

International Organization for Migration
Statement

General debate

(a) Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development at the global, regional and national levels

(b) Population, education and sustainable development

Fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development
10-14 April 2023

[max 4 min]

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, guests,

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is honoured to present a statement on the occasion of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development. In the spirit of this year's theme, I want to reiterate the ICPD Programme of Action's commitment in "protecting the human rights and dignity of migrants and providing basic services" and its acknowledgement that "the integration of migrants is facilitated by universal access to education".

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the significance of education and migration programming, with the related immobility stranded hundreds of thousands of foreign students in higher education, causing economic hardships and disrupting provision of essential services. However, it has also presented opportunities for innovation in education, greater use of digital technologies, and broader access for people on the move, including forcible displaced.

Education is a key determinant to transform lives. Universal access to education for all migrants is fundamental, as it influences their opportunities in life, their economic and civic involvement and their degree of integration. Quality education empowers individuals to make informed choices for and about their families. It can help overcome discrimination and contribute to social cohesion and be an intrinsic bridge connecting human potential with sustainable development. Hindered access to education for migrant populations hinders the positive and numerous contributions migrants can bring to societies at large, and the benefits that are associated with good migration governance to accelerate the attainment of all other SDGs.

Through the GCM Objective 15, Member States committed to ensuring that all migrants, regardless of their migration status, can exercise their human rights through safe access to basic services. This includes inclusive and equitable quality education. The GCM also contained calls for Governments to facilitate the mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences of migrant workers at all skill levels as well as to ensure decent work.

As we move towards the new world of education, digitalization and the reconceptualization of the nature of work, we can make a meaningful impact through these key policy and programming areas:

First, with a staggering 31 million school-aged children being international migrants, this issue demands our utmost attention as a long-term strategic priority and investment. Education of migrant children extend far beyond the ambit of SDG 4, but also contributes to economic and social benefits, such as enhanced livelihoods, better health outcomes, and reduced gender disparities. Large and unexpected migration flows can disrupt education systems, creating barriers for migrant children to access education, therefore is crucial to adopt a policy coherence and whole-of-government approach, that encompasses all stakeholders, such as the education sector, social services, and migration authorities.

Second, access to education and lifelong learning opportunities can help ensure that migrants have the requisite skills to succeed in the labor market and adapt to its changing nature. Investment in education may contribute to necessary skill sets to fill gaps in the labor market in other countries or regions. Skills Mobility Partnerships can be a key tool to address labour gaps, while supporting young people to move safely and develop new skills.

Third, it is crucial to close the digital divide, ensure education in emergencies, and importantly, migrants themselves and their families are critical stakeholders who must be consulted and can help promote equitable access to education. Migrants and diaspora keep educational system running, at the same time, remittances from emigrant family members can fund good quality education of family members back in the country of origin.

Last, it is important to ensure reliable, high-quality data disaggregated by migratory status to inform policy formulation by all countries. This will be essential for the review and follow-up to the ICPD and for reviewing progress

towards achieving the SDGs. Only through a thorough and systematic assessment of the barriers and risks in terms of access and literacy, will we be able to identify gaps and areas to support education for all.

IOM has initiated a number of initiatives. At the global level, we partnered with UNICEF, ILO, and UNESCO to launch a Toolkit for integrating migration into education interventions; IOM is also co-leading the Global Skills Partnership initiative to advance the recognition of skills of migrant workers with a particular focus on women and youth. In various countries, IOM has supported expanding access to migrants for remote education during COVID-19 by assisting migrants in vulnerable situations with equipment and tools to access virtual education.

As the Transforming Education Summit elevated education to the top of the global political agenda, IOM reiterates our unwavering commitment to advancing equality, rights and dignity for all migrants, and hopes to see major considerations for migrants continuously featured in the CPD outcomes of this session.