



International Dialogue on Migration 2015

Conference on Migrants and Cities

26 and 27 October 2015

Palais des Nations, Geneva

Summary of conclusions

The Conference on Migrants and Cities was held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 26 and 27 October 2015 within the framework of IOM's annual International Dialogue on Migration (IDM).

The Conference was IOM's second global meeting following the milestone Diaspora Ministerial Conference in 2013. It gathered approximately 600 participants including mayors, representatives from local authorities, ministers and high-level government officials, as well as delegates from international organizations, NGOs, academia, the private sector, media and also migrants to discuss the link between migration and cities and the key role of local authorities in migration policymaking.

The Conference was opened by the IOM Director General and featured keynote addresses by the Mayor of Geneva, by the Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, and by the Director, Strategy and General Affairs, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission. In keeping with the practice of providing a forum for migrants, the "Migrant's Voice" session presented the testimonies of two young migrants.

The Conference was also the venue of the launch of the *World Migration Report 2015: Migrants and Cities: New Partnerships to Manage Mobility*, and of two side events. The first side event introduced the IOM/JMDI *White Paper on Mainstreaming Migration into Local Development Planning*; the second one launched IOM's global campaign *I am a migrant* and presented a documentary illustrating stories of migrant children on the move in cities.

The Conference discussions were divided into six sessions, each with one or two panels, and led by 64 speakers, representing a balanced mix of policymakers, experts in the areas of migration, urbanization and development, academics, private sector and civil society. The composition of the panels ensured a good geographical and gender balance with speakers, of whom 21 were women, representing almost all regions worldwide.

This document summarizes the main conclusions and outcomes of the discussions over the two days.

The nexus between growing urbanization and human mobility is evident:

1. Driven by internal and international migration, the world's population is and will continue to become increasingly urban throughout this century. Local authorities will need to be prepared to face the ensuing challenges.

- Almost all the growth in the world's population over the next few decades is expected to take place in urban centres. It is at the local level that the effects of this movement will be felt most; consequently, local authorities will need to play a central role in the policymaking process.
- Local leaders agreed that cities are at the center of migration challenges and thus they should be front runners in the planning and provision of policies on migration and urbanization. Mayors have valuable practical knowledge and experience that can be fed into the policymaking cycle to enhance the efficacy of national policies.

2. Increasing urbanization presents both opportunities and challenges for human mobility management. The extent to which the potential benefits of this movement are realised and the potential negative effects mitigated depends on the response measures put in place at the local level.

- Mayors concurred that migrants contribute to the image of cities and help drive prosperity within cities. Migration connects cities and transnational communities creating unique social and economic opportunities. With comprehensive urban planning and sound integration policies, the 'triple win' scenario of benefits for the migrant, the country of destination and the country of origin can be realised.
- Local representatives emphasized that the challenges of urbanization amongst others will include the effective integration of migrants and the development of adequate infrastructure and services. They agreed that the inclusion of migrants and their needs increases the efficiency of urban planning.
- As the majority of urban growth will occur in developing and least developed countries, infrastructure and urban design will need as a priority to feature in the development agenda to ensure that emerging global cities have the adequate infrastructure to respond to population growth.
- Representatives indicated that significant population flows to cities, triggered by conflicts, disasters and other shocks can seriously challenge local authorities' management capacities to provide migrants with adequate access to services such as health, housing and education. Host cities can in their turn be affected by natural or man-made disasters. Migrants who find themselves in situations of crisis are often more vulnerable than the native population. Cities must have mechanisms in place to address these specific vulnerabilities.
- Local representatives and partners acknowledged that migration is a determinant of health. In particular, urban health risks (for instance poor living and working conditions) affect poorest migrants disproportionately. Ensuring access to migrant-sensitive health services is essential for a positive outcome for migrants and for their contribution to social and economic development.

- In order to make their cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11), local authorities need to strengthen their capacity to prevent, prepare for, manage and recover from urban crises while building on the capacity of migrants and diasporas to contribute to risk reduction and resilience building.
- The negative impacts of urbanization on rural areas should not be overlooked both as an area of challenge and opportunity; the shrinking of the rural population can have a significant social and economic impact on the those left behind, particularly as it is often those with the greatest needs – such as the young and elderly – who remain.
- Rural areas can be positively affected by smart, responsive planning that promotes economic diversification and competitiveness and ensures sufficient levels of investment to meet the needs of those who stay behind.

Challenges for policymakers and national actors:

3. Policy responses to increasing human mobility in cities should be adapted to accommodate, not to control it.

- Participants explained that policies that aim to restrict population movements to cities have often proved to be ineffective and with a negative economic impact. In creating policies for accommodation, national and local policymakers can contribute to SDG 11, “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.
- Satellite cities and large cities can play a role in absorbing newcomers, allowing the benefits of migration and urbanization to be felt across the whole country and distributing the accompanying economic advantages.

4. The majority of urban population growth is expected to take place in developing countries where adequate infrastructure will need to be significantly developed if it is to meet the increased demand for services and to realise the full benefits of human mobility.

- Unplanned or inadequately managed urbanization can lead to increased inequality and inequity particularly if newcomers struggle to gain sufficient access to services; planning for the social, economic and political integration of newcomers can ensure that the benefits of urbanization for the individual and for society are reached.
- The quality of infrastructure in cities can aid or hinder productivity. Building infrastructure to ensure that a city’s amenities, such as health and social services, are accessible to all residents without discrimination will effectively support the social and economic activities of the city’s newest residents.
- The accessibility of space by all and opening up of ‘commons’ could be a smart way to utilise space in cities that experience challenging levels of population density. Technical solutions should be utilised in cities to improve functionality of infrastructure and ensure urban

population growth occurs in a sustainable way without detriment to the environment and the quality of life of city dwellers.

5. The integration of migrants – planned in collaboration by central and local authorities – needs to feature in all aspects of public policy. In a world of increasing human mobility, the integration of migrants is a key variable in achieving SDG 10, “Reduce inequality within and among countries”.

- The extent to which migrants are integrated in policy planning will determine how well human mobility can positively affect cities.
- Urbanization and migration reinforce each-other; migration increases urbanization and urbanization in turn facilitates migration. As such, urbanization and migration policies should not be distinct from each other. Speakers highlighted that currently there is a policy vacuum on migration in urbanization policies.
- Migrants are absorbed into society at the local level and the integration outcomes of migrants are dependent on the conditions of the locality. As such, migration policy disseminated from central authorities should consider the needs and capacities of local authorities.
- Mayors and local authorities have a crucial role in the elaboration and implementation of inclusive policies which facilitate the integration of migrants in the local areas of residence while contributing to the development of their countries and communities of origin. City leaders need to better know who the migrants are and their needs, where they are settling and how they are organized in order to inform their discourse on integration and promote inclusive local policies.
- As a multi-dimensional policy area, ministries outside of the designated migration authorities should be involved in designing and implementing policies that affect migrants and migration itself. Accordingly, the governance of urbanization and migration should adopt a whole-of-government approach which brings a range of ministries and local authorities into the migration governance process.

Challenges and opportunities for international actors and stakeholders:

6. Good governance of human mobility in urban context requires partnerships between local and central authorities’ and all relevant actors including the private sector. Local and central authority partnerships ensure that national policy aligns with the needs and capacities of local authorities at the heart of implementation.

- Meaningful dialogue at all levels of government on the way urbanization and migration is planned for, managed and governed is paramount. Good urban migration governance requires collaboration between local and central authorities to allow for coherent policy responses which can maximize the positive outcomes of migration and human mobility.
- Local authorities have the advantage of being at the forefront of the daily services provided for the populations living in their area including migrants. Accordingly, they need to have the relevant political capacity that would allow them to enact efficient local management.

- Moreover, as major actors in cities and with first-hand experience with migrants, local authorities can contribute significantly to changing the narrative and improving the national public perception of migration.
- Cooperation between local authorities, such as city-to-city partnership or the formation of regional and global network of cities, promotes exchanges of practices and successful policies and supports local management capacity building.
- The implementation and delivery of services to migrants often involves a range of non-governmental actors particularly in instances where government actors are unable to provide services. Non-governmental actors including private sector entities are sometimes better placed to deliver services particularly to vulnerable migrants. The knowledge and information of non-governmental actors should be utilised and fed into the policy cycle.
- Migrants need to be integrated into local governance. Participants showed that migrants can support local authorities in efficiently managing migration and the challenges of inclusion and diversity it implies. Migrants and diaspora can act as bridge-builders and promoters of development and humanitarian support between cities of destination and of origin. They can contribute to reducing risks of urban crises and in building the resilience of cities in countries both destination and of origin.

Finally, delegates highlighted the role international organizations such as IOM have in assisting local authorities at the policy, research and operational levels and in fostering collaboration between local and national authorities, as well as with non-governmental actors. Local authorities and central government representatives present mentioned their appreciation to IOM for its support in improving migration management capacities. IOM is actively involved in various types of partnerships and programmes aiming at enabling migrants to achieve many of the targets set by the SGDs through encouraging, for example, partnerships between relevant parties in the management of migration.

This summary is not exhaustive. A fuller report of the proceedings will be available in due course.

The Conference has set a new framework for a global dialogue on migration involving all levels of migration governance and in which local authorities are the main interlocutors. The Conference thus affirmed the key role of local authorities in the global migration governance and provided them a voice in the global debate on migration.

The Conference represented also an important step in the promotion of cohesion and collaboration in migration governance including between the Organization and new local partners

The outcomes of the meeting will provide inputs to a series of processes, including the Mayoral Forum on Mobility, Migration and Development and the UN-Habitat III Conference.