



GMPA

Global Migration Policy Associates

*An international research, policy development,
advisory services and advocacy group*

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Remarks

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Global Migration Policy Associates (GMPA), a member of the Global Coalition on Migration and the Women in Migration Network. We are an international organization of experts fostering a consultative, research and rights-based approach to international migration governance. We concur with the general message of the Issue Brief prepared for the Fourth Thematic Session on the positive contributions of migrants to all dimensions of sustainable development. In particular, we share the authors' concern that heightened security measures have increased costs in an effort to restrict migration. These costs are not only economic; they also undermine human security and social cohesion wherever migrants live and work.

Migrants are integral members of complex communities: filling labor market gaps, supporting families, and participating in local economies, even when they lack government authorization. For this reason, deterrence frameworks are counterproductive, even antithetical to an approach which seeks to valorize the contributions of migrants to countries of both origin and destination. Numerous studies demonstrate that migrants – including those in irregular status - pay more in taxes than they receive in government benefits.¹ We consider regularization programs to be key for maximizing the positive impact of migration insofar as they encourage integration, prevent the destabilizing effects of family separation, and address the hazards facing those who live in fear of detection. Better laws, policies and practices can make significant inroads towards eliminating substandard pay and work conditions, sexual exploitation, police abuse and xenophobic violence.

Migrants enhance economic, social and demographic vitality as workers and through their transnational relationships. Social scientists have found that the thickening of ties between countries intensifies economic activity on both sides, reinforcing interpersonal networks that provide support and opportunities for problem-solving and innovation.² Such “social remittances” cannot be reduced to a

¹ See T Liebig and J Mo (2013), “The Fiscal Impact of Immigration in OECD Countries”, *International Migration Outlook 2013*, Paris: OECD; Lisa Christensen Gee, Matthew Gardner and Meg Wiehe (2016), *Undocumented Immigrants' State & Local Tax Contributions*. Washington, DC: Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy; Christian Dustmann and Tommaso Frattini (2014), and “The Fiscal Effects of Immigration to the UK,” *The Economic Journal* 124: F593-F643; Yoshitaka Ishikawa, ed. (2015), *International Migrants in Japan: Contributions in an Era of Population Decline*, Kyoto University Press.

² See Jeffrey H. Cohen (2011), “Migration, Remittances, and Household Strategies,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40: 103-114; Samson Adesola Adesote (2017), “A Comparative Study of the African Diasporas' Contribution to the Development of and Their Integration in the US and the UK,” *IUP Journal of International Relations* 11(2): 24-35;

cost and benefit equation predicated on predetermined assessments of human capital. Policy research suggests that low and medium-skilled migrants are as valuable as highly-trained professionals to quickly changing labor markets.³ In addition, family-based migration promotes personal investment in employment outcomes and flexibility in acquiring new skills.⁴

On the contrary, temporary worker programs may institutionalize exploitative labor relations by cultivating a workforce with precarious legal and employment status, without access to fundamental rights.⁵ While circular mobility patterns may be beneficial, they may also fracture family relationships, with a particularly negative effect on women and girls, both as migrants and as family members “left behind”. The productivity of migrant communities is contingent on nondiscriminatory access to the full array of social and labor protections, including healthcare and safety net services. The portability of social security entitlements is a key factor for the inclusion of migrant workers into the formal labor market, as well as the possibility of voluntary and viable return.

It has been well-established that migrant remittances have become critical to the sustenance of families and communities in countries of origin.⁶ Yet it is rarely noted that migrants make their greatest contributions to host countries, where they spend, invest or save at least 80% of their earnings. In addition, education and training represents a significant transfer of value from poorer to wealthier economies. Policymakers should not rely on migrants as a primary impetus for wealth creation and investment. Remittances are personal income flows which may have the potential to elevate individuals, even entire networks, out of poverty. However, they are not adequate to create the widespread opportunities for employment and upward mobility that are necessary to reduce emigration pressures among young people and professionals throughout the world. Such outcomes require global commitments on the scale envisioned in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

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Anastasia N. Panagakos and Heather A. Horst (2006), “Return to Cyberia: Technology and the Social Worlds of Transnational Migrants,” *Global Networks* 6(2): 109-124.

³ See Gaetano Basso and Giovanni Peri (2015) *The association between immigration and labor market outcomes in the United States*, IZA Discussion Paper No. 9436, Bonn, DE: Institute for the Study of Labor; and Uri Dadush (2014), “The Effect of Low-Skilled Labor Migration on the Host Economy,” KNOMAD Working Paper No. 1, Washington, DC: World Bank.

⁴ See Kerry Abrams (2011), “What Makes the Family Special?” *University of Chicago Law Review* 80(1): 7-28; David L. Sam (2014), “Immigrant Families in a Global Context: Challenges and Future Directions,” in R Dimitrova et al., eds, *Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families*. New York: Springer, pp. 311-320.

⁵ See Shauna Olney and Ryszard Cholewinski (2014), “Migrant Workers and the Right to Non-discrimination and Equality,” in C Costello and M Freedland, eds., *Migrants at Work: Immigration and Vulnerability in Labour Law*. Cambridge, UK: Oxford University Press.

⁶ See Mark Boyle and Rob Kitchin (2013) “Diaspora and development: In search of a new generation of diaspora strategies,” in Y Kuznetsov (ed), *How Can Talent Abroad Induce Development at Home?* Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute, pp. 315-346; and Piyasiri Wickramasekara (2015), *Mainstreaming Migration in Development Agendas: Assessment of South Asian Countries*, Working Paper in Trade and Development No. 2, Australian National University.