

Report on Revisiting Migrants' Contributions from a Human Rights-Based Approach: A Discussion on Facilitating and Hindering Factors

Introduction

Forced To Flee is a global organisation committed to protecting and empowering refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Our tireless efforts ensure that their human rights are upheld and that they are valued members of the societies they reside in. This report is a testament to our ongoing dedication to amplifying the voices and contributions of migrants. Our research is multifaceted, drawing from extensive data and statistics, including reports from international organisations, academic research, and government agencies. This data demonstrates the positive economic, social, and environmental impacts that migrants have on their host communities. This submission aims to challenge the negative narrative surrounding migration and to highlight the critical contributions that migrants make to society. We firmly believe that a human rights-based approach to migration is morally imperative and strategically beneficial for all. By identifying and addressing the barriers that migrants face, we can unlock their full potential and create more inclusive and prosperous societies for everyone. We are confident that this report will serve as a valuable resource for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of migration and the positive role that migrants play in our communities.

Examples of migrants' contributions to various sectors of society

Economic:

Most economies worldwide, both emergent and developed, report positive effects and impacts thanks to migrants' contributions. An increase of 1% in the share of the migrant population in advanced economies could mean a 2% increase in the GDP in the long term (Jaumotte et al., 2016). At the same time, they represent nearly 3% of the GDP of developing economies (McKinsey Global Institute, 2016).

Migrants are critical in fulfilling the employment demand in advanced economies. Data shows they often take on jobs native-born populations are less likely to fill. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, around 31% of farm workers in the US are foreign-born, most of whom come from Mexico and Central America (Economic Research Service, 2023). These workers play an essential role in the agricultural industry, as many native-born workers are less likely to take on physically demanding and often seasonal agricultural jobs (New American Economy, n.d).

In the United States, nearly half of the new workforce incorporated into the US labour market are migrants. At the same time, this proportion reaches 70% of the new workforce in Europe, a more aged economy (OECD, 2014). Also, this new workforce consists of a highly educated migrant population. For example, in capital regions of the US, nearly 60% of the migrant population are highly educated. Furthermore, in some cities,

this share of the highly educated foreign-born population could surpass the share of the highly educated native population (OECD, 2022). This migrant population is present in most economic sectors. Still, it stands out in the European context, for example, in the primary sector (agriculture, mining, and construction), where the share of migrant workers doubles the share of European workers. (Eurostat, 2023).

Migrants are also more likely to start businesses than native-born individuals, with studies suggesting a 50% higher rate in the US (Kerr & Kerr, 2020).

Between 2007 and 2012, 1 of every four new firms created in the US was started by immigrants (Kerr & Kerr, 2020). Migrants are 80% more likely to develop a new firm than natives in the US (Azoulay et al., 2020). These entrepreneurial migrants came from many different countries and cultural contexts, but, for example, most US billion-dollar startup companies have been founded by people from India and China (Anderson, 2022).

Migrants bring diverse skills and perspectives that can spur innovation. Research suggests they have a higher concentration in R&D-intensive sectors and generate more patents in host countries. Disaggregation by gender shows that female migrants face barriers to accessing resources for innovation, making targeted support crucial.

For example, in the US, for every 12,000 migrants, there is a 27% increment in innovative patents presented in the country (Burchardi et al., 2020).

Social:

Migrants are vital in healthcare systems, working as doctors, nurses, and caregivers. In the US, 25% of trained physicians are foreigners, mostly from low-income countries (Hagopian et al.,

2004). In the UK, for example, over 30% of NHS doctors are from outside the EU. Age and gender disaggregation reveal that younger female migrants are mainly in caregiving roles (Baker, 2023).

Migrant educators and researchers enrich educational landscapes with diverse perspectives and experiences. In Australia, 25% of primary school teachers are immigrants, with higher proportions in specific languages (Collins & Reid, 2012). More than 10% of school staff in the UK were born outside of the UK, reaching more than 30% of London's school staff (Briggs, 2021). Data shows that female refugees face obstacles entering teaching but can contribute significantly with targeted support.

CASE STUDY: Migrants' contributions to various sectors in Newham, London:

Newham is one of the most diverse boroughs in London, with over 70% of its population identifying as Black, Asian, or minority ethnic (BAME) (Pilkington et al., 2023). Migrants contribute significantly to the borough's economy, social fabric, and cultural richness.

Specific sectors and examples:

Economy:

Small businesses: Many migrants run businesses in Newham, creating jobs and contributing to the local economy. A 2019 report by the Centre for London found that 44% of small businesses in Newham were owned by people born outside the UK.

Essential services: Migrants are crucial in healthcare, transportation, and sanitation. For example, a 2017 report by the Migration Observatory found that 28% of NHS staff in London were born outside the UK.

It is worth noting, however, that despite the diverse background of Newham, migrant-owned small businesses are often disregarded. Market Village in Stratford, Newham, has been a vital part of the community for over 30 years. Unfortunately, the sudden closure of the market has adversely affected the livelihoods of migrant traders. This abrupt closure has left several viable businesses in limbo, disrupting a piece of our local history and culture that locals hold dear.

Culture and Community: Migrants contribute to Newham's vibrant arts scene through music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. For example, the borough hosts festivals celebrating different cultures, such as the Newham Bengali Mela (City Connections, 2021).

Also, many migrants are involved in community organisations that provide support and services to residents. These organisations often cater to specific needs based on language, religion, or ethnicity.

Innovation and Entrepreneurship: New ideas and perspectives: Migrants bring diverse skills, knowledge, and experiences that can contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship. For example, several tech startups in Newham are founded by migrants.

Measures Taken by States at the Local, National, Regional, and international levels

Positive Measures by Governments to Facilitate, Maximise, and Optimise Migrant Contributions

Governments can implement many positive measures at local, national, regional, and international levels to facilitate, maximise, and optimise the contributions of migrants, their families, and communities in origin, transit, and

receiving societies. Here are some examples across different levels:

Local (London):

Develop and implement integration strategies: London's Integration Strategy outlines plans for language training, employment support, and community cohesion measures to aid migrant integration.

Fund community-based organisations: Initiatives like the Mayor's Fund for London support NGOs providing language classes, skills training, and other services to empower migrants.

Create inclusive public spaces and services: Ensure cultural awareness training for local government staff and promote multilingual resources to make services accessible to diverse communities.

National (UK):

Regularisation mechanisms: Schemes like the Windrush Compensation Scheme address historical injustices and provide pathways to citizenship for previously irregular migrants.

Skilled worker visa programs: Facilitate the attraction and retention of skilled migrants through streamlined visa processes and tailored employment pathways.

Anti-discrimination legislation: The Equality Act protects migrants from discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas, fostering a more inclusive society.

National Integration Framework: Develop a comprehensive framework outlining policies to support language learning, skills recognition, and social integration for all migrants.

Regional (European):

EU Blue Card initiative: Facilitate the movement of highly skilled migrants within the EU by simplifying visa procedures and offering attractive benefits.

Cooperation on asylum and migration: European Union migration agreements aim to ensure coordinated responses to migrant flows and promote fair responsibility-sharing among member states.

Integration initiatives: EU projects like Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) co-fund projects fostering migrant integration and social cohesion at the local level.

International:

Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: This non-binding agreement promotes cooperation among states on migration governance, emphasising migrant rights and contributions.

Development assistance: Programs by agencies like UNDP and USAID support capacity building in origin countries to address root causes of migration and create opportunities for local development.

Innovative Initiatives: Civil Society and NGO Efforts

Civil society organisations and non-governmental stakeholders play a crucial role in supporting and facilitating the integration of migrants, leading to their valuable contributions to society. They implement some vital positive measures:

Skills Recognition and Bridging Programmes: NGOs like the City of Sanctuary and Migrants Support Network help migrants assess and document their skills and qualifications, bridging the gap between their foreign credentials and UK requirements.

Other NGOs like Refugee Council and Migrant Voice offer workshops and guidance to help migrants get their qualifications recognised in the UK, facilitating access to relevant jobs. Also, the Refugee Council connects migrants with field professionals, offering coaching and upskilling opportunities to enhance their employability and giving mentorship.

"No Wrong Door" in Scotland connects migrants with skills assessment and training programs, bridging the gap between their skills and job market requirements.

Finally, regarding language acquisition support, numerous community groups and charities like English in Action and Refugee Women Connect provide English language classes tailored to specific sectors and professional needs, empowering migrants to navigate workplaces effectively. The Charitable Foundation "Liechtenstein Languages": Gives classes and training in German with different practical approaches for migrants, teaching specific words and grammatical formulas for their interaction with the authorities, for healthcare, for their particular job or sector. This initiative allows migrants to develop their skills in their new communities thanks to the orientation with German.

Entrepreneurship and Business Development: Regarding microfinance and business loan schemes, there are initiatives like the MicroLoan Foundation and Migrants Entrepreneurship Network that offer financial support and guidance to migrant entrepreneurs, fostering business creation and self-employment. They are provided to support migrant entrepreneurs in starting and growing their businesses.

Community Integration and Social Cohesion: Organisations like Citizens UK and Interfaith Network for the UK bring together migrants and residents to foster understanding, break down stereotypes, and build positive relationships. Also, Platforms like DoSomething.org and Timebank connect migrants with volunteer opportunities in various sectors, allowing them to contribute their skills and talents while building social connections.

In the context of the US, there are other kinds of programs oriented to integrating migrants, such as the Matching Grant program of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, a traditional NGO that advocates the integration of migrants, mainly from Central America, into the US. This program, through voluntary donations and contributors, and with federal funds, helps refugees and migrants with a personalised assistance approach when they arrive in the country, giving them stipends, orientation, language classes, and job-seeking help. After six months, nearly 70% of migrants achieve economic self-sufficiency, facilitating their integration into the country and maximising their contribution through work.

Advocacy and Policy Influence: NGOs like Migration Observatory and Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants conduct research and produce evidence-based reports to inform policymakers about the positive contributions of migrants, advocating for policies that enhance their integration and opportunities.

There are also campaigns, for example, those organised by Stop the Hate UK and Stand Up to Racism, that challenge negative narratives and discrimination against migrants, promoting general

understanding and fostering a more inclusive society.

Some other groups are oriented to lobbyings, like the Refugee Council and British Red Cross in the UK, which work with parliamentarians and decision-makers to influence policies that protect the rights of migrants and create a more welcoming environment for them to thrive.

Barriers to Acknowledging and Utilising Migrants' Contributions

Unfortunately, the situation surrounding migrants' contributions in the UK is complex and multi-faceted, with numerous obstacles hindering their full realisation and recognition.

Obstacles hindering the realisation and recognition of migrants' contributions in the UK:

Legal and Policy Frameworks: There is a hostile migrant policy environment in the UK. The 2012 policy introduced measures like the "right to rent" scheme and increased immigration enforcement, creating a climate of fear and distrust for migrants, hindering their integration and participation in society.

Also, migrants have limited access to social security. Many irregular migrants lack access to essential benefits like healthcare and social housing, affecting their well-being and ability to contribute fully.

Another obstacle is the restrictive visa regulation. The complex and expensive visa processes, limited quotas and long waiting times can discourage skilled migrants from coming to the UK and hinder their ability to utilise their skills.

Institutional Frameworks: One of the biggest problems is the lack of data collection. The disaggregated data on migrant contributions across various

sectors is often limited, making it difficult to assess their impact and advocate for supportive policies.

Public Discourse: Migrants suffer from negative media portrayal. Sensationalised and often inaccurate media coverage of migration can fuel negative stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes towards migrants, hindering public recognition of their contributions. There is much misinformation and "us vs them" narratives on the topic of migration, making false claims about migrants taking jobs and straining resources. This fosters a hostile environment and hinder social cohesion.

In general terms, there is a lack of understanding of migrant experiences because of limited exposure to diverse perspectives and stories that can perpetuate negative stereotypes and hinder empathy and understanding toward migrants.

Strategies for Awareness and Narrative Change

Addressing harmful narratives on migration and shifting conversations to a more positive and accurate portrayal requires a multi-pronged approach. According to the Eurobarometer, less than 4 of every 10 Europeans consider themselves well-informed about migrant policy and the integration of non-EU nationals (Eurobarometer, 2022). This lack of knowledge about migrants' policies and contributions allows the diffusion of some of the most common misconceptions, such as the myth that migrants and refugees steal jobs of nationals in their host country, that they are welfare cheats, or that they bring insecurity and terrorism (UNESCO, 2023).

These are some strategies:

1. **Counteracting misinformation with facts and data:** It is necessary to support organisations and initiatives researching and disseminating accurate statistics and reports on migration's positive contributions. Organisations like The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank offer data-driven resources. This information could help to debunk myths and harmful stereotypes through social media campaigns, infographics, and educational videos. Fact-checking initiatives like the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and Snopes can be vital partners. Also, it is necessary to engage with and empower journalists to report responsibly on migration, avoiding sensationalism. Promoting training and workshops on fair and balanced reporting on migration can help this.

2. **Amplifying migrant voices and stories:** A good strategy is to promote platforms and storytelling projects that showcase the diverse experiences and contributions of migrants. Support initiatives like "Migrant Voices" and "The New Arrivals" that allow migrants to share their stories. It is important to empower migrants so they can take control of their narratives.

3. **Challenging the framing and language used in public discourse:** Harmful language and metaphors like "invasion," "burden," and "flood" used to dehumanise migrants should be eliminated. Advocate for respectful and inclusive language that recognises migrants' individuality and agency. Part of the work to change these narratives is to challenge the politicisation of migration by engaging in constructive dialogue with policymakers and politicians.

4. **Building understanding and empathy through education:** Integrate accurate

and balanced information about migration into school curriculums from an early age through workshops and training on responsible representation of migration for educators and community leaders.

Practical Recommendations

These are some practical recommendations for the UK to address the challenges hindering migrant contributions and ensure their human rights are protected at all stages of the migration journey:

Legislative and Policy Framework:

- Reform the "hostile environment" policies: Introduce inclusive policies that facilitate secure housing, employment, and social integration for all migrants, regardless of their status.
- Expand access to social safety nets: Grant equal access to essential benefits like healthcare and education for all migrants, regardless of legal status, to avoid poverty and promote well-being.
- Streamline skills recognition mechanisms: Develop efficient and flexible procedures for recognising foreign qualifications based on skills and experience, allowing migrants to contribute to their full potential.
- Review discriminatory immigration laws: Revise policies based on human rights principles to avoid categorisation and ensure equal opportunities for all migrant groups.

Institutional Frameworks and Practices:

- Simplify administrative procedures: Reduce bureaucracy and streamline application processes for visas, work permits, and social services to improve accessibility and inclusivity for migrants.
- Increase language provision and intercultural training: Invest in language resources and cultural awareness training for public sector personnel to improve communication and service delivery for diverse communities.

Public Discourse and Societal Attitudes:

- Counter negative media portrayals: Promote positive narratives and factual reporting about migrant contributions to raise awareness and challenge stereotypes.
- Address anxieties about competition: Educate the public about the positive aspects of migration, including skills gaps filled by migrants and economic growth through diverse businesses.
- Engage with anti-immigration movements: Foster constructive dialogue and counter misinformation to promote understanding and build bridges between communities.

Protection of Human Rights:

- Uphold international human rights obligations: Ensure all policies and practices adhere to international human rights conventions and frameworks for refugee protection and migrant rights.

- Provide access to justice and legal support: Offer legal aid and representation to migrants facing legal challenges or human rights violations.

These recommendations require multi-level collaboration between government, civil society, the private sector, and the public. Addressing these challenges with practical solutions will not only optimise migrant contributions but also create a more inclusive and prosperous society for all.

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