

## **24th Session of the Standing Committee on Programmes and Finance: Update on “Youth and Migration” (Agenda Item 18)**

**Date:** Thursday, June 20, 2019

**Speaker:** Jill Helke, Director, Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships (ICP), International Organization for Migration

**Location:** Geneva

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

We have put this topic on the agenda in order to brief you on the work we have been doing on “youth and migration” issues, and to highlight the relevance and importance of this cross-cutting thematic area for the Organization.

- First, I will present a snapshot of youth migration worldwide and why the focus on young migrants is important.
- Second, I will give some examples of the work we do with and for youth worldwide.
- Third, I will talk about our engagement with UN system-wide initiatives and the UN Youth Strategy.

### **(I) Snapshot of youth migration worldwide**

Today, the world is home to the largest generation of youth in history with approximately 1.2 billion young people between the ages of 15 and 24. Approximately 11% of the estimated 258 million international migrants are between 15- 24 years of age<sup>1</sup>.

High unemployment rates, increased susceptibility to poverty and a lack of work are among the main drivers among young people. Others include: seeking higher education or better-quality employment opportunities abroad, reuniting with family members, or escaping from regions affected by violence, war, persecution, humanitarian crises, natural disasters or climate change. For young women specifically, gender-based discrimination, including gender-based violence or restrictions on women’s rights, is often a reason for migration.

Focusing on youth and addressing their needs through evidence-based policymaking and good migration governance is one of the key priorities of the Organization. Youth development and youth engagement are among the core cross-cutting issues in many of the recently adopted internationally agreed frameworks. Security Council Resolutions 2250 and 2419 also acknowledge that young people play an important and positive role in the realization of sustainable development, in the prevention of crises and in the advancement of peace.

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<sup>1</sup> UN DESA figures and definition (as of latest figures available for 2017). UN SG’s Envoy of Youth has proposed a UN Youth Strategy which uses 10-24 age range for youth and quotes a global youth population of 1.8 billion.

Young people are far from being mere beneficiaries of migration and development policies. They are or should be active architects in policy development, planning and implementation processes at all levels. Effective migration governance and management can help set youth on a path towards realizing their full potential and developing economic and social assets for their future, benefiting countries and communities of origin and destination. By contrast, ineffective migration management can have particularly dire and traumatizing consequences for the overall social, economic and cultural wellbeing of young people.

## **(II) IOM programmes and projects with and for youth across the globe**

IOM has been working with migrants and with issues that affect young people since its inception, in fulfilling the purposes set out in the Constitution, including:

- Assisting in meeting growing operational challenges of migration management;
- Advancing understanding of migration issues;
- Encouraging social and economic development through migration; and
- Upholding the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

While migration can provide young people with opportunities, IOM recognizes that there are specific challenges associated with being both youth and on the move. As a result, IOM recognizes the role of youth as key partners in creating responsive age-sensitive migration policy and governance at all levels. Thus, we see youth engagement in global policy platforms as vital. For example, in December 2018, IOM, as an official partner with UNICEF, promoted youth engagement during the Migration Week discussions in Marrakesh by supporting the Youth Forum, organized by the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth.

IOM is promoting the engagement of youth in its annual events, such as the International Dialogue on Migration. This year the IDM is focusing on youth and migration and aims to amplify youth voices, gather knowledge and expertise, facilitate evidence-based global awareness on youth migration, and encourage collaboration between youth and relevant actors in migration and related areas. The first session of the IDM 2019 was held in New York on 28 February with the theme, “Youth and migration: Engaging youth as key partners in migration governance”. The second session will be in Geneva on 15 and 16 October with the title “Unlocking the potential of youth in the context of the new challenges and opportunities of migration”. The outcomes of both workshops will support the implementation of IOM’s Youth Action Plan and the UN’s efforts to engage youth and promote their inclusion in global migration debates.

In terms of programmes and projects, IOM has established its own internal network of youth focal points to further enhance youth-focused programming and engagement with youth across all sectors of its work. Here are some thematic examples.

### **1. Employment, skills training and combating discrimination**

IOM supports the creation of decent work and productive employment opportunities for youth as an alternative to migration, in countries of origin, transit and destination; and for



returning young people as part of promoting the sustainability of return and broader community development and stabilization.

IOM enhances youth employability through support in policy coherence, bi- and multilateral cooperation on labour migration, promotion of skills partnerships and development, vocational training, and development of entrepreneurship. We also focus on mitigation of unemployment among youth, including through improving socio-economic and cultural integration of young migrants and combating xenophobia and discrimination.

One example is the project TandEM – Towards Empowered Migrant Youth in Southern Europe, funded by the European Union, which aims to build a bridge between migrant and local youth to promote dialogue, mutual understanding and cohesion in Spain, Italy, Malta, Greece, Croatia and Cyprus. Another example is IOM’s work on Youth, Employment and Migration in West and Central Africa where the Organization supports the governments to address the challenges of youth unemployment and to ensure that migration can bring about positive results in both origin and destination communities.

## **2. Health and wellbeing**

IOM promotes access to health services by young migrants at all stages of migration, and is increasing participation of youth migrants in health services. IOM also promotes research on migration health-related topics pertinent for youth and migration issues, including the impact of migration on the health of children left behind. IOM also promote programmes for mainstreaming health and sexual gender-based violence for youth migrants in humanitarian emergencies. For example, since 2016, IOM, Save the Children Netherlands and the University of the Witwatersrand School of Public Health have gathered a consortium called the "Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV Knows No Borders", to implement a project to improve sexual and reproductive health and HIV amongst migrants, young people, sex workers, as well as host communities in six countries in the southern Africa region: Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Eswatini and Zambia.

## **3. Addressing the inequalities faced by marginalized youth**

Youth in conflict and fragile contexts can be exposed to a range of vulnerabilities, which can result in heightened risk of exploitation, human-trafficking, radicalization, recruitment, and involvement in criminal activities. IOM works across a variety of settings and with both migrant and host communities to counter and mitigate these risks. IOM currently has 29 projects in 21 countries with youth as direct beneficiaries, amounting to a total budget of USD 41 million. Within our Prevention of Violent Extremism portfolio, the focus of youth projects is on increasing youth resilience to recruitment and radicalization, such as in Kosovo, Bosnia and Mauritania. Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration projects systematically include a youth component, and IOM is trying to devise new and innovative means tailored to the specific need of the youth, and to include youth in the planning and implementation of such activities. In the framework of Disaster Risk Reduction, IOM’s activities include capacity-building and awareness raising with youth,



for example through IOM's Climate Adaptation, DRR and Education Programme in Micronesia.

#### **4. Protection of young migrants**

IOM supports member states in the development of national child protection and youth empowerment strategies and action plans and, in particular, mainstreaming migration and migrant children and youth in these plans. IOM is a member of the child protection area of responsibility under the global protection cluster, Strategic Advisory Group as well as of the Steering Committee of the Alliance for child protection in humanitarian action that produces inter-agency guidelines widely used as reference standards, such as the Child Protection Minimum Standards. In 2018 alone, IOM has trained and sensitized a total of 75 partners, consulate authorities and community leaders on Child Rights, Child Protection and Best Interests of the Child Procedure, e.g. in Mauritania, Libya and Tunisia. In addition to conducting joint trainings with UNHCR and UNICEF, in 2018 we have focused on strengthening our collaboration in the area of child protection through discussions on strategic issues and data, and by formulating joint Standard Operating Procedures, joint referrals, counselling and assessment forms.

IOM also works to address the vulnerability of young people to violence, exploitation, and abuse, including human trafficking. Trafficking affects boys, girls, men, and women but in different ways. IOM sees trafficking as an inherently gendered phenomenon. While women and girls are represented in all forms of exploitation, they are disproportionately affected by trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. IOM also sees gender as inherent in shaping both the vulnerabilities of women and girls to trafficking, and as a key factor in their recovery. IOM ensures that both adolescent girls and boys can safely access life-saving and recovery services through innovative approaches and partnerships, and by empowering and equipping them with the necessary skills to raise their voices.

#### **5. Communication**

IOM, in partnership with other agencies, organizes media and cultural events promoting youth and migration, to combat xenophobia and dispels myths about migration. For example, IOM is a co-organizer of the PLURAL+ initiative, in partnership with UN Alliance Of Civilizations. This is a festival and competition for which young people produce videos exploring the themes of migration, diversity and social inclusion. IOM also organizes the Global Migration Film Festival, in partnership with Member States and other stakeholders, featuring films and documentaries highlighting the promise and challenges of migration, and the unique contributions that migrants including young migrants make to their communities.



### **(III) Engagement with UN system-wide initiatives**

IOM is already engaged with several UN activities and networks on youth, such as the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, and we chair the inter-agency task force on unaccompanied and separated children. In the past year, IOM has closely collaborated with the Office of the UN Secretary General's Youth Envoy including in support of the SG's Youth Strategy. We have provided our initial action plan focusing on the five priority areas of the Strategy and our Deputy Director General is now a member of the High-Level Steering Committee, created to provide strategic guidance to the implementation of the UN youth strategy.

In conclusion, we are committed to ensuring that young people are key partners in global migration governance. We will continue to work closely with the Member States, the UN Secretary General, the UN Youth Envoy, youth organizations and other stakeholders to engage and partner with youth, with the objective of promoting youth development through good migration governance.