

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION  
FOR MIGRATION IS COMMITTED TO  
THE PRINCIPLE THAT HUMANE No.24  
AND ORDERLY INTERNATIONAL  
MIGRATION DIALOGUE BENEFITS  
MIGRANTS AND ON MIGRATION  
SOCIETY IOM ASSISTS IN MEETING  
THE GROWING OPERATIONAL  
CHALLENGES OF MIGRATION  
MANAGEMENT ADVANCES  
UNDERSTANDING OF MIGRATION  
MIGRATION ISSUES AND FAMILIES  
ENCOURAGES SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MIGRATION  
UPHOLDS THE HUMAN DIGNITY AND  
WELL-BEING OF MIGRANTS



International Organization for Migration (IOM)



No. 24

**INTERNATIONAL  
DIALOGUE  
ON MIGRATION**

**MIGRATION  
AND FAMILIES**



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Opinions expressed in the chapters of this book by named contributors are those expressed by the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM.

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*The primary goal of IOM is to facilitate the orderly and humane management of international migration... To achieve that goal, IOM will focus on the following activities, acting at the request of or in agreement with Member States:...*

*7. To promote, facilitate and support regional and global debate and dialogue on migration, including through the International Dialogue on Migration, so as to advance understanding of the opportunities and challenges it presents, the identification and development of effective policies for addressing those challenges and to identify comprehensive approaches and measures for advancing international cooperation... (IOM Strategy, adopted by the IOM Council in 2007).*

IOM launched its International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) at the fiftieth anniversary session of the IOM Council in 2001, at the request of the Organization's membership. The purpose of the IDM, consistent with the mandate in IOM's constitution, is to provide a forum for Member States and Observers to identify and discuss major issues and challenges in the field of international migration, to contribute to a better understanding of migration and to strengthen cooperation on migration issues between governments and with other actors. The IDM also has a capacity-building function, enabling experts from different domains and regions to share policy approaches and effective practices in particular areas of interest and to develop networks for future action.

The IOM membership selects an annual theme to guide the IDM as well as the topics of the IDM workshops. The inclusive, informal and constructive format of the dialogue has helped to create a more open climate for migration policy debate and has served to build confidence among the various migration stakeholders. In combination with targeted research and policy analysis, the IDM has also contributed to a better understanding of topical and emerging migration issues and their linkages with other policy domains. It has also facilitated the exchange of policy options and approaches among policymakers and practitioners, with a view towards more effective and humane governance of international migration.

The International Dialogue on Migration Publication Series (or “Red Book Series”) is designed to capture and review the results of the events and research carried out within the framework of the IDM. The Red Book Series is prepared and coordinated by the IDM Unit of IOM’s Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships. More information on the IDM can be found at [www.iom.int/idm](http://www.iom.int/idm).

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This publication contains the report and supplementary materials of a workshop on “Migration and Families” which was held in Geneva, Switzerland on 7 and 8 October 2014. The workshop, which took place under the overarching theme of the 2014 IDM “Human Mobility and Development: Emerging Trends and New Opportunities for Partnerships”, was attended by 265 participants representing 88 governments, 31 international and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academics.

The publication opens with a Summary of the principal conclusions derived from discussions, which was presented to participants at the end of the two-day event, followed by a more detailed report of the deliberations and recommendations of the workshop. In addition, the publication contains the testimony of a young migrant as well as the agenda and background paper pertaining to the workshop.

The IDM “Migration and Families” was organized by the IDM Unit of IOM’s Department of International Cooperation and Partnerships (ICP), under the overall supervision of Ms Jill Helke, Director, ICP and coordination of Mr Azzouz Samri, Head of the Governing Bodies Division and IDM. Special thanks for the preparation of the background paper and the report contained in this publication are owed to Paula Benea and Giulia Ciccarese, the main authors, and to Susanne Klink, Barbara Rijks and Pindie Stephen (Department of Migration Management) and Antoinette Wills (ICP) for their inputs and support.

IOM would like to express its great appreciation to the Government of Australia and the Government of the United States of America for their financial contribution to the realization of this event as well as for their continued support to the IDM.

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# **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS**



## SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The workshop “Migration and families” was held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 7 and 8 October 2014 in the framework of IOM’s annual International Dialogue on Migration (IDM), which in 2014 was guided by the overarching theme of “Human mobility and development: Emerging trends and new opportunities for partnerships”, as selected by the IOM membership.

The workshop was the second in a series that examined human mobility trends and the implications for human development, as well as scenarios for future approaches to the constantly changing social, political and economic context. It focused on family migration and on the differential and challenging impact of migration on the family unit and its members.

The workshop was attended by approximately 260 registered participants from around the world including policymakers and practitioners specializing in immigration law, social and family affairs, health and development, as well as civil society and media representatives active in areas related to various dimensions of family migration.

The workshop featured a keynote address by H.E. Ana María Baiardi Quesnel, Minister of Women of the Republic of Paraguay, who highlighted the consequences of migration for children and called for more attention to the reality of female migrants and their key role in the family, as well as agents for development. In keeping with the practice of providing a forum for migrants themselves to be heard, the workshop featured a “Migrant’s Voice” session, in which testimonies of a young migrant and a representative of female migrants were presented.

The discussions were divided into five sessions and were led by 32 speakers, selected according to geographical and gender balance and representing countries from various regions and backgrounds.

This document summarizes the main conclusions and key ideas for action that stemmed from the discussion.

**1. Due to its magnitude and impact on human and economic development, family migration and its implications for the family unit and society require greater consideration from policy makers and researchers.**

- Participants recognized that human mobility affects and increasing number of families, their structure, life-style, well-being and cohesion. A proper assessment of multifaceted impacts and effects of migration on the family unit requires more studies and research, as well as a better understanding of the vital link between migration and families.
- Participants pointed out that migrants and their families contribute greatly to the development of destination and origin countries through their human, cultural and economic potential. Despite this evidence, research and policy debates tend to either focus on individual migrants rather than on the family as a unit, or approach family purely from an economic perspective. There was a call for increased attention and cooperation on family migration at the local, national and international level.
- Many participants agreed that given the considerable impact migration has on the families, it is clear that migration has to be a family decision.

## **2. Specific data on the migration of families and its impact on family members, their communities, and society overall is very limited.**

- Incidence of migration on people varies from impacts on the life of migrants themselves, non-migrant members of their families and people from their communities, and societies at large. An assessment of the wide range of effects and impacts of migration on families is jeopardized by limited data.
- Participants shed light on the multidimensionality and complexity of family migration and reiterated that there is a lack of statistics concerning family migration, in particular concerning those most vulnerable, such as women, unaccompanied children and the elderly left behind.
- On the larger scale, a comprehensive assessment of the impacts of family migration should go beyond focusing solely on the migrant or the person who moves to include others affected directly or indirectly by this mobility - particularly the children and women who remain behind.
- It was pointed out that available data on the impact of migration on family members tends to focus on the positive aspects and thus overshadows the many adverse and negative emotional, psychological and social impacts. An objective assessment of the situation requires a balanced approach that avoids prioritizing.

## **3. There are still many gaps and challenges in protecting migrants and their families.**

- While migration can have a positive impact on families, it may also put them in more vulnerable situations with risks of abuse, abandonment, and exposure to exploitation. Access to basic services including education and health care remains a challenge for migrant families and unaccompanied children, especially those with irregular status and cut off from support and protection services.

- The complex nature of family migration exacerbates the challenges of protecting these already vulnerability-prone groups. Providing a clear and holistic interpretation of the family migration phenomenon and a comprehensive data base is necessary to better address these protection challenges. Participants called for the implementation of appropriate strategies and programmes tailored to family migration's specific needs and circumstances.
- Information available indicates that unaccompanied or separated children are particularly at risk in places of immigration detention, and often unable to claim their fundamental human rights. Speakers underlined that detention has long-term mental and physical health implications for children and thus all possible efforts should be undertaken to end child immigration detention.
- Challenges linked to the protection of migrant families require particular attention and a better coordinated response from governments, international organizations and civil society. Appropriate policy responses need to take into account the multiple challenges of family migration and include the gender perspective as an essential component, since women and girls are most vulnerable and most likely to face all kinds of exploitation.

**4. Family reunification policies, when well managed and coordinated, contribute to strengthening orderly and regular migration and help to facilitate the integration of migrants into the societies where they are living while maximizing the positive impact of migration on these families and societies.**

- Family unity and the child's right to reunification with parents, non-discrimination, equality of treatment, and non-refoulement are essential human rights that ought to be respected during the implementation of migration policies.

More research on family migration is needed to analyse the impact of migration and the implications for the family unit. This will provide evidence for the development of migration laws and rights-based policies that address protection concerns of families and children.

- The workshop also provided the opportunity to take stock of the current legal frameworks concerning family reunification and migrants' rights. Participants emphasized that fulfilling migrants and their families' rights could be a complementary driver of development and, consequently, government policies should be guided by a rights-based and migrant-centred approach.

**5. Youth account for a large share of today's world population and international migration flows and hold great potential towards positive development. In the absence of appropriate policy responses, migration risks can reduce the potential of these youth and expose them to significant human rights violations.**

- The debate revolved around the fact that migration represents an important step towards achieving a sustainable life for youth and their families, providing young people with opportunities for human and economic development. However, the long term absence of parents, excessive burden of supporting their family, lack of schooling, unemployment, discrimination, marginalization, and risk of abuse and psychosocial problems risk outweighing the opportunities migration provides.
- Protection needs and vulnerabilities of youth are not dissimilar to those of children, yet youth more than 18 years old do not fall within the purview of some international treaties and are consequently exposed to a number of human rights violations. Legislation and policies addressing the rights, protection, support, and awareness of youth impacted

by migration could benefit youth well-being and support them towards becoming key actors in their communities and societies.

- Several participants showed that where youth are mainstreamed into national and development strategies, they integrate more easily into society and are more likely to contribute positively to their own human development and the economic development of their society.

**6. Adapted responses founded on concerted efforts between relevant States and non-State actors, based on better and more direct communication with affected families, are required to address the negative impact migration has on those family members remaining behind.**

- Public health experts confirmed that long term separation caused by the departure of family members can have negative developmental, emotional and health effects on family members who remain behind. A grass-root community approach is necessary to respond appropriately to the psychosocial needs of these family members.
- The increasing number of female migrants demands a new policy approach and greater consideration for the social and economic impact of this trend on female migrants and their families. In the case of female migration, the absence of the mother or wife can significantly alter men's traditional role within the family unit and society at large, with repercussions on the health and well-being of families and particularly on children who may feel abandoned.
- Participants stressed that while the role of the elderly in migration of families is increasing, very little is known about the real impact of migration on this group. A correct assessment of the needs of these family members who remain behind, often acting as the only means of support for young



family members separated from their migrant parents, could promote effective policies and tools to respond to the many associated risks. The well-being of the family members who are left behind is ultimately dependent on the health and well-being of the elderly.

- Many participants pointed out the absence of an adequate collaboration mechanism between countries -transnational cooperation between State and non-State actors is crucial in order to minimize the social costs and maximize the gains of family migration. There was a call for an advanced dialogue and cooperation on family migration issues at the local, national and international levels in order to promote coherent programmes and policies targeting families affected by migration.

Based on the deliberations summarized above, it was concluded that family migration, the severe challenges surrounding family migration, and development implications have been, on the whole, neglected for too long and thus deserve further attention and discussion.

While there are no “one-size-fits-all” responses to challenges related to migration of families, neglecting the high cost of migration for migrants and their families could offset the positive impact of migration. Understanding the realities of migration for families ultimately contributes to enhancing and improving the well-being of migrants and members of their families. This is an IOM objective, as illustrated by its latest flagship publication issue dedicated to the well-being of migrants and its information campaign aimed at improving the public perception of migrants.

IOM will continue to work with its partners, addressing this increasing and important trend of family migration and raise awareness of the significant implications of this trend for local, national and international development, especially within the context of the post-2015 development agenda discussions and including at the upcoming High-Level Conference on Migrants and Cities.

Geneva, 8 October 2014



# **WORKSHOP REPORT**



## INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the membership selected the theme “*Human Mobility and Development: Emerging Trends and New Opportunities for Partnerships*” to guide International Dialogue on Migration (IDM) workshops. With migrants representing 1 billion of the world’s population of 7 billion, this theme reflected the membership’s desire to explore the key features and the current trend of human mobility.

Two workshops were planned under this theme. The first workshop, “*South–South Migration: Partnering Strategically for Development*”, was held in Geneva on 24 and 25 March 2014 and aimed to deepen the understanding of the nature and dynamics of new migration trends, and to explore policies and management mechanisms available, particularly of South–South mobility.

The second intersessional workshop, “*Migration and Families*”, held in Geneva on 7 and 8 October 2014, shifted the focus from a geographic approach to a migrant-centred one and placed migrant families at the heart of the debate. The workshop examined the migrant family and the reality surrounding the phenomenon of family migration, aiming to increase the understanding of the differential and challenging impacts of migration on families and their members. Participants recognized that human mobility affects an increasing number of families, their structure, lifestyle, and ultimately their well-being. There was a general agreement during the workshop on the role of families as points of reference for the communities, as well as on their role in the complex picture of human mobility nowadays. Family migration is, in fact, estimated to be the main and largest channel of entry for migrants, accounting for almost 50 per cent of international migration flows in countries which

are members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It is against this background that family migration is increasingly being acknowledged as an important international trend that requires a global approach, increased attention and coordinated responses at the local, national and international levels. States, experts in the field and relevant organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), can play a crucial role in advancing the dialogue on this topic.

This report aims to offer an analytical summary of discussions and deliberations of the workshop. While the first part discusses the complexity of family migration trends and implications for the well-being of families, and assesses gaps in policymaking and research, the second part illustrates policy practices and, along with this, strategies for migration challenges management have emerged from discussions.

The workshop drew attention to the key aspects of family migration by presenting available data and shedding light on the challenges faced by migrant families, as well as by discussing key legal and policy frameworks concerning migrants and their families. It took stock of the contemporary family migration trends and their consequences for the family structure.

Participants exchanged views on the positive and negative costs and implications of migration for the family unit and society. Discussions touched upon the psychosocial and health impacts of migration on family members who remain behind, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable such as women, children and the elderly. The workshop also provided participants with the opportunity to look at family reunification policies and their implications for migrants and their families. Contributors shared their countries' experience and good practices in addressing the negative aspects of migration for family members. They presented their policies and cooperation and partnerships frameworks to maximize family migration benefits for sending and receiving countries and for migrant families themselves; moreover, they recommended practical solutions at the regional, national and international levels. The key role that international organizations,

civil society and non-governmental organizations play in family migration management echoed strongly during discussions.

The workshop also drew attention to the phenomenon of youth migration and the opportunities it implies for young people and their role as key agents of development. Participants also took a close look at policies and programmes that respond to specific needs of young migrants by supporting skill recognition and promoting employment and educational opportunities.

To sum up, participants considered the workshop to be a significant contribution to the debate on migration and family, as well as on the global efforts aiming at developing innovative policy and operational options to better address the challenges faced by family migrants.

The workshop was structured in a way that allowed a comprehensive discussion and analysis of various aspects of family migration. The following questions served to guide the workshop discussions:

- What is the current reality of the migration of families? Is the contribution of family migration to development correctly assessed?
- What are some of the social costs of migration? What are some of the psychosocial consequences of split families, especially on members left behind? What are the vulnerabilities specific to the migration of children?
- Do family reunification policies hinder or promote integration? What are some of the positive policy approaches and best practices relating to family reunification? What studies have been carried out to measure such implications and costs?
- What policies, programmes and practices exist to address migration challenges affecting families at home and abroad? Are contemporary policies and social services geared towards the new realities of family migration?

- What are the current dynamics of youth migration? Are contemporary policy strategies appropriately addressing the new realities and complexities of youth migration? How is youth migration mainstreamed into national development strategies?

While discussions at the workshop provided the opportunity to raise awareness of the significant human mobility trend of family migration, they urged the need to translate this awareness into concrete policies and actions at national, regional and international levels.



## **SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP**

The workshop “*Migration and Families*” was attended by approximately 260 registered participants from around the world, including policymakers and practitioners specializing in immigration law, social and family affairs, health and development, as well as civil society and media representatives active in areas related to various dimensions of family migration. The workshop offered an opportunity to policymakers and practitioners to exchange policies, experiences and lessons learned; and discuss best strategies to respond to the challenges that migrant families and their members face. The goal is to ensure protection of their rights and ultimately increase their well-being and their ability to contribute to socioeconomic development of their communities in destination and home countries.

The key objectives of the workshop were:

- To provide the IOM membership with the opportunity to better understand the complexity and multidimensionality of family migration;
- To bring together stakeholders from governments, international organizations, academia, civil society and the private sector to examine vulnerabilities and protection challenges faced by migrants, as well as the effects of migration on those who migrate and those who stay behind;
- To gain perspective on the current family migration trends so as to identify practical solutions and interventions that ensure protection to family migrants;

- To advance dialogue on family migration and recommend new tools and policies to tackle this multifaceted issue.

A background paper, provided to participants in advance of the workshop, outlined the main concepts, definitions, policy challenges and areas of focus of the workshop. A provisional agenda was also provided to participants before the workshop to present the themes, descriptions of sessions and speakers, and guiding questions. The main messages of the discussions were presented at the end of the two-day deliberations in the form of a summary. The background paper, final agenda and the summary are included in this report.

# **DELIBERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP**

The following statements capture the key ideas that emerged from the workshop discussions and will serve to structure this report<sup>1</sup>:

1. Due to its magnitude and impact on human and economic development, family migration and its implications for the family unit and society require greater consideration from policymakers and researchers.
2. Specific data is very limited on the migration of families and its impact on family members, their communities and society overall.
3. There are still many gaps and challenges in protecting migrants and their families.
4. Family reunification policies, when well managed and coordinated, contribute to strengthening orderly and regular migration, and help facilitate the integration of migrants into the societies where they are living while maximizing the positive impact of migration on these families and societies.

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<sup>1</sup> The report is based on the IDM workshop, but does not claim to offer an exhaustive summary of the discussions. Likewise, it aims to gather relevant examples and experiences presented at the workshop, but does not claim or attempt to evaluate their validity or effectiveness. IOM is not responsible for factual inaccuracies in the original presentations made at the workshop that may have been reproduced in this account. The information contained in this report dates from October 2014, although it is recognized that some ongoing situations may have evolved since then.

5. Adapted responses founded on concerted efforts between relevant states and non-state actors, based on better and more direct communication with affected families, are required to address the negative impact migration has on family members remaining behind.
6. Youth is a prominent feature of today's world population and international migration offers great potential for development. Policies concerning young migrants should promote access to employment and educational opportunities.

**1. Due to its magnitude and impact on human and economic development, family migration and its implications for the family unit and society require greater consideration from policymakers and researchers.**

The workshop discussions echoed strongly the crucial role family migration plays in our mobile world and its significant impact on the well-being of families and development of societies. Family migration represents an important component of migration at both international and national levels. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 90 per cent of recorded international migrants are labour migrants and their families. While there are not enough data that consider the effects of family migration, existing literature and information shared by practitioners do point to the great social, cultural and economic contributions that migrant families make to countries of origin and destination. However, the conditions in which migration takes place can generate inverse results on families and communities and, in the long term, limit its development impact. Participants emphasized the complexity of family migration trends and noted the alarming challenges and suffering many families are exposed to – human rights violations, including discrimination, abuse and violence; as well as great psychosocial distress caused by the separation from their loved ones. These conditions can severely undermine families' positive contributions to socioeconomic development. Family migration, its nature and implications for development have not received sufficient attention from

policymakers. Development policies cannot succeed in making family migration a positive experience for development if policymakers do not carefully consider the impact of migration on the family unit, its structure and well-being. The family unit is perceived as the fundamental element of our society and an important community-building agent. A proper assessment of the way human mobility affects the family unit requires more research on the vital link between migration and families.

**Acknowledging that human mobility affects an increasing number of families:** Driven by a series of socioeconomic, security and environmental factors, migration of families is predicted to increase in the coming decades involving especially significant numbers of youth and women. The manner in which migration takes place and the consequences it creates for the society are also becoming complex.

- In Italy, for instance, family migration is a significant feature of international migration inflows. In 2013, the number of families that included at least one foreign member was equal to approximately 2.1 million. 22.6 per cent of the families had both Italian and foreign members. Family migration trends are set to increase given the rise in foreign births, which in 2012 accounted for 15 per cent of the total number of children born of parents residing in Italy. Statistics also showed that foreign families were poorer, faced severe housing deprivation, and their members were more often victims of discrimination than were those of national families. The national financial and economic crisis exacerbated these challenges. Italy's Department of Equal Opportunities works to ensure that local policymaking targets vulnerable families, including immigrant ones, in an effort to improve their economic and social status. Moreover, these efforts are supported by Italy's legal system, which guarantees migrants, regardless of their status, equal rights with its citizens ensuring recognition and protection of universal rights such as access to labour market, health and education, services, as well as to social and political life.
- According to Save the Children Romania, the conditions in which family migration takes place currently make it an increasingly challenging and traumatizing experience

for families, with little, or no positive outcome for their development. Demographic factors, economic disparity, violent conflict, state failure and natural disasters are driving unprecedented family migration. Children on the move are a significant component of this trend. The number of children migrating alone or with their families is growing dramatically, estimates indicating that 33 million international migrants worldwide are under the age of 20 and 11 million between the ages of 15 and 19 years. Against a background of mounting crisis situations, children and women particularly are among the large number of migrants embarking on perilous journeys in search of safe havens. Save the Children Romania highlighted that out of approximately 113,000 migrants who reached Italy's southern borders between January and August 2014, 10,000 were unaccompanied minors and 8,000 came with families. Syrians accounted for about 24,000 migrants, including 4,000 women and 7,000 children, mostly accompanied. Similarly, in the Central America and the US corridor, over 66,000 unaccompanied minors arrived at the southwest border of the United States between the end of August and mid October 2014.

**Migrants and their families contribute greatly to the development of destination and origin countries through their human, cultural and economic potential.** Participants emphasized the contribution of migration to the development of both countries of origin and destination. They shared examples of positive contribution of migrants and their families to communities of origin and destination and generally agreed that family migration can be a key factor in sustaining socioeconomic development. For instance, remittances of migrant families play an important role in enhancing economic growth in countries of origin and in increasing the overall quality of life of their families. However, the developmental impact of remittances is significantly jeopardized by the high remitting costs between countries, and particularly those in the south. Participants urged action towards reducing the cost of transfers and ensuring migrant access to new financial products to facilitate transactions, and thus give added weight to migrant contribution to community development. Representatives equally highlighted the diaspora's role in local development mainly through financial input.

- The Democratic Republic of the Congo quoted recent estimates by the World Bank showing that remittances sent by migrants back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo rose from USD 630 million in 2006 to USD 1 billion in 2010. Furthermore, the diaspora in this country is actively engaged in projects aimed at improving local development. For example, in the absence of a public transport system in an urban area with 10 million inhabitants, the Congolese diaspora financed 70 per cent of vehicles with the aim of supporting their families and communities of origin.
- To facilitate the contribution of its diaspora to social, economic, technological and political development, Uganda created, in 2007, a Diaspora Services Department which provides a comprehensive range of services to Ugandans abroad, including more affordable and secure options to transfer remittances to further help their families and communities at home. This mechanism facilitated the transfer of USD 1 billion in remittances by Ugandans abroad.
- Remittances emanating from family migration represent a significant contribution to a country's development, as was highlighted by Bangladesh, the Republic of Moldova and Lesotho. Bangladesh registered USD 15 billion remittances in 2014, while in the Republic of Moldova and Lesotho, the funds remitted accounted for 30 per cent and 25 per cent of their national gross domestic product (GDP), respectively.

**Considering the social implications of migration in the debate on family migration's contribution to socioeconomic development:** While participants agreed that migration can be a key developmental tool greatly benefiting both families and communities, they also showed that migration profoundly affects families and, consequently, communities. Discussions about family migration tended to have a mere statistical, economic and short-term approach and not give sufficient consideration to its social impact on migrants, their families and communities in the long-term. While migration can be a tool for individual and family social and economic change – through the opportunities for better education, health, security and personal development it brings – it can also cause serious impacts on family and

community development. Addressing the challenges of migration for the socioeconomic development of families can also enhance the development potential of family migration for the benefit of both migrants and countries.

- The Minister of Women of Paraguay noted that family migration needs to be perceived as a mobility phenomenon carrying an inestimable human, historical and cultural value and not as a mere statistical data with economic and financial implications. Moreover, only by acknowledging the social, economic, cultural and environmental implications of migration for individuals and their families can the efforts and contribution of migrant families receive due recognition.
- While emphasizing the invaluable contribution of family migration not only to the development of individuals but also to that of the society, through building and preserving social cohesion, the ICMC too drew attention to the human significance of family migration. It noted that based on its experience in the field and research, the social costs of migration surpass the economic benefits of family migration, fragilization of families being the highest social cost that migrants and their families have to pay given the great psychosocial distress it causes to families. The well-being and development of families and communities cannot be built on separated families and the positive developmental effects of family migration will be limited in time if policies for protecting family unity are not implemented.

**Shifting the focus of migration research and policy debate on the family- seen as a unit strongly affected by migration decisions.** Participants agreed that given the impact it has on families, migration is definitely a family decision. Nevertheless, it emanated from discussions that research and policy do not look sufficiently at the impact migration can have on the family unit and its structure in the short- and long-term. The increasing rate of separation of families caused by the migration of one or more members was identified by participants as one of the main consequences of migration for families, bearing negative implications for social and economic development. Discussants called for policies and research to better take into account the importance of the family unit and the consequences



of its separation when analysing patterns and impact of family migration.

## **2. Specific data on the migration of families and its impact on family members, their communities and society overall, is very limited.**

One of the most important messages that emerged from the workshop discussions was that little data is available on family migration, the manner in which it takes place, and its impact on families and communities. Moreover, the data that is available tend to focus only on the positive aspects, and so overshadow the many adverse and negative emotional, psychological and social consequences. Insufficient reliable data and actionable research on the multiple aspects of family migration distort the reality of family migration and limit the understanding of how migration affects development and family well-being, which holds back effective and meaningful family migrant-oriented policymaking. Data shared on family migration trends by participants was valuable to further understand the reality of family migration, especially on that of the most vulnerable groups affected, such as women, unaccompanied children and young migrants. Nevertheless, participants echoed the need for improved data collection, disaggregated by age, gender, migration status, access to education, health and food, to reflect correctly the reality of migrant families and the specificities to each category of migrants. In this sense, supporting research was fundamental for developing the knowledge base to identify and address family migration and its impact. Participants believed, furthermore, that data sharing was essential to timely, effective and evidence-based policymaking.

**Understanding the complexity and multidimensionality of family migration is key to good assessment of the costs of migration for families.** The impact migration has on families varies with the type of migration and the actors involved in the migratory process. Participants shared results of studies that showed migration can impact differently on women, men, children, youth or the elderly, and thus increased the awareness

on the realities of family migration. They noted that addressing the challenges of migration for families and ensuring protection of migrants and their families cannot be done without having a clear understanding of family migration trends and implications for each category of migrants and on family members left behind. Policymakers need, therefore, to take into account the complexity and multidimensionality of family migration to develop adapted strategies and policies to address vulnerabilities and protection challenges that might arise for migrant families.

- The Republic of Moldova carried out a study to investigate the challenges that migrant children and children left behind are facing. The results of this study fed in the drafting process of the *Law 140/2013 on Special Protection of Children at Risk or Separated from Their Parents*. The law implemented at community, regional and central levels a system of information aimed at gathering data on children left behind or migrant children found to be at risk. Monitoring and analysing data at all administrative levels is a necessary element for the development of evidence-based micro and macropolicies. The law also aimed at facilitating cooperation among schools, specialists in child protection, community social workers, doctors and policy officers to collect data on children left behind. The data serves to assess the situation of children and promote protection responses such as establishment of guardianship for children separated from their families. Parents migrating abroad for longer than three months and leaving their children at home have the obligation to notify the local guardianship authority about the situation of the children. This mechanism can help support parents and provide the Government with sufficient information concerning children's situation to develop adapted policies.
- The results of a 2009 survey, "*Income and Living Conditions*," by Italy's Department of Equal Opportunities demonstrated that migrant families had worse living conditions than those of Italian families. Migrants often face economic difficulties, severe housing deprivation, hardship in meeting everyday essential costs (for instance, 28% did not have money to buy indispensable clothes, in comparison with 16% of Italian families), and are often unable to deal with unexpected

financial expenses. However, the survey results showed that, overall, the living conditions of mixed households seem to be better than those that are exclusively composed of foreign members. Another survey commissioned by the Department for Equal Opportunities in 2012, "*Conditions and Social Integration of Foreign Nationals*," revealed that migrants are victims of many forms of discrimination in different contexts: home and job search, in shops or public transport, workplace and schools. For instance, in searching for jobs, 9 per cent of the migrants interviewed had been victims of discrimination and, in 90 per cent of cases, this was based on their foreign origin. Nevertheless, the level of overall life satisfaction of migrants was reported to be higher than that of the national citizens. Over half of immigrants interviewed indicated a level of satisfaction between 8 and 10 (where 0 meant totally dissatisfied and 10 meant very satisfied).

- Italy also highlighted the importance of considering the gender dimension in assessing the challenges and costs of migration for families. Children and women are particularly studied since they are more often victims of discrimination based on race and ethnic origin. However, data depends on nationality and the sector in which discrimination occurs. In analysing the level of discrimination among migrants from various destinations, the Department of Equal Opportunities observed that when searching for a job or in the workplace, migrant men seem to be discriminated more, and women of certain origin are reported to suffer similar levels of discrimination. The Department's efforts in promoting equal opportunities are particularly oriented towards supporting migrant women who face significant challenges related to their social multiple roles as workers, mothers and wives. The collaboration between national institutions and the civil society is key to promoting equal opportunities for migrants and protecting them from any form of discrimination and, consequently, facilitating their integration into the host society.
- Furthermore, speakers noted that, because of its complexity, family migration is not homogeneously perceived and therefore it lacks a definition. In this sense, Professor Kofman

noted that family migration is looked at in research and policy as: 1) family reunification of spouse, parent or other relatives; 2) family formation or new marriage between permanent residents or citizens; or 3) family accompanying a family member entering at the same time as primary migrant. While there is not an international established legal definition of family migration, the family unit is recognized in several international instruments. Participants pointed to the legal texts on family reunification as a point of reference in the research and policymaking processes.

### **3. There are still many gaps and challenges in protecting migrants and their families.**

When discussing the impact of migration on family, participants emphasized that it is not migration in itself but the conditions in which migration takes place that can make family migrants vulnerable and expose them to challenging situations. Current family migration trends, marked by continuous fragmentation and transformation of families, negatively impact the health and socioeconomic development of migrants and members of the families remaining behind. Migrant families still face inhumane, inequitable and unlawful international migration conditions, which expose them to increased challenges and human rights violations. Support from states is still inaccessible to many migrants, and access to labour markets is restricted. Repressive migration responses, such as detention or deportation, cause great suffering to migrants and engender severe abuses of their human rights. Family members are impacted differently by family migration, yet evidence shows that it has higher detrimental effects on children, women and the elderly. Shedding light on the multiple impacts of complex migration trends and of existing migration policies on the protection and general well-being of migrant families can identify gaps in policies promoting protection and respect of human rights of migrants. Better evidence of the challenges and violations of rights that migrants and their families face could promote mechanisms to reinforce respect and reduce their exposure to abuses and suffering thereof.

**Considering the protection needs of vulnerability-prone groups such as irregular migrant families:** The complex nature of family migration exacerbates the protection challenges of vulnerable migrant categories. Participants called for less restrictive migration policies vis-à-vis family migration as well as for implementation of appropriate strategies and programmes tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of vulnerable migrant families.

- The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants highlighted that irregular migrant families who embarked on a survival migration experience, are a group in great need of human rights protection. The Special Rapporteur considered human smuggling to be among the greatest threats to human rights, a phenomenon often encouraged by restrictive migration policies promoted by states. Promotion of regular and open mobility policies is necessary for avoiding further human suffering and death of migrant families. The way forward needs to be less repressive regarding survival migration and concentrate more on harm-reduction policies, centred on ensuring the well-being of migrants.
- Because of their irregular status, migrant families often face severe human rights violations in the countries of destination or transit. The Special Rapporteur believes that restrictive migration policies increase the precariousness of migrant families, which can be counterproductive for development in the longer term. Existing strict migration policies create insecure conditions for migrants, leading to alienation and marginalization, which consequently foster human rights violation such as discrimination and violence. States have the obligation to ensure that migrant families, regardless of their migration status, are able to exercise their human rights and seek protection from any rights violation. It is believed that demarcation of access between the immigration services and public services would enable public services to ensure basic rights for migrants such as housing, health, education and ultimately empower them to contribute to the society while free from fear of detection and deportation. To encourage a political counter discourse that emphasizes the benefits

that migrants bring and so discourage hate, xenophobia and criminalization of irregular migration, migrants need to be given the chance to raise their concerns and have a voice in the migration policy debate.

**Taking into account emotional, psychosocial and health factors in assessing the impact migration has on families.** There was a general understanding that available data tend to focus mainly on the positive aspects of migration, overshadowing the many adverse and negative impacts it has on families. Participants gave a wide-ranging account of the challenges faced by migrants and their families and provided the opportunity to reflect on the potential consequences of family separation. Discussions also touched upon the barriers families come across in accessing services such as health care. Insufficient information available to migrants regarding their rights in the host country, as well as the challenges of receiving social, health-related and other basic service benefits, represents clear obstacles to the social integration of migrants. Much debate also drew attention to the effects of migration on children with migration backgrounds. Participants affirmed that the severe effects of migration on these members require adapted responses founded on concerted efforts between relevant state and non-state actors and based on better and more direct communication with affected families.

- Discussants acknowledged that migration affects family members differently. Children and adolescents, when they migrate or when their parents leave them behind, are particularly vulnerable to migration risks. Save the Children Romania noted that remittances sent by parents can have a positive impact on children's ability to access services at home, such as education and health, as well as access to essential goods. However, they observed that often the negative emotional impact of separation from family exceeds the positive. The distress caused by the separation from parents severely affects children's emotional and psychosocial development. From a long-term perspective, this situation can affect family development and the human capital of the country.

- The study *“Health Condition, Access to Services, and the Identification of Risk Factors and Specific Vulnerabilities of Migration in Honduras,”* realized by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, Facultad de Ciencias Médicas, provides evidence to support the need for institutional capacity-building to address the challenges of the health outcomes faced by Honduran migrants and their families. Research looked at deported people, migrants in transit and fragmented families and established their social-epidemiological profiles. It evaluated their level of availability and access of services related to health, and it identified the risk factors associated with migration and the vulnerability to negative health effects associated with migration. The research showed that 25 per cent of fragmented families had members who had suffered a negative health migration outcome. Moreover, about 50 per cent of the fragmented families interviewed affirmed that the health condition of their members had worsened, due to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, vulnerability and abandonment caused by the migratory experience. The study observed that the impact of migration on the mental health was greater among the members of fragmented families and among migrant women. The research also looked at the economic consequences that psychosocial health issues can have on families and on communities in the long term. The results of the investigation indicated that little is known about the particular health-related needs of migrant family populations, communication between migrants and medical caregivers being minimal. Finally, results underlined the need for further study and documentation of the impact of migration on families from an interdisciplinary perspective, looking at age cycles, group migration (voluntary and involuntary returns, irregular situations, transit and families), gender perspective and multicultural focus.
- Lesotho reports the highest tuberculosis (TB) incidence in the world, the families of migrants working in the mines being particularly at risk of infection from TB and HIV. Lack of job opportunities and high unemployment rates in the country constrain Lesotho to keep 12 per cent of its workers in the mining sectors in South Africa. TB-affected

miners not following accordingly their treatment or hesitant to inform doctors about their medical status are among the main challenges for families. Through the National TB Programme, the Lesotho Government is committed to ensuring countrywide access to quality TB services including prevention, interventions and treatment, and to providing migrants with training and information. IOM is supporting Lesotho's National TB Programme.

**Responding the situation of unaccompanied migrant children or children migrating with their parents, which are vulnerable migrant groups that become often victims of violence, torture, abuse and exploitation:** Participants focused on the situation of unaccompanied migrants or children separated from their families, especially those with irregular status and cut off from support and protection services. The number of children who are on the move is growing dramatically, and the protection challenges and human rights violations they are exposed to are multifaceted. Their impact can reverberate on children during their whole developmental process and for generations to come. The policy responses promoted do not often reflect the best interests of the child, further increasing their distress and suffering.

- The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants affirmed that the best interest of the child is the first principle a state needs to follow, in response to the protection of migrant family rights. The other three principles that states need to strictly follow are the preservation of family unity, non-refoulement and non-discrimination. Unaccompanied or separated children are extremely vulnerable to human rights violations, causing them serious emotional trauma. The Special Rapporteur stressed that countries of destination need to make available to migrant children the same provisions accessible in the national child protection system. The Special Rapporteur furthermore underlined that detention has long-term mental and physical health implications for children, and urged states to always ensure that there are alternative solutions to the detention of migrant families.
- On the same subject of detention of children, Terre des Hommes pointed to the declaration of the Committee on the



Rights of the Child according to which family reunification should never be used as an excuse to place children in detention with their parents. Information available indicates that migrants, as well as unaccompanied or separated children, are particularly at risk in these places, and often unable to claim their fundamental human rights.

- UNICEF works actively to combat detention of children and called for a challenging, unified and comprehensive approach saying that case-by-case analysis at country level is therefore necessary. Children can face, in fact, a double exclusion: not only the difficulties posed by migration but also the separation from their family. UNICEF also reiterated the right to family life and the best interest of the child. UNICEF also works jointly with partners such as IOM, Terre des Hommes and UNHRC.
- Exploitation and forced labour involving migrant children is another serious threat to the protection and well-being of children. The ILO, together with other speakers, drew attention to this challenge and called on states to put in place or reinforce more inspection procedures to control and reduce this phenomenon which has damaging long-term impact on children and on the society.
- Save the Children affirmed that too often authorities lack the necessary awareness of child rights and the ability to act in a child-sensitive way. Decisions regarding the family unit do not systematically assess the best interest of the child. Children born in destination countries to irregular migrant parents may be denied their right to family life, if one or both parents are deported. To prevent these violations, a child's rights-based approach to migration requires that the best interests of the child are given primary consideration over migration control policies or administrative considerations.
- Speakers also affirmed that migration management policies should respect and reflect the rights of children, regardless of their migration status and, in particular, act in accordance with the best interest of the child. Participants reiterated that the UN Second High-Level Dialogue represented a

significant opportunity to draw attention to the issues of children affected by migration. In particular, migrant children are now visible in the 2015 post-development agenda, and UN members are engaged in “protecting the human rights of migrant children given their vulnerability, particularly unaccompanied migrant children, and to provide for their health, education and psychosocial development, ensuring that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in policies of integration, return and family reunification.”

**Identifying and addressing the needs of children left behind while recognizing the detrimental impacts of family separation on their well-being.** Examples provided by participants showed that long-term separation caused by the departure of family members can have negative developmental, emotional and health effects on family members who remain behind and put them in more vulnerable situations. From the case studies presented, family separation often engenders feelings of sadness, depression, anger and abandonment. The departure of one or both members of the family can have negative effects on children. In this sense, many participants highlighted the need to ponder on the positive economic effects caused by remittances and the negative emotional outcomes, due to parental absence. Discussions explored in detail the specific impact of family migration on children and pointed to areas that need further investigation. Speakers equally stressed careful examination of the reasons behind the decision of parents to migrate to avoid castigating them, especially women, for leaving their children behind. Their decision is often driven by the need to provide for the family and desire to give them a better life. Emotional displacement affects both children and parents, particularly mothers who have abandoned their customary caring role and have become the household providers.

- There are 10.5 million Filipinos living and working abroad and UNICEF estimated in 2010 that there were more than 9 million Filipino children left behind by their migrant parents. In analysing the effects of family separation on members left behind in the Philippines, the non-governmental organization, ATHIKHA, affirmed that while many children were resilient and adapted to the situation, others experienced lack of interest in studying and in pursuing

higher education, became dependent, indulged extravagant expenses, became pregnant and made early marriages. The long-term separation can also lead to communication gaps between family members, estrangement of relations or even family break-ups.

- The Ministry of Women of Paraguay referred to a study carried out in Salvador, which shows that remittances sent by families abroad can engender an increase in educational attainments and a consequent decrease in child labour. Conversely, other studies demonstrate that the negative emotional effects caused by parental absence may outweigh the positive impacts of remittances. For instance, a study carried out in Mexico showed that migration of family members (and in particular maternal migration) can generate academic and behavioural problems of many children.
- Romania reported an estimated 80,000 families have one or both parents working abroad, while their children stay at home. The Romanian authorities' efforts in creating an adequate policy response to this challenge includes a set of procedures developed in 2006 by the National Authority for the Protection of Child's Rights, which was meant to encourage migrant families staying behind to report to competent authorities to guarantee access for their children to special protection measures, if necessary. In view of the increasing complexities of family migration trends, the relevant national legislation was amended to include specific references to the situation of children left behind, such as requiring the parent who lives with the child or has sole parental authority to notify the public social assistance services 40 days before leaving to work abroad and to obtain approval from the court of a chosen guardian, usually a member of the extended family, to ensure the placement of the child under adequate care. Moreover, a draft National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child 2014–2020 includes a new set of distinctive provisions such as the creation of personalized counselling programmes, coupled with a more proactive role taken by the schools.

- Save the Children Romania pointed out that remittances can have a positive impact, allowing children to access services such as education and health. On the other hand, family separation may have a negative impact on children's emotional and psychosocial development, affecting their self-esteem and emotional well-being.
- Two recent studies carried out in the Republic of Moldova looked at children's welfare, measured by indexes of educational performance, health and emotional standards. The research showed that 105,000 children have at least one parent abroad, that parents are worried about children's welfare and quality care, and over 90 per cent of the children interviewed affirmed to communicate systematically with their parents. At the same time, the study revealed that 3 per cent of children interviewed prepare their own meals, 2 per cent have nothing to eat once or twice a month, and 5 per cent do not go to school because they have to help at home. In particular, the findings demonstrated that children have less free time to do homework because they are involved in domestic work or they have to take care of the younger siblings. Furthermore, among children who have tried to commit or committed suicide are children whose parents are abroad. The Republic of Moldova emphasized the importance of communication technologies and electronic devices to improve the relationship and communication between parents and their children.
- Uganda explored the negative impacts of migration on children left behind and noted that children often experience inadequate parental care, protection and upbringing, poverty in the case of long-term migration, increased school dropout and, in the worst cases, child labour, prostitution, pornography, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, moral and cultural degeneration due to inadequate parental guidance. On the other hand, if well managed, migration can have positive effects on children by improving the standard of living, income, infrastructure development, service delivery, standard and education, improved health, nutrition and education.

- Andrea Diefenbach, author of the project “*Country without Parents*”, on Moldovan children left behind, studied closely – and on a long-term basis – family separation and the life conditions of migrants abroad, as well as of their families staying behind. The study showed that children left behind and forced to grow up without one or both parents experienced a permanent feeling of loss and had no knowledge of the importance of the bonds between children and parents. She noticed that both children and parents tried to adapt to the situation through communication by phone or via Skype as well as the expedition of parcels which all helped migrants stay in contact with their families at home. The study shows that despite separation, the family remains the most important value for Moldovans.
- According to many participants, information and communication technologies can play an essential role in connecting separated family members and reducing the risk of family disruption. Governments should facilitate the use of mobile phones and other communications means, as well as social media to strengthen the contact and the relationship between family members.

**Minimizing the adverse effects of migration on children by supporting them and their families before, during and after the process of migration:** participants recommended and showcased examples of good practices that promote respect of rights and assistance to children impacted by family migration in countries of origin and destination.

- A strong system of protection and support for migrant children starts by supporting families and children in their home countries and improving access to opportunities for parents, adolescents and young people. Save the Children Romania emphasized that promotion of the rights of children on the move needs to start by reducing the need for migration of children that is unsafe and risky. The close work it does with children helps Save the Children understand the reasons behind children’s desire to migrate, identify their protection needs and what kind of responses need to be developed to best assist them.

- The Republic of Moldova, for instance, has put in place the National Strategy on Child Protection (2014–2020). This Strategy aims to address the negative impacts of parental migration on minors left behind by: 1) developing and implementing a national support service and mechanisms to promote effective parenting skills to prevent and reduce violence, negligence and exploitation of children; 2) strengthening the capacities of the Moldovan diaspora associations to support parental relations with children left behind; 3) and developing telecommunications instruments and resources to preserve the ties between migrant parents and their children. This Strategy also aims to implement an effective system to monitor the situation of children whose parents are abroad, as well as information or awareness programmes and services for parents, children left behind and caretakers. It also seeks to support the national educational system in addressing the social vulnerabilities faced by children left behind.
- Spain's 2011–2014 Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration main objective is to promote equality and respect for diversity and strengthen social cohesion. More specifically, through an area of intervention dedicated to childhood, youth and families the Plan aims to promote the development of parental skills in diversity contexts, to reduce vulnerability, poverty and risk of social exclusion of children and youth in diversity contexts, to promote children's and youth's participation in diversity contexts and to favor the participation of minors and youth of immigrant origin in children's and youth programs. Finally, this Plan seeks to provide information, guidance, advice and funds to encourage the social inclusion of migrants and their insertion in the labour market.
- Mexico presented the "*Programa Especial de Migración*," a comprehensive and transnational strategy focusing on human rights, sustainable development, gender, multiculturalism and human security. The programme brings to the centre of the institutional debate the most vulnerable migrants, such as unaccompanied children and youth and migrants who experienced repatriation, detention or other events leading to

family separation. In particular, the recent humanitarian crisis in various countries and the consequent massive migration of migrants and their families added greater emphasis to the crucial points that need to be reconsidered on policy agendas, such as, the necessity to promote cooperation between the Mexican Government and United States consulates to reduce organized crime-related violence.

- Terre des Hommes showcased its international campaign entitled, “Destination Unknown →to Protect Children on the Move.” The 40 campaign members are active in 30 countries and advocate in different regions and at a global level. One of the main objectives of this campaign is to ensure that, on a number of identified migration routes, children get access to appropriate protection and services during their journey. Other objectives of the campaign revolve around the need to develop a better understanding of the risks and opportunities for a child before, during and after the migration process. The advocacy includes: 1) enhancing alternatives to migration and their families back home; 2) bringing an end to detention and deportation procedures involving migrant children; 3) finding a durable solution according to the best interests of the child and listening to the views of the child; and 4) enhancing the evidence base of policies aiming at protecting children on the move.
- Costa Rica introduced the 2013–2023 “*Política Migratoria Integral*,” its national migration management framework. The framework focuses on the human rights of migrants and highlights the contribution of migrants to cultural wealth, economic development and social welfare. More specifically, it looks attentively at integration and development with a particular emphasis on equality, non-discrimination and the best interests of the child. The national plan aims to foster employment, health, education, culture and socioeconomic development. Consultations between public and social institutions and international organizations are key elements of this process. Costa Rica also adopted intervention protocols to protect those most affected by migration: migrant children, including unaccompanied or separated children, children whose parents are deported or detained, and refugees.

- Malta's 2014 Child Protection Act aims to put children and their voice at the heart of the government policies. Consultations with separated and unaccompanied children, parents and caregivers provided significant elements that fed in the formulation of the act. The act replaces the Children and Young Persons Act and establishes Child Court Services, introduces child protection orders, provides special care and protection to children that were removed or separated from their parents and placed in out-of-home care. The Bill also creates a number of new actors with responsibilities towards minors, including a child advocate and a guardian. This act is drawn up to promote the well-being and best interest of the child and states that all children must receive the same care and protection, regardless of their status. Assessment of age is taken into account as a differential criterion in accordance with the EASO (European Asylum Support Office) age assessment. This assessment is an initiative introduced by EASO and aims to provide practical support to Member States in the field and ensure that children are protected; it determines whether an individual is an adult or a child in circumstances where their age is unknown. According to this initiative, the best interest of the child should be considered as a primary consideration in age assessment procedures.
- Malta also cited another recent initiative on children's rights: the PRUMA<sup>2</sup> project implemented in collaboration with IOM offices in Paris, Berlin, Athens, Malta and London. The project "aims at facilitating family reunification of unaccompanied migrant minors arriving in Europe in order to seek international protection and who have relatives living in one of the EU member states". It promotes family reunification and transfer of unaccompanied minor asylum-seekers under the Dublin Regulation and protects them from the risk of becoming victims of trafficking and exploitation.

**Taking into account the challenges of women migrants and including the gender perspective as essential components of appropriate migration policy responses:** The workshop debate

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<sup>2</sup> Promoting Family Reunification and transfer of Unaccompanied Minor Asylum-Seekers (UMASs) under the Dublin Regulation.



drew attention to the gendered nature of migration and growing feminization of migration. In particular, speakers looked at women's migration and at the social and economic repercussions of this current trend on migrants and their families. Since women and girls are most vulnerable and most likely to face all kinds of exploitation, a new policy approach and greater consideration should be given to them and their families. Much debate at the workshop was also devoted to how migration may positively affect women. Many participants highlighted that migration is often a safety strategy and it allows women to gain independence, confidence, freedom and self-respect.

- Statistics provided by participants highlighted the increasing role women play in family migration and the impact their migration has on the family, community and workplace. Representing almost half of the international migrant stock worldwide, women are increasingly recognized as central agents in the migration process. The growing feminization of migration was highlighted by many participants as a trend that requires more consideration, particularly regarding the social and economic costs both for migrant women themselves and their families.
- Uganda pointed out that women and young girls are often victims of sexual violence and exploitation. Migration can provide women with the opportunity to start a new life or escape the country, due to fear of being mutilated or forced into early marriages and pregnancies.
- Even if migration can improve women's developmental prospects and empower them economically and socially, discussions reiterated the existing mismatch between qualifications of women workers and the jobs they have access to. Participants stressed the need for governments to provide women with training and pre-departure support information on the risks and benefits of migration. Others affirmed that country legislation should be gender-sensitive and include provisions regarding women labour migration.
- There was a general call for countries to develop and implement strategic plans to benefit from current trends and

patterns of women migration. Most of the national legislation and policies governing migration are gender neutral. National laws need to be revised to make them more gender sensitive so that they can guarantee better protection of women migrants and promote the realization of their contribution to the society.

**Considering the multiple effects of women migration on family members left behind:** Contemporary family migration trends have significant consequences for the family structure and relationships of the family and, as described earlier, growing feminization of migration is an important trend in this sense. Speakers reported that gender is a key determinant of family migration, which helps to explain the causes, processes and consequences of family mobility. For this reason, migration policy and research can no longer afford to be gender neutral and must include all gender perspectives. Many participants affirmed that the absence of women, with their multiple roles – as mother, wife or daughter – can significantly alter men’s traditional role within the family unit and society at large, with repercussions on the health and well-being of families and particularly on children who may feel abandoned and suffer severe psychosocial and health consequences.

**Assessing the increasing role the elderly have in the migration of families and promoting appropriate responses to their needs:** In the absence of women or the usual household caretakers, the elderly are delegated with taking responsibility for the children left behind and for household tasks. This unstudied category of family migration appears to be seriously affected by the migration of families. There was not much evidence shared on how the elderly fare in the absence of the members of their families. The general understanding, however, is that this category is exposed to severe physical and psychosocial health issues caused by the long-term absence of their families and by the often burdensome mission of running the household. This situation translates into little access to nutrition, hygiene services, medical attention and social assistance. As very little is known about the real impact of migration on this group, more research and policy attention are needed to allow for appropriate and timely responses to their needs.

**4. Family reunification policies, when well managed and coordinated, contribute to strengthening orderly and regular migration and help facilitate the integration of migrants into the societies in which they are living while maximizing the positive impact of migration on these families and societies.**

Speakers pointed the considerable gap between international rights concerning family migration and their actual enjoyment of them by migrants in practice. Many participants highlighted that while they recognize that migration management is an internal affair, they underline the importance of the obligation of states to respect the international frameworks that effectively mainstream human rights. In particular, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) emphasized that protection of the rights of family migrants is one of the most urgent challenges and called for states to improve the implementation of appropriate policies and programmes to promote the right to family reunification. Family unity and children right to reunification with parents are essential human rights that ought to be respected during the implementation of migration policies. Exploring good practices at country level was recognized as a necessary step to identify common and effective responses to the challenges faced by migrants and their families. The workshop discussions emphasized that fulfilling the rights of migrants and their families could be a complementary driver of development and, consequently, government policies should be guided by a rights-based and migrant-centred approach. It is, therefore, vital that the human rights of migrants are placed at the centre of policies. On that basis, many participants presented strategies and programmes inspired by essential human rights such as the right to a family unit, non-discrimination and equality of treatment. Participants also discussed legal frameworks concerning family reunification and the rights of migrants and looked at their application.

**Mitigating restrictive regulations and policies acting as a barrier to reunification of family members:** The evidence shared by participants showed that government trend towards family reunification has recently been gearing towards more restrictive policies. Such policies negatively impact the ability of migrants to integrate in the destination countries which ultimately hinders their contribution to societies. Moreover, family separation can have negative effects on migrants' well-being, their families and ultimately on societies. Children are the most affected by restrictive migration policies. More research on the repercussions of family reunification restrictive practices would provide evidence for the development of migration laws and rights-based policies that address protection concerns of families and children.

- Much debate revolved around the impact of the restrictive migration policies on family reunification and the integration of migrants. In particular, the representative of the European Commission's Integration and Immigration Unit made reference to the findings of two studies, co-founded by the European Integration Fund which focused on family reunification. The first research study, "*Family Reunification: A Barrier or Facilitator of Integration? A Comparative Study*", focused on the impact that restrictive rules have on the integration of both the sponsor and the admitted family in selected EU member States. The project showed that the restrictive tendency in national policies has caused a drop in applications in the past ten years. The study also demonstrated that restrictive measures have not furthered integration and, in many cases, may have actually impeded it. In many instances, long-term separation can have several consequences, such as the loss of social and financial capital, emotional stress, limitation in choosing job opportunities with resulting impacts on labour market positions, difficulties in building up lives since family members cannot be together and residence is not secure, and diminished feelings of belonging.
- The second research study, "*Impact of Admission Criteria on the Integration of Migrants*," or IMPACIM study, is a project that aims to examine the impact of restrictive measures on the economic, social, cultural and political

integration of third-country nationals in selected EU member States. More specifically, this study looks at the tensions that may arise between the integration of migrants and the imposition of admission restriction on post-entry access to jobs, public services, welfare, benefit and voting. This tension is explored in relation to family migration. The findings demonstrated that tension exists between increasing expectations towards the integration of family migrants and restricting their access to services and benefits that facilitate participation in society. When there are more significant restrictions, there are indications that they do act as barriers to integration. Generally, conditions of entry for family migrants mean that access is relatively open in relation to compulsory education, healthcare and the labour market. In other areas, services are more restricted according to immigration status and residency: in particular for post-compulsory education fee assistance including for English language classes, welfare benefits, social housing and political participation (such as voting). For instance, restricted access to funded courses and expectations to pay course costs can create barriers to social and labour market participation by family migrants.

- The Minister of Woman of Paraguay noted that research on Latin American migration to Spain showed that the poor working conditions experienced by Latin American workers and reflected in the absence of labour contracts and low stipends, hinder their request for reunification of families. Women are especially affected by this situation since they are mostly involved in informal labour sectors such as domestic and care work.
- In the same vein, Professor Kofman believed that despite regional legal instruments, such as the EU Directive on Family Reunification, requiring Member States to implement family-oriented policies, national policies have become more restrictive. For instance, policies that set a minimum income for citizens or other settled persons wanting to support a non-EEA citizen act as a barrier to family reunification. Moreover, they hold potential gender discriminatory effects for those

working in less skilled and thus less paid jobs, where women migrants often find themselves.

- For Chile, no child should be separated from his/her family due to the action or inaction of the states. Policies should, instead, include reunification and specific protection measures as well as take into account psycho-emotional issues. In the impossibility of family reunification, states should make all necessary efforts to maintain the familiar nexus by implementing protection policies adapted to the specific needs of migrants to reduce the negative impact of restrictive policies.
- Save the Children underlined how restrictive migration policies hinder children's reunification with their parents through regular channels and eventually drive them to reunite with their parents and risk their lives by embarking on dangerous and irregular journeys. Save the Children, therefore, considered it crucial that governments and the international community acknowledge the impact and consequences migration control and restrictive policies can have on children and their families. Under UNCRC and other human rights standards, states have the obligation to respect and fulfil the rights of children irrespective of their status.
- The British Refugee Council showed that, in general, unified migrant families are better off and thus contribute more to development. The well-being of migrant families produces a domino effect: a positive impact on migrants' health consequently reduces demand in public health services and increases tax revenues flowing from higher levels of employment, which finally translate into a reduction in national welfare expenditure. The benefits of better-off migrant families can also be assessed through the level of their participation in communities, schools, public services, arts, culture or in businesses and commerce. On the other hand, family separation can lead to poor mental and physical health, impairing migrants' ability to integrate socially and contribute economically to the development of the destination country.

**Participants pointed out that in order to be effective, reunification policies should be tailored to the specific needs, status and situation of migrants:**

- For the United States, reunification of families is a guiding principle of its immigration policy. Under the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, the United States has put in place three different programmes to promote the protection and integration of specific target groups: 1) Immigrant Visa Program, 2) Refugee Admission Program and 3) Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act. The Immigrant Visa Program allows US citizens and legal permanent residents to apply for certain categories of family members to join them in the United States. The programme enabled 395,000 immigrants to join relatives in the United States in 2013. In addition, almost half a million visas were issued to family members accompanying migrant workers, while one million individuals are registered every year to become permanent residents. The State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs provides migrant spouses and fiancés information on their rights to ensure reunified migrant family members have access to adequate protection in case of domestic violence or child abuse. These measures are in line with the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act created in 2005. Secondly, under the Refugee Admission Program, the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration oversees, together with the help of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the yearly admission of some 70,000 refugees to the United States. Lastly, the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act allows foreign victims of trafficking identified in the United States to have eligible family members join them in the United States. The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration supports IOM programmes aimed at reuniting victims of trafficking with their families.
- Other participants referred instead to a practical, skills-oriented approach to family reunification. For instance, Australia acknowledged that enabling family migration is pivotal to social integration and showed how it is promoting

skilled migration while facilitating family migration as a unit. The focus of Australia's skilled migration policy has not been at the expense of family unity. In this way, migrants coming to Australia are allowed to bring their partners and children as well as dependent relatives, with the result that skilled migration to Australia is also typically family migration. In the past five years (2009–2014), 55 per cent of the 600,000 people who migrated to Australia through the skilled migration programme were families of the skilled migrants. The programme is designed to foster permanent migration by people who are educated, proficient in English, and will either go directly into a job once there, or possess desirable attributes from a labour market or entrepreneurial perspective. Facilitating family migration alone is not enough and settlement policies and services are key to supporting migrants' integration process. The Australian government offers significant English language courses to migrants with little or no proficiency; these are also available to the partner of a highly skilled migrant who has a job and solid command of English. Evidence shows that skilled migrants and their family members are able to integrate into the labour market and eventually into society, better than unqualified migrants.

**5. Adapted responses founded on concerted efforts between relevant state and non-state actors, based on better and more direct communication with affected families, are required to address the negative impact migration has on family members remaining behind.**

Participants pointed out the absence of adequate collaboration mechanism between countries on family migration noting that transnational cooperation between state and non-state actors is crucial to minimize the social costs and maximize the gains of family migration. Challenges linked to the protection of migrant families require particular attention and coordinated response from governments, international organizations and civil society. There was, therefore, a call for an advanced dialogue and cooperation



on family migration issues at the local, national and international levels to promote coherent and coordinated programmes and policies targeting families affected by migration. Speakers urged for collaborative practices at global, regional, national and interministerial level to minimize the negative repercussions of family migration and to ensure protection of families in the context of migration and the fulfilment of their human rights.

- The Republic of Korea stated that its immigration policy is handled by the cooperation between the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. More specifically, the Minister of Justice establishes a basic plan for immigration policy in consultation with the heads of the cited ministries. The National Plan for Immigration Policy is reviewed every five years under the article 5 of the Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea.
- Participants also affirmed that to promote the effective integration of immigrants, it is necessary to draw on the strengths and capacity of all states, regional, local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. Governments, international organizations, NGOs, church groups and social workers need to work together to ensure that family migrants are better protected and can truly benefit from migration.
- Mexico underlined the importance of bilateral and transnational agreements and reiterated that the Mexican Government cooperates with consulates, organizations and child protection agencies to organize training for families who are victims of trafficking and to conduct preventive campaigns and educational programmes for children. More specifically, given that 11 million of Mexicans living abroad reside in the United States, Mexico and the United States work closely to pursue programmes to ensure efficient border management and minimize security risks and challenges. Mexico also provides free legal advice and mechanisms to allow migrants to access services and work permits, and to protect families and children against deportation. Furthermore, Mexico has organized working groups with

other countries in Central America to exchange views and good practices in this regard.

- The World University Service of Canada's (WUSC) Student Refugee Program provides student refugees in Canada with opportunities for higher education, help and advice. Its presence in refugee camps for over 30 years provides consistency and hope. WUSC also offers relevant and accessible training to student leaders providing guidance and recognition of their valuable contribution. The WUSC reiterated the importance of cooperation with partners to create long-lasting change. Canadian students, universities and colleges, the Government of Canada and Québec, local NGOs, individual donors and private foundations are all essential, and their contribution ensures the success of the programme.
- Exchanges during a side event organized during the workshop on transnational cooperation on the protection of children on the move and cooperation mechanisms showed that there is still a gap at the international level concerning the lack of explicit or comprehensive guidance to States on the specific international coordination mechanisms to support realization of protection of children in the context of migration and the fulfilment of the associated human rights obligations. The side event made a substantial contribution to further the debate on strengthening international cooperation for the protection of children on the move.
- The ATIKHA Foundation reiterated that in implementing a comprehensive programme and delivering services for migrants and families, an established and operational multi-stakeholder partnership is the key to success. Trust on the capacity and respect of the limitations of partners, commitment of different players, and well-crafted strategies are necessary. It is important to build the capacities of government and local partners for the sustainability of programmes and services. According to ATHIKA, to create multi-stakeholder partnership, it is essential to identify and engage the government, private and academic sector, civil society organizations, and migrant associations in programme

planning and implementation. The community-based NGO ATIKHA assists in setting up one-stop resource migration centres in areas with a high concentration of overseas Filipinos by providing economic, psychosocial, development programmes and services. It also offers economic and psychosocial services to migrant families in partnership with other actors such as school-based programmes for children of migrants, training for teachers, financial education courses for Filipinos abroad. Families in the Philippines can avail themselves of skill training and reintegration programmes such as investment opportunities in agri-business, social enterprise, ecotourism, business and skills training.

- More specifically, the project, *“Maximizing the Gains and Minimizing the Social Cost of Overseas Migration in the Philippines”*, was initiated by the ATIKHA Foundation, together with the Filipino Women’s Council (FWC) and Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP). It aims to strengthen Filipino migrant associations and socioeconomic integration of Filipino workers in Italy. The project also seeks to build the capacity of local governments, schools and other stakeholders in providing social and economic services for migrants and families left behind. The collaboration of CISP, FWC and ATIKHA aims at creating a synergy between non-profit organizations and institutions towards advocacy for change in policies involving migration, and at raising the awareness of the Italian and Philippine Governments and civil society on issues of migrants, the contribution of migration to development, and the implementation of innovative interventions in the Philippines and in Italy.

**International organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society have an essential role in promoting and facilitating cooperation on family migration.** Workshop discussions reiterated that migrants need to have access to adequate information, training and services to better integrate in countries of destination. Speakers underlined that lack of access to services and information often happens due to discrimination, language barriers and cultural differences, which are often evident obstacles to social inclusion. Participants recognized the role of

IOs, NGOs and civil society in supporting migrants and families by providing them with much needed capacity and resources to become effective partners of local and national governments. Nevertheless, inadequate resources impede them from fully contributing. Building capacities of partners is necessary to support sustainability of their programmes and services. Long-term funding assistance is essential for the strategic engagement of NGOs with and capacity-building of interested actors.

- To support effective integration of migrant families, the United States have developed a network of programs consisting of a community resources and programmes for refugees and victims of trafficking developed through funding from the Federal Government of the United States to states. Non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, libraries, adult education providers and civic institutions play a key role in implementing these programmes and outreaching to immigrant communities. In this sense, the Bureau ensured funding to NGOs enabling the set-up of a nationwide network of 350 resettlement offices in 185 cities providing various assistance to refugees such as housing, food, clothing, jobs, schools and medical care. In the same manner, the federal and state programs work with NGOs to provide victims of trafficking and their families joining them necessary assistance.
- Terre des Hommes pointed to the challenges faced by NGOs working on migration, such as the geographic disconnection between NGO activities in the places of origin and destination. Furthermore, NGOs with a strong individual donor base are sometimes reluctant to engage in building public awareness of migration issues fearing the loss of donor support. Beyond funding concerns, the political climate also tends to limit the space for action by NGOs in an increasing number of countries. In addition, services are provided by governments or outsourced by them without any accountability mechanism. Terre des Hommes, along with other NGOs and agencies, believes that communication has to invest in supporting integrated protection systems to benefit all children. More specifically, systems in different countries need to be linked to ensure

a continuum of protection and services for children on the move. Promising practices are being developed by different NGOs around the world; however, the way forward should look at: adopting a systems approach; a system accessible for all including migrant children; ability to successfully provide specific services for specific groups of children; and keeping up the awareness within societies for the need to address xenophobia and discrimination and to work in solidarity.

- ATIKHA pointed to the need for long-term funding assistance for strategic engagement and capacity-building of NGOs and migrant and family associations. More development agencies should provide assistance not only to governments but also to migrant NGOs and associations. The government should not consider migrant NGOs and associations as competitors but as partners in development. NGOs should also enhance their skills and capacities and be open to new partnerships so as to implement innovative interventions.

## **6. Youth is a prominent feature of today's world population and international migration with great potential for development. Policies concerning young migrants should promote access to employment and educational opportunities.**

Policymakers increasingly recognize that while migration provides young migrants with opportunities for their personal and economic potential, youth can also be a powerful driver of development for countries of origin and destination. Participants noted the complex role youth has in family migration, discussing various aspects including their staying behind in their countries of origin to look after their families in the absence of parents or siblings, migrating alone to escape poverty, conflict or for better study and job opportunities as well as youth migrating with their families. Experiences and facts presented showed that in the absence of valid policy responses to specific family migration situations, migration can expose youth to serious risks and vulnerabilities. In particular, unemployment or

underemployment, lack of access to social services and schooling in their countries of origin and destination, excessive burden of supporting their family in the absence of parents can lead to a wide range of consequences such as discrimination, marginalization, relational and psychosocial problems, social exclusion, abuse and violence. There was a general agreement that legislation and policies addressing the rights, protection, support, and awareness of the effects of migration are needed to support youth well-being and enable them to become key actors in their communities and societies. Moreover, participants showed that where youth-inclusive national and development strategies are available, youth integrates more easily into society and are more likely to contribute positively to their own personal development and the socioeconomic development of their society.

- Statistics provided by participants showed that youth migration is increasing globally. Young migrants between 15 and 24 today number 28 million, accounting for 12 per cent of all international migrants. For instance, the Republic of Korea is increasingly becoming a country of destination for young migrants, it registering 191,328 children from multicultural families, 7,171 foreign-born children of migrants' marriage and 7,288 foreign-ethnic Korean children with foreign nationalities. More than half of children with immigrant backgrounds enter the Republic of Korea for reunification, 13 per cent of children with a migrant background move to the Republic of Korea in the absence of a tutor in their country of origin, and 10 per cent decided to migrate following a parental decision.
- Spain has also faced increasing in-migration in the past two decades, from almost 1 per cent in 1991 to 11 per cent of the total population today. At the beginning of 2014, young people (aged less than 26 years) accounted for 27.39 per cent of foreigners registered to live in the country.
- Evidence shows as well that 74.5 million young people were unemployed in 2013. Research carried out by the ILO, IOM and UNICEF analysed the trends of youth labour migration which showed that the main reasons for youth migration are the availability outside their countries of origin

of jobs, structures of employment and higher educational opportunities. Despite this evidence, the study shows that 35 per cent of young migrants are employed in elementary or unskilled jobs (in comparison with 21 per cent of natives) or work in economic sectors such as agriculture or construction.

- OECD affirmed that in Africa, 60 per cent of the unemployed are young people, with youth unemployment rates double those of adult unemployment in most African countries. On average, 72 per cent of the youth population in Africa lives on less than USD 2 per day. The incidence of poverty among young people in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia and Burundi is over 80 per cent.

In this sense, participants stressed that policy interventions should prioritize the protection of young migrants and their human rights, including labour rights, to maximize migration's beneficial impacts and mitigate its negative consequences. Many participants highlighted that where it is mainstreamed into national and development strategies (such as education, labour and health), youth integrates better into society and is more likely to make a greater contribution to development. Others emphasized that legislation and policies should protect and support young migrants to enable them to take ownership of their contribution to development.

**There is an urgent need for governments to invest in flexible and specific programmes that respond to the professional aspirations of young migrants.** There was a strong call for the implementation of specific measures to create more jobs and address youth unemployment. Participants showed that successful policies have to strengthen the capacity of existing services and to promote a comprehensive approach to the specific needs of skilled migrant youth. The workshop allowed participants to exchange experiences and best practices that support skill recognition and promote employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Participants provided many practical examples of policies put in place to better address the professional aspirations of youth.

- According to the ILO, mitigation of challenges faced by youth should start in the country of origin. Regulation

of requirement procedures, negotiation with destination countries, cultural orientation and information are necessary steps to maximize the skills development of young migrants. Policies in the countries of destination should be focused on the access to employment, social security system and educational opportunities. The analysis of the labour market and consultations among stakeholders (ministries, employers, workers organizations and so forth) are also crucial steps to reduce the existing gap between the competences of young migrants and market requirements.

- OECD pointed out that a high percentage of youth migrates for non-economic reasons, such as education, marriage, family reunification or refuge, and they are more likely to leave if dissatisfied with local institutions, local economy, quality of education, city infrastructure, entrepreneurship opportunities and meritocracy. At the same time, young people are more likely to learn local languages and adapt quickly. In light of this, programmes and strategies should be focused on entrepreneurship, loans, training and vocational training and also build on assessed needs in the country of origin to improve youth's potential and help them find appropriate migration opportunities. OECD is carrying out a project "*Enhance the Capacity of Partner Countries to Incorporate Migration into the Design and Implementation of Their Development Strategies*," co-funded by the EU Thematic programme on migration and asylum. This project aims to enhance the capacity of partner countries to incorporate migration and youth migration into the design and implementation of their development strategies.
- Canada drew attention to the role students and youth mobility in general play in enriching the academic environment and enhancing the intercultural exchange and competencies of domestic students. It was estimated that international students contribute approximately USD 8 billion a year to the Canadian economy through tuition fees and other expenses. Canada's immigration system encourages youth mobility and integration by offering a number of opportunities for foreign students and youth. In this sense, Canada's *International Student Program* provides opportunities for international



students to gain work experience in Canada during or after their studies, through work permit programmes providing international students with opportunities to qualify for permanent residence schemes. Secondly, the *Canadian Experience Class (CEC)* programme allows international graduates having completed a diploma/degree course with a Canadian educational institution and at least one year of work in a skilled, professional or technical field to become eligible for achieving permanent residence. The programme was amended in 2013 to reduce the work experience requirement from 24 months to 12 months. The *International Experience Canada (IEC)* is another programme that facilitates bilateral, reciprocal agreements with other countries to allow travel and work exchange opportunities for young Canadians and foreign nationals. It originated in 1951 as a cultural exchange between Canada and Germany and today has youth mobility agreements with 32 countries. Finally, the 1978 *Student Refugee Program* has enabled student refugees to settle in Canada as permanent residents to pursue their studies at universities and colleges across Canada. This Programme facilitates the entry of more than 70 student refugees every year to Canada as permanent residents to pursue their studies at a Canadian post-secondary institution.

- The Republic of Korea introduced the *Second Basic Plan for Immigration Policy 2013–2017* which aims to support economic growth by attracting skilled migrants, foster the social integration of immigrants, prevent discrimination and promote greater appreciation of cultural diversity. It also seeks to provide young migrants with better services and employment opportunities, as well as information on the Republic of Korea's basic laws and institutions to establish a friendly multicultural environment, and allow young migrants to integrate and safely settle in the Republic of Korea.
- The Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security has established the *Strategy of Entrepreneurship and Youth Employment 2013–2016*. Considering the economic crisis and its impact on young people, youth employment remains a priority for the Government of Spain. This strategy aims

to improve the employability of young people and quality of employment and to foster entrepreneurship. It also includes 100 measures to promote equal opportunities of access to the labour market. Furthermore, the Institute for Youth Development (*El instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud*) promotes activities for young people and provides economic and technical support (including microcredit programmes) to support youth's participation and inclusion. It aims to encourage positive outcomes for young people and ensure they have access to positive development opportunities. In collaboration with local and private entities, this institute also provides young migrants with useful information to facilitate their social integration.

- Finally, Uganda presented the “*Youth Livelihood Programme*” (YLP) that aims to provide youth with skills, financial support, entrepreneurship and relevant knowledge and information to encourage change. This programme seeks to empower youth by harnessing their socioeconomic potential and to increase employment opportunities. To identify appropriate and specific action areas, the programme consulted young people in the phase of conceptualization. Another such initiative, the “*Youth Venture Capital Fund*,” has created a capital fund of USD 25 billion to support the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises owned by the youth. The programme is supported by the Development Finance Company of Uganda (DFCU) Bank and the Centenary Rural Development Bank.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the IDM workshop offered policymakers and practitioners a timely opportunity to discuss and exchange practices and policies on family migration trends and the implications for socioeconomic development. In brief, the workshop pointed to the increasing number of families affected by human mobility and, most importantly, it highlighted the challenges and impact of this mobility trend on families, calling for increased attention and coordinated responses at the local, national and international levels.

The workshop discussions revolved around six areas of focus and action for participants. The first area addressed the links between mobility, family migration and development. It mapped the current realities of family migration worldwide and threw light on the socioeconomic contributions of migrants and their families. Moreover, it analysed family migration through a comprehensive perspective and a long-term approach looking at the social implications and cost of migration for migrants and the family unit.

The second area explored available data and information sources on family migration. Many participants drew attention to the significant paucity of information about the migration of families and its complex facets, the lack of specific statistics regarding, in particular, the psychosocial impacts of migration on migrants, their families and society. Data provided by participants refined categories and gave details of actors involved in the family migration process, with particular reference to women, children and youth. Given the multifaceted aspects of family migration, improving information, knowledge and evidence, based on its

nature and implications for families and societies, is needed for effective policymaking and realization of families' developmental objectives.

The third area of action identified the obstacles to family migration that negatively affect migrants and their families. Participants showed that restrictive national migration policies contribute negatively to family well-being. Much debate also focused on the gender component of migration, particularly taking into account the growing feminization of migration and "deskilling phenomenon" and the growing trend of child migration and protection challenges attached to this.

The fourth area explored family reunification strategies and programmes. Participants affirmed that policies should be tailored to the specific needs of individuals involved in migration, and be guided by a rights-based and migrant-centred approach. Moreover, to foster human and economic development, programmes and strategies need to valorize the skills of migrants. Cooperation and consultation mechanisms among governments, international organizations and civil society have a key role in promoting coherence, complementarity and effectiveness of initiatives addressed to migrant families.

In the fifth area, participants pointed to the negative impacts of separation on families, specifically on emotional and psychosocial development. This explored, in detail, the effects of migration on family members left behind with emphasis on children and the elderly, and pointed to areas that need further investigation. The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration when states implement policies to address difficulties faced by children with a migration background. Moreover, communication technologies can play a crucial role in maintaining the ties between migrants and families left behind. The role of the elderly in family migration is crucial, yet it is underestimated. Speakers called for more research to be carried out on and policy attention given to the category of family members and their contribution to families and communities.

Lastly, the workshop discussions provided an overview of the challenges that the youth face nowadays and their multiple contributions to the economic and social development of origin and destination countries. Ensuring access to employment and educational opportunities is key to strengthening their contribution to development. Governments need to invest in programmes that take into account and encourage young migrants' professional aspirations. Moreover, youth protection needs and the impact of migration on their psychosocial health and personal development require timely and adapted responses.

Based on the deliberations summarized earlier, it was concluded that family migration and its consequences for the family and society deserve further discussion and improved policy attention. Participants called for greater attention to be given to the detrimental consequences caused by long-term separation of families during the migration process. While discussions at the workshop provided the opportunity to delve into family migration, the need emerges to translate this dialogue into concrete policies and actions at the national, regional and international levels.

As the leading organization on migration, IOM will continue to fully take the responsibility entrusted on it by its membership to assist them in an orderly and humane management of migration for the benefit of all, particularly the migrants. IOM was glad about the quality of discussions and exchanges and honoured to have such a wide participation of stakeholders from various geographical regions and representing a variety of institutional and academic backgrounds. Once again, the IDM has lived up to its role as an interactive and inclusive forum serving Member States and other migration actors.



# **MIGRANT'S VOICE**





## **MIGRANT'S VOICE**

No dialogue on migration can be complete without the voices of migrants. For this reason, the IDM has made it a tradition and a priority to invite migrants to share their personal stories, experiences, hopes and dreams with government representatives and others attending the IDM workshops. What follows is one of their testimonies.

### **Elvis Christian Kenmoe from Cameroon, Biomedical Engineer at the Polytechnic Institute of Milan, Italy**

*Could you tell us why you emigrated to Italy?*

I was born and spent my childhood in a small town (Nkongsamba) in Cameroon, in a hostile and unhealthy environment. As a child growing up in those surroundings, I dreamt of being a doctor. So after I had passed my school-leaving examination, I went to the capital, Yaoundé, where at the time the only medical faculty was located. After two unsuccessful attempts to pass the competitive examinations, I decided to give up my studies and joined a public health inspection team headed by an uncle who was an epidemiologist. That experience gave me an opportunity to visit hospitals and to see the difficulties faced by hospitals in developing countries. One of their main problems stems from the lack of qualified staff to run and maintain what is generally high-technology medical equipment. That gave me the idea of training as a biomedical engineer in order to overcome those problems. As biomedical engineering was a new profession and there was no training for it in Cameroon, I had to migrate to the West.

*What was your journey to Italy like? How did you travel? Was it hard to obtain a visa? What channels did you use? Did you move here alone or with your family?*

I chose Italy for just one reason: I had a friend living in Italy who was attending Milan Polytechnic, which was the college I wanted to enter. The idea of my going to the West gave rise to some divided opinions within my family, with the women generally being against the plan, chiefly because of the family's precarious economic situation and the risk of my being lonely. The men, on the other hand, were in favour. It took several months of arguing before getting all the family to agree.

Unanimous agreement within the family made it possible to finance the preparations for my trip, in other words the cost of my Italian language classes, which lasted about eight months, preregistration with the university and the lodging of a deposit to cover my subsistence during at least one year's studies. Those are the three main conditions for obtaining a visa.

*How easy or difficult was it for you to find work/a place to study in Italy?*

I consider myself lucky, because on arrival in Italy, I had the good fortune to come across the Cameroonian Students' Association which made it easier for me slot into the educational environment and helped me to find work as a student. This association informs new students about the Italian education system, how to look for a student's job and, above all, about charities which offer services to foreigners from which I was therefore able to benefit.

*Do you feel integrated in Italy? How did you imagine life in Italy before you arrived? Have your expectations been met?*

Italy is one of the main routes for irregular migration which is therefore the focus of media reports. The latter give the impression that migrants tend to be a problem. This negative view creates mistrust and fear among the local population and does not therefore make for integration. The Cameroonian community's integration has been assisted by the Cameroonian Students'

Association, which organizes cultural activities at the university in order to promote African culture in general. I am sure that this approach has made it easier for us to integrate within the university. But once we are outside of the university, we become migrants again with the negative image often conveyed by the media. I was aware of this situation because, before I go to a country, I always learn about it in order to avoid surprises.

*How has your family been affected by your absence (emotionally, physically or economically)? Do you manage to support your family and community in Cameroon (by sending money or goods, by visiting home, or through business links)?*

My first two years were very hard, not only for me, but also for my family, especially my mother who had difficulty in cutting the umbilical cord. I think that it was my academic success that gave me the strength to overcome that situation. Unlike other African families, mine knows exactly what the purpose of my journey is and I do not therefore experience the financial pressures that weigh on some people. However, I do sometimes take the personal initiative of paying the school fees of my nieces, or cousins, etc.

*Do you think that your migration to Italy has made your life and that of your family better? If so, in what way? If not, why not?*

This experience has changed my life for the better. Professionally speaking, the knowledge I have acquired in the biomedical field has transformed the way that I see myself – not as a young migrant who has gone abroad in order to improve his family's living conditions, but as a young migrant who wants to improve the living conditions of a whole nation.

*What do you think are the main challenges facing young migrants?*

I think that the main challenge they face is mental, especially in the case of young Africans who have migrated in order to study. The fact that they allow themselves to be disheartened by their history and their past, their present situation, their origin and their skin colour, influences their future. This is also why, when they are in Europe, these young people are content with doing odd jobs in order to survive.

*What are your expectations for the future? Do you intend to return to Cameroon?*

Although at the moment I am in Italy, in my mind I have always been in Africa. My journey will be a true success when I have set up a biomedical engineering firm to service and manage clinical equipment in isolated regions of Cameroon.

*What recommendations would you make to those who devise migration policies and to people who play key roles in migration?*

I think that these two groups of people should increase their interaction through more frequent conferences, forums and websites where migrants can freely express their views, in order to become thoroughly conversant with reality on the ground and thus be able to define policies in keeping with real situations. This would make it possible to keep abreast of the evolving situation of migrants.

**AGENDA AND  
BACKGROUND PAPER**





International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Organisation internationale pour les migrations (OIM)  
Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM)

INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION (IDM) 2014  
HUMAN MOBILITY AND DEVELOPMENT: EMERGING TRENDS  
AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

INTERSESSIONAL WORKSHOP ON

**MIGRATION AND FAMILIES**

7-8 OCTOBER 2014

FINAL AGENDA

<b>7 October – DAY I</b>	
09:00 – 10:00	<i>Registration</i>
10:00 – 12:30	<b>OPENING SESSION</b>
	WELCOME REMARKS <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>William Lacy Swing</b>, Director General, IOM</li></ul> KEYNOTE ADDRESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Ana María Baiardi Quesnel</b>, Minister of Woman, Paraguay</li></ul>
	<b>Session I: Understanding the reality of the migration of families in an era of the greatest human mobility</b>
	More than 232 million people live today outside their countries of origin. Of these, 105 million men and women are economically active, contributing significantly to development, economic progress and social welfare in origin and destination countries alike. Children and young people are increasingly affected by family migration, either by being separated from their parents and remaining behind, by migrating with their families or by migrating alone. Migration represents the means for an improved standard of living for many of these families. However, the reality of migration today poses also serious challenges to families with potential negative impact on their well-being. This workshop aims to give visibility to the migrant family and understand the reality surrounding this phenomenon. It will thus discuss differential and complex effects of migration on families, on their rights - both in the countries of destination and origin - and cast light on vulnerabilities and protection challenges as well as promote policy responses. The workshop will also discuss youth migration and the challenges and opportunities faced by this category of migrants and exchange development-oriented policy perspectives and responses. The policy dialogue on the dynamics of family migration aims therefore to contribute to the debate on migration and development.

	<p><b>Moderator: William Lacy Swing</b>, Director General, IOM</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bience Gawanas</b>, Former AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, Advisor to the Government of Namibia</li> <li>• <b>Johan Ketelers</b>, Secretary General, International Catholic Migration Commission, Geneva</li> <li>• <b>Marco de Giorgi</b>, Director General, National Office against Racial Discrimination (UNAR) of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Italy</li> <li>• <b>Gabriela Alexandrescu</b>, Executive President, Save the Children Romania</li> <li>• <b>Eleonore Kofman</b>, Professor of Gender, Migration and Citizenship, Middlesex University, UK</li> <li>• <b>Jane Connors</b>, Director, Research and Right to Development Division, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva</li> <li>• <b>Francois Crépeau</b>, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants (video message)</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p> <p>The questions below are among those proposed to guide the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the current reality of the migration of families?</li> <li>• To what extent does migration occur globally through family migration channels and what are the main push-forces?</li> <li>• Is the contribution of family migration to development correctly assessed? And how well are the costs of migration for families understood?</li> <li>• How can protection challenges of migrant families be better addressed?</li> </ul>
12:30 – 13:00	<b><i>Country Without Parents - Presentation of book and discussion</i></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Andrea Diefenbach, internationally awarded photographer, Germany</li> </ul>
13:00 – 15:00	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:00 – 15:00	<b>SIDE EVENT: Strengthening international cooperation for the protection of children on the move</b>
15:00 – 16:30	<b>Session II: Conditions, challenges and rights-based responses to support families and children in the context of migration</b>
	<p>Challenges attached to migration of families and of children are increasing and are being exacerbated by a growing worldwide context of labour mobility and restrictive migration policies. In some cases, both parents go abroad to work, while their children are left in the care of the extended family, including older siblings, or even neighbours and friends. Families migrating together are also faced with challenges, ranging from the economic to the social, such as integration in a different cultural and social context. Other circumstances increase the risks of abuse, abandonment and exposure to exploitation, especially for migrants in an irregular situation with no access to support and protection services. The category of children migrating alone (unaccompanied minors) is particularly vulnerable to these kinds of abuse. Current international migration policy discussions increasingly focus on the impact of migration on the rights of children and families. However, international comparative review of experience and research in the field remains limited and the rights-based responses to supporting children and family in the context of migration needs further attention. The session will discuss issues relating to the migration of families and international law;</p>



	<p>migration regimes and their impact on families and children; child labour and exploitation; child migrants in countries in crisis, and will present comprehensive policy approaches to address vulnerabilities and protection challenges.</p> <p><b>Moderator: Eleonore Kofman</b>, Professor of Gender, Migration and Citizenship, Middlesex University, United Kingdom</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ruth Farrugia</b>, Advocate and Senior Lecturer Coordinator: Human Rights Programme Faculty of Laws University of Malta, Director General, The President’s Foundation for the Well-being of Society, Malta</li> <li>• <b>Kathya Rodriguez</b>, Director General of Migration, Costa Rica</li> <li>• <b>Patricia Mendoza</b>, Director, Service for the protection of Mexicans in the United States of America, General Department for Protection of Mexicans abroad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico</li> <li>• <b>Ignacio Packer</b>, Secretary General, Terre des Hommes International Federation, Geneva</li> <li>• <b>Andres Franco</b>, Deputy Director, United Nations Children’s Fund, Geneva</li> <li>• <b>Azfar Khan</b>, Head, Policy Research and Knowledge Building, International Labour Organization, Geneva</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p> <p>The following questions are among those proposed to guide the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the vulnerabilities specific to the migration of children?</li> <li>• How is gender mainstreamed into migration policies and debates?</li> <li>• What impact do various migration regimes and policies have on children and families?</li> <li>• What comprehensive policy approaches exist to address migration challenges affecting families at home and abroad?</li> </ul>
16:30 – 18:00	<p><b>Session III: The role of family reunification in facilitating integration</b></p>
	<p>It has generally been acknowledged that while some States perceive family reunification as playing a critical role in the promotion of integration, others prefer to be more restrictive, believing that protecting national interests is reason enough for limiting family reunification. Family reunification accounts for a large share of legal migration; in some States, it accounts for over 50 per cent of legal immigration. While many family reunification policies have changed over the past ten years, it appears that the majority remain restrictive. A significant drop in the number of applications and permits granted for family reunification has been noted, in part due to the introduction of more restrictive measures over the past decade. This session will provide a forum to discuss and debate the issues, and bring to the fore some of the challenges of the costly consequences of long-term family separation and harsh, restrictive policies. Studies have shown that while it is difficult to measure if family reunification has promoted or hindered the integration of families, it is clear that successful integration is determined by a number of factors including the economic situation in the host country, discrimination, and the attitudes of immigration authorities, etc. Delays also lead to fragmentation with much effort being put by families into the actual reunification process rather than on their contribution to the host society. Children ultimately lose out, being denied the presence of one parent and a chance to live in a stable, inclusive environment.</p>

	<p><b>Moderator: William Lacy Swing</b>, Director General, IOM</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Catherine Wiesner</b>, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, United States of America</li> <li>• <b>Richard Johnson</b>, Assistant Secretary, Visa Framework and Family Policy Branch, Migration and Citizenship Policy Division, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Australia</li> <li>• <b>Lieven Brouwers</b>, Policy Officer, Immigration and Integration Unit, DG Home Affairs, European Commission</li> <li>• <b>Maurice Wren</b>, Chief Executive, Refugee Council, United Kingdom</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p> <p>The following questions are among those proposed to guide the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do family reunification policies hinder or promote integration?</li> <li>• Are the requirements for family reunification more of a barrier than a facilitator for social inclusion? What are some of the positive policy approaches and best practices relating to family reunification? Challenges?</li> <li>• Are there implications and costs relating to family reunification both for sending and receiving countries?</li> <li>• What studies have been carried out to measure such implications and costs?</li> </ul>
	<i>End of Day 1</i>
<b>8 October – DAY II</b>	
10:00 – 12:00	<b>Session IV: The effects of migration on family members remaining at home, particularly the children and the elderly</b>
	<p>Migration can bring a lot of positive benefits to migrants and their families, but the realities of contemporary migration often significantly impact not only on the health and welfare of migrants but also on their families who remain behind in the countries of origin. Children are particularly vulnerable in situations of separation from their parents. Long-term separation from their parents can have negative developmental, emotional and health effects on children, with many of them growing up without one or both parents and being raised by their grandparents or extended families. The elderly are another group particularly affected by the migration of family members, with their children or grandchildren very often their only means of support. But beyond the negative social impact, such separation may ultimately set back development of families and communities at home. This session aims to increase understanding of this common migration trend and of the ensuing protection challenges faced by the members of the families affected. It will discuss and exchange perspectives on the reality of transnational and split families and the possible impacts on the physical and mental health and well-being of those staying behind. It will also offer the opportunity to assess policies, programmes and practices that address the protection of migrants’ families who remain behind and promote successful examples of such responses.</p> <p><b>Moderator: Ambassador Marta Maurás Pérez</b>, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations and other international organizations and to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva</p>

	<p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Corneliu Tarus</b>, Deputy Head, Family and Child Rights Protection Department, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, the Republic of Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Liang Maama-Maime</b>, Dr., Manager, National Tuberculosis Programme, Ministry of Health, Lesotho</li> <li>• <b>Fred Machulu Onduri</b>, Director Social Protection, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development, Uganda</li> <li>• <b>Manuel Sierra</b>, Physician and public health specialist, Honduras</li> <li>• <b>Aileen Peñas</b>, Deputy Executive Director, ATIKHA Foundation, the Philippines</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p> <p>The following topics are proposed for discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the social costs of migration? What are some of the impacts on gender relations within families? What are some of the social, economic and health impacts of split families especially on children and the elderly, including psychosocial consequences?</li> <li>• What are some of the key protection challenges faced by families resulting from the migration of the main breadwinners, be it one or both parents?</li> <li>• Are contemporary policies and social services geared towards the new realities of split families and non-traditional families, where one or both parents are not present to play a daily role in the upbringing of their children? What are some examples of policies, programmes and practices addressing the main protection challenges of migrant families?</li> </ul>
12:00 – 13:00	<b>Migrant’s Voice Session</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sumaiya Islam</b>, Director, Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA), Bangladesh</li> <li>• <b>Elvis Christian Kenmoe Sieyapdjie</b>, Biomedical Engineer, Cameroon</li> </ul>
13:00 – 15:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
15:00 – 17 :30	<b>Session V: The multiple role of youth in family migration</b>
	<p>About half of the world population is under the age of 24 and about 12 per cent of the total number of international migrants comprises this age group. Migration represents an important step towards achieving a sustainable life for young family members. This cohort is thus becoming a powerful agent of change and development essentially through its potential to tap the developmental gaps and complement aging societies in countries of origin and destination alike. They also act as key drivers of diaspora engagement in origin and destination countries in bridging different cultures and societies. In the context of migration of families, the younger generation often represents the only source of revenue for families remaining behind. For this category, migration, coupled with poverty and unemployment, can also pose risks and lead to unacceptable situations, discrimination and exploitation. Unaddressed, these challenges may have a detrimental impact on the well-being of young migrants, as individuals and as communities, and on the economic development of countries of destination and origin alike. By bringing to the same table representatives of global youth migration and key governmental and non-governmental policy stakeholders, this session will address trends and drivers of youth migration and will examine the impact of migration on the human development of young people while looking at specific social protection rights and needs. It will also consider the role of youth migrants in achieving development goals and thus provide a platform for exchange of best practices for harnessing opportunities and addressing the challenges created by youth migration.</p>

	<p><b>Moderator: Natalia Popova</b>, Senior Labour Economist, Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT), International Labour Organization</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cha Yong-Ho</b>, Director of Immigrant Integration Division, Korea Immigration Service, Ministry of Justice, the Republic of Korea</li> <li>• <b>Jason Gagnon</b>, Economist, Migration and Skills Unit, OECD Development Centre</li> <li>• <b>François Beya Kasonga</b>, Director General of the General Directorate for Migration, Ministry of Interior and Security, Democratic Republic of the Congo</li> <li>• <b>André Belzile</b>, First Secretary Humanitarian Affairs, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva</li> <li>• <b>Miguel Polo</b>, Head of the Area of Evaluation and Technical Assistance in the Spanish Directorate General for Migrations, Spain</li> </ul> <p><b>General Discussion</b></p> <p>The following topics are among those proposed to guide discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the current dynamics of youth migration? What drives young people to migrate?</li> <li>• What is the impact on young people of the migration of their parents? And how is the family impacted by youth migration?</li> <li>• How is youth, as migrant or by remaining behind, incorporated in national social security frameworks?</li> <li>• Are contemporary policy strategies appropriately addressing the new realities and complexities of youth migration? And what is the role for youth-led organizations to respond to such complexities?</li> <li>• What are the good practices on policies and programmes that promote employment and safe migration among young people?</li> <li>• How is youth migration mainstreamed into national development strategies?</li> <li>• How can youth be better engaged in key policy debates?</li> </ul>
17:30 – 18:00	<b>CLOSING SESSION</b>
	<i>Wrap-up and closing remarks</i>

# MIGRATION AND FAMILIES<sup>1</sup>

## BACKGROUND PAPER

### Introduction

Family migration is estimated to be the main and largest channel of entry for migrants, accounting for almost 50 per cent of international migration flows in countries Members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>2</sup>. Family reunification has been proven to strengthen migrants' contribution to development by increasing their well-being, promoting their personal development and ultimately improving their social integration. Despite this evidence, family migration and its impact on the family unit as a whole, as well as on development, have not yet received the attention they deserve from academics and policymakers.

Through migration, families improve their income, increase their access to education and health, and are generally able to provide better prospects for their children. That notwithstanding, the reality of migration today can pose serious challenges to the family and have a potentially negative impact on the well-being of its members and on development in general. The situation of migrants and families living in settings marked by conflict, economic setback and acute and prolonged periods of

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<sup>1</sup> The topic of this workshop was selected by IOM membership. This workshop is the second in a series, the first workshop "South-South Migration: Partnering Strategically for Development" took place on 24 and 25 March 2014. Please see: <http://www.iom.int/idmmigrationandfamilies>

<sup>2</sup> OECD's International Migration Outlook 2010 estimates family migration to be the main category of entry, accounting for 36 per cent of migration flows (45% if accompanying family of workers are included).

unemployment is particularly challenging. The poor, children, young people and the elderly are particularly vulnerable in these contexts. Although it has been acknowledged that policies are at their most effective when targeting the family unit and its dynamic as a whole, migration research and policy attention currently tends to focus predominantly on individuals rather than on the family as a unit.

The United Nations General Assembly has recognized the crucial role of the family in fostering human development and has called for due consideration to be given to promoting family policy development when setting the post-2015 development agenda. The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, celebrated in 2014, provided an opportunity to reiterate the need for increased cooperation on family issues at all levels and to implement effective, family-oriented national policies, strategies and programmes.<sup>3</sup>

This background paper considers how migration trends impact the family unit by focusing on vulnerable family members – children, the elderly and youth – and drawing attention to policy areas that require further attention. It discusses protection challenges facing families involved in migration and addresses the psychosocial impact of migration on members of the family who are most susceptible and at greatest risk. Lastly, it highlights the multiple roles youth have on family migration and draws attention to policy challenges in this regard.

## **Realities of family-related migration – a gender-based perspective**

Migration of families is a complex phenomenon influenced by a variety of socioeconomic factors and mobility scenarios in all regions of the world. People generally migrate to seek better job opportunities and to provide adequate nutrition, housing, healthcare and education for their families. In this context, several

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly resolution on preparations for and observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (A/C.3/68/L.16).

types of family migration occur: accompanying or dependent family members entering with the primary migrant; family reunification, in which spouses, children and in some cases other relatives, migrate to join an immigrant; and family formation, whereby a citizen marries a foreigner. Families also often migrate in order to escape violent conflict, ethnic persecution and natural disasters.

Economic, social, demographic and political developments drive important dynamics in family migration. Along with the migration of children and youth, female migration continues to account for a significant proportion of family migration. In 2013 women comprised 48 per cent of the international migrant stock worldwide. Although male migrants were seen to be the main economic players of the family until the 1980s, over the past decade perceptions have changed. Women's role in the family, community and workplace is changing, and they are increasingly recognized as key economic decision makers.

A notable proportion of female migration occurs through marriage. This is a common trend in East Asia: in 2008, Taiwan Province of China registered 20–32 per cent of marriages as international and in the Republic of Korea and Japan more than 42 per cent of incoming migration results from marriage. Scandinavian countries are also facing increased marriage migration.<sup>4</sup> More and better opportunities for women in the labour market drive migration for family formation purposes. In some countries, marriage migration is also encouraged to redress imbalances in the population sex ratio, while other governments promote international marriages to tackle depopulation and rural exodus.<sup>5</sup>

The global care chain, or global care drain<sup>6</sup>, is a twenty-first century pattern of female migration, which has major implications for gender and family relations. Mostly present in the high and middle income countries, this trend reflects an unmet demand for care, driven by factors including changes in the social status

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<sup>4</sup> Migration Outlook, OECD, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Seoul et. al (2006) in Hye-kyung Lee *Family migration issues in the East Asian region*.

<sup>6</sup> The term was coined by sociologist Arlie Hochschild in 2002 to describe women's migration as a loss for families remaining in the country of origin.

of women, migration, the reluctance of local populations to take on low-paid and low-skilled domestic jobs, or simply by changes occurring in countries' traditional culture. Commonly perceived to be a family's prime nurturers and care givers, women represent very often the most suitable and the only available candidates for foreign domestic and care jobs – they have natural nurturing skills, they are in search for labour opportunities and thus are willing to quickly take on care-giving responsibilities.<sup>7</sup> In the absence of their wives, mothers, daughters and sisters families left behind are themselves often in need of care and in turn call upon the assistance of relatives or foreign caregivers. The global care chain thus continues.

Contemporary family migration trends have significant consequences for the family structure and relationships of the family, and as described above, growing feminization of migration is an important trend in this sense. Yet, the role of men in family migration, both as a traditional category of migrants or more recently as those left behind, has equally significant implications for the family and for society. Migration of men improves the family's well-being and empowers women, who in the absence of their husbands take on (more) decision making roles. However, migration of men can often translate into vulnerable situations for the family, additional workload for women and children, financial hardship, conflict and even break up the family altogether<sup>89</sup>. Similarly, male migrants may be just as vulnerable as other family members are when facing migration-related challenges. Furthermore, studies show that women's migration can seriously alter men's traditional role in the family and society, with severe repercussions for their health and well-being. This in turn has an impact on the health and well-being of the rest of the family. Gender is thus a key determinant of family migration, which helps to explain the causes, processes and consequences of family mobility. For this reason, migration policy and research can no

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<sup>7</sup> Uncovering the interfaces between Gender, Family, Migration and Development: The Global Care Economy and Chain, Background paper for roundtable discussion 2.2, GFMD 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Ranjana Kumari. Director, CSR, India, Prof. Ishrat Shamim. Director, CWCS, Bangladesh (2007), *Gender Dimensions of International Migration from Bangladesh and India: Socio Economic Impact on Families Left Behind*.

<sup>9</sup> Brenda Yeoh, Lan Anh Hoang and Theodora Lam (2010), *Effects of International Migration on Families Left Behind*, Civil Society Days, Global Forum on Migration and Development, Mexico.



longer afford to be gender neutral and must include all gender perspectives.

While evolving family migration trends will continue to transform the traditional concept of family and fragment the family unit, the concept of the family is beginning to assume a transnational nature, which makes it central to the international migration debate.

### **Challenges posed by family migration**

Migration of families poses significant socioeconomic challenges, since it may put family members in vulnerable situations with risks of abuse, abandonment and exposure to exploitation. This is particularly true for migrants with irregular status, who are often denied access to support and protection services. Throughout the world, millions of children migrate every year; some within their countries of origin and some across international borders. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently estimated that 33 million international migrants are below the age of 20; among them 11 million are aged between 15 and 19, and 9 million are between 10 and 14 years of age.<sup>10</sup> Unaccompanied migrant children have become part of global and mixed migration flows throughout the world. The statistical data available is scattered and unreliable, and the evolving complex and multidimensional aspects of child migration are not well known. There is no homogeneous profile of migrant children: they may be accompanied, separated or alone, and may be of varied ages. Boys and girls alike migrate and do so both through irregular and regular tracks. They may be born in countries of transit or destination, or fall victim to trafficking or sale, or they may be asylum-seekers or refugees, children who left voluntarily or children seeking family reunification.

The reasons why children move on their own are complex and include persecution and conflict, failing States, natural disasters

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<sup>10</sup> *International Migration, Children and Adolescents. Population dynamics*, UNICEF, 2013 [http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Population\\_Dynamics\\_and\\_Migration\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Population_Dynamics_and_Migration(1).pdf)

and environmental change, violence and abuse in the home or at school (or the threat thereof), cultural practices such as arranged or forced marriages, lack of employment or education at home and the resulting belief in real or perceived economic opportunities elsewhere. The child's age and development, as well as the conditions of the journey, influence the level of risk for the child concerned. On the other hand, children's mobility can provide opportunities for personal development. The problem is therefore not necessarily that children move, but rather the vulnerability they face when doing so. The lack of a regular means of migration may lead them to depend on smugglers or other unscrupulous intermediaries and to engage in risky trajectories with limited access to protection services. Children with irregular status also face challenges related to access to basic services, such as education and health care.<sup>11</sup>

Children who are unaccompanied or separated from their families are particularly at risk in places of immigration detention, and are often deprived of their fundamental human rights. Several experts have indicated that these detention centres can have long-term mental and physical health implications for children, even when used only for very short periods of time.

In 2010, the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that, as a general rule, unaccompanied migrant children should not be detained, since alternatives to detention exist. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child only allows for detention as a last resort.<sup>12</sup> Detention of children cannot be justified solely by their immigration status or the fact that they are unaccompanied or separated.<sup>13</sup> The Convention also provides that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration. This includes with regard to the separation of children from their parents or guardians.<sup>14</sup> Given the detrimental effects that detention and family separation have been

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<sup>11</sup> IOM/Eurasyllum: *MIGRATION POLICY PRACTICE*. Vol. III, Number 6, December 2013–January 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Council, 13th Sess., Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Chairperson-Rapporteur: El Hadji Malick Sow, A/HRC/13/30 (Jan. 15, 2010) at pp. 24-25, paras 58-61.

<sup>13</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, article 9.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 3(1).

shown to have on children, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has called on States parties to the Convention to “expeditiously and completely cease the detention of children on the basis of their immigration status.”<sup>15</sup>

Effective and humane approaches to migration management exist, which allow States to achieve their policy goals without harming the health and well-being of children and their families, or violating children’s rights. In order to prevent unnecessary detention, particularly when dealing with children and families, it is fundamental to build trust, respect and value the dignity of the child, and guarantee fair and transparent processes.<sup>16</sup>

## **Family reunification and integration of migrants**

The right to family reunification is recognized in several international instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as in regional legal instruments, such as Directive 2003/86 of the Council of the European Union<sup>17</sup> establishing the right to family reunification for third-country nationals. It is generally acknowledged that while some States perceive family reunification as critical for promoting integration, others are more restrictive. Family reunification accounts for a large share – more than 50 per cent in some States – of legal migration. While many family reunification policies have changed over the past 10 years it appears that the majority remain restrictive when it comes to eligibility for core family

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<sup>15</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Report of the 2012 Day of General Discussion: The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration*, 78-79, available at: [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/2012CRC\\_DGDChildrens\\_Rights\\_International\\_Migration.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/2012CRC_DGDChildrens_Rights_International_Migration.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Report of the 2012 Day of General Discussion: The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration*, 16-18, available at: [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/2012CRC\\_DGDChildrens\\_Rights\\_International\\_Migration.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/discussion2012/2012CRC_DGDChildrens_Rights_International_Migration.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Council of the European Union Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification *OJ L 251, 3.10.2003, p. 12-18.*

reunification.<sup>18</sup> These include strengthened income requirements, pre-entry tests, raised or introduced age limits and procedural and/or financial thresholds. They can also be related to fees and visas and include changes in the definition of “family”. The reasons for such restrictive procedures are usually linked to States’ concerns about abuses of the family reunification system, including through sham and forced marriages, as well as concerns about the integration potential of family members in the country of settlement and their ability to contribute to the local economy. As a result, a significant drop has been noted in the number of family reunification applications approved and permits granted. Policies in support of family reunification, family unity or care and empowerment of the family remaining in the countries of origin are still rare, particularly in the case of temporary and circular migration. However, more favourable family reunification rules are foreseen for the families of highly qualified workers.<sup>19</sup>

Strict family reunification policies can also be the result of family unity not yet being generally acknowledged in migration policies, which tend to ignore the fact that migrants whose families are close by and who enjoy services that respect family rights in their country of destination are often recognized as being healthier and more productive and thus make a greater contribution to development in their country of destination than those who remain separated from their families.

Challenges associated with the costly consequences of long-term family separation and harsh and restrictive family reunification policies have significant implications for migrants and their human development. Studies have shown that, while it is difficult to measure whether family reunification has facilitated or hindered the integration of migrants, it is clear that successful integration is determined by a number of factors including, among others, the economic situation in the host country, discrimination, and the attitude of immigration authorities. It is strongly believed that restrictions on the admission and residence of family members

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<sup>18</sup> OECD Migration Outlook 2012, Migration policy developments, page 97-121.

<sup>19</sup> Council of the European Union, Directive 2009/50/EC. The so-called Blue Card Directive stipulates the conditions of entry and residence of non-EU/EFTA nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment, including family reunification rights.

can hamper integration. Delays also lead to fragmentation, with families putting more effort into the reunification process than into their contributions to the host society. Moreover, focusing the family reunification debate on the perspective of economic impact and shifting immigration policy towards preferences for skilled labour migration increases the duration of family separation, and thus increases the number of people affected by migration. Children ultimately suffer, since they are denied the presence of one parent and the chance to live in a stable, inclusive environment.<sup>20</sup>

### **The impact of family migration on children and the elderly remaining at home**

Migration can bring positive benefits not only to migrants themselves, but also to their family members who remain behind in countries of origin. Their living conditions improve and many gain better access to services, including better goods, good quality education and improved health care. That notwithstanding, separation of family members often determines significant socio-economic outcomes that affect individuals and the family unit overall.

The reality of contemporary migration is such that those who stay behind are often negatively impacted by the absence of the member(s) of the family who have migrated. Parent-child relationships are particularly affected.

Migrant workers are often forced to leave their children behind owing either to restrictive policies regarding accompanying dependents in the country of destination, or because their job makes it impossible for them to take their children with them<sup>21</sup>. This situation forces parents to leave their children in the care of members of their extended family or other members of their home communities. While limited research has been done on the

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<sup>20</sup> Fernando Borraz, Susan Pozo and Máximo Rossi (2008) *And What About the Family Back Home? International Migration and Happiness*.

<sup>21</sup> IOM World Migration Report 2008, Chapter 6, Family Migration.

health and social effects of migration on families left behind, the separation of children from their parents has been found to have profoundly negative emotional effects, generating significant behavioural change, and feelings of loss, sadness, abandonment, anger and rejection. Case studies in countries with high rates of female migration confirm that children staying behind often feel abandoned by their mothers and tend to lose respect for and trust in their parents.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, migration of mothers contributes to a decline in children's school attendance, an increase in early marriage of adolescent girls, as well as heightened risk of drug abuse and other negative social behaviors.<sup>23</sup> Fathers remaining at home with their children cannot easily fulfil the traditional role that mothers assume, and often have difficulty coping with the multitude of tasks they face, and the ensuing loneliness and stress they feel. A study conducted in the Republic of Moldova shows that national support for children affected by migration is often limited to school activities, while other institutions tend not to be concerned with the situation of children left behind by migrant parents.<sup>24</sup>

The migration of family members can also have a significant effect on the elderly. Despite calls<sup>25</sup> for greater attention to be paid to the situation of the elderly left behind, little is known of the specific impacts of migration on this group. Studies show that remittances sent by adult children can benefit elderly parents left behind by increasing the prospects of improving their living standards. The prolonged absence of their children, however, may have a severe psychological outcome.<sup>26</sup> Grandparents are very often the sole caretakers of their grandchildren and their other family members who remain at home. They are therefore often burdened by increased responsibilities and risk serious

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<sup>22</sup> Maria G. Hernandez (2013), *Migrating alone or rejoining the family? Implications of migration strategies and family separations for Latino adolescents*, Research in Human Development.

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF 2006, Study report- The situation of children left behind by migrating parents.

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>25</sup> 30th session of the Commission on Population and Development in New York in 1997.

<sup>26</sup> *Impact of children's migration on health and health care-seeking behavior of elderly left behind*, Ramesh Adhikari, Aree Jampaklay and Aphichat Chamrathirong, 2011.

health problems. For many of these elderly people, the social costs of the migration of their children and/or children's spouses seem to outweigh the benefits both for them and for the grandchildren left in their care. Such situations highlight the acute need for support programmes in communities of origin to help those who are left behind to cope with the migration of their family members. Case studies have shown that the presence of support systems for families staying behind can help them to remain resilient and positive; similarly, migrants maintaining constant communication with their children and parents by telephone, Skype or Internet can contribute significantly to the well-being of those family members left behind and of the family as a whole.

Evidence of the disruptive impact of migration on families shows how important it is to analyse the non-economic social impacts of migration. The significant psychological and emotional effects of family migration should not be overlooked in migration research. Raising community awareness and supporting adult family members to take on and assume domestic tasks such as care for children and the elderly can contribute positively to the well-being of families and communities. Finally, given the developmental implications of migration on the migrants themselves and on their families, a better assessment should be made of the needs and responsibilities of all members involved in the family migration chain to ensure that these are met both in the country of origin and in the country of destination. Migrants should be able to enjoy decent working and living conditions and personal development, as well as sustainable development for their families and communities.

## **The role of young people in family migration**

Recent statistics show that youth account for 12 per cent of all international migrants, with one in every eight migrants being a young migrant<sup>27</sup>. This figure refers to migrants aged between 15 and 24 years old, in line with the United Nations definition

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<sup>27</sup> Estimates by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013.

of youth.<sup>28</sup> This paper, however, does not limit its scope solely to this category but strives to look at a larger group of young people beyond 18 years of age, reflecting various socioeconomic and demographic circumstances.<sup>29,30</sup> Although mobility of young people has been at the top of many international agendas in recent years, many aspects of their migration experience are still not included in policy debates. Migration represents an important step towards achieving a sustainable life for youth and their families, providing young people with opportunities for human and economic development. Through migration, young people have the opportunity to become powerful agents for change and development by bridging developmental gaps and complementing ageing societies in countries of origin and destination alike. That notwithstanding, evidence of the multiple roles youth can play in the migration cycle is limited, which can obstruct the full realization of their potential. Youth have three main roles in family migration: migrating alone to escape poverty, support their families, escape conflict or climate hazards, or for improved study opportunities; migrating to reunite with their families abroad; and staying behind in their countries of origin to look after their families in the absence of their parents or siblings. While these perspectives on youth migration are not exhaustive they reflect the complex and varied nature of the issue. In all the three of these situations young people can benefit from migration as much as they can be negatively affected by it. Better living standards and development opportunities provided as a result of the financial contribution made by their parents abroad are often outweighed by the difficult conditions young people face when staying at home in the absence of parents, such as the

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations (1981), Report of the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year, A/36/215, Annex, United Nations, New York.

<sup>29</sup> Discussions on youth in this paper refer to young people over the age of 18 years old, who are thus not covered by the scope of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child « every human being below the age of 18 years ».

<sup>30</sup> Several working definitions of youth and young people exist in practice: UN Secretariat/ILO/UNESCO: Youth is defined as persons aged 15-24; UN Habitat: Youth - aged 15-32; UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA: Adolescent - 10-19, Young People - 10-24, Youth - 15-24; UNICEF: Child - up to the age of 18; African Youth Charter: Youth - 15-35. The variety of definitions responds to different circumstances and needs relating to young people and youth in a given situation.



excessive burden of supporting their family, lack of schooling, unemployment and risk of abuse and psychosocial problems. Similarly, youth migrating alone or accompanying their parents may face restrictive policies in the country of destination, as well as discrimination, marginalization and unemployment. These are but a few of the migration challenges facing young people. Unemployment remains a key driver for youth migration and a critical challenge: in 2013, of the 228 million young people affected by poverty, 75 million were registered as unemployed.<sup>31</sup> This situation only serves to expose youth to highly vulnerable situations.

Young people constitute a growing and highly educated share of the international population. Their potential to improve and contribute to the development of their communities of origin and destination cannot be underestimated. In the absence of a sustainable response to challenges related to their migration experience, their skills can be wasted. Furthermore, the protection needs and vulnerabilities of youth are not dissimilar to those of children, although young people over the age of 18 years do not come within the scope of international treaties and are consequently exposed to a number of human rights violations. Young migrants in irregular situations, who lack accurate information about their intended destination and face difficult socioeconomic situations in their country of destination or origin, remain exposed and vulnerable to many potentially abusive situations. Legislation and policies addressing protection, support, and awareness of youth impacted by migration and their rights can benefit their well-being thereby further enabling them to take ownership of their contribution to development.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> ILO 2013, Employment trends for youth- A generation at risk.

<sup>32</sup> The World Youth Report, UN DESA, 2013.

## Conclusions

In the context of migration, family has long been approached purely from an economic perspective. Given its policy implications, however, the dynamics of family migration have such an impact on the members of the family that greater consideration should be given to the position of family migration in the policy debate. The potential for families to contribute to development is often reduced as a result of challenging migration experiences. Greater attention to coherent policy is necessary to better assess the potential of the family unit in international migration discourse, as well as the protection challenges resulting from this trend and its potential impact on individual family members and society overall. Although current policy discussions increasingly focus on the impact of migration on child rights and family, there continues to be a dearth of information about children, elderly people who migrate or stay behind, and the resulting changes in family structures and relations due to the absence of one or more parents and other family members. Scarce data on this aspect accounts in part for the lack of policies developed to address challenges related to the migration of families, either in countries of origin or in countries of destination.<sup>33</sup> Research and policy therefore need to take better account of the specific vulnerabilities of each context and situation of family migration. Policymakers in countries of origin and destination face the difficult task of identifying mechanisms and appropriate policies to promote economic development through migrants' contributions, while ensuring adequate protection for the well-being of migrants and members of their families.

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<sup>33</sup> See UNICEF 2009.

## **Selected further reading**

- IDM 2014: First intersessional workshop “South–South Migration: Partnering Strategically for Development” (24-25 March 2014)
- IOM 2014 International Migration Journal, Vol. 52, No.3
- IOM and Eurasyllum 2014 Migration Policy Practice, Vol. 3, No. 6
- GMG 2014 Report “Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities”
- IOM 2013 Children on the Move
- IOM 2013 World Migration “Report Migrant Well-being and development”
- UN DESA 2013 World Youth Report
- ACP Observatory 2012 “Transnational families and the social and gender impact of mobility in ACP countries”
- IOM 2011 Unaccompanied Children on the Move
- IOM 2010 World Migration Report “The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change”
- GFMD 2010 “Partnerships for Migration and Human Development; Shared Prosperity, Shared Responsibility”
- GFMD 2010 Civil Society Days Background papers
- IOM 2008 World Migration Report “Managing Labour Mobility in the Evolving Global Economy”

Please visit the workshop webpage: <http://www.iom.int/cms/idmmigrationandfamilies>







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