



REGULAR PATHWAYS AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION

Economic insecurity, political instability, environmental degradation and climate change are always among the drivers of mobility. Mobility restrictions and other fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic increased and exacerbated the circumstances that force migrants into irregular status, while also heightening irregular migrants' vulnerability. As migration governance continually develops, it is important to adapt to the needs and realities of migrants. Migrants' status can shift, going in and out of irregularity as laws and conditions change. However, it is critical that at all stages of a migrant's journey their rights are upheld and they are empowered, regardless of their status.

RIGHTS-BASED AND INCLUSIVE MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Irregular migrants often face stigma and discrimination because of their circumstance. It is important to decriminalize such perception since it contributes to the vulnerabilities of irregular migrants. At a policy level, viewing irregularity of migrants as criminal or a threat instead of an administrative violation can lead to the denial of their rights. Instead, adopting rights-based and inclusive migration policies can ensure that migrants are empowered and their rights are upheld, regardless of status.

CREATING MORE REGULAR PATHWAYS

While there are many factors involved with irregular migration, it is often a consequence of limited regular pathways. Creating more and better regular pathways is therefore critical for destination, transit, and origin countries. Capacitating States, embassies, and other significant organisations to govern migration for work, study, family reunification, and more, so as to protect the rights of migrants, especially those under temporary visa schemes, is essential. Creating new regular pathways should also involve assessing the needs of migrants at every stage of their journey including reintegration phase.

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO MEET MIGRANTS' NEEDS

Migrants, regardless of their status, are an important constituency of local government officials in destination countries, particularly in cities. Whether transient or permanent

settlers, migrants disproportionately gravitate towards cities due to varying conditions such as job openings, presence of diaspora, and transit points among others. Local governments are in a key position to address migrants' specific concerns with regard to settlement, integration, and transit. They have the capacity to shape the conditions of migrants, in ways that are immediate and essential to their wellbeing. As migrants work locally, engage with local communities, send their children to local schools, access services locally, local government plays an important role in facilitating fair and proper conditions for migrants. Local governments have the responsibility then to ensure that needs of migrants are met, regardless of their status.

INTEGRATING TEMPORARY OR EMERGENCY POLICIES INTO LONG-TERM MECHANISMS

With mobility restrictions and job loss rampant due to the pandemic, more migrants have entered into irregular status. This has called for a broadened perspective for COVID-19 response on the part of States and local governments. Access to healthcare and social services, including treatment, vaccines, and housing amongst others, have been part of said response. The immediate relief and services that have been provided by some States generally followed the principle of non-discrimination and a rights-based approach. While a step towards more inclusive and responsive policies, these are seen as an emergency response to a global crisis. Such responses should be integrated into long-term mechanisms and migration governance.