

Ninth International Forum of NGOs in Official Partnership with UNESCO
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Another Perspective on Migration

Concept Note



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Introduction

In accordance with the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with NGOs, adopted by the UNESCO's General Conference in 2011, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee has the responsibility of organizing, in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, international forums of NGOs on UNESCO priority issues.

In order to take into account the cultural and geographic diversity of civil society and further involve new organizations located in diverse regions of the world, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee and the UNESCO Secretariat organize the Forums wherever possible outside UNESCO's Headquarters in Paris.

Eight Forums have been organized on the following topics: "Which Education Goals for Tomorrow's Citizens of the World: Is Quality Enough?" (Paris, France - 2013); "Access to Water for All in Africa" (Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire - 2014); "The Role of Youth in Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage" (Sozopol, Bulgaria - 2014); "The Role of Women in Fighting Poverty" (Paris, France - 2015); "Rapprochement of Cultures: One Humanity Beyond Diversities" (Beijing, China – 2016) ; "From Promoting to Building Peace with NGOs" (Querétaro, Mexico – 2016); "Youth and its Social Impact" (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – 2017) and "Changing Minds, not the Climate; the Contribution of NGOs" (Paris, France – 2017).

Why a Forum on Migrants?

Migration has now become part of our societies' daily life. Whether national, regional or international, it is one of the emerging faces of a world in constant motion. Every woman, every man, every child, have their own story when they embark on this journey, whether guided by economic opportunities, social reasons or simply survival. About 40% of migration takes place in the South-North direction, 37% between Southern countries, while 740 million people are displaced internally every year. Yet migration is often associated with international security or even identity issues by a portion of our collective imagination. The media hyper-focus on the tragic situation of the millions of people who had to leave their countries because of armed conflicts represents in reality only 21.3 million of the overall 247.6 million population of migrants (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, DESA, 2015) ¹.

The deteriorating conditions surrounding the flow of migrants around the world today, and the alarming increase in their mortality rate, call for new actions to strengthen global solidarity and protect their fundamental rights. It is also necessary to design sustainable policies for migratory flows and for the inclusion of migrants beyond the humanitarian emergency and a crisis approach. Protecting the migrants' fundamental rights is a moral duty and a development imperative; it is also a condition for building a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. Indeed, it is not a matter of encouraging and restricting migration, but of reflecting on the conditions for inclusive development, which should de facto reduce forced migration. In 1997, Ronald Skeldon² demonstrated that the development of a society tends to make it more mobile, while underdevelopment can prevent access to any opportunity for mobility and migration. It is in this spirit that the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2019, stated in its paragraph 43 that "*Migration should be a choice, not a necessity*".

International migration has far-reaching implications for growth and poverty in both origin and destination countries. Migrants are also major contributors to the gross national income of host countries as well as providers of cash transfers and knowledge. In 2015, remittances were valued at more than \$ 439 billion by the World Bank³, making them the second largest source of funding for developing countries globally, behind direct investment abroad, and official development assistance. The social and professional inclusion of migrants can be beneficial to the host and home economies of both countries and can thus enable migrants to have a capacity to fight against poverty. Many people have abilities that need to be properly recognized and evaluated. Opportunities for intercultural enrichment can also be a catalyst for development and peace.

As the United Nations sets to adopt two compacts on migrants and refugees this year, it is more than ever necessary to develop a methodical approach to assess the benefits of migration and consider these issues in the negotiations.

International migration has become a key element of globalization today. It also has an impact on international cooperation and the development goals set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda, designed to "leave no one behind", provides a comprehensive framework in which UNESCO and its partners can play a leading role in developing a new global agenda on migration, based on the principles of human rights, gender equality and respect for cultural diversity. Indeed, more than forty targets identified across 15 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have direct implications for migrants and refugees

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates17.shtml>

² Skeldon, R. 1997, *Migration and Development: A Global Interpretation*, London, Longman.

³ <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/992371492706371662/MigrationandDevelopmentBrief27.pdf>

and in situations related to international migration. The New York Declaration states, inter alia, that “the implementation of all relevant provisions of the 2030 Agenda will promote the enhancement of the positive contribution of migrants to sustainable development” while addressing at the same time “a large number of root causes of forced displacement, by helping to create more favourable conditions in the countries of origin”.

UNESCO strives to address migration in its structural, dynamic and human dimensions in order to better analyse its social causes and consequences, paying particular attention to the perspectives of the most vulnerable groups. Actions to tackle these challenges should focus on an integrated approach involving a wide range of stakeholders, including governments at national and local levels, intergovernmental institutions such as the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, civil research institutions, the media and the private sector.

The ninth International Forum of NGOs

In accordance with the aforementioned Directives, the Forum is organized by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat and with the active participation of UNESCO's partner organizations. The Forum is designed in priority for NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO, while remaining open to the participation of other NGOs and institutions, as well as representatives of Member States.

Organized in the framework of the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this Forum will seek to identify concrete examples of good practices and grassroots prospects in the areas of protection, reception and inclusion of migrants and refugees in conditions that are respectful of their dignity. It also aims to analyse and propose global guidelines on the management of social transformations in the societies of the countries of origin, as well as the countries of transit and destination. This must be thought from a perspective of respect for fundamental human rights and the wishes of the people involved. With this in mind, every effort must be made to ensure that the right of people to live in their homeland is respected, as well as their right to come and go, especially for those in a situation of great vulnerability.

The Forum would have two main focuses: to address major challenges in order to change attitudes, stories and representations to promote full respect of human rights for migrants and refugees; and define scenarios for resilience and direct action by facilitating the full inclusion and participation of migrants and refugees in host societies. It would allow to share field-based perspectives through the experience of NGOs, policy makers, experts and UNESCO.

The specific objectives are to:

- Promote exchanges, synergies and the sharing of good practices, particular at the field level, for the protection, reception and inclusion of migrants;
- Reflecting on preventing the structural causes of migration by strengthening social cohesion, respect for human rights and economic development;
- Contribute to the theoretical debates in order to change views on global migration with a view to combating xenophobia, intolerance and exclusion;
- Consider in the long term the means of resilience necessary for everyone to become local and global citizens;
- Examine the role of UNESCO and NGOs in this area, in order to create a common vision to better address this phenomenon;
- Develop pilot projects and a guide of good practices.

Several potential topics of discussion have been identified for this Forum, including:

A) Art and culture for raising awareness on the situation of migrants: Creativity in the service of social cohesion and inclusion

Engaged artistic creation and cultural action in favour of migrants and refugees can make people feel, understand and share a humanist vision of the phenomenon, to a degree often going beyond words. Perhaps because artistic work is profoundly human and precisely appeals to humanity in all of us, artists are particularly well placed to raise awareness and change perceptions on migrants. Cultural activities also promote the contribution of migrants in their host societies. Cultural diversity is thus valued in an approach that promotes inclusion and social cohesion. This approach is part of the desire to recognize and promote the work of artists and cultural, educational and other initiatives carried out in particular within the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), for which UNESCO is the leading agency.

B) Media and information management: inform the greatest number of people and raise public awareness

In a context of increasing discourse of hatred, rejection and exclusion over migrants, it is imperative to define new models to inform effectively, to deconstruct stereotypes, especially those based on gender, and to raise public awareness. Journalists play a key role in this process, both to disseminate truthful and nuanced information, and to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudices that some media all too often convey. The role of young women and men as information actors and the use of ICT in information dissemination will also be at the heart of the discussions.

C) Education and training of migrants

Discussing migrants' education and training will raise awareness of the absolute need to provide education in emergencies at the same level of priority as other humanitarian interventions. Indeed, reality urges us to act: today, education represents only 2% of emergency humanitarian aid. The number of international migrants currently amounts to about 232 million globally. There are more than 60 million displaced people (refugees and internally displaced) in the world, of which 1 out of 2 refugees is a minor and 75% of those that are in age to be in school are unable to do so. In line with SDG 4 ("*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*"), several issues will be addressed: initiatives in child education (girls and boys), language learning, recognition of foreign diplomas/certificates, as well as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Global citizenship education, in which UNESCO strives to foster a sense of solidarity with others, by sharing the richness of diversity as a force for renewal, will also be addressed.

D) The central role of cities in the reception, protection and inclusion of migrants

Urbanization and migration are inter-linked processes in an increasingly urban and globalized world. The arrival of migrants in urban areas has transformative effects on cities and society. In combination with appropriate reception and inclusion policies, this arrival can have a positive impact on local development. In 2008, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population lived in urban areas. By 2030, this proportion should reach 60% and represent approximately 4.9 billion people. SDG 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on Member States to "Ensure that cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Municipal authorities and local governments are facing significant challenges because of the dramatic increase in the number of refugees and migrants as well as key issues relating to their social inclusion. In fact, cities are at the forefront of welcoming and including migrants and refugees, as well as protecting their rights. They are also the place where cultures

meet, where intercultural dialogue takes place and where tolerance and solidarity have to become a driving force for living together. This will be the occasion also to consider good practices, such as those from the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities - ICCAR.⁴

E) Achieving a global compact for safe, regular and orderly migration

The New York Declaration clearly reaffirms the “respect for fundamental rights” of migrants and refugees as expressed by world leaders in their desire to take decisive action in support of migrants and refugees. To this end, Member States pledged to draft and to approve, before the end of 2018, two Global Compacts on refugees and migrants. The “Global Compacts” are a unique opportunity to improve the governance of migration, address challenges associated with migration, and to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development. We will therefore endeavour to initiate ways to strengthen the contribution of NGOs and UNESCO in the process and in its possible implementation strategies.

Programme of the Forum

The Forum will be held during two days. It will begin with an opening ceremony followed by introductory lectures on the state of migration in the world. Panel 1 under the theme "Migrants as Actors of Development" will also be held during the morning, of the first day. The afternoon will be devoted to the work of Panel 2 on Education and Resilience. Panel 3 entitled "Media and Information Management on Migration" will be held in the morning of the second day. All panels will end with focus group sessions. The conclusions will be returned the afternoon of the second day before the closure of the works. Details on the programme will be available soon.

Panel 1. Migrants as Actors of Development

This panel will seek to determine the positive and negative impacts of capital and knowledge transfer due to migrants. It will also reflect on how to take advantage of this transfer in order to develop efficient and sustainable strategies for co-development by exchanging best practices. It will also explore the implementation of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the social inclusion of migrants. Inclusion by school and work life will be discussed whilst taking into consideration trauma and the person's ability to bounce back. It is a question of encouraging an approach aiming to promote the re-appropriation by migrants of their history and culture, while helping them mobilize their personal, intellectual, relational, practical and artistic resources.

Panel 2. Education and Resilience

This panel will place particular emphasis on the potential of resilience in education, learning, civic life, as well as social and economic inclusion. The panel will highlight the need to take into account the migrants’ culture, motivations and knowledge. We are going to be looking not only at the legislation on the rights of migrant workers but also at the rights of the child, in particular the situation of minor migrants and their protection. We will talk about global citizenship education, universal solidarity, cultural diversity as positive factors. The session will emphasize the important role of formal and informal education and their joint participation in the acceptance, protection and inclusion of migrants.

⁴ <http://www.unesco.org/new/fr/social-and-human-sciences/themes/fight-against-discrimination/coalition-of-cities/>.

Panel 3. Media and information management on migration

There is currently a rise in anti-immigration movements, reinforced by hate speech, rejection and exclusion against migrants. In this context, it is therefore important to reflect on information models, and to think about deconstructing stereotypes, especially those based on gender, in order to raise awareness against these phenomena. The media are privileged actors in this process of deconstructing stereotypes and promoting a positive attitude towards migrants. To be well informed, they must nevertheless enjoy their full freedom of expression.