



INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL COHESION: KEY ELEMENTS FOR REAPING THE BENEFITS OF MIGRATION

Building upon the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants adopted on 19 September 2016, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) will set out a range of principles, commitments and understandings among Member States regarding international migration in all its dimensions. The GCM should make an important contribution to global governance and enhance coordination on international migration. For the consideration of Member States, the “Thematic Papers”, developed by IOM, outline core topics and suggestions to inform actors involved in the 2017 consultation process that will lead to the inter-governmental negotiations and final adoption of the GCM.

INTRODUCTION

Migration is an important enabler of sustainable development and therefore has significant potential for contributing to both the well-being of individual migrants— social, economic, and physical – and to their communities of origin and destination. For migration to indeed be beneficial in this way, migration governance actors must ensure that newcomers are successfully integrated into society.

When insufficient or ineffective efforts are made to ensure integration, newcomers can become marginalized, thus more vulnerable to risks of all kinds, for example, lack of educational opportunities, language barriers and the inability to find decent work. It is not surprising that those involved in international migration in every sphere – governments, academia, the private sector – have paid increasing attention to the topics of integration and social cohesion of migrants.¹ Despite this growing interest, there is no consensus on what effective migrant integration and social cohesion fully entails, whether programmes should target both temporary and permanent migrants, and whether social cohesion policies and programmes are as relevant for countries of destination as for countries of origin. Indeed, the very terminology related to integration and social cohesion is highly disputed and questions remain on how “integration” relates to “inclusion”, if “social inclusion” is synonymous with “integration”, or whether “social cohesion” is a more neutral and universal term and, hence, should be recommended for usage in the global context.

This paper provides practical insights into the broad thematic issues surrounding integration and social cohesion in order to assist IOM Member States and partners prepare towards the negotiation phase of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).² A number of specific actions and effective practices are identified as potential actionable commitments within the GCM context.



EXISTING PRINCIPLES

The normative framework

In the New York Declaration, States committed to take measures to improve migrants' "integration and inclusion, as appropriate, and with particular reference to access to education, health care, justice and language training."³ Integration and social cohesion are policy areas that fall primarily under national and local jurisdiction. Nevertheless, several international norms and frameworks can provide governments and partners with a reference point when working towards identifying effective national practices and considering possible common areas of action at supra-national and global levels.

The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development⁴ is an historic achievement that placed migration squarely on the global debate. The Agenda recognizes the positive contribution of migrants to sustainable development and expresses the need for international cooperation toward achieving safe, orderly and regular migration (target 10.7). Within the overarching objective of "leaving no one behind", the Agenda calls for ensuring everyone's equitable access, regardless of their migrant status, to health, education, decent work, legal identity (targets 10.2 and 16.9). In addition, the Agenda contains a number of cross-cutting issues that relate to integration and social cohesion and makes clear emphasis on the need to foster inclusiveness. The importance of cultural diversity, non-discrimination and violence prevention is highlighted (targets 4.7, 10.3, 16.7), as is the need to build capacities to promote non-discriminatory policies and laws (target 16.b).⁵

While there are no international legal instruments specific to migrant integration or social cohesion,⁶ international law and customary norms entitle all human beings, irrespective of their status, to protection of their human rights. This premise becomes an important determinant of effective policies and programmes on migrant integration and social cohesion⁷. *The international human rights law* via Article 2 on the Prohibition of Discrimination in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) protects all human beings, including migrants, by prohibiting practices that can negatively impact the enjoyment of their rights for reasons related to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. In addition, the nine core international human rights treaties set out the rights of individuals and the responsibilities of States and apply to all persons, including migrants, and in all contexts, including migration.⁸ The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees provides refugees with *specific international protection* that takes into account their vulnerable situation. Resettlement serves as a durable solution and a tool to ensure protection of refugees.

ISSUES

Integration is defined as the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and host societies in which migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community. As such, integration entails a set of joint responsibilities for migrants and host communities, and, in this broad understanding, incorporates other related notions such as social inclusion and social cohesion. Integration is a cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issue that pertains to policy areas that address the economic, social, legal, cultural, and civic spheres and impacts all aspects of migrants' lives and their communities. (see Figure 1)

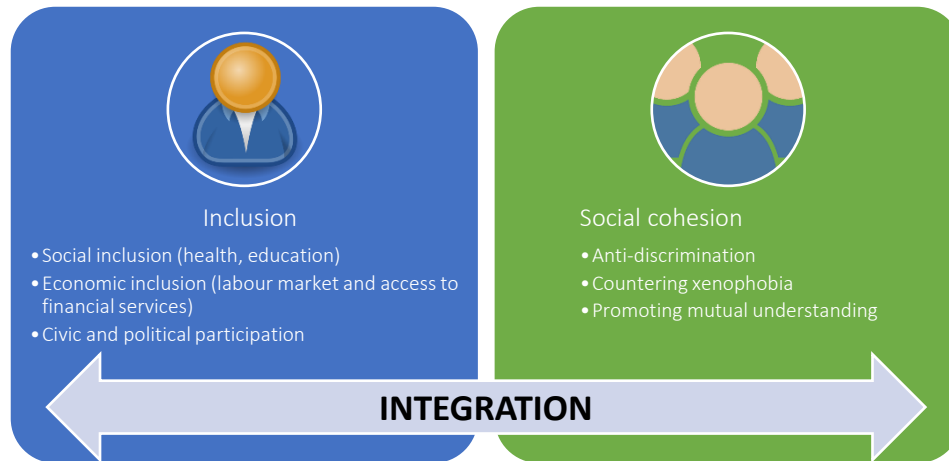


Fig. 1: Elements of integration

Integration is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour. Approaches to integration will vary according to where a State's integration policy lies between the poles of assimilation and multiculturalism.⁹ Moreover, the components of integration and social cohesion policies will also differ depending on the type, duration or purpose of migration. The common denominator is that integration is a process that contributes to stable and inclusive societies. Whether for temporary migration purposes or permanent settlement, the risks and costs of non-integration far outweigh the initial investment needed to support integration. Developing effective integration measures requires sufficient political, social, and financial investments to achieve tangible long-term benefits for all.¹⁰

Integration requires comprehensive and coherent policy approaches across sectors based on partnerships between States and various stakeholders, including intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations, private sector actors and migrants themselves. Integration services and social cohesion support help facilitate access to health care, education and employment, and seek to ensure migrants' social and economic inclusion. Integration policies are more effective when they take a "whole-of-community" approach, and when there is a clear understanding of expectations and obligations from all involved - the migrants and the receiving society, including authorities at the local, regional and national levels.¹¹ Access to basic services needs to be coupled with States' efforts to help prepare local communities for the arrival of newcomers, explore common values between migrants and hosts and create an overall enabling environment in which migrants are empowered to effectively develop their full potential and become active members of their receiving societies.

Integration is influenced by multiple factors including the migrants' reasons for migrating, the length of the intended stay and their socio-economic status, as well as the political climate and prevailing attitudes and opinions about migrants in the receiving societies. Depending on their reasons to move, migrants may face potentially numerous challenges throughout the migration cycle, which threaten their health and psychosocial well-being.¹² Moreover, gender-sensitive approaches to integration are crucial as a person's sex and gender shape every stage of the migration experience. The paths of women and men toward integration may face differing obstacles due to societal expectations and prejudices regarding their perceived roles in society both in the country of origin and of destination. In addition, discrimination in public institutions as well as xenophobic attitudes and abuse from local communities is an obstacle to successful integration.



Challenges to successful integration and social cohesion

Policies that move away from the principle of joint responsibility place the onus of integration efforts on migrants and limit the assistance of the state. For example, some policies set demanding language requirements for certain migrant categories such as family reunification cases without providing the necessary support to meet these requirements. While language training programmes exist, obstacles such as costs for lessons may be imposed on migrants, who face other hurdles to attendance such as access to child care for dependent children.

There are various forms of civic and political participation that extend beyond voting rights depending on the categories of migrants. These forms of participation range from the establishment of consultative structures that allow migrants to communicate their views to government officials, to volunteering opportunities in local institutions that empower migrants as active members in their communities. However, policies that by action or omission restrict pathways to civic and political participation may lead to a protracted state of exclusion, and may lower the representation of migrants and their descendants in politics. Obstacles to migrants' participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life in their communities may increase the risk of tensions between hosts and migrants, thus diminishing the potential benefits of migration.

Growing migratory flows generate questions about how to manage the changing composition of societies. Open dialogue, transparency and accurate information are important ingredients to improving public confidence in migration and integration policies. Host populations are critical stakeholders in the integration process, but more and different avenues need to be found to involve and inform local communities in migration and integration processes from an early stage. Although there are numerous examples of campaigns that strive to paint migrants in a positive light, these practices need to be reconceptualised and new approaches considered. Improving data collection and analysis is also essential to dispel the myths and misperceptions surrounding migration. People tend to overestimate levels of immigration into their countries, often believing that migrants and refugees are a burden on, rather than contributors to, their economies. Such misperceptions feed xenophobic sentiment while hindering migrants' and refugees' integration and opportunities to contribute to the recipient societies. Accurate data and valid empirical research is needed to promote a balanced debate on migration issues. Integration outcomes may be measured differently across countries and regions due to the multifaceted nature of integration, but indicators on integration and discrimination against migrants should be available in all receiving countries.

Effective Approaches to migrant integration

Even though integration approaches vary in purpose and scope across countries and regions, a number of promising and well-established actions are already being taken by various States.

Countering xenophobia and all forms of discrimination against migrants regardless of their status is a salient commitment of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and is essential to facilitate effective migrant integration. Governments have at their disposal a number of tools to ensure that transit receiving and return communities abide by instruments that protect migrants against discrimination.¹³ This can not only be addressed through information and awareness-raising campaigns but also through targeted training of relevant law enforcement officials and local authorities.

Pre-departure and post-arrival orientation programmes are designed to prepare migrants for their arrival and facilitate their integration into host communities by managing their expectations and providing information about their rights and responsibilities, the country's culture and customs, as well as



information about education, health care and employment. These activities help equip migrants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to overcome the challenges of a new culture and reduce their vulnerability to exploitation.

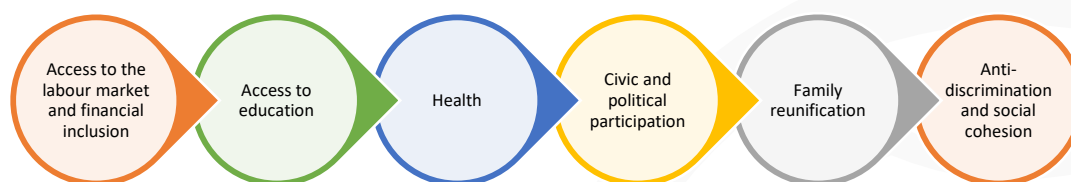
Engagement with the private sector to facilitate labour market access for migrants is an important element of a successful integration policy. The private sector can serve not only as a potential employer of migrants but also as a committed partner in formulating vocational and language training for its workforce. It can also provide knowledge on national and local labour markets to assess labour market needs and identify key areas for migrant employment. Businesses that acknowledge the value of diversity by integrating it into their workforce and institutional culture can be influential actors in shaping perceptions about migrants. The private sector also plays a valuable role in the enforcement of legal obligations regarding the protection of migrants' human and labour rights, and partnerships may help forge greater adherence to international labour standards.

Engagement with receiving communities and local authorities aims to educate and empower all members of society, not just migrants, about the integration process. Capacity building programmes for local communities consist of training and information sessions on topics such as the cultural profiles of migrants as well as information gathered through needs assessment surveys conducted at the pre-departure stage.

Engagement with the media and other actors to highlight the positive contributions of migrants consists of innovative partnerships between intergovernmental organizations, governments and communicators, which foster a balanced and evidence-based reporting of migrant issues. Campaigns which aim to address the negative perceptions of migrants by host societies can be developed jointly by governments, the media and NGOs. Other impactful initiatives consist of campaigns that offer a platform for migrants to tell their own stories by helping them develop skills such as film making and digital storytelling.

SUGGESTED ACTION

In light of the considerations specified in the New York Declaration, the following possible actionable commitments on integration have been identified:¹⁴



Access to the labour market and financial inclusion

- 1) Collect data on incoming migrant flows via mapping of skills, qualifications and language proficiency to ensure better job matching. Mainstream data collection about specific migrant populations including their socio-economic background, employment experience, culture, psychosocial profiles and needs with direct support from organizations in the field.



- 2) Set up migrant resource centres or 'one-stop shops' to provide migrants and prospective migrants, both in countries of origin and destination, with services on all matters related to their safe migration experience such as registration and documentation, information about employment opportunities, legal counselling, training and referral to additional external services.
- 3) Provide information and training services to migrants and their families at the earliest stage possible to facilitate their financial inclusion in their receiving communities and reap the development benefits of migration.
- 4) Increase institutional capacity for the assessment and recognition of foreign academic, professional and vocational qualifications in cooperation with other stakeholders including the private sector. This should include employer training/awareness-raising on value and equivalences of foreign credentials.
- 5) Consider innovative ways of matching newcomers with labour market needs and gaps such as partnerships with the private sector to address key labour shortages.
- 6) Focus on strategies to promote labour market insertion and development of professional skills and networks schemes including internships and traineeships and work/study programmes.
- 7) Provide access for on-the-job training to migrant women as well as childcare and single parents' services to enable them to access meaningful employment, support for self-employment through access to credit and business support, as well as study opportunities.

Access to education

- 8) Provide tailored services based on education level, literacy and mother tongue including targeted language and vocational skills training to migrants.
- 9) Develop online training resources for areas such as language training and interpretation services.
- 10) Provide enhanced integration services to unaccompanied and separated migrant children ranging from education, language and socio-development opportunities.
- 11) Increase capacity in schools, healthcare and public services through embedding migrants in service delivery areas, especially those who share both a linguistic and cultural familiarity with target populations who can serve as cultural mediators.

Health

- 12) Develop policies that recognize that the equitable access to health services for migrants is a means to reduce health and social costs, improve social cohesion and protect public health and human rights.
- 13) Ensure the training of health staff to provide culturally-sensitive support to migrant populations as well as interpretation services as appropriate.
- 14) Address obstacles relating to xenophobia and discrimination to migrants' access to health services, and mainstream resilience through adequate information, education, and empowerment for self-help.
- 15) Provide services for psychosocial support of migrants that address the physical and mental challenges that migrants may experience throughout the migration cycle. Services should include capacity-



building and training of local health professionals and educators, and must be guided by a flexible and multidisciplinary approach to mental health.

Civic and political participation

- 16) Explore pathways to guarantee legal identity to migrants in countries of destination as appropriate. In cooperation with intergovernmental organizations, national and local governments and other stakeholders, introduce universal civil registration and identification systems to grant migrants access to services and monetary transactions, with attention to protecting personal information.
- 17) Actively contribute to engagement of migrants with national and local authorities to ensure the presence of migrants in decision-making processes at the national, regional and local levels.
- 18) Establish consultation mechanisms such as focus groups and town hall meetings to build rapport with migrant communities and offer pathways to streamline migrants' political participation and their presence in the public debate on migration.
- 19) Provide resources for the creation of spaces that can host encounters between migrants and hosts to promote interreligious, intra-faith and/or interfaith dialogue.
- 20) Provide civic education through greater engagement with local authorities, linguistic and cross-cultural mediators and migrant organizations.
- 21) Provide support at all stages of the integration process for online communications targeting migrants' knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in the receiving countries, their social networks, their decision to migrate and their knowledge about their protection against discrimination and xenophobia. Innovative tools must also be used to foster intercultural dialogue and celebrate cultural diversity.

Family reunification

- 22) Family unity contributes to migrants' well-being. When migrants move to a new country together as families they benefit from the immediate support structure created within the family unit, as well as the increased likelihood of broadening their social networks and establishing themselves in a new environment. Where appropriate, facilitate family reunification by establishing realistic and feasible requirements of income, language and fees and eliminate unnecessary obstacles such as excessive delays in visa processing.

Anti-discrimination

- 23) Implement innovative tools such as storytelling platforms, artistic and cultural activities and social media campaigns to disseminate messages about the positive contributions of migrants.
- 24) Ensure budget allocation to facilitate migrants' participation in artistic and cultural activities.
- 25) Devise, reform, and implement, as necessary, legislation on countering discrimination against migrants, in line with international standards. This may require modifying legal, policy, and institutional frameworks to remove legal, administrative, and practical barriers that inhibit migrants from accessing information, resources, and services.



- 26) Adopt integration indicators¹⁵ that include ways of monitoring expressions of xenophobia, discrimination and reported cases of physical and mental abuse within migrant receiving communities.
- 27) Ensure that migrants are provided with comprehensive information relating to their rights and access to recourse as perceived or actual victims of discrimination, and implement mechanisms to enable reporting abuse and access justice.
- 28) Provide operational and financial support to the implementation of UN-wide campaigns that aim to change negative perceptions and attitudes toward migrants.¹⁶

¹ See, for instance, McKinsey Global Institute, *People on the move: Global migration's impact and opportunity* (2016) Available from: <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/global-migrations-impact-and-opportunity>

² Following recommendations of the latest Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), IOM is embarking on the development of a comprehensive framework on integration and social cohesion to be presented to the consideration of IOM member states and partners in 2018.

³ New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (A/71/L.1) para. 39

⁴ A/RES/70/1 (25 September 2015), available from http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.

⁵ The goals and targets that refer to integration's main areas of work can be found in Annex I.

⁶ A list of frameworks and their brief descriptions is presented in Annex II.

⁷ An important legal collision frequently referred to in the context of migrant right protection is the relationship with the sovereign right of States to restrict entry and stay of foreigners on their territory. This issue is dealt in detail in another IOM thematic paper prepared towards the GCM and, hence, is not covered in this paper.

⁸ These are: the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1966); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990); the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006); and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). See Annex II for more detail.

⁹ IOM, *Essentials of Migration Management*, "Integration of Migrants" vol. 3.6

¹⁰ Such benefits are, for example, migrants' positive fiscal net contribution, which stems from their integration into the labour market and their access to education in a timely manner. This type of contribution is recognized in the European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals.

¹¹ Ministries and national level agencies engaged in integration vary from country to country, but typically a number of different ministries and government portfolios deal with integration-related issues – including but not limited to education, employment, access to nationality, social affairs and political participation. Regional and local authorities including mayors, public officials in education, law enforcement and other areas have a key position in developing community or ethnic-specific measures compared to national governments because they have stronger ties with migrant organisations and are less susceptible to national debates. Non-state actors including civil society, religious organizations, private sector institutions, employers, civil society organizations, trade unions and migrant organizations are key in promoting social inclusion and defending migrant rights through promotion of networks, advocacy work and access to migrant-oriented services. Various intergovernmental organizations collaborate closely with governments and offer programmatic support within specific areas of integration. These intergovernmental bodies act in partnership with representatives of the international community to advance the understanding of integration issues and address their operational challenges. The primary actors include IOM, UNHCR and other noteworthy actors such as the World Health Organization, OECD and UNICEF. Migrants themselves contribute with positive messages about their role in receiving societies. Moreover, migrant leaders



within specific communities can serve as links with local authorities and establish spaces for intercultural dialogue with hosts. Receiving communities in turn can be active in promoting the inclusion of migrants by helping national and local authorities to implement migrant-sensitive initiatives.

¹² Good mental health is not only the absence of mental disorders, but is a state of well-being in which an individual can realize his or her own abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. See World Health Organization. Mental Health: a state of well-being. Available at: http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/ Accessed March 30, 2017

¹³ As an example, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union “enshrines many rights of crucial importance to the integration process, including the freedoms of speech and religion, as well as the rights to equality and non-discrimination. Understanding and subscribing to these fundamental values is an essential element of living and participating in the host society.” (COM(2016) 377 final)

¹⁴ This paper consulted two main sources to identify integration topics and indicators: the Migrant Policy Index 2015 and the migrant statistics overview from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. See also: OECD/European Union (2015), Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In, OECD Publishing, Paris.

¹⁵ See Eurostat Migrant Integration Indicators in: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant_integration_statistics_-_overview

¹⁶ One example of such campaigns is TOGETHER which aims, among other things, to create a coalition of UN agencies, Member States, the private sector and civil society, acting under the same banner, committed to addressing the problem of rising xenophobia. Through its information channels, the campaign helps to showcase similar efforts such as the Plural+ Youth Film Festival and the I Am a Migrant campaign. See <http://together.un.org/>