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Thematic report to the UN Human Rights Council - 56th session

"Call for input: Report on Revisiting migrants' contributions from a human rights-based approach: a discussion on facilitating and hindering factors"

Submission by: Pixology Foundation Inc.

Introduction:

Pixology Foundation Inc, a civil society organization based in the United States of America, is committed to fostering peace and development through economic empowerment. Immigrants, especially the most vulnerable group of them, refugees, are one of the marginalized categories that the foundation focuses their work and support for. The founder of the foundation and his wife are models for Arab immigrants who have enriched the host society with their contributions after efficiently integrating into it. The founder, is a visual artist, digital designer and visual effects director in the United States. He also teaches film directing, 3D designs, and advertising design at a public middle school in the state of Connecticut. He strives through his work to utilize design skills and arts to rehabilitate and raise awareness among children about the importance of the world peace and to enlighten them about other global issues driven by the conviction that today's children are tomorrow's leaders. The founder's wife is also an example of how immigrants with the proper support and tools can enrich and be part of the growth of their host country. She is an educational leader, leading transformative efforts in the public education sector in the United States. As a result of their successful integration into the host society, the idea of establishing the organization came about. The organization aims to serve the marginalized and most vulnerable groups in society, particularly women affected by violence, refugees, and individuals with disabilities in America, the Middle East, and North Africa. Our mission revolves around equipping these individuals with technological skills and entrepreneurial knowledge across diverse fields, facilitating their access to decent and secure employment, and ultimately eradicating poverty in the targeted communities. Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, our initiatives aim to promote self-reliance and social inclusion. Through providing education and training in technology and business, we strive to create opportunities that not only uplift individual lives, contributing to poverty eradication one person at a time, but also foster the broader development and stability of the communities we serve.

1. **Migrants' contributions in host societies:**
   - One of the most important contributions of migrants is to modify the demographic structure, especially in European countries characterized by low birth rates and increasing aging populations. Arab migrants play a major role in this, as a third of the population of the Arab region is under the age of 15. The number of young people between the ages of 15-24 has increased from 49 million in 1995 to 73 million in 2020, while the proportion of people of working age reached 63% in 2020. This young population is the result of the high fertility rates that the region has experienced in recent decades. With a high fertility rate of 3.3% and a population growth rate of 1.9% compared to a global average growth rate of 1.2% per year [1].
   - Migrants often contribute to processes of modernization, democracy, and respect for human rights, both abroad and when they return to their home countries. Migration can also empower women and other vulnerable groups to claim their rights and those who suffer from a weaker social status in the country of origin, provided that there are sufficient safeguards to prevent the exploitation of these groups (such as workers in sectors that lack

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[1] العائد الديمغرافي | UNFPA Arabstates

regulatory labor codes, such as home and agricultural workers), given that work in these sectors has become common in a number of Arab countries, especially the Gulf countries [2].

- The contributions of Arab migrants to financial transfers to the country of origin are also evident. These transfers increased in the Arab region in 2022 by about 10.5% [3].
- Many studies have shown that the economic impact of migrants in host countries - in terms of increasing GDP and creating jobs as a result of opening new businesses - outweighs the negative effects that some exaggerate in terms of the pressure on some services.[4]

2. **Examples of positive measures taken by States to facilitate, maximize and optimize migrants, their families and communities' contributions:**

- There are many regional agreements, whether in the European region, African countries, or even in some Asian countries, for the recognition of migrants' academic qualifications. As a result of these agreements, UNESCO drafted the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, which aims to "ensure regional recognition of qualifications in a fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner". However, the recognition of professional qualifications and skills still faces many challenges. Mutual recognition agreements, which involve an agreement on reciprocal recognition of certifications and competences, can be a better solution. In the ideal scenario, qualifications or licenses are automatically recognized, with no additional assessment or training requirements.[5].
- Spain is one of the few countries that provide undocumented workers with access to public healthcare and education, very few make use of these services (often due to age and family composition) and others avoid the formal system due to fear of deportation[6].
- The federal government in Canada granted permanent residency to some asylum seekers who cared for patients in hospitals and long-term care homes at the height of the pandemic , in a one-time program that became more restrictive as Ottawa negotiated with Quebec.[7]
- Hundreds of immigrants in France working on the coronavirus frontline have had their service to the country recognized with fast-track citizenship[8].

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[2] العلاقة بين الهجرة الدولية والتنمية: من منظور البلدان المرسلة للمهاجرين (dohainstitute.org) , To download the Arabic book "The Relationship Between International Migration and Development: From the Perspective of Migrant-Sending Countries" by Hashim Naama Fayyad has been published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies: العلاقة بين الهجرة الدولية والتنمية (dohainstitute.org)

[3] For more about remittances to middle East &North Africa countries see "ICMPD Migration Outlook Mediterranean 2023 " available online in: ICMPD Regional Migration Outlook for the Mediterranean 2023 - EU Neighbours

[4] For more information: Are Refugees Bad or Good for the Economy? - The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC)

[5] For more details on regional agreements and national procedures: Policy paper "What a waste: ensure migrants and refugees' qualifications and prior learning are recognized", available online at https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366312

[6] Regularizing Migrant Workers in Response to COVID-19 | Center For Global Development (cgdev.org)

[7] Some asylum seekers who cared for patients in pandemic to get permanent residency | CBC News

[8] Covid: France rewards frontline immigrant workers with citizenship - BBC News

3. **Examples of positive measures implemented by civil society organizations and non-governmental stakeholders to optimize migrants' contributions:**

- CSOs play an important role in migrant and refugee integration in most countries. They carry out valuable work assisting or in some cases even substituting for governments by providing guidance and support in integration processes. Integration activities that they run may include providing accommodation, information about rights and obligations in the host country, interpretation, legal and social counselling, language courses, cultural guidance, job search assistance and advocacy and awareness-raising activities.
- CSOs help migrants gain access to education, training and employment, and they can challenge discrimination in the education sector, labor market and society as a whole.[9]
- A lot of NGOs have great institutional capacities to participate in the consultation processes for migration policy-making. There is also kind of informal migrant organizations like some migrant associations primarily rely on their own community for resources and usually are volunteer-run resembling grassroots entities. research explores some features of specific grassroots movements supporting migrants, they tend to be distant from the State and characterized by fluid, open and anti-hierarchical forms of relations primarily aiming to protect vested interests in local areas or volunteer to help people in need.[10]

4. **Major obstacles that hinder the recognition of migrants' contributions:**

The recognition of migrants academic and professional qualifications is one of the most significant obstacles hindering them from continuing their education or finding work that matches their skills. Recognition becomes an even greater challenge when learning takes place outside of formal education pathways or when individuals do not have documentation to prove their qualifications. This is especially true for those who have been forced to flee their homes or undertake dangerous journeys, as they are unlikely to have their educational certificates and diplomas with them. An analysis of the European Labor Force Survey conducted for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report found that limited recognition of qualifications was the main obstacle for nearly one in eight migrants, often ranking higher than lack of language skills, discrimination, visa restrictions, or limited social networks. Despite efforts to address this issue, the challenge remains significant due to:

- The increased pressure on host countries from refugees can make this process very time-consuming. Migrants may be unable or unwilling to invest the resources required for these complex, time-consuming, and costly procedures. They may also be unaware of the existence of such procedures.

[9] "The role of civil society organisations in ensuring the integration of migrants and refugees", European Economic and Social Committee study group, available online on: The role of civil society organisations in ensuring the integration of migrants and refugees | EESC (europa.eu)

[10] "A Mixed Method Approach on Greek Civil Society Organizations Supporting Migrants During the Refugee Crisis", Stefania Kalogeraki, 2019, Journal of International Migration and Integration, available online on: (8) A Mixed Method Approach on Greek Civil Society Organizations Supporting Migrants During the Refugee Crisis | Stefania Kalogeraki - Academia.edu

- There are also legal concerns and public safety issues that may impose restrictions on the right of foreigners to work. Migrants whose qualifications are not recognized may not be able to practice legally regulated professions such as teaching and nursing. They often end up working in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills.[11]
- Sometimes, the evaluation processes are unfair due to discriminatory factors like race, ethnicity, nationality or gender.

female refugees have additional hardships as they often bear caregiving responsibilities within families and can lack access to childcare facilities or social networks to facilitate their childcare, which can further limit their access to the labor market. Additionally, they may be subjected to institutionalized forms of gender-based discrimination that perpetuate inequalities.[12]

Language, as a socio-cultural barrier, can be a major obstacle when it comes to migrants or refugees' health. It may contribute to the lack of adherence to treatment, delays or misdiagnosis, unnecessary examinations and incorrect treatments.[13]

5. **Mechanisms used by migrants and their families in overcoming hindering factors:**
   Individuals seek to adapt to the issue of immigration in various ways, from the outset, individuals with rigid personalities look for communities that are close to their original communities in terms of culture, language, and perhaps the dominant religion. Open-minded and quick-to-adapt individuals, on the other hand, look for good opportunities even if they are in communities that are completely different from their original communities.
   Changes that happens to migrants can be one of two kinds:

   - Positive changes, which are identified in increased self-esteem and self-confidence if they were appreciated, valued, and motivated in their activities and developed professionally. So they improve their financial situation and their relationships with family and others, form new social areas and professional and entrepreneurial interests, and upon their return home, with a new mentality, a new vision, and with the accumulation from the country of migration, they came back with new innovations and developments.

   - Negative changes identified in low self-esteem and self-confidence as a result of being offended, labeled, marginalized, and exploited through work and inadequately paid. Migrants here lack moral and physical support, fell loneliness due to not knowing the

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[11] Policy paper "What a waste: ensure migrants and refugees' qualifications and prior learning are recognized", available online at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366312
[12] The Contributions of Refugees: Lifting Barriers to Inclusion - Our World (unu.edu)
13 Nefti-Eboni Bempong &others," Critical reflections, challenges and solutions for migrant and refugee health: 2nd M8 Alliance Expert Meeting", Public Health Reviews, Article 3, 2019, as cited in: International Migration, Health and Human Rights. IOM, WHO and UN Human Rights, available on https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/WHO_IOM_UNOHCHRPublication.pdf

language or cultural maladjustments.[14]

6. **Ways to raise awareness, rethink and change the way migration is spoken about:** Raising awareness can be achieved through the cooperation of all national actors. Governments should ensure that the phenomenon of migration is included in school curricula as a primarily humanitarian issue, especially when it comes to refugees who have fled their homelands due to conflicts and wars. The numerous economic, social, cultural, and political benefits of migration for societies should also be highlighted.

   Governments and civil society organizations should also monitor religious discourse and ensure that it promotes values of helping and protecting others, while rejecting hatred and selfishness.

7. **Recommendations:**

   - It is necessary to strengthen international cooperation to organize and activate clear, more flexible, and less costly migration pathways, in order to protect migrants from all the risks they may face during their journey, such as the risks of exploitation and human trafficking in the country of origin and transit, and the risks of poverty and difficulty accessing services in host countries.
   - It is necessary to enact and enforce strict legislation against any person or entity that spreads hate speech. There should also be increased monitoring of the media discourse of far-right parties, which usually take a hostile stance towards immigration, ranging from restricting it to preventing the reception of certain groups.
   - Mechanisms for the recognition of academic and professional qualifications, including regional conventions or mutual recognition agreements, need to include provisions targeted at migrants and refugees that simplify procedures, increase flexibility and reduce costs, such as application fees. It is not enough for public authorities to invest in recognition procedures targeting migrants and refugees; they must also raise awareness about such procedures, using online or mobile phone applications to inform about the existence of these procedures and about the responsible national institutions. To help increase uptake, awareness-raising campaigns should preferably be conducted in relevant languages[11].
   - States must work to ensure that all migrants have access to the necessary healthcare services, regardless of their legal status and without any discriminatory considerations. Effective mechanisms should be put in place to monitor healthcare institutions to ensure that they fulfill their obligations towards migrants.

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14 "The Processes of Adaptation, Assimilation and Integration in the Country of Migration: A Psychosocial Perspective on Place Identity Changes", a study by Viorica Cristina Cormos, Department of Humanities and Social-Political Sciences, Ștefan cel Mare University, 720229 Suceava, Romania , available online on: https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/14/16/10296#:~:text=In%20the%20new%20social%20environment%2C%20migrants%20experience%20aspects%20of%20life,have%20different%20possibilities%20and%20opportunities.

- Provide awareness and training to all government agencies including law enforcement and service providers to raise awareness of migrants' rights, cultural sensitivity, and effecective communication.