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IOM's Labour Migration and Human Development Programme

Migrant Integration

IOM AND MIGRANT INTEGRATION

Integration is key to effective and comprehensive migration-management approaches. Successful integration is essential for all stakeholders, not only in terms of the benefits gained from migration, but also for the well-being of migrants and the security, stability, social harmony and prosperity of society as a whole.

While the term “integration” is one that is understood differently depending upon the country and context, it can generally be defined as the process of mutual adaptation between the host society and the migrants themselves, both as individuals and as groups. Migrant integration policy frameworks should take into consideration the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, including access to the labour market, health and social services, and education for children and adults. Integration implies a sense of obligation and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and their host communities in a common purpose. In this regard, integration policies and support measures should not be limited to long term migrants, but should also tackle the needs and challenges pertaining to shorter-term migration.

Comprehensive approaches to migrant integration help to ensure that migrants can fully engage in the host society whether socio-economically, politically or culturally. They allow migrants to develop their human capital during their stay, thereby fostering economic growth while building critical links between their host and source country. Such approaches and related policies are most effective when tailored to address the specific migration context, taking into account migrant characteristics (including gender and age), duration of stay, and overall economic and societal trends in the receiving country. Strategies must be simultaneously developed to educate receiving communities on the positive contributions of migrants, as well as the benefits of living and working together in multi-cultural settings. Open and transparent dialogue on the benefits and challenges of integration among all actors can help to reduce misperception and fear and foster a sense of common understanding.

Integration policy intersects with a number of other major policy areas, including employment and labour market policy, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, social cohesion, public health, education, naturalization and citizenship, regional development and nationality security, as well as the protection of human rights. Migration admission policies also play a crucial role in defining a migrant’s legal status and rights and also in determining the accessibility to social services. Effective integration policies therefore cannot be implemented in isolation and require coherence across policy areas. In this regard, the benefits of migration can be further reinforced by comprehensive policies that support the social, economical, political and cultural inclusion of migrants in their new environments.

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IOM International Organization for Migration



IOM's Approach to Integration

IOM recognizes that successful integration is a dynamic two-way process that involves mutual adaptation of migrants and the host society based on principles of protection of fundamental rights, respect, tolerance and non-discrimination. Migrants who are integrated successfully in the receiving societies have acquired new knowledge and skills and accumulated capital, as well as achieved security of accommodation, and are also best placed to effectively contribute to the development of their countries of origin.

IOM recognizes that, in order for integration to succeed, dialogue and mutual adaptation between the receiving society and migrants must be based on a common set of values. In this regard, IOM works to develop measures that support the participation of migrants in public life, such as their inclusion in consultative bodies at the national and local levels, fostering their engagement in civil society, and building the capacity of government actors and other stakeholders to effectively involve migrants.

Present in over 150 countries, with over 440 offices worldwide, IOM has the distinct advantage of being able to operate at various stages and levels in the migration process. Its neutrality and independence enables it to serve as a neutral broker between newcomers and host communities. With its broad range of migration management services, IOM has the capacity to provide significant input on the design and implementation of integration programmes, and works in the following ways to promote and support integration efforts:

Pre-departure Orientation

IOM equips migrants with basic information about the country of destination and helps them to identify the skills and attitudes needed to succeed in their new environment. IOM does this through tailored training activities that focus on managing expectations, exploring behavioral changes needed for a successful and productive transition.

Capacity Building

IOM works with a broad range of stakeholders, including government agencies at national and local levels, employers, trade unions, educational institutions, media, and ethnic community representatives to address specific integration challenges. IOM offers technical support through trainings, advisory services and other capacity-building initiatives drawing on a range of integration models and best practices gained through its work.

Awareness Raising and Information Dissemination

IOM engages in awareness-raising activities targeting host communities, local authorities and service providers on integration-related issues, and promotes and organizes thematic discussions and platforms on migration issues, specifically highlighting the positive contributions of migrants. IOM works with media representatives on developing a responsible and balanced approach to media-reporting on migration issues in order to improve public perception of migrants.

Promoting Social Inclusion and Combating Xenophobia and Discrimination

IOM works closely with migrant organizations, often directly as project partners, to promote across-the-board participation of migrants in the national and local-level decision-making process. IOM conducts information campaigns and promotes building inclusive societies. Programmes designed to promote social inclusion and address marginalization are implemented with a wide range of migrant beneficiaries, including youth, unaccompanied migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Policy Development and Research

IOM works on mainstreaming migration and integration in various policy agendas, including addressing employment, non-discrimination, development and education. IOM also conducts research and has produced studies on various aspects of labour market integration of migrants and public perceptions of migrants, among others, and has organized high-level seminars to publicize and discuss research findings.

For further information, please contact:

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