International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

Report of the Secretary-General on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027)

Input from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) - 2023

Overview: human mobility and poverty eradication

With one in eight people in the world on the move, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs will not be achieved without due consideration of human mobility. In a world characterized by widening inequalities, rapid urbanization, demographic changes, record levels of displacement, and climate change, human mobility remains a powerful poverty-reduction tool for international migrants, internal migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and their host, origin, and transit communities.

Mobile populations contribute knowledge, skills, innovation, and social capital. For instance, non-nationals make up a disproportionate share of the patents submitted for approval in many countries (40.17% in the Netherlands, 55.7% in the USA, and 87.3% in Canada[1]). Some data suggests that firms with a greater share of migrant owners are more likely to introduce new products and processes[2]. The latest edition of the Secretary General's report on Rural Poverty[3] shows that poverty continues to be overwhelmingly rural: over 80 percent of the world's extreme poor live in rural areas. Around 40 percent of remittances sent to rural areas are indispensable for sustaining households. Remittances allow families to diversify their income, helping them meet their immediate needs and facilitate access to better nutrition, education and healthcare.

But the contributions that mobile populations make to sustainable development are hindered in many ways. Migration remains far from safe: since 2014, nearly 45,000 lives have been lost during migration worldwide, though the true number is likely far higher[4]. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM) posits that good migration governance rests in whole-of-government approaches. Although nearly 65 percent of governments reported having some provisions in place for migration governance, only 4 percent have fully comprehensive policy measures [5].

Mobile populations, and particularly women, are more likely to be confronted with multiple forms of inequality, such as insecure and dangerous forms of labour, the absence of social protection safety nets, barriers to digital access, racism, and xenophobia. Displacement is more protracted: around 76 percent of refugees have been displaced for more than five years, and the vast majority live in developing countries that are already struggling to meet their development goals. This marginalization further compounds vulnerabilities of mobile populations.

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[1] https://www3.wipo.int/ipstats/keysearch.htm?keyId=202
[2] https://academic.oup.com/joeg/article/15/4/769/2449970
[3] (Forthcoming)
[4] https://missingmigrants.iom.int/
[5] https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-and-sdgs-measuring-progress-edited-volume

Things do not have to be this way. If the cost of sending remittances was reduced by 5 percent relative to the value sent, remittance recipients would receive over 16 billion USD more each year[6]. If governments actively opened more safe and regular migration pathways across borders, it would create immediate economic benefits for mobile populations and communities: every additional 1 percent of immigration can boost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth by 2 percent in destination countries in addition to boosting GDP of countries of origin[7]. Reinforcing efforts to match, up-skill and re-skill people on the move and improve recognition of qualifications to meet the demands of a changing global labour market could also help reduce unemployment, particularly for youth. Availing seasonal mobility schemes could help mitigate the risks of poverty and food insecurity, building resilience to fluctuations in agricultural production, income and employment triggered by climate change[8].

IOM's Work to Eradicate Poverty

Since 2020, IOM has invested 11.5 billion USD through its programming in support of safe, orderly and regular migration. This investment has spanned the 17 SDGs and advanced 124 SDG targets; it encompasses programmes that directly contribute to the seven thematic policy areas under the plan of action

The Making Migration Work for Sustainable Development programme implemented jointly by IOM and UNDP and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, works to integrate migration considerations into key policy areas and design new policies that aim to ensure inclusion for all; it supports efforts to put national policies into practice via locally led initiatives. Focus is given to ensuring local-national coordination for enhanced empowerment of sub-national authorities while contributing to improved national policy making. In eight cities across Nepal, Ecuador, Serbia, Morocco, Tunisia and more, livelihoods, entrepreneurship, and employment support in the form of business-start up training and seed funding have directly supported nearly 3,000 people's ability to reduce poverty.

In Ecuador, the provincial and municipal governments of Manta, Manabí and Santo Domingo have instituted a whole-of-community strategy to enable displaced Venezuelans, Colombians and vulnerable Ecuadorians to live an empowered life without poverty through the provision of basic needs, inclusion and livelihoods activities. 400 people, many of whom are women, participate in hands-on and virtual skills courses (e.g., CV writing, business plans, food handling, IT, electrical systems) to better grow their businesses or find employment. Over 20 companies participated in courses that demystify migration and explain the benefits of hiring migrants.

Migrants, including children, who need emergency support like food, housing, healthcare or protection from violence are referred to city services like women's homes, temporary rent subsidies, emergency food kits and cash vouchers, because sustainable support requires holistically addressing the entire ecosystem of a person's situation. Meanwhile the national government is also working towards structural transformation through a mass regularization campaign and local governments are establishing local ordinances integrating migrants' needs and contributions into city development. People on the move also have a more direct say in policy and decision making through initiatives like the Cantonal Human Mobility Consultative Council in Santo Domingo.

Recommendations for the Secretary-General's Report

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[6] https://remittanceprices.worldbank.org/about-remittance-prices-worldwide
[7] https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020
[8] https://publications.iom.int/books/people-move-changing-climate-linking-policy-evidence-and-action

This year's Secretary-General's report on Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018-2027) should:

- Reiterate the importance and transversality of human mobility as a core development consideration, and as an accelerator to eradicate extreme poverty.
- Reiterate the centrality of the GCM and the power of multilateralism and other frameworks such as the Secretary General Action Agenda on Internal Displacement as a key component of the rescue plan for the SDGs.
- Encourage Member States to take bold initiatives that have the potential to reduce multidimensional poverty and have knock-on effects on various SDGs, including:
    o Extend social protection and universal health coverage to all migrants and displaced persons, to reduce inequalities and enable their active contribution to societies.
    o Develop safe and regular migration pathways across borders to advance good migration governance and integrate the human and financial capital presented by diasporas in trade systems to boost global value chains and the green economy.
    o Listen to migrants and displaced persons' voices, and integrate human mobility considerations into national and local development plans and urban planning efforts to achieve cohesive communities Reinforce efforts to match, up-skill and re-skill people on the move to meet the demands and needs of a changing global labour market and divergent demographic trends.
    o Reduce the digital access gap for migrants to effectively leverage entrepreneurship, including for green transition and climate action.
    o Integrate human mobility into national adaptation plans, invest in preparedness and means to address loss and damages, reduce climate induced displacement and build resilient societies.