

BACKGROUND NOTE 2:

MAKING MIGRATION WORK FOR ALL

MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF
MIGRATION FOR ALL

Why does “Making Migration Work for All” say that “the basic challenge before us is to maximize the benefits of migration, rather than obsess about minimizing risks”?

Public debates about the downsides of migration have obscured its astonishing contributions to economic growth, sustainable development and improvements in the lives of millions of people.

Migrants represent 4.4% of the global workforce. But the McKinsey Global Institute estimates that migrant workers in higher-productivity settings contributed \$6.7 trillion – or 9.4% -- to global GDP in 2015. This is \$3 trillion more than they would have produced in their countries of origin.

Migrants put 85% of their earnings back into host countries

through taxes and spending. Migrants typically do not take jobs that local workforces would otherwise fill. Instead, by stimulating economic activity and demand for labour, they create more and higher-quality job openings for other workers.

Migration also promotes international development. Migrants send home large sums in remittances. In 2017, nearly \$600 billion was remitted internationally – three times all development assistance – although extremely high transfer costs often penalize senders, especially among poorer migrants.

The benefits of migration for countries of origin go beyond financial transfers. Migrants offer skills, knowledge and entrepreneurship to their home societies, and promote trade and investment.

Well-managed migration can also bridge cultural divides and break down stereotypes – including gender stereotypes – in both host countries and countries of origin.



Global Compact
FOR Migration

Governments have the potential to maximize the benefits of migration by reforming the laws, rules and practices – and burdens like visa fees – that limit their contributions, and by strengthening policies that ensure decent work for national and migrant workers alike.

Are the benefits of migration shared equally by men and women?

49% of migrants are women. 67% of female migrants work (compared to 51% of women worldwide) and they send home a higher percentage of their earnings as remittances than men. Meanwhile, many are in low-paid posts, such as care-giving, experience wage and other forms of discrimination and have little job security.

Does migration create economic and social problems?

While the impacts of migration are generally positive, large inflows of migrants can have short-term destabilizing effects on local labour markets if they are not properly regulated. When large numbers of skilled migrants leave a country for work elsewhere, it can be difficult to fill resulting labour gaps.

The long-term benefits of migration outweigh these challenges over time. But misunderstandings about its effects can fuel social tensions and extremely negative political narratives about migrants.

These negative narratives are often based on false assumptions: Migrants are frequently presented as security threats,

but they are statistically less likely to be involved in crime than local populations.

Are migrants fulfilling their potential worldwide?

Many migrants face major social and economic barriers. They cannot fulfil their potential because of restrictive or ineffectual labour policies, laws and employment customs – and in some cases infringements on their fundamental human rights – that stop them from fully contributing to society.

Migrants in low-skilled jobs in particular can face appalling work conditions. There are nearly 6 million migrants in forced labour, accounting for nearly a quarter of those trapped in forced labour globally, often in developed countries.

Other migrants are forced to pay exorbitant recruitment fees and visa costs in order to work, forcing them into debt bondage and conditions amounting to modern slavery. Many are excluded from social security programmes and protection schemes in both their host countries and countries of origin, or cannot bring with them the entitlements they accrue while working abroad when they return home.

How can we maximize the benefits of migration for all?

Governments have the potential to maximize the benefits of migration by reforming the laws, rules and practices – and burdens like visa fees – that limit their contributions, and by strengthening policies that ensure decent work for national and migrant workers alike.

At the international level, governments can also take steps to develop skills partnerships (agreements to train individuals in one country to fill specific labour gaps in another), make social security benefits easily portable across borders and reduce the transfer costs of international remittances.

At all times, political leaders should be sensitive to the concerns of their own societies over migration, challenge myths about the impact of migrants, and clarify that policies to expand economic and social opportunities for migrants will ultimately contribute to the prosperity and security of all.