## **Annex**

### **Recommendations of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) relating to Migration**

#### **Mandate:**

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) is an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues relating to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. According to its mandate, the Permanent Forum would:

- provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the Council, as well as to programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations, through the Council;
- raise awareness and promote the integration and coordination of activities related to indigenous issues within the UN system; and
- prepare and disseminate information on indigenous issues

#### **Recommendations:**

The UNPFII noted at its Third Session the lack of data and studies on the issue of migration in recommendations 12 and 65:

12. Given the large number of indigenous migrants within and beyond national borders and the

The PFII reported to ECOSOC about the issue of migration, through recommendations 13 and 89:

**13.** Violent conflicts and militarization fundamentally affect the lives of indigenous women and their families and communities, causing violations of their human rights and displacement from their ancestral lands. Yet indigenous women do not see themselves as passive victims but have taken up the roles of mediators and peace builders. Recognizing the profound concerns of the impact of conflict situations on indigenous women, the Forum recommends:

(a) That IOM and other relevant United Nations entities incorporate the needs and priorities of women and girls as ex-combatants in the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, and ensure their full access to all resources and benefits provided in reintegration programs, including income-generation and skill-development programs;

(b) That UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, WHO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme, and other field-based agencies collect data on the situation of indigenous women living in conflict areas. Such data would be invaluable for analysis and programme development;

(e) That UNHCR give priority to indigenous women and their families who are displaced internally and externally by force due to armed conflict in their territories.

**89.** The Forum, reaffirming its recommendations on health made at its first and second reports, in the spirit of the theme of its third session (Indigenous women), recommends that all relevant United Nations entities, especially WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA, as well as regional health organizations and Governments:

(h) Provide appropriate health services and protection services, including safe houses, to displaced refugee and migrant women and women and girl children victimized by trafficking for prostitution;