

CHAPTER

5



The value of peer to peer information sharing and capacity building
Photo by Kathryn Stam

YOUTH AWARENESS & ENGAGEMENT ON MIGRATION



Over the past decade, evidence from around the world has shown that young leaders and youth-led organizations engaged in civic activities have influenced public policies through the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives that have direct relevance to their well-being and development. Young people have proven themselves to be a tremendous source of innovative solutions. Active citizenship shapes the identities of youth migrants and other youth affected by migration. Being an active citizen also constitutes a social good, as it tends to reduce idleness and fosters a sense of belonging and social cohesion. Government accountability and service delivery can also be enhanced through the active engagement of young people.

Young migrants face many challenges, but their meaningful awareness of and engagement in migration-centred initiatives such as policy and programme development allows them to facilitate their integration and assume ownership of their contribution to development. In addition, it facilitates the development of policies and programmes which accurately target the real issues being faced by young migrants.

AWARENESS

First things first: awareness and engagement go hand in hand

In order for young people to be engaged in migration discussions, they first must be aware of their own circumstances as well as the circumstances of other migrants. But before all that can happen, they need to have basic, reliable information at all stages of their own migration process. During the pre-departure stage, youth need

HIV/AIDS AWARENESS— UNDERTAKEN BY AND FOR YOUTH

Youth Media: Our Response to HIV/AIDS is an initiative undertaken by Associação Bué Fixe in partnership with the MTV Staying Alive Foundation and several non-governmental organizations in Portugal. The project uses contemporary media resources to promote HIV/AIDS prevention strategies and to help youth between the ages of 18 and 30 cope with being HIV-positive. It specifically targets young migrants from Portuguese-speaking African countries who are living in the disadvantaged neighborhoods of Amadora Village outside Lisbon. The tools this programme uses to get its message across include radio talk shows, text messages, a Facebook page, capacity-building workshops and condom distribution. The radio shows are broadcast not only in Portugal, but also in five African Portuguese-speaking countries—Angola, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau.

Source: Bué Fixe (2013).

to understand their options and be aware of the potential risks and dangers associated with migration. Upon arrival in a destination country, they should strengthen social networks and know how to access local resources and services for health, housing and employment. Young people who intend to embark on voluntary return need reliable and accurate information on safe transit and on opportunities in their home countries.

Information can be especially critical during the decision-making, planning and preparation stages. Youth who lack reliable information on safe migration may resort to illegal travel options, which can expose them to risks including abuse, exploitation and even death. A number of organizations dealing with migration issues have made it a priority to develop information campaigns for youth. Young people today tend to have easy access to information—much of it inaccurate or deliberately misleading—and they may be persuaded by traffickers to pursue irregular migration.

Making reliable information readily available to prospective youth migrants is key to preventing and combating risky forms of irregular migration,

including trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants. The most effective way to protect potential migrants and trafficking victims is to ensure that they are conscious of the possible dangers. Some of the awareness-raising activities carried out by the International Organization for Migration and other international organizations in various countries target students through school exercise books, cartoons, posters, websites, T-shirts, youth radio stations and

newspapers. There is some evidence that these activities have been effective in preventing irregular migration.

Youth-led awareness 101: Young people know how to reach other young people

Youth involvement in advocacy campaigns benefits both the concerned organizations and the young people themselves, as the latter have the opportunity to develop leadership and

communication skills while promoting social change. Youth can be involved in advocacy campaigns in both countries of origin and destination that promote the rights of youth migrants, challenge negative public perceptions about migrants and migration, support safe migration among youth, and endorse public policies focused on the well-being of young migrants. Boxes 5.1 and 5.2 offer examples of how youth have contributed to making advocacy messages more relevant and accessible to targeted youth populations.

ENGAGEMENT

Sociocultural engagement among youth in destination countries

Various factors shape youth migrants' engagement in sociocultural activities and activism, including their country of origin and background, their status in the destination country, time and resource availability, language skills, the social costs and benefits of participation, and their interest in intercultural relations. The personal attitude of young migrants can also mediate social and community relations. There are a number of young

migrants worldwide who engage in social and civic activities such as fundraising for non-profit organizations, environmental conservation, migrant rights advocacy, and participation in national and community events such as festivals. Several young migrants share their experiences below.

PAWSER, FEMALE, AGE 19-25,

REFUGEE

THAILAND -----> UNITED STATES

I [participate in] many community volunteer activities that are aimed at enhancing the capacity of refugees in Utica and at my school in particular.

FIONA, FEMALE, AGE 26-29

AUSTRIA -----> SINGAPORE

I collect donations for abused migrant workers in safe-houses. I also participated in Ramadan on Wheels—an initiative supporting lower-income Malay Muslims in

BOX 5.2

PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH VIDEO MESSAGES

In this age of mobility, as societies become increasingly diverse and cultural and religious intolerance poses a growing threat, youth can serve as agents of social change. The PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival, organized by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the International Organization for Migration, has been held annually since 2009 to allow young people to share their perspectives on migrant integration, inclusiveness, identity, diversity, human rights and social cohesiveness at the local and global levels. The winning videos are broadcast on a number of platforms and have the potential to influence policies, challenge stereotypes and xenophobia, and promote migration and diversity.

Source: United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (n.d.).

Singapore during the Hari Raya festivities.

**KELLY, FEMALE, AGE 26-29,
MIGRANT WORKER
UNITED STATES -----> AUSTRALIA**

I am actively involved in global health and human rights activities within the community.

Although there is some evidence that migrant youth participate in social and civic activities in destination countries, there is little information about the level of youth engagement in migration-related activism in places of origin. Young people appear to be largely unaware of the role of youth and youth organizations play in such endeavours in their respective countries. Nevertheless, they have shown a strong interest in civic engagement as well as an awareness of their potential role in confronting the challenges and exploring the opportunities associated with youth migration.

**RUEBEN, MALE, AGE 30
-----> GHANA**

I'm not aware of what any youth organizations have been up to in

terms of information dissemination to curb irregular migration or other social activities related to migration. However, I believe young people can play a critical role in information campaigns at the organizational level and through peer-to-peer mechanisms.

Barriers to youth engagement in destination countries

Although some young migrants participate in social and civic activities in destination countries, others are reluctant to do so because they feel that many of these activities are not immigrant-friendly. As shown below, some social activities are structured in a way that inhibits migrant participation.

**ANONYMOUS, FEMALE, AGE 26-29
IRELAND -----> NETHERLANDS**

[There are] language barriers. Everybody speaks English, making it very difficult to practice speaking Dutch, yet sometimes, when you attend social events, you are made to feel as though you should be making a better effort to learn Dutch.

**ANONYMOUS, AGE 26-29,
STUDENT MIGRANT
-----> THAILAND**

Sometimes I felt I was not part of an activity, as it was designed mostly for local people.

Youth migrants also hesitate to become involved in social affairs because they have experienced unfair treatment in their host countries, including discrimination, xenophobic and racist remarks, and stereotyping.

**ANONYMOUS, FEMALE, AGE 26-29
THAILAND -----> UNITED KINGDOM**

I have experienced... unfair treatment before in the United Kingdom in my attempts to participate in civic activities when people mocked my Asian language and some shouted at me to "go home". Those [episodes] were not severe and did not involve any physical harm, but it hurt to hear such words.

**ANONYMOUS, FEMALE, AGE 26-29
GERMANY -----> FRANCE**

They are generally an unfriendly people, and some are openly hostile to foreigners, making it difficult to



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon participated in the Youth Event, Fifth Global Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations. A view of the group of youth interacting with the Secretary-General. February 2013 | Vienna, Austria
UN Photo/Evan Schneider

NATIONAL YOUTH DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION

engage in social and civic activities.

The lack of time and financial resources are factors that may limit social and civic engagement. Since most young migrants have an economic motive for leaving their places of origin, they generally choose to work and save their money rather than spending it on discretionary social activities.

ANONYMOUS, FEMALE, AGE 19-25
KENYA -----> UNITED KINGDOM

Time and cost limitations were some of the barriers to my effective participation, and I have observed this same challenge for other immigrants.

MURSI, MALE, AGE 26-29
ROMANIA -----> SUDAN

Sometimes there are fees required before participating, which is a challenge.

GIEDRE, FEMALE, AGE 19-25
LITHUANIA -----> AUSTRIA

I don't have time [for civic participation] because I have to work and study.

The exodus of trained, experienced professionals from Zimbabwe is a growing national concern, as it is affecting the country's ability to achieve its development goals. The Government of Zimbabwe, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, organized a dialogue with Zimbabwean youth between the ages of 10 and 30 in order to explore ways to strengthen migration management and diaspora engagement in national development.

The event sensitised children and youth to the risks of human trafficking and irregular migration and the benefits of safe migration. The organizers solicited the young participants' views on migration policy and practice with the aim of formulating and endorsing an action plan (or recommendations) on youth migration issues that would be integrated into the broader national migration and development strategy. The dialogue produced priority areas for consideration in the national strategy, including employment and economic development, education and skills training, facilitating safe migration, and expanding the contribution of diaspora youth to the development of Zimbabwe.

Source: International Organization for Migration (2010a; 2010b).

The value of youth engagement in migration policy and programme development

Young immigrants (internal and international) and other youth affected by migration possess valuable experiential knowledge. In some countries, Governments and relevant development partners recognize the importance of engaging young people in the process of developing

national planning strategies and policies. A number of national youth commissions, youth-led organizations and other youth civil society networks have been directly involved in official decision-making structures at the highest levels. Studies have shown that public policies and organizational policies are more effective when young people are involved in the planning and design. Youth engaged in migration and development policy processes can share the perspectives

TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR YOUTH LEADERS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA LIVING IN EUROPE

Since 2009 the African Diaspora Youth Network in Europe has organized a number of training events for African diaspora youth living on the continent. The training programme is being carried out in partnership with the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. This initiative is aimed at strengthening the role of leading African diaspora youth groups and movements and of youth leaders and youth workers active in youth organizations in European host societies. It focuses on empowering youth by fostering political participation and active citizenship, promoting their capacity to organize and take action within the framework of Africa-Europe youth cooperation and global youth initiatives. More than 400 youth leaders have developed their competencies and strengthened their role in Euro-African cooperation while developing the capacity of their organizations as well. Priorities for future action include facilitating the exchange of youth experiences and empowering the young African community living in Europe to take local action relevant to the Millennium Development Goals and other international development objectives.

Source: North-South Centre of the Council of Europe (2013).

and life experiences of young people and articulate their needs (see box 5.3). Genuine consideration and integration of their input can increase young people's trust in development mechanisms. Political participation among young people can be effective if youth share in decision-making and are recognized as partners in migration policy and programme development.

Youth-led organizations are at the forefront

Youth organizations can be the mechanism through which such knowledge is marshalled and mobilized. These organizations are an effective avenue for building the capacity of youth migrants and youth civil society to engage in public debate over migration and development (see box 5.4). A number of organizations involve

youth in the design, implementation and evaluation of youth-centred programmes. This approach needs to be followed for advocacy campaigns in the area of migration and development. Youth engaged in the initial stages of an initiative can provide valuable insights and perspectives that can inform the development of policies and programmes. They can help attract a broader constituency of young people to build an organic advocacy network and make communication more youth-friendly—and therefore more effective and efficient.

Engagement must include disadvantaged youth

Within the migration framework, certain categories of youth such as girls and young women, youth left behind by migrant parents, and forced migrants (including refugees) are especially vulnerable to the risks of exploitation and abuse. Others who also may be susceptible to such risks include rural youth, out-of-school youth, and informal workers. Some programmes target these groups; however, many fail to classify them as groups at special risk and therefore make little effort to understand their experiences and the special challenges



Young migrant participation
Photo by Kathryn Stam



A teacher helps her student learn to pronounce Dutch words, in the city of San Nicolas. The girl is participating in the Prisma Project, which helps non-Dutch-speaking immigrant children become familiarized with the language so that they pursue a traditional course of study as quickly as possible. The Project began as a pilot programme and is now available in all public primary schools throughout the country.

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ARUBA (KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS),
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