

Statement for the Fourth Informal Thematic Session towards the UN global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration: 'Contributions of migrants and diaspora to all dimensions of sustainable development, including remittances and portability of earned benefits'

Student migration and negative remittances

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak, moderator, and thanks to all the panelists and earlier speakers for their excellent interventions.

Over the last couple of days a number of countries have talked about youth mobility and development. 'Brain drain' has also been mentioned a number of times.

Of course, student migrants are an important group who sit at the confluence between these topics but they are not fully recognized in the issues brief.

Students are a small but growing part of the migrant population. In 2014, there were nearly 5 million internationally mobile students and they now constitute about 2% of the migrant stream. The top two sending countries are China and India; and some of the top receiving countries are US, UK, and Australia. Often international students are overlooked in the migration discussion as they are seen as temporary.

So this contribution wants to highlight 2 things - why they should be included and how.

Why? They contribute in 3 ways:

1. Enable knowledge development. For instance, since 1901, 20% of all Nobel laureates globally undertook their higher education (in part or full) outside of their home country.
2. Transfer of resources: International students bring in considerable income into the receiving countries through direct costs such as tuition, food and accommodation; and indirect costs such as visits from family, other leisure expenses etc. In most countries revenue generated through international students is considered to be export services revenue within GDP calculations. But fees are also a key modality for negative remittance. The majority of international students are self-funded. In United States, nearly 70% of international students rely primarily on self or family funds to pay for their studies.
3. *Skills utilisation*: Students have limited rights to work due to their migrant status. These policies prevent international students, who have made significant financial contribution to the economy, from earning benefits

This leads to four recommendations for considering student migration as part of the 2030 agenda with particular emphasis on SDG 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education) and SDG 10 (reducing inequalities).

1. Inclusion of international students as a key migrant group in the formulation and implementation of the global compact on migration.
2. Inclusion of negative remittances in international debates on remittances and to make efforts to minimize them.
3. To facilitate widening access to global higher education resources through safe migration strategies with lower cost visas.
4. Work internally to ensure that State systems protect migrants' rights, and enable international students to utilize their skills to contribute to global economic and knowledge development.

Thank you.
