



→ CHAPTER ←
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The everyday lives of young migrants in destination societies | Photo by Rut Perez

CHALLENGES FACED BY MIGRANT YOUTH IN DESTINATION SOCIETIES

The experiences of migrant youth in destination societies vary greatly owing to differences in migration motives, gender and migration status. Pre-arrival and post-arrival experiences are crucial, as together they determine whether the migration process will have a positive or negative impact on the migrants. Foreign-born immigrants, who come to a new country for education, employment, skill development, adventure, or family reunification, often encounter challenges ranging from communication barriers to exploitation and abuse. Internal migrants have very different experiences, with most challenges centred on an ambivalent sense of personal identity.

The difficulties youth migrants encounter on arrival or in the short term usually differ from the long-term challenges they face as they settle into destination societies. Recent arrivals are likely to experience culture shock and loneliness. They often face problems finding accommodations and employment, overcoming communication barriers, coping with different weather conditions, and dealing with transportation issues. In the long term, they may face stereotyping, discrimination and abuse at work or in society at large. These challenges may interfere with their social and economic integration and limit their opportunities for development on a multitude of levels.

Social networks, both personal and institutional, often play an important role in facilitating the social and economic integration of youth migrants in destination societies. Establishing connections in new places helps newcomers settle in, while maintaining ties with their countries of origin eases the transition to a new place and provides emotional continuity. Young migrants lacking access to such support systems tend to experience slower or less effective integration and are more likely to be subjected to abuse and exploitation.

In this chapter, young international and internal immigrants share the challenges they have faced in finding housing, securing employment, accessing healthcare

services, and generally adapting to life in a new locale. The chapter also offers some insight into their remittance behaviour and the challenging decision to stay abroad or return home to their countries of origin.

THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF YOUNG MIGRANTS IN DESTINATION SOCIETIES

Access to social networks

These stories illustrate how important social networks can be both for potential young migrants and for those who have already migrated. Immediate and extended family, friends and acquaintances, community groups, religious centers, and other individuals and organizations frequently help these young people adjust to their new surroundings by offering them a place to stay, information on how to find work, and an introduction to the lifestyle of their new community or country. Support from social networks is often temporary, with emphasis on meeting basic survival needs and facilitating the integration of newly arrived migrants. Such networks provide critical

assistance, though they can also be a source of tension and conflict among young migrants.

Youth migrants' perspectives on social networks

**NICHOLAS, MALE, REFUGEE
LIBERIA -----> GHANA**

Like some migrants, my movement was not voluntary but forced because of the Liberian civil war between 1999 and 2003. I was recruited as a child soldier, but thanks to my migration experience I have a relatively safe life and I am a child activist. My movement was not well planned; I had no information about how to move safely and no contacts in Ghana, my destination country.

**ITZEL—FEMALE, ADVENTURE
AND LABOUR MIGRANT
MEXICO -----> SPAIN**

My name is Itzel Eguiluz, and I am a Mexican living in Spain. My journey to Spain began with internal migration to Mexico City. For 24 years I lived in the metropolitan area of Mexico City. When I grew up and completed my B.A. in International Affairs, I worked for a year, then took a

postgraduate course and a language course for another year. I moved with my boyfriend to Cuernavaca and the move offered us a new life together. For us, migrating to the city didn't really represent a risk; it was an adventure for the two of us. It wasn't easy, but we did it. The challenges were simple: find a new home in a new city and understand the social construct of that city. Our experience was great. Thanks to the phone and the Internet, especially Skype and Google Talk, I was in touch with my family almost every day.

Access to adequate shelter

Securing appropriate accommodations is essential to the well-being of youth migrants and their ability to adjust to their new life. Although some youth are able to find a place to stay before they arrive, others may have to search for lodgings upon arrival. Finding decent and affordable housing may take time—sometimes several months—which can affect their health as well as their educational or employment prospects. Because young migrants are often poor or have limited financial resources when they first arrive, cost is usually a major obstacle to securing decent housing,

The housing situation is particularly complicated for undocumented youth migrants. These individuals are vulnerable to abusive landlords who may threaten to report them should they attempt to exercise their rights, so they may hesitate to complain about their deplorable living conditions. Moreover, their migration status often makes them ineligible for participation in housing assistance schemes. Some of them end up homeless or living in slums, with limited access to heat, safe drinking water, hot water, sanitation services, and other basic needs. In fast-growing urban areas receiving large numbers of international or internal migrants, homelessness among immigrant populations has risen.

Newly arrived youth immigrants may tap a number of different sources in their search for adequate accommodations. Some rely on relatives, friends, acquaintances, religious institutions, or diaspora community groups for help, while others obtain housing with the support of employers, educational institutions, or local authorities, or through the use of the Internet. Housing agents in destination societies may also provide assistance to young migrants looking for a place to live.

As illustrated below, young migrants' housing experiences have varied widely. Some have been able to negotiate fair terms for safe, comfortable accommodations, while others have been victimized by unscrupulous landlords preying on vulnerable newcomers. Discrimination, difficulty identifying genuine housing agents, and questionable legal and financial practices were only a few of the challenges voiced by youth immigrants.

Youth migrants' perspectives on the availability of decent housing

ANONYMOUS, FEMALE, AGED 19-25
IRELAND -----> SWEDEN

I was very lucky to find a place to live through a work colleague I met during my participation in the Erasmus programme. Stockholm has a huge housing deficit, and many people fall victim to scamming. The situation is so bad that it might lead me to leave the country if I ever have to give up the apartment I have now. Rents are extremely high, deposits are sometimes equal to two months' rent, flats are sometimes of poor quality, and leases are often for only six months. It can be extremely

stressful. I know several people that have had to resort to sleeping on a friend's couch while they've tried to find a new place to live.

JUNILTO, 24, WENT IN SEARCH OF BETTER OPPORTUNITIES
GUINÉ BISSAU -----> PORTUGAL

To migrate always means to leave our home, people, and things and go in search of a better life or simply a different life. It's been four years that I have been living in Portugal. When I arrived here I was welcomed into a housing estate, where the quality of life was not the best and a lot of young people my age had accepted a way of life that I did not support—not because it was bad, but just because I hold different values. This and my difficulty with the Portuguese language hampered my adaptation. I had little interaction with other people; I barely noticed them and they barely noticed me. Through a group of young people (JOC) who held the same values that had, I began to feel more at home. The light of life (God) has not left me alone and has guided me in the darkness of life. It is that truth that erases my pain and sustains my joy when I am here far away from my normal habitat.

AKHTAR, MALE, AGED 19-25

ASYLUM-SEEKER

AFGHANISTAN -----> LUXEMBOURG

I went to the Ministry of Immigration in Luxembourg; they asked me to come back in two weeks' time. After staying two weeks on the roads, I was given a bed in a foyer. I am not homeless right now, but I was homeless for a period of two months—November and December 2012. I used to keep my clothes with friends and sleep here and there.

As these stories suggest, securing housing can be risky, expensive and stressful for youth migrants. The young immigrant from Ireland alludes to the disadvantaged position of migrants in an already fiercely competitive housing market. Junilto and others like him have had to deal with language barriers, prejudice, and ethnic and gender discrimination in their interaction with landlords, housing agents, and members of the wider community in their destination societies. Akhtar's experience is not uncommon among refugees. There is usually a lag between their arrival and the point at which they are able to identify their settlement needs and obtain the necessary support from institutions mandated to

provide them with shelter and housing assistance. During this period, refugees may be homeless and especially vulnerable to various types of risks.

Access to labour markets

Many youth migrants move to urban areas within or outside their countries of origin in search of new employment and skill development opportunities. Although internal and international migration can increase young people's access to work (including entrepreneurship opportunities) and facilitate social integration and

maturity, it also carries certain risks, particularly for young women, those involved in irregular migration situations, and other vulnerable populations.

In recent years, the economic slowdown experienced by many countries has translated into reduced employment opportunities for migrants and, in some areas, has intensified negative public perceptions of non-native residents. Evidence from previous periods of economic downturn suggests that young immigrants are more likely than other workers to lose their jobs in a recession both because of their

BOX 4.1

DECLINING PROSPECTS FOR YOUNG MIGRANT EMPLOYMENT

Statistics indicate that the current economic downturn has had a serious impact on employment among young immigrants living in certain Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries:

- Half of all unemployed youth migrants need more than a year to find a job.
- In 2012, the unemployment rate among youth migrants aged 15–24 years as a share of the youth labour force totalled 16.2 per cent in the United States, 14.3 per cent in Canada, and 16.3 per cent for the OECD countries as a group.
- Between 2008 and 2012, unemployment rose by only 3 per cent among native-born youth but increased by 5 per cent among foreign-born youth.

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013a).

low human capital (including limited educational attainment, pre-migration work experience, and proficiency in the working language) and because they are often employed in sectors that tend to be hardest hit in times of crisis, such as construction and manufacturing.

YOUTH MIGRANTS' EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES IN DESTINATION SOCIETIES

The importance of human capital

SILVIA,
ECONOMIC IMMIGRANT/JOB-SEEKER
ITALY -----> TURKEY

I am a twenty-five-year-old girl from a well-off Italian family and have a master's degree in political science and international relations from a private university. I decided to follow the flow of opportunities my academic freedom was offering me and move to another country to find a job. The first problem I had to deal with when I got here was practical in nature and was a daily struggle: the language. Among

all the social issues an immigrant has to face every day, the most awkward is that of employment. It is not easy to get a work permit, as a company must make a considerable investment in you. You might have a lot of advantages on your side—for example, speaking languages others don't—but it isn't enough. Then you start asking yourself whether it is appropriate or not to struggle that much against a bureaucracy that is even tougher than your country's.

For many youth immigrants, securing employment is a top priority. One of the first things they do when they arrive in a new place is look for work, but finding a job may take a considerable amount of time and can prove difficult. As mentioned, the human capital characteristics of young immigrants are likely to affect their employment prospects in destination societies. Their level of fluency in languages of commerce, their educational qualifications, and their work experience prior to immigration are all key factors in determining how quickly they can find a job and the type of employment they can secure.

Youth migrants from poorer economic backgrounds with fewer skills and lower

educational attainment often remain unemployed or are forced to endure substandard working conditions. Many low-skilled migrants as well as first-time young migrant job seekers find work in what is sometimes termed as the '3 Ds' (dirty, dangerous, demeaning) sector. Moderately or highly skilled youth with higher levels of education, knowledge of the working language(s), and some work experience stand a better chance of finding a decent job after migrating. Such youth are also more likely to come with the intention of pursuing higher education before integrating themselves into the labour market of their destination societies, which gives them a distinct advantage over their lower skilled counterparts.

Youth migrants' perspectives on seeking and securing employment

LONNEKE, 34-YEAR-OLD FEMALE
THE NETHERLANDS -----> HONG KONG

The kinds of jobs young migrants get at destination totally depend on their background and skill/education levels and whether they are documented or undocumented immigrants.

CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS DOUBLY DISADVANTAGED IN LABOUR MARKETS

Among young adults in their twenties living in European OECD countries (with the exception of Switzerland), education and labour market outcomes tend to be much less favourable for the children of immigrants than for those with native-born parents.

Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, children of immigrants from Turkey and certain non-OECD low- and middle-income countries such as Morocco often have less positive outcomes than children of immigrants from high-income countries.

The female offspring of immigrants appear to be at a particular disadvantage. In 2009, OECD figures indicated that employment rates were lower for children of immigrants than for children of native-born residents, with gaps of about 8 percentage points for men and about 13 percentage points for women.

Social and economic factors aside, migrants and their children are likely to experience discrimination in labour markets. This sometimes reduces the incentive for parents to invest in education, with some repercussions for social cohesion in the long term.

Sources: Thomas Liebig and Sarah Widmaier (2009); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2013b).

in my native country. With an official unemployment rate hitting 15 per cent, youth unemployment of up to 35 per cent, decaying pension plans, decaying ethics, and decaying politics, Italy was no longer allowing me to fulfil my ambitions, to dream big and be constantly learning. Like me, many young Italians have taken flight outside of their motherland to found a tech start-up in the Silicon Valley or to work for companies that still value meritocracy.

Young migrants with few marketable skills or those who are first-time job-seekers often find employment in what is sometimes termed the '3D sector', compelled to accept work that is dirty, dangerous and demeaning. Moderately to highly skilled youth immigrants with low-paid, low-status jobs may acquire some work experience and skills over time. However, this experience is often not recognized by potential employers when they try to find better jobs.

**EVA, LABOUR MIGRANT
PORTUGAL -----> FRANCE**

After a year without work, disheartened, I decided to move to France to work in my area of specialization—physiotherapy. I'm well paid and have good working conditions, and my colleagues and customers are fantastic. Furthermore, the people of France and my hosts from Portugal say we have adapted well and that we are

workers! It was difficult to leave my family. When asked about having to choose between my love for my family and chasing my future, I say that work is more important at this stage of my life.

**CLAUDIA,
LABOUR MIGRANT
ITALY -----> UNITED STATES**

As an Italian, I migrated to the United States, hoping to avoid the recession

**S.W., FEMALE, AGE 15-35,
LABOUR MIGRANT
CAMEROON -----> FINLAND**

Finding a job is a nightmare, and when you get one, you have to work twice as hard as the locals. Most often

BOX 4.3

DOMESTIC WORKERS CONVENTION

In acknowledgment of the numerous challenges domestic workers face, the General Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted the Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers—also referred to as the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)—at the 100th Session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva on 16 June 2011. The Convention entered into force on 5 September 2013.

The Convention delineates the basic rights of domestic workers, requiring that all signatories establish legal provisions for their protection. The 27 articles of the Convention address a wide range of issues, including human rights violations, age standards, mechanisms for dispute settlement, and terms and conditions of employment (work hours, remuneration, occupational safety, and health and social security).

The Convention is legally binding on countries that have ratified it (a total of eight had done so by 1 August 2013). Ratifying Governments are obligated to take measures, in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers, to ensure that national laws are in compliance with the Convention.

Source: International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, C189 - Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Link to the full text of the Convention available from <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/domestic-workers/lang--en/index.htm>.

you have to accept a job (such as cleaning or newspaper distribution) that is not linked to your field of study or qualifications so you can settle your bills.

Depending on the labour market conditions in destination societies, even highly educated and skilled migrant youth may be forced to take jobs that are not commensurate with their qualifications. The mismatch between the educational and skill

levels of young migrants and the employment opportunities open to them, resulting in part from the failure of receiving countries to recognize foreign qualifications, amounts to what is often referred to as 'brain waste'.

GEORGE TWENEBOAH KODUA,
MALE, AGE 32
-----> **GHANA**

I know of endless lists of university graduates ... with backgrounds in

engineering, to mention a few, whose migration situations have pushed them to work in salons or security jobs, as Internet café consultants, or as cobblers. Simply put, a lot of skilled migrants end up working in unrelated fields and eventually abandon their professions. Some have voluntarily gone back home, as situations have not been favourable.

Large numbers of young female migrants from developing countries are engaged in domestic work. While some will end up empowered by the migration experience, many of them—particularly those in irregular situations—endure abuse, violence, and physical and financial exploitation. Some migrants seem to be 'stuck' in the destination country, often because their passports have been seized by employers, debt collectors or human traffickers.

LONNEKE, FEMALE, AGE 34
THE NETHERLANDS -----> **HONG KONG**

I know young women who are indeed stuck in some Asian countries and would love to go back to their home [but cannot do so] because [travel intermediaries]

charged them enormous amounts of money (US\$ 10,000 – US\$ 25,000), which they have to pay back. These youth migrants work under harsh conditions in destination countries. There's often a thin line between the victims of legal migration and the victims of irregular migration.

ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Over the past several decades, there have been increasing numbers of youth migrating to other countries in pursuit of higher education. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics reported that the international tertiary student population jumped from 2 million in 2000 to 3.6 million in 2010, and was expected to reach 8 million by 2020.

The marked increase in international student mobility has been driven by the rise of a middle class with a strong interest in higher education in several developing countries. Other factors supporting this trend include the growing prevalence of English as the language of global communication, relatively low education costs in some destination countries (often through

increased scholarship opportunities), relatively easy and inexpensive transportation options for international travel, and the high value placed on multiculturalism among youth.

DANIELA DI MAURO, FEMALE, AGE 28
LABOUR MIGRANT
ITALY -----> SWITZERLAND

My name is Daniela Di Mauro, and I'm a young, 28-year-old woman currently living and working in Geneva. I first arrived in Switzerland in 2006 because of a European exchange-student programme called Erasmus. Once I finished my studies abroad, I decided to go back to Italy to finish my bachelor's degree and then to move again to Switzerland to study for a master's degree. One of the main reasons for that decision was the high level of education offered in Geneva and the fact that the cost of studying at a public university was much cheaper in Switzerland than in Italy, in spite of the higher cost of living. Once I'd finished my master's, I couldn't find anything interesting because I was perceived as overqualified, having a graduate degree from a foreign country. Luckily, I found a job in Geneva, a very competitive city.

Like Daniela, youth who move to other places to study are likely to receive a higher-quality education than would be the case in their home countries. Those studying abroad benefit not only from higher academic standards, but also from broader social, cultural and economic exposure and expanded networking opportunities—all of which enhance their employability. The migration regulations of several OECD countries allow foreign students to work while studying and for a specified period of time after they complete their studies. Student migrants who earn an income from work are likely to use those resources to finance their education. Some countries also allow foreign students to adjust their status to 'long-term migrant' or 'resident' if they find long-term employment.

Orientation and language services provided by educational institutions

Research has shown that international students provided with an initial orientation by their educational institutions tend to be much better prepared for their foreign academic experience and life abroad. Such support can make a critical difference to their adjustment to unfamiliar

surroundings. A student migrant who feels disoriented or unwelcome is likely to have difficulty learning and is more vulnerable to risks within a new community.

ANONYMOUS, FEMALE STUDENT

AGED 19-25

KENYA -----> UNITED KINGDOM

The orientation [I received] was detailed, informative and relevant. It covered all issues that were likely to affect a foreign student. The international office played an important role in my educational achievements.

SHANIQUE, FEMALE, AGED 19-25

STUDENT

JAMAICA -----> ST. KITTS

I attended a 2- to 3-hour seminar on the school. I was told what to expect, cautioned about how to act on the island, and shown how to protect myself. I was also given a short tour around the island's main spots.

Student migrants, in particular those living in countries where English is not the official language, frequently benefit from language instruction offered on arrival. The cost can be a

major obstacle for some, however—especially those who migrate under forced circumstances with limited or no access to socio-economic resources.

PAWSER, AGED 19-25

REFUGEE

THAILAND -----> UNITED STATES

I think that it's not about where you come from; if you want to get a good job, you need a better education and to speak English well. Working in the library taught me that I need to get an education and get a better job. My community college has an English as a Second Language (ESL) programme for all foreign students to take before they go to regular classes with all American students. ... Now I work in the ESL office.

Recognition of qualifications obtained abroad

As noted in the labour section of this chapter, a key challenge for many student migrants is the non-recognition of qualifications across borders. Such students may face problems in both directions—when enrolling abroad and upon their return home. Failure to recognize the validity or equivalency of their academic or professional

qualifications can have a serious impact on their employment prospects, extending periods of unemployment or forcing students into work for which they are overqualified or poorly remunerated. Recognition of academic and professional qualifications is fundamental to reconciling the best interests of individual migrants with the development objectives of countries of origin and destination.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

The level of access youth migrants have to affordable, quality healthcare has a direct impact on their socio-economic welfare. Other factors influencing their overall health and well-being include their migration status (regular or irregular, forced or voluntary) and how they live and work. Student and labour migrants who can avail themselves of healthcare services are more likely than those without healthcare access to stay healthy and be productive in school and at work. Those who have medical coverage through their employers or have access to free public medical care consider themselves fortunate.

BOX 4.4

RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

Recognition by education authorities of formal studies abroad and of foreign academic certification is critical for student migrants, facilitating the pursuit of higher education in other countries and improving long-term employment prospects.

UNESCO has supported the adoption, ratification and implementation of one interregional and six regional conventions on the recognition of studies/qualifications:

- + International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean (1976);
- + Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in the African States (1981);
- + Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the Arab States (1978);
- + Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (1983);
- + Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997);
- + Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region (1979);
- + Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Latin America and the Caribbean (1974).

These conventions are legal agreements between countries willing to recognize academic qualifications issued in other countries that have ratified the same agreements.

International agreements and regional exchange programmes represent progress in the right direction; however, implementation of these agreements have only been slowly or not at all been implemented, and problems with credit calculation, grade transfer, bureaucratic documentation, and perceptions and attitudes among professors often interfere with full recognition of academic qualifications.

Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (n.d.(a)). Conventions on the recognition of qualifications. Links to each convention available from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13880&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

EVA, FEMALE AGED 30-35
IRELAND -----> UNITED KINGDOM

I have had private insurance when living in countries where it was essential, such as the United States. Now that I am in the UK, the National Health Service provides excellent free health care.

A number of factors effectively limit young migrants' access to healthcare services. Language difficulties initially constitute the biggest barrier to becoming aware of and using services. Some young migrants have foreign health insurance that is invalid or offers only limited coverage in destination countries, and out-of-pocket expenses can sometimes be very high. In extreme cases, access to healthcare can mean the difference between life and death. Migrants who are ill or injured may not receive the care they need, and those who are healthy worry about the potential repercussions of a health crisis.

RAYMOND, MALE, AGED 30-35
-----> IRELAND

I don't have medical insurance; I have to stay healthy or else I die.

ITZEL, FEMALE, AGED 26-29
YEARS, STUDENT MIGRANT
MEXICO -----> SPAIN

I have private healthcare insurance that my scholarship pays for now. It was difficult, initially, to get healthcare because you need your resident number, which they give you six months after you arrive in the country.

ANA, FEMALE, AGED 26-29
MOLDOVA -----> GREECE

Whenever I need healthcare, I pay. In 2008 I had an operation. I was on my mother's insurance, and the hospital said that I didn't have to pay anything. After four months, I received a hospital bill of €12,000. This came as a heavy cost to me.

Migrants in irregular situations tend to be especially vulnerable; even when they have the right to access to basic healthcare (and other services, such as education), lack of awareness or the fear of being arrested and deported may keep them from using available services in some countries. One young man, a migrant himself and coordinator of Bué Fixe, describes his organization's efforts to facilitate access to healthcare

and promote awareness of sexual and reproductive rights among other young migrants in his host country:

DYNKA, MALE, AGE 28,
MIGRANT AND ACTIVIST
SAO TOMÉ AND PRINCIPE ----->
PORTUGAL

Regular and irregular migrants are sometimes unaware of their right to health, so we work to inform and engage them on a wide range of HIV/AIDS and sexual/reproductive health issues as well as their right to health using media platforms such as radio and social media.

CONNECTIONS TO COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

Remittances

Immediate and extended family members from the country or community of origin usually bear at least part of the financial cost of migration for youth pursuing outside work opportunities. In return, these relatives expect to receive remittances once the young migrant is employed.

The money these youth migrants or migrant parents send to family members or youth left behind tends to improve their social and economic welfare. The funds are often used to pay school fees, purchase clothing, and cover healthcare costs. In return, the children or family members still at home occasionally send gifts or locally available goods and supplies to their migrant parents.

**EMMANUEL, MALE, AGE 26,
STUDENT MIGRANT
GHANA -----> MACEDONIA**

It has been 12 years since my father left the shores of Ghana. One positive effect of his migration is that he has been able to support our education through the remittances that he sends.

**GEORGE, MALE, AGE 35,
FAMILY MEMBER IN THE COUNTRY OF
ORIGIN, NIGERIA**

I send my family members abroad greeting cards during festival periods and also send them music tapes. I receive money from my family once in a year, and it comes during the Christmas period.

Although young people left behind recognize and appreciate the socio-economic benefits deriving from remittances, many of them would gladly trade the financial gains for greater physical proximity to their parents.

**B., FEMALE, AGE 29,
YOUTH MIGRANT
PHILIPPINES -----> UNITED
KINGDOM**

As we grew older, these gifts, though lovely and admired, were just gifts and didn't really make that much of an impact anymore, because what we needed then was the presence of the migrant parent, not the remittances sent to us.

The amounts, types and frequency of remittances vary widely. Migrants may send money home as often as once a month or as seldom as once a year. Transfer arrangements depend on a number of factors, including the young immigrant's employment status and income level in the destination country, the needs of family members in the country of origin, the cost of sending remittances, and in some cases the availability of someone trustworthy to hand-carry the funds back home.

Migrants may send financial and non-financial resources to their immediate or extended families through formal or informal channels.

The decision to use formal or informal avenues for remittance transfer is guided by considerations such as the migrant's immigration status, the cost of sending remittances, and the migrant's relationship with individuals returning to the same country of origin. In some countries, migrants in an irregular situation may not have access to formal transfer systems. If the cost of sending remittances is prohibitively high, many migrants will resort to informal means.

**PAWSER, AGE 19-25,
REFUGEE
THAILAND -----> UNITED STATES**

I save money here by myself and send money to my family and poor children at Christmastime. Sometimes it can be expensive to send it via formal means.

The decision to stay abroad or return home

Migration outcomes vary widely. Some young migrants return to their country of origin, either voluntarily or

involuntarily, whereas others remain in the destination country.

To understand the dynamics of return migration, it is important to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary return. Voluntary return among young migrants tends to be linked to greater potential for development in countries of origin. Those who travel home on their own terms are often equipped with new skills, qualifications and economic resources that may generate long-term benefits for the returnees, their families, and the local community. Conversely, young migrants subjected to involuntary return frequently experience difficulties that increase their vulnerability and make their return and reintegration more challenging. This is particularly true for migrants in irregular situations subjected to deportation and perhaps less true for youth who are compelled to return home to fulfil contractual obligations linked to migration sponsorship programmes.

**FILIGA, FEMALE, AGE 15-35,
UNICEF “RURAL VOICE OF YOUTH”
FOCAL POINT FOR TUVALU**

One of the main reasons migrants return home is because they find

life overseas harder than life at home. Others return because of their parents’ influence or instructions, which in Tuvalu play a significant role in the lives and choices of young people. Some have returned because their wives or husbands or children are still back home. Those who went overseas for education may have had jobs waiting for them in their country of origin, or they may have been required to return because part of the contract they signed with their employer was to return for a set period (especially in the case of sponsored students).

While migrants returning home voluntarily are generally at a relative advantage, they nonetheless require social support and reliable information on economic prospects to facilitate their reintegration. For returning youth, detailed and accurate information on development opportunities is essential to compensate for any loss of social capital upon return.

Some youth migrants approach both migration and repatriation with a clear purpose. Young student migrants from developing countries in particular often feel that their enhanced skills and qualifications will allow them have a

positive developmental impact on their societies and countries of origin when they return. Most of the youth in this category were initially motivated to study abroad by an interest in acquiring new skills and ideas and in joining business networks that would be useful for their countries of origin upon their return.

**LAZ, MALE, AGE 30,
STUDENT MIGRANT PHYSICIAN
NIGERIA -----> UNITED STATES**

It is my desire to return to my home country or Africa, live closer to my loved ones, and use my skills as a health expert for the benefit of a population that needs it most.

While some youth may choose to return home permanently, others might decide to settle in their destination societies. Those in the latter category feel that the factors that caused them to migrate—such as poverty, high unemployment and poor infrastructure—are still prevalent in their countries of origin.

**GEORGE, MALE, AGE
32, STUDENT MIGRANT
GHANA -----> SOUTH AFRICA**

Inadequate opportunities in Ghana [are] an issue of concern. The statistics for unemployed graduates (most of whom are my colleagues) have skyrocketed in recent years, and I simply can't add to the numbers. ... I literally packed my whole life up from Ghana to study and hopefully search for economic opportunities. I have made a huge investment in my studies as a self-funded student, and I feel it would not be economically wise to forfeit this effort.

Many of those who settle abroad permanently maintain ties with their origins through short, periodic visits to their native countries or communities. This group includes young migrants who are involved in diaspora-driven activities.

**JAMES, MALE, AGE 20-35,
COMMUNITY ACTIVIST
KENYA -----> CANADA**

When I got to Canada, I still wanted to continue with my passion: community work. In 2009 I formed Youth Initiative Canada, which is a diaspora-driven organization working to empower youth in Canada and Kenya through sports, education

and entrepreneurship. What has kept the organization running is working closely with diaspora organizations and community partnerships with community-based organizations in Kenya. I try to travel back to Kenya every year. I'd like to encourage young migrants to stay in touch and get involved in development in their countries of origin and also to preserve their culture as they integrate into the new country/home.

Whether young migrants decide to stay in their destination societies or return to their countries of origin, they typically find that the migration experience has transformed them into 'third-culture youth' influenced by experiences in both their home and host countries.

**TIMOTHY, MALE,
STUDENT AND TRAVELLER
NIGERIA -----> UNITED STATES**

I have never been more aware of my identity as a Nigerian. Unlike in Port Harcourt, where I could be mistaken for another youth down the street, I stand out in the small Texas town of Wimberley. I hear myself when I speak. I feel my own presence in a

room. I get smiles and sometimes a little "Hello, where in Africa are you from?" The anonymity that others enjoy eludes me. But this awareness within a new society is my strength; it is my contribution to the melting pot. Knowing the importance of retaining my originality and staying in touch with the realities at home, I am cautious of the melting pot experience. It is a give-and-take situation, though; something must give way. What that 'something' is, I do not know. As Derek Walcott said in one of his poems, "Motion brings loss." The more one moves, the more difficult it becomes to reconnect with the realities of one's home country. Home, as it were, becomes a state of mind and a function of place and time.

A number of young returnees and immigrants report undergoing an identity crisis, which can be especially pronounced when they return home for visits or permanent resettlement. Youth migrants, especially those who left at a very young age and have been away for a long period of time, often have problems fitting in and feeling at home in their countries of origin as they tend to be viewed as outsiders, which can be a source of frustration. Third-culture

youth feel that they do not really belong anywhere—either in the destination country or in the country of origin.

ESI, FEMALE, AGE 20-35

GHANA -----> UNITED STATES

Though I strongly identify as Ghanaian and have always had a desire to return, the lack of familiarity makes it hard for me to form new relationships and successfully integrate into a new environment in my home country. I find that most migrants (like me) are often treated differently (like outsiders) by others in their home country. There is a bit of difference in culture and experience. I've been away for so long and I'm often perceived as someone born in the U.S.

Maintaining contact with people in and from their countries of origin allows young migrants to keep abreast of social, cultural, political and economic conditions at home. Staying connected through various means, including diaspora-driven activities or the use of social media, e-mail and other forms of electronic communication—is critical for migrant reintegration and transmigrant identity formation.

MAGDALENA, FEMALE, AGE 15-35
MEXICO/CHILE -----> AUSTRALIA

[It would be useful] to have a safety net of acquaintances to support you during the 'transition' period of your return, including relatives that offer you safe and affordable accommodations, a friend that advises you on what is 'logical' to locals but not so logical to you anymore, and/or a professional colleague or mentor to guide you on how to get a job and keep it.

THE MIGRATION EXPERIENCE: PERCEPTIONS VERSUS REALITY

Misinformation and misconceptions about migration and migrants still constitute one of the biggest challenges faced by Governments in countries of origin, transit and destination. The changing patterns of migration and the growing diversity of migrants—whether regular or irregular, permanent or temporary, male or female, old or young, and across the skill range—have further complicated migration issues and the lives of individual migrants and their families.

CLAUDIA, FEMALE,
DAUGHTER OF A MIGRANT
-----> ITALY

"Please follow me right this way, Miss...Miss...Sh-...Sheku.... How do you pronounce your last name?" my doctor asked before my routine check-up, while hopelessly squinting her eyes in an attempt to read my name.

"Shekufendeh," I corrected her with a smile.

"Ah, yes. And where are you from, Ms. Shukoufenday?" That would be my cue to take a deep breath and churn out a phrase that I have already recited many times. "Well, I'm originally from Italy", I would respond, ready for her suspicious face to start taking form.

"Well, that doesn't sound very Italian, Shekufendeh."

And it isn't. It never was, as my elementary school peers would remind me on a daily basis, bombarding me with questions as to where I was really from. I am from Italy, born from an authentic Iranian father with the thick Farsi accent.

Public perceptions of migration vary with time and place and are often shaped by contextual factors. During

periods of economic recession, when unemployment levels are high, migrants may be viewed with disfavour and even hostility, especially in transit and destination countries. In countries of origin, emigrants and their children—even those born abroad—may be considered unpatriotic and are seen by some to have abandoned their home countries. In certain cases, young migrants who come back must deal with the perception that their return is due to their failure abroad. In other settings, youth migrants living outside their countries or returning home are recognized as heroes. Positive perceptions about migration in countries of origin can also influence the decisions of potential youth migrants to venture abroad, especially when they are given the opportunity to interact with successful youth migrants and returnees.

Unfavourable—and often biased—media content can reinforce negative perceptions about migration. For example, mainstream and social media (ranging from news programmes to blogs) may link immigrants and migration policies in a destination country to security threats such as terrorism.

Popular misconceptions surrounding migrants and migration can lead to harmful stereotyping, anti-immigrant discrimination, xenophobia, social exclusion, the abuse of migrants' rights, and social unrest. Most young migrants are unaware of the full extent of these socio-cultural and political undercurrents prior to their migration and are thus unprepared to deal with the challenges they present.

Many youth migrants struggle through a period of adjustment in their countries of destination and often lack the time and resources to actively challenge negative perceptions about them. Even when they have met their basic needs and are better situated in their host countries, they may be unwilling or unable to internalize certain cultural values that are very different from their own; this may extend through several generations. All of these factors distance migrants from native populations, perpetuating bias, ignorance and suspicion among the latter and effectively creating resistance to change in society—which can result in tougher immigration policies and more difficult migrant adjustment experiences. To disrupt this vicious cycle, young migrants need to make their voices heard, to create support

networks for new migrants, and to become actively involved in facilitating greater intercultural dialogue and understanding.

NATALIA, FEMALE, AGE 22,

FAMILY MIGRANT

POLAND ----->THE NETHERLANDS

I am a 22-year-old student living in the Netherlands. I was 15 years old when I was forced to reunite with my parents, who had previously immigrated to the Netherlands. After a period of depression, an identity crisis, and many difficult years, I managed to find a way to be happy. I became engaged in various social/political projects in order to help and inspire others in similar situations and to make policy makers and immigration experts in the Netherlands and worldwide aware of the impact of immigration—not only on youth [migrants], but also on second- and third-generation immigrants and even on those who are just young people living in a multicultural city.

Natalia's experience inspired her to use political participation as an avenue to improve the integration of young migrants. She is a prime example of

how youth can actively participate in advocacy to deal with the challenges of migration. Governments have responded to such efforts with policies ranging from addressing human trafficking to enhancing integration policies and cooperating with third countries to help control migrant flows. Migration policies and public perceptions can reinforce each other in both positive and negative ways; it is therefore essential that various stakeholders (including youth organizations, employers, labour unions, diaspora associations and international organizations) work to create positive perceptions about migration and migrants and that policy makers support and strengthen such efforts through the adoption of appropriate migration management policies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- 2013 UN World Youth Report: Youth Migration and Development. Youth and labour migration: summary of week 5 online discussions. Available from http://www.unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/summary_week_5_online_discussions.pdf

This summary document presents youth perspectives on factors that influence young people's decision to migrate for employment, factors or characteristics in young migrants that determine their employment outcomes in countries of destination, and challenges specific to young migrants that they or their migrant friends, relatives or acquaintances have faced in the labour markets of destination countries. Good practices on youth employment are presented, along with recommendations on what young migrants believe can improve labour migrants' working conditions.

- 2013 UN World Youth Report: Youth Migration and Development. Return/no return migration of youth migrants: summary of week 3 online discussions. Available from http://unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/summary_week_3_online_discussions.pdf

The main reasons behind young people's decision to return or not to return to their native countries are explored in this document. The development potential of returning youth migrants is also highlighted. Based on the combined perspectives of youth, the paper contends that "creating an environment that facilitates the economic and

social integration of return migrants and raising awareness about existing opportunities for return migrants in their country of origin is likely to stimulate return migration, and therewith development in countries of origin."

- 2013 UN World Youth Report: Youth Migration and Development. Youth migration: challenges and opportunities of migrant youth in destination countries: summary of [week 2] online discussions. Available from http://www.unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/summary_week_2_part2_online_discussions.pdf

The unique experiences of young migrants, including native-born and foreign-born immigrants, are related in this summary report. Based on an analysis of youth perspectives, the report underscores the importance of strengthening social and economic integration mechanisms to address the unique needs of young immigrants and of promoting youth participation in addressing challenges such as discrimination.

- Garrett, Katherine E., ed. (2006). *Living In America: Challenges Facing New Immigrants and Refugees*. Prepared for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation by Lake Snell Perry Mermin/Decision Research. Available from <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/21623.pdf>

This report examines the living situations of new immigrants and refugees in the United States. An effort is made in the report to highlight some of the social and economic challenges young immigrants face and how these affect their prospects for obtaining quality education, employment and housing. The report identifies

a number of actions that could help immigrants and refugees overcome these challenges in order to live productive lives.

- *Khanlou, Nazilla, and others (2002). Mental Health Promotion among Newcomer Female Youth: Post-Migration Experiences and Self-Esteem. Ottawa: Status of Women Canada.*

This participatory action research undertaken with females attending secondary school in Toronto examines the mental health situation of newcomer female youth. The study identifies a number of factors that influence the mental health of young female migrants and concludes that relationships with parents and friends play an important supportive role. The study advocates for measures that promote the mental health of newcomer female youth and their active participation in the design and implementation of such measures.

- *McKenzie, David J. (2007). A profile of the world's young developing country migrants. Institute for the Study of Labor, Discussion Paper Series, IZA DP No. 2948. Bonn, July. Available from <http://ftp.iza.org/dp2948.pdf>*

This discussion paper examines youth migration from a gender perspective. It presents a picture of youth migrants from developing countries,

focusing on how they move (accompanied or unaccompanied) as well as their participation in education and work in destination countries. Special attention is given to the return migration of young people and its potential for development in countries of origin. The study concludes that while migration is linked to the potential for human capital development among young people, their prospects for success are limited owing to the absence of economic and social integration measures.

- *Liebig, Thomas, and Sarah Widmaier (2009). Children of immigrants in the labour markets of EU and OECD countries: an overview. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 97. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. DELSA/ELSA/WD/SEM(2009)25. Available from <http://www.oecd.org/berlin/43880918.pdf>*

This study is based on comparative data collected on the education levels and labour market outcomes of native-born offspring of immigrants and offspring of natives in 16 OECD countries. The study notes that in certain OECD countries, children of immigrants experience less favourable labour market outcomes, even at comparable educational attainment levels. Access to quality education is limited for children of immigrants owing to socio-economic background

characteristics. A special effort is made to highlight gender-related education and labour market disadvantages young men and women face as immigrants in OECD countries.

- *Salzano, Carmela (2013). Youth, Employment and Migration—Review of MDG-F Joint Programmes: Key Findings and Achievements. [Inside cover title: Youth, Employment and Migration—MDG-F Thematic Study: Review of Key Findings and Achievements.] MDG-F Thematic Studies. United Nations Development Programme, MDG Achievement Fund. Available from http://www.mdgfund.org/sites/default/files/YEM_Thematic%20Study.pdf*

The study reviews the lessons learned from the implementation of Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund (MDG-F) joint programmes in 15 countries. It highlights some of the factors that have supported the formulation and implementation of programmes and policies on youth, employment and migration. Key insights are presented on how to target at-risk youth, including migrant workers. Efforts to reduce the risks of poverty and vulnerability among youth while empowering them towards greater social and economic mobility are documented in this report.