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IOM's contribution to discussions on Migrants and Cities

IOM's latest World Migration Report was issued in October 2015 with the title: "Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility". It focuses on how migration and migrants are shaping cities and how the life of migrants is shaped by cities, their people, organizations and rules. While acknowledging the vast differences between international and internal migration scenarios, and between the capacities of various countries to deal with these, the report highlights the growing evidence of potential benefits of all forms of migration and mobility for city growth and development. It showcases innovative ways in which migration and urbanization policies can be better designed for the benefit of migrants and cities.

Also in October in Geneva, IOM held a Conference on Migrants and Cities for global dialogue on migration involving all levels of migration governance. Importantly, local authorities had a chance to talk in a safe space to national government representatives from all over the world. We had more than 600 participants. Mayors, vice-mayors and prefects representing cities and communes from across the globe spoke about their role in migration policymaking and shared their best practices and challenges in managing this increasing trend. The conference demonstrated the significant role that local and city institutions play in the management of human mobility.

But let me first highlight the link between migrants and cities:

1. Cities as place of contact between cultures

Nearly one in five of the world's 245 million migrants live in the world's top 20 largest cities. In many of these cities such as Sydney, London and New York, for example, migrants represent more than a third of the population; in some cities, such as Amsterdam, Brussels and Dubai, - and Toronto - migrants account for at least half of the population.

In other cities, the growth in migration has been remarkable. For example, the number of foreign residents in Seoul has doubled in the last ten years.

The reasons such cities attract large numbers of people are very clear: cities offer

- significant employment opportunities;
- convenient access to essential services such as transport, health and education;
- investment, knowledge and technologies; and
- ready connections for newcomers with social support networks consisting of family, friends or persons sharing a similar ethnic or linguistic background.

These are some of the reasons why most migrants, even those from the most isolated rural areas of the world, choose urban destinations. Cities are where most migrants come into contact with their new host country. Cities are also where migrants settle if or when they return to their countries of origin.

2. Local authorities lead on migration policy and planning

It is evident that migration toward cities will continue to increase in the coming decades. Yet significant population flows to cities — triggered by conflicts, disasters, climate change and other shocks — can seriously challenge local authorities' capacity to provide migrants with adequate access to services such as health, housing and education. At our conference in October the vice-minister of El Salvador and mayors of Palermo and Madrid showed that stopping or controlling migration to cities is not a solution. Not only would this breach people's basic human rights, but it would also obstruct the economic benefits that migration produces.

Instead, cities need to be better prepared to face the challenges that come with urban migration, particularly by adapting or promoting policy responses in ways that accommodate rather than seek to halt migration. Since the challenges of migration and migrants' vulnerabilities are manifested and responded to at the local level, municipal authorities need to strengthen their capacities and establish mechanisms to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from urban crises. The mayors of Saint-Omer, Quilicura and Palermo, for instance, underscored the importance in their daily city management of regular and direct dialogue with migrant groups.

At the same time, migration governance must be a constant preoccupation of city officials, and not just be perceived as a life-saving obligation during times of crises. At our Conference in October, Iman Icar, Deputy Mayor of Mogadishu, Somalia, noted that during the war in his country many people were effectively seeking asylum in their own city of Mogadishu, which was unprepared for dealing with an influx of such magnitude. Icar explained that during the crisis, Mogadishu focused mainly on providing affected populations with vital assistance such as shelter and water, and expressed his conviction that such migration crises can be managed by creating jobs and other opportunities at the local level.

The need to keep migrants at the heart of city governance remains however a challenge, not least from a systemic point of view. Kassegne Adjonou of Togo drew attention to the fact that West African states and municipalities, in general, do not have allocated budgets or funding for migrants, a fact which generates in and of itself a crisis. But cities allow for area based responses that are more integrated. This means that we have the opportunity to strengthen existing functional governance systems and rely on capabilities and resources already in place, rather than re-create or duplicate systems, as may well be the case at the national level.

- 3. Migrants must be integrated in urban planning** to a) mitigate risks in the event of a crisis or negative effects of migration and b) facilitate migrants' integration and their beneficial impact on cities.

City leaders, especially of those cities facing increasing migration flows — such as Mogadishu, Palermo and Athens, among others — showed that they deal on a daily basis with the most practical and impactful aspects of migration and migrants’ needs. Migrants and members of the diaspora can act as bridge-builders and promoters of development. They can contribute to reducing risks of urban crises, in building the resilience of cities of destination and in developing cities in their areas of origin.

Mayors and local authorities have a crucial role in developing inclusive policies that facilitate the integration of migrants into local areas while contributing to the development of their countries and communities of origin. Our World Migration Report showcased the best practice of the city of Gaziantep, in Turkey. The municipality has adopted a comprehensive programme for the Syrians displaced by conflict, providing adequate assistance and integration support, without undermining the well-being of host communities. With the support of the local communities, whose acceptance of the displaced Syrians remains high, the city has adopted a comprehensive programme for the immediate and longer-term needs of displaced persons, through the distribution of food and essential household items, the protection of specifically vulnerable groups and improved longer-term access to education, services and opportunities. The local health system has assisted over 50,000 Syrians through free consultations and medicines, addressing health concerns linked with the living conditions of many of the displaced. Specific assistance has focused on children, who have benefited from targeted psychosocial support and vaccination campaigns, and on women. Further efforts will be needed to raise awareness among the displaced of their right to assistance, as well as to improve accessibility of health care for those living in marginalized settlements.

Indeed, comprehensive urban planning and sound integration policies can result in a “triple win” scenario, simultaneously offering benefits for the migrant, the country of destination and the country of origin. Positive examples of this approach are readily available. Reducing economic disparities, for instance, is a key aim of New York City’s administration. A municipal identification programme called IDNYC offers a free card enabling access to schools, hospitals, libraries and financial institutions. The card is

available to all city residents, regardless of immigration status, and, importantly, the data is protected.

At the same time, a comprehensive approach to migration governance means we must not overlook the negative impacts of urbanization on rural areas. For example, the president of the communes of Togo and the mayor of Karofane, Niger, pointed to how shrinking rural populations can have significant social and economic impacts on those left behind in those areas. This is particularly important as those groups left behind — including the young, the elderly and the disabled — often have the greatest needs.

4. Local leaders can drive change

The immense potential contributions of migrants — and the proven benefits — should be emphasized to balance and ultimately drown out negative perceptions about immigration. While overall discourse on migration tends to be set at the top, it is local leadership and community actors who can often play the largest role in promoting positive perceptions toward migration and migrants.

An example of a perception change initiative at local level was given at the Conference by the Mayor of Quilicura, Chile, who set up a Municipal office for immigrants and refugees when Haitians started arriving following the crisis. Consultations with the new arrivals were held in many places throughout the urban area on how they wanted to become socially included. The process was made very visible to demonstrate to the local community that the city was proud of having migrants, and was supported with a series of cultural activities and “immigrant days”.

A perception-change initiative at global level is IOM’s “[i am a migrant](#)” campaign. The project offers humanizing stories of migrants’ journeys, told in their own words. The campaign also underscores the importance of local responses to combat discrimination while attempting to change the lens through which people view migrants and migration in cities across the globe. Many CSOs and diaspora communities are joining and supporting this effort.

5. The private sector and foundations play an important role too

- They play a role as donors: The magnitude of humanitarian and development financing requirements far exceeds the capacity of official development aid. Tailored and sustainable partnerships between governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society are needed. At the same time, businesses see value in recruiting skilled migrants and enhancing employee motivation, rebuilding and extending current and future markets, and ensuring current and future brand loyalty, to name just a few.
- They play a role as experts: IOM and the 100 Resilient Cities initiative also plan to jointly produce a planning guide and toolbox as guidance for well-managed urban migration. This would aimed to help Mayors across the world build or re-design more resilient cities that take into account the dynamics and diversity that migration brings, both in normal times and during crises.
- And they play a role as employers of migrants. IOM has launched a Public Private Alliance for Fair and Ethical Recruitment, to create a platform for employers, recruitment intermediaries, governments, civil society organizations and other organizations to promote fair recruitment. It provides a mechanism for appropriate communication and collaboration for ethical recruitment and labour supply chain management. This makes sure that the distinct interests and capacities of different sectors would be recognized and reflected in the roles and responsibilities to be agreed for governments, employers, recruiters, civil society and other organizations.

6. Local change can inspire a shift in policy and practice at the national level

Meaningful, evidence-based dialogue at all levels of the government is a pre-requisite for the governance of migration and an opportunity for good governance, overall. Good governance of human mobility in the urban context requires partnerships between local and central authorities and all relevant actors. Yet currently there is a disconnect between central and local authorities in the policy-planning process, with governments often

failing to sufficiently acknowledge, take account of and support the role of local authorities in national development planning.

Such cooperation between local and national level is however a requirement for migration to be well managed. At our Conference in October, the State Secretary of Serbia said that his country was facing its greatest migration crisis since World War II. He explained how local authorities were collaborating with the central government and international organizations based in the country to assist with managing the massive migrant flows entering Serbia from Macedonia and Bulgaria. Most originated from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq and included large numbers of unaccompanied minors who faced a high risk of exploitation.

Data, specialized services and increased capacities must be ready to be put in place, in a coordinated fashion, for effective migration solutions. At the same time, if strengthened, whole-of-government approaches allow for coherent policy responses, which can maximize the positive outcomes of migration and human mobility. Moreover, partnerships between local and central authorities can ensure that national policies align with the needs and capacities of local authorities and thus ensure the systemic conditions for policy implementation.

For those who may not know IOM:

The International Organization for Migration is the global lead migration agency, an intergovernmental organization with 162 member states, providing authoritative advice on how to govern migration better. Founded in 1951, IOM's original function was to move the "surplus population of Europe" - large numbers of people with little or no prospect of economic activity and livelihoods in a continent devastated by the war - out to North and South America, Australia and New Zealand wanted migrants to help them develop. IOM has also been responsible for moving refugees going for resettlement since 1951, and is proud to have been working with Canada to bring into Canada the 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February, and fulfilling the Prime Minister's pledge.

Among the programmes IOM has been implementing for decades are those that assist governments with the integration of migrants in their societies. IOM supports policies and strategies that promote the social, economic and cultural inclusion of migrants within existing legal frameworks in countries of destination. Its focus is on the development of strategies that help migrants better integrate into new communities as well as assisting receiving communities to recognize the positive contributions that migrants can make. This two-way integration process is essential for the existence of thriving, multicultural communities. IOM takes a comprehensive approach to migrant integration in order to ensure that migrants can fully engage with their host society from a socio-economic, political, and cultural perspective to build inclusive, fair and harmonious societies.

Migration and governance trends at all levels

Migrants play a significant role in the global shift to greater urbanization, and contribute significantly to urban areas and their development, bringing ideas, innovation and diversity, as well as connecting communities across borders to create new kinds of global cities. Yet the role of migrants is largely overlooked in the global debate on urbanization and development. While many cities and local governments are attuned to the realities and policy responses that include migrants — and take migrants’ voices into account when putting forward agendas at both the national and local levels — others have ignored these issues in their development planning.

Nonetheless, migration plays a significant part in several important international processes at the moment. In a world of increasing human mobility, for instance, the integration of migrants is a key element in achieving several of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Goal 10, for instance, aims to “reduce inequality within and among countries”. Likewise, well-managed migration will be crucial in the implementation of the ambitious Goal 11, the “urban SDG” that seeks to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

We also need to look forward to Habitat III, the major urbanization conference that will take place in Quito in October and will result in a 20-year strategy called the New Urban

Agenda. That summit, and the preparations for it, offer opportunities to raise awareness around two issues: first, migration is a key driver of cities' growth; and second, migrants are indeed individuals with specific needs during times of crises, but they can also become agents of development when the right policies are put in place.

These priorities respond to calls by UN member states and others for broader and more coherent inclusion of migration in the preparatory discussions. States have highlighted the need to link humanitarian and development discussions and to promote an integrated and comprehensive approach to urban migration management.

Importantly, Habitat III follows not only the adoption of the SDGs but also the new UN climate agreement as well as discussions at the World Humanitarian Summit, scheduled for Istanbul in May. Each of these processes offers an opportunity to promote sustainable development as well as a reformed approach to crisis response and mitigation – and migration is an important common factor in all. Ultimately, the extent to which migration is integrated into local policy planning will determine how well human mobility can positively affect cities.

Conclusion

Integration is not an intellectual process, nor is it some abstract concept that can be reduced to fulfilment of administrative requirements, however important these may be. Integration is a people process – it is felt, breathed and lived in an immediate and personal way, both from the point of view of the migrant and that of the local community. Workplaces, shopping centres, schools, places of worship, community centres and local government offices are the social crucibles where, under the best circumstances, the “alchemy of integration” occurs. Unfortunately, it is also true that under the worst of circumstances, integration can fail, and when it does, the costs are borne on all sides – communities of origin, destination and migrants.

It is therefore important that local governments develop social inclusion policies aimed at providing better living conditions for migrants, thereby promoting more cohesive societies. Migration needs to be included in local development plans. IOM's latest World

Migration Report provides the evidence base for well-managed migration, and the recent Conference on Migrants and Cities clarified the scope and applications of these recommendations. Together, these offer the evidence base and relevant recommendations to comprehensively address ongoing concerns and raise awareness of migration in the contexts of urban planning and development.

This is a starting point for well-governed migration. But what is most important is that migrants should and must be part of the urbanization project; their views and voices should be heard. We must continually ask how best to enable migrants to unleash their potential, how to engage their resources, skills and ideas, to build and revitalize cities. Leadership is key – and not just words, but evident conviction and commitment that infect others with enthusiasm, positive perceptions and engagement, and that spur them to actions. Congratulations to Canada and to Toronto for having such leaders.

