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Youth, Migration and Development: A New Lens for Critical Times

Samuel Hall

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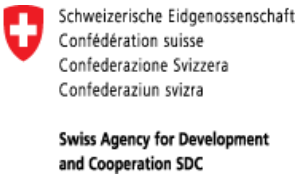

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Youth, Migration and Development: A New Lens for Critical Times

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While international migration represents an opportunity for young people to make a better life for themselves and their families by pursuing educational aspirations, job prospects, or a desire for personal development, the majority of youth migration seen today takes place against a backdrop of high unemployment, underemployment, and labor flexibilization; governance failures; persistent gender inequality; social exclusion; and growing concerns about climate change. These trends and phenomena are particularly prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, which helps explain why migration aspirations tend to be strongest in these countries. Youth migration is also evolving in a context of wider debates around the importance of job quality and security—many of which center on the question of whether job quality has been decreasing in recent decades. Among other key events, the 2019 International Dialogue on Migration organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) confirmed the importance of addressing the challenges facing young migrants, and how these intersect with social, economic, and environmental well-being and development.

Diverging regional demographic trends help shape youth migration patterns. On the one hand, high-income countries, mainly in North America, Europe, and East and Southeast Asia, are witnessing the shrinking of their working-age population. According to the 2019 World Population Prospects,[1] nearly 50 countries in these regions are projected to have a support ratio (a figure that compares the working-age population with those over 65 years old) below 2. Not only does this put pressure on social protection systems, but it also has implications for local labor markets and economic performance. On the other hand, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and some countries in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean have the potential to reap a demographic dividend: people of working age (25–64) have become the largest share of the total population, most often due to decreasing fertility rates. While these countries can tap into their demographic dividend to create opportunities for economic growth, the shift in their population's age structure is also leading them to become net senders of international migrants. Against this backdrop, high-income countries can benefit from youth migration to offset population losses and reinvigorate their economies.

As the world undergoes a period of uncertainty, young people around the world are particularly affected by the growing inequalities and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as they transition to adulthood. Young people who have made the difficult choice to move, or who have been forced to do so, are particularly marginalized in their current environment: they are not only socially and economically vulnerable, but also psychologically and often legally so. Yet, in a global context marked by crises, this paper reveals the world's youth, and young migrants, as resourceful actors of development. Young migrants bring with them creativity and innovation, and are often risk takers, prepared to seize opportunities with a greater awareness of tomorrow's climate challenges. Many have a thirst for equality and peace as well as the belief that problems are only the beginnings of future solutions to which they can, and must, contribute.

[1] UN DESA (2019), *World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights*.

In this perspective, young migrants undoubtedly represent an opportunity to rethink the goals and modalities of what is considered "development." Development itself is an important driver of migration. Migration is "an integral—and therefore inevitable—part of broader processes of economic development and social transformation that characterize societies going through 'modernization' processes."[2] Development, in turn, is necessary for the positive effects of migration to materialize. In contexts where socioeconomic conditions are dire, young migrants can be viewed as a strain on a country's resources. However, youth migration can positively contribute to a country's development when the right processes and frameworks are put in place to absorb newcomers and harness their potential.[3]

The goal behind this scoping paper is to set an agenda on how youth migration can contribute to development and how it can be meaningfully integrated into development strategies. It goes beyond general references to youth migration and development, by drawing attention to regional and subregional specificities. While most of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators have focused on the relationship between youth, employment, and development (SDG 4.4, 8.5, 8b),[4] this paper turns the focus to a more holistic understanding of the contribution of youth, through the prism of migration.

Exploring the Nexus between Youth Migration and Development

By exploring the link between youth migration and development, this scoping paper creates a space for a new conversation, one that focuses on the active role that young migrants play in the realization of sustainable development and on how sustainable development can in turn support the potential of youth migration. In light of significant global transformations and taking into account the high mobility patterns of youth, this conversation is not only topical but needed to ensure that progress is realized to support future generations in a sustainable manner. This implies that young migrants have access to the resources they need to develop their capabilities, which in turn relates the conversation back to one of national, regional, and global governance.

While there is a common understanding of youth as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood, there is no universal definition of the age bracket for this period. The World Bank and the United Nations adopt an age-based definition of youth identified in the 15–24 years cohort for statistical purposes, but regional and national definitions vary. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa has used the 15–39 and 15–35 age brackets, also used by national governments in Ghana, Tanzania, and South Africa. Nigeria refers to the 12–30 age bracket, while Kenya uses the 15–30 age bracket to define its approach to youth. These examples from Africa show the diversity of definitions for youth. Meanwhile, the United

[2] See de Haas, H. (2020).
[3] See de Haas, H. (2011).
[4] SDG target 4.4: "By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship"; SDG target 8.5: "By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value"; SDG target 8.b: "By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization."

Nations Development Programme has opted for the adoption of a "flexible age range" where the focus is primarily placed on young women and men aged 15–24, with the possibility of extending this age range up to 30 years old and beyond based on contextual realities and national youth policy directives.[5] The Islamic Development Bank's youth development strategy refers to the 15–35 age bracket, to allow for greater inclusion. The YMOBILITY research project uses a survey of people 16–35 years of age to capture key life transitions well into full adulthood

Defining an age bracket for youth can open up possibilities for policy development and coordination. The lack of a common definition results in inaccurate data collection when data are disaggregated, and a misunderstanding of youth-specific challenges that can lead to ineffective policies. However, an age-based definition as a metric does not account for the contextual meaning of youth: one that changes across cultures and contexts, as individuals are expected to take on different societal roles at different life stages. This brings us back to the definition of youth as a period of nonlinear life transition, a transformative process. This paper takes a broad approach to youth, one that considers the importance of adopting a numerical definition as well as looking at the diversity of notions of youth across space: we identify a younger youth cohort (15–24) and an older one (25–34), which we compare to understand how different youth cohorts undertake migration and the implications of this for development policies.

The sections to follow first frame the conversation before considering the specificities of youth migration today. Then they outline key development issues that relate to youth migration and identify knowledge gaps.

Limitations

Any paper on youth migration and development commonly encounters three difficulties that limit the analysis:

- **Lack of data**: Disaggregation by age group, when available, is inconsistent across databases. Datasets are most often available for international migrant stocks that are not disaggregated by country of origin, thus limiting researchers' ability to gain a comprehensive overview of youth migration patterns. Lack of data on returns and internal migration contribute to a limited understanding of youth migration patterns.

  Section 2, for instance, largely relies on data on international migrant *stocks* from the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, recorded every five years since 1990. The United Nations Statistics Division defines migrant stocks as "estimates of the total number of international migrants present in a given country at a particular point in time."[6] In contrast, data on migration

[5] See Annex 1 of UNDP Youth Strategy 2014–17 for further information.
[6] See https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-migrant-stocks.

flows measure the number of migrants entering and leaving a country over the course of a specific period (e.g., one year). The static picture that migrant stocks offer has implications for the way data in this section can be interpreted: little can be said about migration trajectories, or the age at which migrants arrived in their destination country, or specific demographic effects. We only know what age the migrants were at the time the data were collected in their destination country. Some migrants could have migrated as children/youths, while others could have migrated as adults. For example, a 44-year-old migrant in Kenya could have migrated when she was 20, yet the data available would categorize her as an adult, placing her in the 35–44 age group. It is not clear therefore whether current observed migrants migrated within or outside of the age group of interest (15–34). As a result, there is a need to collect data on international migration flows that are consistently disaggregated by age (e.g., in five-year cohorts).

- **An unbalanced focus:** Certain regions are overrepresented by the datasets available. Scant attention is given, for instance, to the specificities of migration patterns within and among developing countries. This limits researchers' ability to fully depict the complexity of youth movements at a global level as well as the dynamics and effects of youth migration in developing countries. This limitation is strongly related to data collection systems and capacity, and justifies the need to expand capacities in developing countries to enable a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of migration trends.

- **Limited data on the differences between general international migration patterns vs. those of internal or irregular youth migration:** Internal and irregular youth migration are phenomena that should not be underestimated and that deserve more attention from both researchers and policy makers. These migration trends constitute invisible movements in the eyes of data science experts, who are not well equipped to measure and record them. Assuming that internal and irregular migration involves youth to a larger extent, concerns regarding the conditions of their labor market integration and their likely absorption by the informal economy remain unaddressed due to the lack of data. This lack also limits understanding of the impact of youth migration on a country's development, and thus hampers policy makers' efforts to identify appropriate ways to maximize young migrants' contributions to labor markets, the economy, and society as a whole. Expanding empirical resources on these phenomena would help clarify the intersection between youth, migration, and development.

Each of these points are addressed by the research recommendations offered at the conclusion of this paper.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

EU	European Union
ICT	information and communication technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UIS	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Institute of Statistics
UNECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
UN	United Nations

1. YOUTH MIGRATION ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

Policy makers are increasingly aware of the specific contributions of young people to development, spurring the launch of global initiatives intended to better understand the social, political, economic, and psychological factors that affect youth behavior.[7] Yet, little attention has been paid to the specificities of young migrants' contributions, to how these contributions have changed over time, and to how young people's migration patterns may vary from those of older generations. The countries of destination that young migrants relocate to and the way their destination preferences have evolved reveal complex migration stories embedded in individual plans and perspectives, alongside economic, social, and political factors. Based on an exploration of available data,[8] this section sheds light on how youth migration dynamics have evolved over time, highlighting both geographic and demographic specificities.

Box 1. Key Figures on Youth Migration across Time and Space

- **Even as, in absolute numbers, young migrant stocks are higher today than at any point in time, their share of total migrant stocks has been shrinking.** In 2020, nearly 90 million migrants were 15–34 years old, of which 36 percent belonged to the 15–24 age group and 64 percent belonged to the 25–34 age group. This compares to around 52 million in the same age group in 1990, of which 42 percent were aged 15–24 and 58 percent were 25–34.
- **Young migrants are more present in low- and middle-income countries.** In 2020, 43 percent of all young migrants aged 15–24 and 37 percent of those aged 25–34 were located in such countries, versus only 29 percent of migrants aged 45–54. Moreover, younger migrants are more common than older ones in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- **The shares of youth migrants from Western Asia have been gaining traction, but for how long?** Of the 30 million migrants aged 15–34 present in Asia in 2020, more than 16 million were located in Western Asia. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates alone account for nearly 50 percent of young migrants living in Western Asia. However, the volume of migrant stocks aged 20–34 decreased between 2015 and 2020 in Saudi Arabia, while that of older age groups continued to expand.
- **The number of internationally mobile students has been booming for the past 20 years,** with an increase from 2 to 5.5 million international students between 2000 and 2018. This is especially the case for students from East Asia and the Pacific.
- **While North America and Western Europe are still top destinations, intraregional student mobility tends to prevail, depending on various parameters, including geographic proximity and cultural similarity.** Eighty-one percent of North American and Western European students, 37 percent of students from East Asia and the Pacific, and 27 percent of students from the Arab states were pursuing their higher education within their respective regions in 2018, while 28 percent of South and West Asian students migrated to study in the East Asia and Pacific region.

[7] See Belmonte, M., and McMahon, S. (2019).

[8] UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020: Age, sex and destination, Destination and origin; Eurostat, Immigration by age group, sex and country of birth; UIS, National Monitoring: Inbound internationally mobile students by continent of origin, by region of origin, 2021, and by host region, 2021.

- **Adopting a regional lens on youth migration highlights gendered differences that need both further exploration and to be accounted for when developing appropriate youth inclusion policies.** In 2020, 52 percent of migrants aged 15–24 were men while 48 percent were women overall, while the ratio differed noticeably by region.

1.1. Young Migrants, Increasing in Absolute Terms, Are Declining as a Share of Total Stocks

In absolute numbers, youth migrant stocks are larger today than they were 30 years ago, but the size of the 15–24 age group has increased at a slower pace than that of the 25–34 age group.[9] In 2020, nearly 90 million migrants were between 15 and 34 years old, of which 36 percent belong to the 15–24 age group and 64 percent belong to the 25–34 age group, compared to around 52 million in 1990, of which 42 percent belong to the 15–24 age group and 58 percent to the 25–34 age group.[10] Moreover, youth aged 15–24 represented 11 percent of the total migrant stocks and those aged 25–34, 20 percent. The share of migrants aged 35–44 continues to peak at 20 percent of total migrant stocks, before decreasing for the older age categories.

At the same time, an increase of the overall migrant stocks and the overall youth population can be observed. The share of the 15–24 age group in total migrant stocks has slowly been shrinking (see figure 1),[11] while the share of the 25–34 age group has remained relatively stable across time. Young migrants represent relatively the same proportion of the total youth population—between 2 and 3 percent—since 1990. This overall figure, however, conceals a striking gap between high-income countries and low- and middle-income countries.[12] Today, young migrants aged 15–24 account for 13 percent of the total youth population in high-income countries, 1 percent for middle-income countries, and 2 percent for low-income countries. Such statistics call for the need to analyze the socioeconomic implications of youth migration in light of contextual factors. Indeed, key policy issues that lie at the intersection of youth, migration, and development—such as the social, economic, and political interactions between young migrants and young nonmigrants—may vary from one country to another.

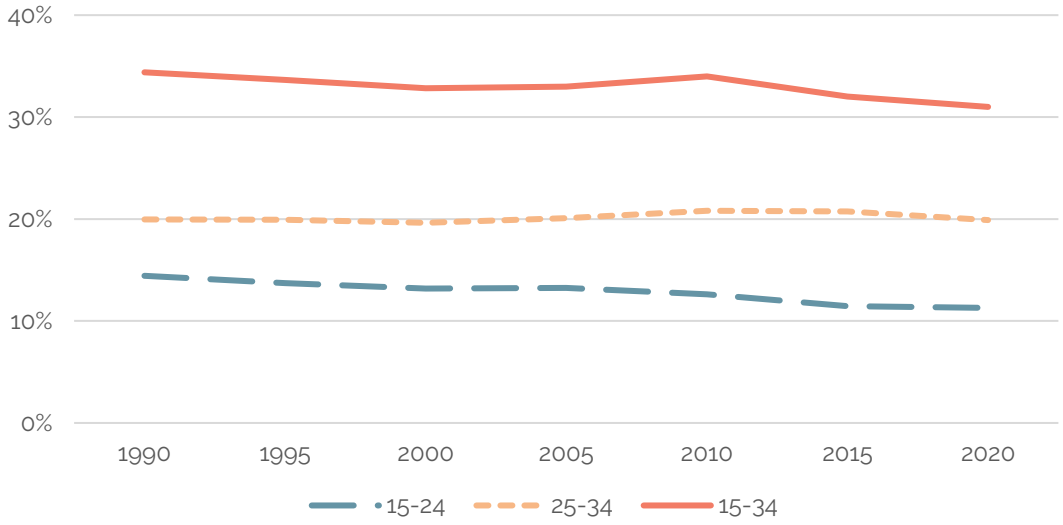
[9] UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020: Age, sex and destination.

[10] One of the major caveats of analyzing youth migration trends through migrant stocks rather than flows is that demographic effects are hard to isolate. Because the migrant stock is itself aging, it is hard to determine the extent to which changes in the age composition of the migrant population are due to new cohorts migrating or the aging of people who migrated in the past. In this specific instance, the fact that the size of the 15–24 migrant stock has been decreasing over the past 30 years may not necessarily mean that young people are migrating less than before but that they may be moving up the age ladder and transitioning to older age groups. In contrast to migration flows, migrant stocks may account for the same people over time but in different age groups.

[11] A similar finding was noted in the JRC 2020 report on Youth and Migration. See Belmonte, M., et al. (2020), Youth and migration: an overview. Publications Office of the European Union, Ispra.

[12] The statistical categories referred to in this section on "developed" and "less developed" regions are those used by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. For more information, see UN DESA, International Migrant Stock 2020 Documentation, 2020.

Figure 1. Evolution of Youth Migrant Stocks as a Share of Total Migrant Stocks, 1990–2020



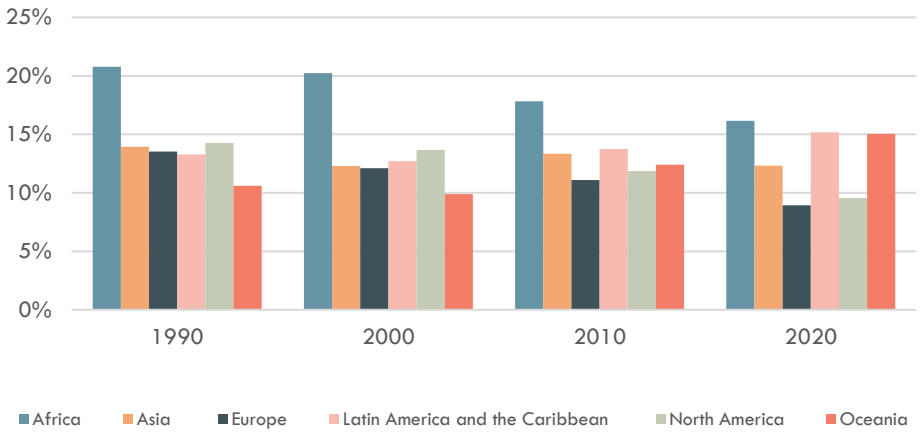
Source: UN DESA, 2020.

By region, the share of young migrants aged 15–24 in total migrant stocks declined overall in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, while the share of young migrants aged 25–34 decreased only in Europe and North America. Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania have a growing proportion of young migrants in their total migrant population.[13] Figure 2 shows that the share of young migrants aged 15–24 is dropping in most regions with the exception of these two. Nonetheless, the share of young migrants aged 15–24 in the overall migrant stocks remains the largest for Africa, at 16 percent. At the same time, the 25–34 age group consistently represents the largest share of total migrant stocks, except for Europe and North America, where the 35–44 age group accounts for 20 percent of total migrant stocks in the region. Meanwhile, data show that the 25–34 age group represents the largest proportion of the total migrant population in three of the main destination countries in the European Union: Germany (29 percent), Spain (28 percent), and France (26 percent).[14]

While migrant stocks do not provide evidence of the age at which people migrate, the fact that the African migrant population is "younger" than the migrant populations of other regions, particularly Europe and North America, may suggest greater intraregional movements among young Africans. Yet, it is still important to acknowledge that the older migrant cohorts in Europe and North America may be indicative of an aging migrant population and are not necessarily proof that these regions attract older migrants per se. This raises questions on who can migrate to developed regions and underpins the need for age-disaggregated data on migration flows.

[13] See also https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/child-and-young-migrants.
[14] Eurostat, Immigration by age group, sex and country of birth, 1998-2019. *https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_imm3ctb&lang=en.*

Figure 2. Share of Young Migrants (15–24) among Regional Migrant Population across Time, 1990–2020



Source: UN DESA, 2020.

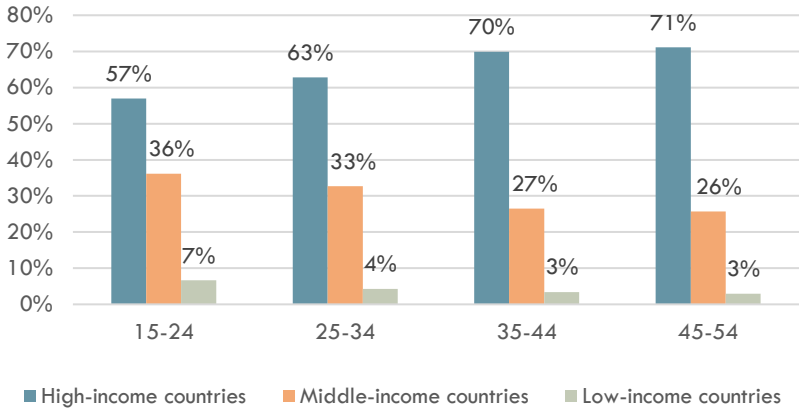
1.2. Young Migrants Are More Present in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Data show that younger people—aged both 15–24 and 25–34—are more present in low- and middle-income countries than are older cohorts (see figure 3).[15] In 2020, 43 percent of all young migrants aged 15–24 and 37 percent of all young migrants aged 25–34 were located in low- and middle-income countries.[16] Meanwhile, only 29 percent of migrants aged 45–54 were located in low- and middle-income countries. At the same time, a larger proportion of older migrant groups was present in high-income countries, compared to younger migrant groups. It should also be highlighted that young people aged 15–24 are more likely than other age group to be located in low-income countries, with a share of 7 percent.

[15] According to the UN DESA International Migration Stock 2020 Documentation, the classification of countries and areas by income level is based on gross national income per capita as reported by the World Bank (June 2020). These income groups are not available for all countries and areas. Further information is available at: https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups.

[16] This greater presence of young migrants in low- and middle-income countries was observed in the UN World Youth Report 2013 on Youth and Migration: in 2013, the majority of young migrants (60 percent) lived in developing countries.

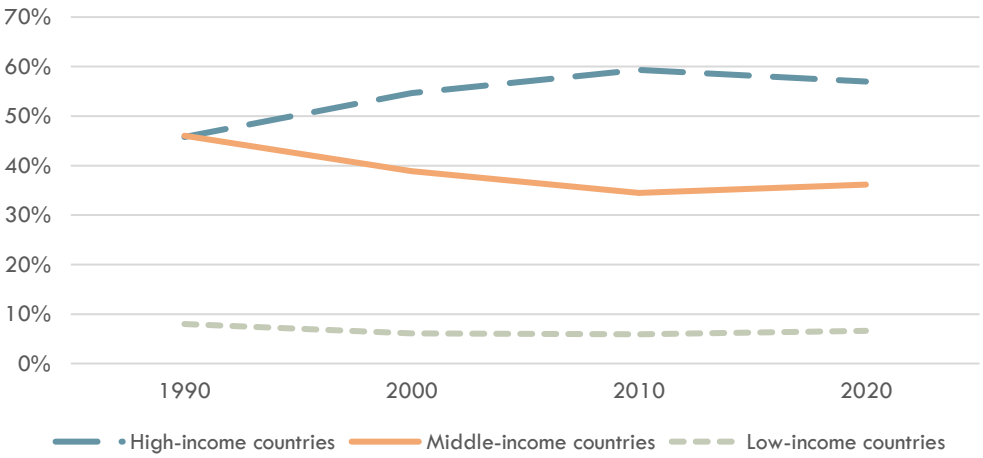
Figure 3. Distribution of Migrants across Income Groups for Different Age Categories, 2020



Source: UN DESA, 2020.

The greater presence of young migrants in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income countries is a phenomenon observed throughout time and was more striking 30 years ago than it is today (see figure 4). The percentage of young migrants aged 15–24 living in high-income countries has been increasing, from 46 percent in 1990 to 57 percent in 2020, while the share of those living in middle-income countries decreased by 10 percentage points. Meanwhile, the share of young migrants aged 15–24 living in low-income countries remained relatively the same. The fact that more young migrants are located in high-income countries may be correlated with their increased presence in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Figure 4. Distribution of Young Migrants (15–24) across Income Groups and Time, 1990–2020

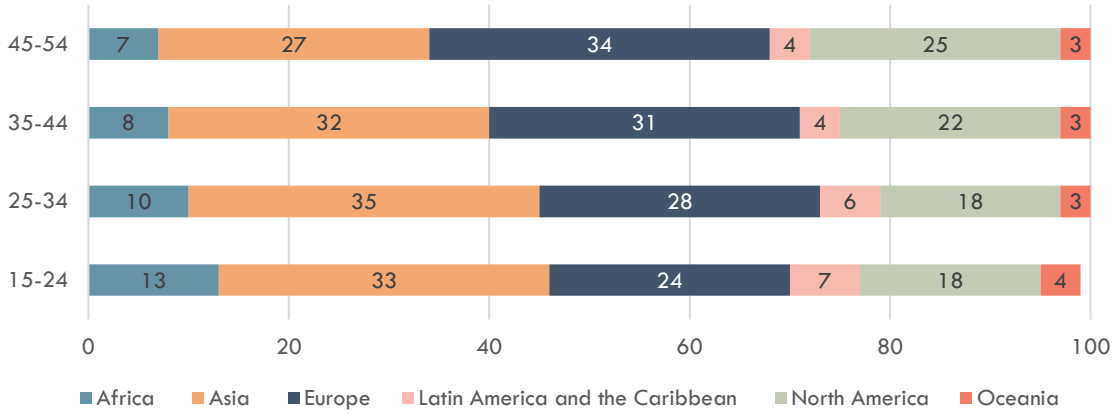


Source: UN DESA, 2020.

In 2020, Asia hosted the largest share of young migrants—both 15–24 and 25–34—followed by Europe and North America (see figure 5). Younger migrants are overall more represented in Asia, Africa, and Latin America than older migrants: 33 percent of young migrants aged 15–24 are located in Asia, 13 percent in Africa, and 7 percent in Latin America. While young migrants are still highly present in Europe and North

America (24 percent and 18 percent of migrants aged 15–24, respectively), the share of older migrants living in these two regions remains larger by up to 34 percent and 25 percent for migrants aged 45–54 in Europe and North America, respectively. With the existing literature pointing to the impact of wealth on the ability to migrate long distances,[17] beyond cultural and social factors, a possible explanation for these trends is that young migrants tend to favor regional migration, and thus shorter and less expensive routes, while older cohorts may find longer migration routes more accessible from a financial viewpoint. Thus, among other parameters, the availability of economic resources may deter younger migrants from moving to destinations that are far away from their home country.

Figure 5. Regional Distribution of International Migrants by Age Category (%), 2020



Source: UN DESA, 2020.

1.3. Asia Gaining Traction—but for How Long?

For the past 20 years, Asia has been gaining particular traction: it has outstripped Europe as the main destination for young migrants since the mid-2000s and today hosts more than 30 million migrants aged 15–34. The greater presence of young migrants in Asia challenges a Western-centric view of migration, which regards Western countries as prime migration destinations. The majority of young migrants (more than 16 million) are located in Western Asia. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates alone, two countries marked by rapid economic growth in the past decades, account for nearly 50 percent of young migrants living in Western Asia.[18] This is the result of high demand for foreign labor, accommodated by a relatively open migration system, which has attracted young migrant workers—especially men—from less developed countries in the region and across Asia.[19] In fact, non-age-disaggregated data show that half of

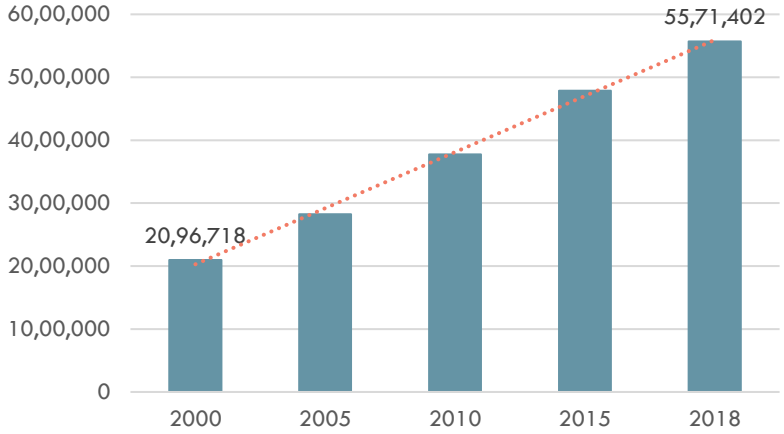
[17] See McKenzie, D. (2007), King, R., and Skeldon, R. (2010), De Haas, H. (2019).
[18] Majid, A.M. (2006), The Contribution of the Oil Sector to Arab Economic Development, OFID Pamphlet Series, 34. For the latest data on the current state of labour migration across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, and in the Abu Dhabi Dialogue area, see OECD, Migration in Asia: What skills for the future? OECD Development Policy Papers No. 40, 2021.
[19] The beginning of Saudi Arabia's open labor migration policy coincided with the country's oil exploration in the late 1930s, fueling the inflows of foreign workers until the 2000s. Both Arab and Asian migrants were recruited on a short-term basis, with limited access to social protection and other labor rights, to bridge the country's infrastructure and economic diversification needs. Declining oil revenues coupled with marked population growth in the 1990s, economic challenges in the 2000s, and

the migrant stock in Saudi Arabia is made up of migrants from South and Southeast Asia, the main diaspora coming from India (approximately 2.5 million migrants), followed by Indonesia and Pakistan.[20] However, while Saudi Arabia is still the top destination for young migrants in Asia, a decrease in the volume of young migrant stocks can be witnessed between 2015 and 2020 for the 20–24, 25–29, and 30–34 age groups, while migrant stocks for older age groups have continued to go up. This coincides with the strict labor market reforms adopted during the 2010s to halt the inflow of foreign workers and push for the"Saudization" of the workforce,[21] reforms that seem to have acted to the detriment of the young migrant population.

1.4. Higher Education Abroad: Growing Intraregional Student Mobility

Higher education is a major factor explaining youth migration decisions and patterns.[22] This is confirmed by recent data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Institute for Statistics (UIS)[23] that show the rapid increase of internationally mobile students, whose numbers more than doubled in less than 20 years, from 2 to 5.5 million between 2000 and 2018 (see figure 6).

Figure 6. Evolution of Total Tertiary Students Studying Abroad (outbound students), 2000–18



Source: UIS, National Monitoring: Outbound Internationally Mobile Students by Host Region, 2021.

social unrest in the wake of the 2011 Arab Springs, led to a shift in the country's labor migration approach and the gradual adoption of labor-market planning measures. See De Bel-Air, F. (2018), Demography, Migration and Labour Market in Saudi Arabia, GLMM. and Khraif, R. M. et al. (2019), Migration in Saudi Arabia: Present and Prospects.

[20] UN DESA (2020).

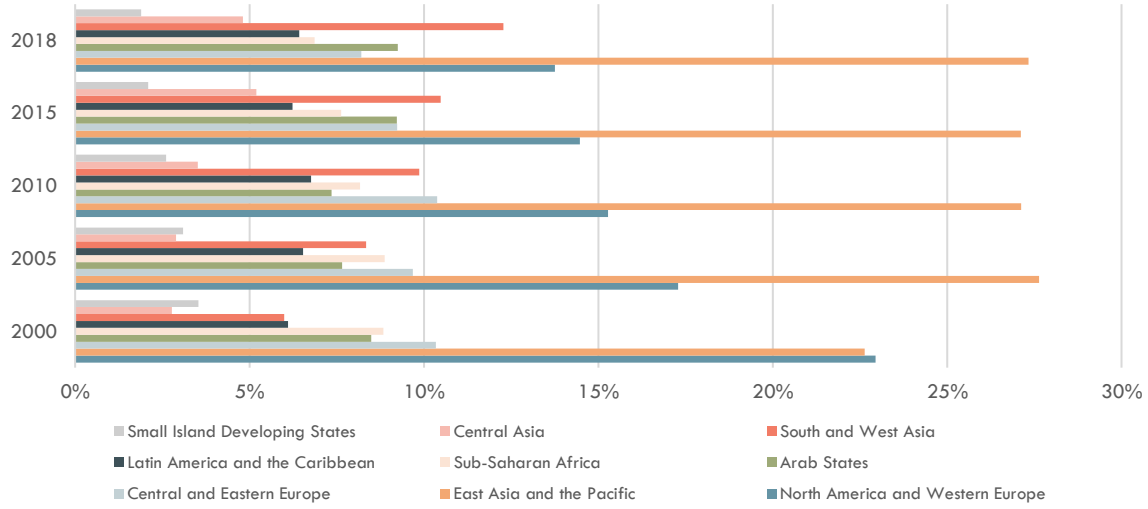
[21] Saudi Arabia introduced the Nitaqat program in September 2011 to limit the private sector's reliance on foreign workers and respond to soaring youth unemployment as the country's most pressing challenge in a region shaken by antigovernment protests. This program has formed part of the broader "Saudization" strategy, or the plan to ensure that the workforce is increasingly made up of Saudi nationals, rather than foreign workers. See De Bel-Air, F. (2018).

[22] See Belmonte, M., et al. (2020). The report also finds a positive correlation between the level of education and the willingness to migrate. For instance, 57.2 percent of young people with secondary education and 10.4 percent of those with tertiary education have migration intentions versus 53.6 percent and 9.5 percent, respectively.

[23] UIS, National Monitoring: Outbound internationally mobile students by host region (lastly updated in March 2021). Note on statistical concepts and terminology: This part of the chapter on student mobility uses the UIS regional classification and key statistics concepts. It defines international (or internationally mobile) students as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin," outbound students as "tertiary students from a given country studying abroad," and inbound students as "tertiary students from abroad studying in a given country."

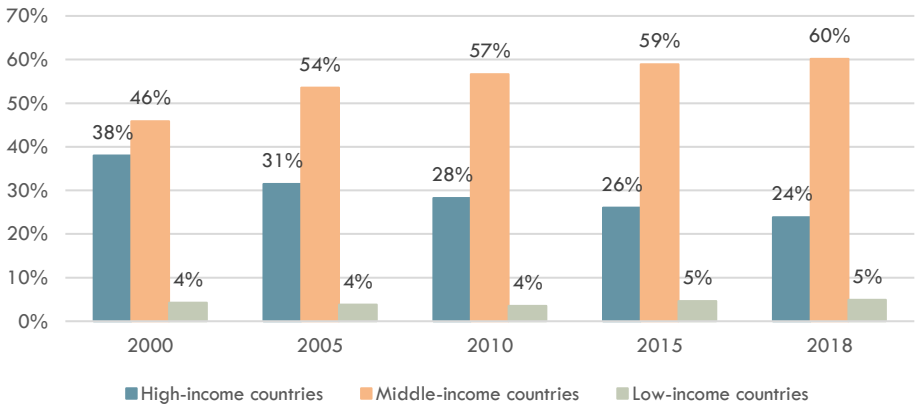
The evolution of tertiary students studying abroad ("outbound students" as per the UIS terminology) differs across regions of origin. While the share of North American and Western European students studying abroad among total international students has been in decline for the past 20 years, the share of Asian students studying abroad has increased, especially for East Asian and Pacific students, who accounted for 27 percent of total international students in 2018. The fact that Asian students pursue their tertiary education abroad can be explained by the growth of emerging economies such as India and China.[24] In fact, students from middle-income countries accounted for 60 percent of total international students in 2018, [25] exceeding by far the share of students from high-income countries (see figure 8).

Figure 7. Tertiary Students Studying Abroad by Region of Origin across Time, 2000–18



Source: UIS, National Monitoring: Inbound internationally mobile students by region of origin, 2021.

Figure 8. Tertiary Students Studying Abroad by Income Group across Time, 2000–18



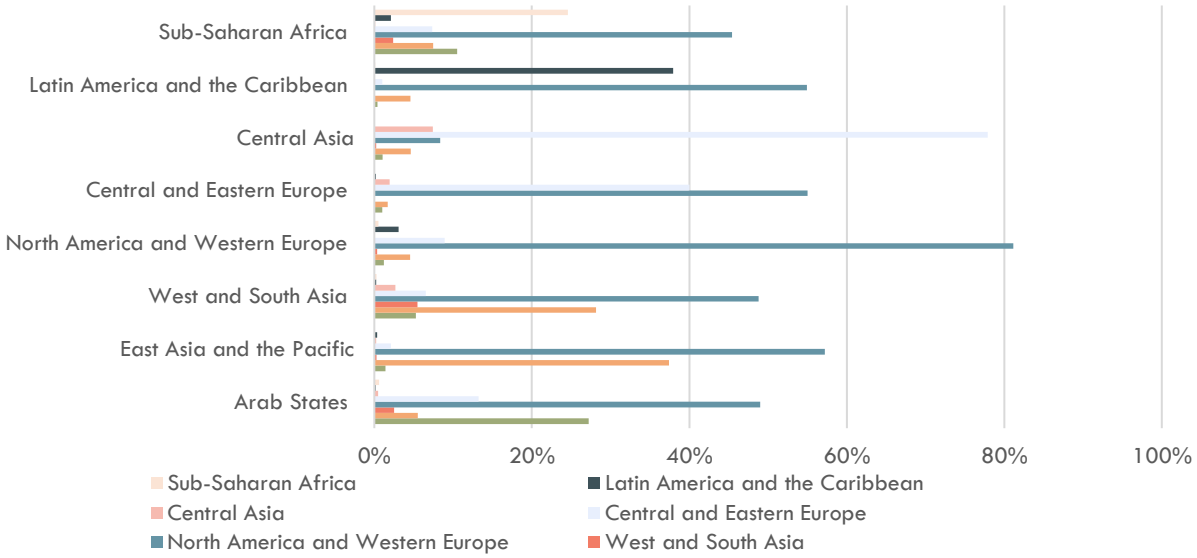
Source: UIS, National Monitoring: Inbound internationally mobile students by continent of origin, 2021 [1]; UIS 2021.

[24] See Cortina, J., et al (2014).

[25] When disaggregating the data for upper- and lower-middle-income countries, the share is larger and increased at a faster rate between 2000 and 2018 for international students from upper-middle-income countries.

While North America and Western Europe continue to be the main destinations for outbound students,[26] a significant share of students resort to intraregional migration: 81 percent of North American and Western European students, 37 percent of students from East Asia and Pacific, and 27 percent of students from the Arab states pursued their higher education within their respective regions, while 28 percent of South and West Asian students migrated to study in East Asia and Pacific (see figure 9). The regionalization of tertiary education has notably been documented for Asia, where countries such as China and Japan are putting in place specific programs to attract Asian students as part of a broader strategy to become higher-education destinations.[27] These countries both build on their capacity to offer students high-quality education at top-ranked universities, while guaranteeing them employability once they graduate.[28] Beyond geographic proximity, cultural and linguistic ties are another major factor explaining students' destination decision.[29] For instance, nearly 9 percent of mobile students from Latin America and the Caribbean could be found in Spain in 2018, while nearly 19 percent of students from Sub-Saharan Africa were studying in France and the United Kingdom the same year. According to the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, a growing number of African students can be seen in China as result of growing economic ties and bilateral cooperation.[30]

Figure 9. Distribution of Students Studying Abroad by Region of Origin and across Regions of Destination, 2018



Source: UIS, 2021.

Note: The vertical axis of this graph figure indicates the region of origin of students studying abroad, while the legend indicates the region of destination.

[26] No temporal pattern was found regarding the regional distribution of outbound mobile students that could allow us to draw conclusions on their destination preferences. For example, the share of outbound East Asian students studying in East Asia oscillated between 35 percent and 45 percent over the past 20 years. This could also be due to way the statistics are recorded, and sometimes estimated.

[27] See Chan, S.J. (2012), Ziguras, C. and McBurnie G. (2011).

[28] ADBI, OECD and ILO (2014), *Labour Migration, Skills and Student Mobility in Asia*.

[29] UNICEF (2014), *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*; See also UNESCO (2019).

[30] According to the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report, Sino-African cooperation has materialized in the field of education, with the number of Chinese scholarships provided to African professionals and students increasing from 30,000 in 2016–18 to 50,000 in 2019–21.

1.5. A Gendered Lens on Youth Migration Dynamics

For all age categories, the share of male migrants slightly exceeds that of female migrants, and this is true across time. In 2020, 52 percent of young migrants aged 15–24 were men while 48 percent were women. However, the gender disaggregation of young migrants follows different patterns at the regional level. In Africa, where 76 percent of the migrant stocks are made of intraregional migrants, largely from Sub-Saharan Africa, the 15–24 age group is composed of a larger share of female migrants (51 percent) relative to male migrants (49 percent). Migrant women, however, represent a smaller share of total migrants for each older age group, and this tendency has been constant for the past 30 years.

Migration in Africa, and particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, is often depicted as a male-dominated phenomenon. However, women constitute an increasingly bigger proportion of international migrants, a process described as the "feminization of migration."[31] Female migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa tend to be very young, generally between 15 and 24 years (see table 1), and unmarried; but a trend of women migrating in their 40s has also been documented. The profile of young migrant women can be divided into two overarching categories: those who are single and low educated, who find employment as housemaids or in the care industry; and those who are single and educated, who migrate in search of better employment opportunities.[32] Besides international migration, the internal migration of women from rural to urban areas is a phenomenon that deserves further attention and exploration.[33]

In Asia, migrant women consistently account for a smaller share of total migrants across age groups, however, the gap between migrant women and men is the smallest for the 15–24 age category. While this tendency has been visible since the 1990s, the gap between female and male migrants was narrower 30 years ago, especially for young age groups. For instance, women represented 48 percent of migrants aged 15–24 and 43 percent of those aged 25–34 in 1990, and these shares shrunk to respectively 45 percent and 39 percent in 2020. A possible explanation for this observation is the fact that intraregional migration from Central and South Asia is increasingly male dominated, with men constituting 66 percent of the migrant stock in 2020, compared to 56 percent in 1990—an increase of 10 percentage points over 30 years.[34] In Latin America and the Caribbean, the share of migrant women and men across different age groups has remained more or less the same over time and indicates a gender balance, especially for younger migrant groups.

[31] See Bachan, A. (2018).
[32] See Masanja, G.F. (2012).
[33] This is not a universal trend. One interviewee, Essa C. Mussa, for example, suggests that in Ethiopia households are reluctant to send young women to work in urban areas, where they may be more exposed to violence and abuses.
[34] The majority (63%) of migrants living in Asia are intraregional migrants. Migrants coming from Central and South Asia continue to represent the largest share of intraregional migrants, although this share has been shrinking with time in favor of migrants from East and Southeast Asia.

Table 1. Gender Distribution of Migrants in Different Age Categories in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, 1990 and 2020

Age categories	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64
Africa					
			2020		
Female (%)	51	47	43	42	43
Male (%)	49	53	57	58	57
			1990		
Female (%)	50	46	42	42	44
Male (%)	50	54	58	58	56
Asia					
			2020		
Female (%)	45	39	38	37	42
Male (%)	55	61	62	63	58
			1990		
Female (%)	48	43	43	45	49
Male (%)	52	57	57	55	51
Latin America and the Caribbean					
			2020		
Female (%)	50	49	48	49	50
Male (%)	50	51	52	51	50
			1990		
Female (%)	51	51	49	48	48
Male (%)	49	49	51	52	52

Source: UN DESA, 2020

2. FACTORS THAT ENABLE AND SUSTAIN YOUTH MIGRATION

The drivers of migration are often both enablers and disablers—and all the more so at an age of life when possibilities are still plural, and the contours of existence are not yet definitively traced. A study focused on youth aspirations to migrate, based on Gallup World Poll's data (2010–16), suggests that more than 32 percent of young people aged 15–34 years, the majority of which are in developing countries, were willing to "migrate permanently abroad if given a chance."[35] Of that total, 17 percent planned to effectively do so within the next year. Expressing an aspiration to migrate, however, differs from having the ability to do so.

Youth migration may not always be the outcome of rational decision-making. Indeed, both choice and chance determine youth migration, and particularly migration destinations (Bloch, Zetter, and Sigona 2009). Some young migrants choose their destination, taking into account the feasibility of the journey, the existence of networks, language, culture, rule of law, and human rights in the country of destination. Others migrate by chance, with youth as an age group showing more risk-taking abilities, and the readiness to travel with little reliable information but a hope to take control over their lives. These abstract motivations are as much part of youth migration as tangible factors; both are based on assumptions and expectations. One of these assumptions has been confirmed in the literature: wage growth has been shown to be higher for migrants who arrive at a younger age.

Thinking of youth migration in terms of push and pull factors is somewhat helpful but also inadequate. Different theories have been used to explain the reasons why people migrate but none fully explains migration patterns,[36] or addresses age specificities.[37] The current debate around youth migration is mostly focused on economic drivers that encourage young migrants to leave their community of origin in search of more stable and better-paid job opportunities, and employment is often cited as a driver for migration by young migrants themselves. Going beyond this unidimensional understanding of youth migration, this section highlights five key enablers of migration among youth, and two factors that sustain it.

Factors enabling youth migration:

1. **Access to finance** may have mixed impacts on youth migration. While young people with migration intentions may have found ways to circumvent credit constraints, some studies show that debt and indebtedness may, on the contrary, drive migration.
2. **Education can act as a key driver of youth migration across all contexts, including conflict settings.** On the one hand, higher education levels may motivate young people to migrate to put their skills and knowledge into practice; on the other, youth migration can be driven by the search for better education prospects. These two mechanisms, however, do not work in isolation but rather mutually reinforce each other, as high education levels may lead to further migration for education purposes.

[35] See Milasi, S. (2020).
[36] See Carling, J. and Collins, F. (2018).
[37] See Juárez F., et al (2013).

3. **Technology is present across the migration process**, shaping desires, and providing access to information and services along the way; the potential—and risks—of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for specific demographics is key.
4. **Social networks and human capital shape and protect youth migrants** but may require young migrants to "give back" to network actors.
5. **Policies and policy frameworks play a key role** in the materialization of migration aspirations. While migration policies may be biased toward work experience and thus limit the possibility of young people to migrate, educational and vocational training policies can also affect the likelihood of migration.

Factors sustaining youth migration:

6. **Youth migration is a proxy for circular migration**, and for generations to come: those who migrate young are more likely to continue to migrate, as will their children.
7. **Youth migration remains a response to crises**, **and personal transitions**, including most recently a response to COVID-19—initially limited by global North countries, due to health constraints before being encouraged in a context of survival and economic reconstruction.

2.1. The Links between Youth Migration and Finance Are Complex and Multidimensional

The links between youth migration and finance, which include access to credit, debt, indebtedness, and money transfers through remittances, are complex and understudied. While financial considerations and constraints are often used as a prism to study youth migration, our understanding of how access to finance shapes the decision-making process of young migrants, how it affects their migration journey, and how it can affect the way young migrants interact with their home country remains limited.

A study of the determinants of youth migration across seven countries shows no evidence of credit constraints hindering youth migration.[38] In other words, youth find a way around credit constraints that often curtail adult migration—either through community pooling of resources, or loans that they will later pay back. In addition, debt migration can take different forms based on the migrant's gender identity. This is the case in many parts of Southeast Asia, where women leaving their country to engage in domestic work abroad will resort to wage deductions to finance their migration, rather than taking out loans. This has been referred to as "silently incurred debt" (Platt 2017), but also shows that the links between youth migration and access to credit can play out differently for men and women.

At the same time, debt or indebtedness can act as a primary driver of migration. A recent IOM study on debt and migration in Southeast Asia shows that, while using migration as a coping mechanism to over-indebtedness is not a new phenomenon in itself, the new forms of loans or "microcredits" that microfinance institutions have given rise to, especially in rural areas, have strengthened the links between

[38] See De Brauw, A. (2019).

credit expansion and migration in the region.[39] For instance, in Cambodia, the repayment of problematic debts is increasingly made possible by migration.

Remittances, or the money migrants abroad send back to their home country, can be used to pay back debt. Bylander notably finds that access to credit and migration mutually reinforce each other: migration has become an increasingly viable response to the growth of formal and informal credit options as it allows individuals to earn enough money to repay loans.[40] Nonetheless, remittances are not always the answer. In fact, younger migrants aged 15–24 are found to remit less than migrants above the age of 25.[41] This can be explained by several factors, including that young migrants may not always migrate for economic reasons but rather "education, marriage, family reunification or refuge"[42] and, when they do seek out economic opportunities, they face significant hurdles that prevent their sustainable integration in the formal labor market. To compensate for informal employment options and the lack of access to social protection, young migrants may resort to reverse remittances.[43] Against this backdrop, some researchers have argued that governments should support young migrants before, during, and after migration, notably by ensuring their access to financial services, including loans, to help them cover migration costs and high recruitment fees.

2.2. Education Decisions Affect Young Migrants' Life Course

Education can influence young people's decision to migrate in two ways that mutually reinforce each other. First, educational aspirations, which are often seen as a secondary driver, mainly because of the difficulties in dissociating them from the search for improved economic prospects, are a key determinant of youth migration across different contexts, both in developed and developing countries, including in humanitarian settings. For instance, young asylum seekers can also be in a quest for education, as seen among young Afghan asylum seekers,[44] as well as among young Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia.[45] Similarly, youth from Somaliland and Puntland may find their right to education fulfilled only through migration abroad.[46]

Education as a driver for youth migration may also open avenues for subsequent migration decisions, particularly in the search for better employment opportunities. For instance, Heckert (2015) found that young Haitians who migrate for education end up with better labor opportunities.[47] Similarly, Valentine et al. (2017) note that access to education is first among the drivers of young Mexicans' migration from rural to peri-urban and urban areas, and precedes labor migration, whether domestic or international.[48]

[39] IOM (2019), *Debt and the Migration Experience: Insights from South-East Asia*.
[40] See Bylander, M. (2014).
[41] Mashayekhi, M. and Twarog, S. (2014), Chapter 9 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Murthy S., and Winder, N. (2014), Chapter 3 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[44] https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/refugees/community/2016/10/21/call-us-students-not-refugees-say-afghans-migrating-for-education.
[45] See Samuel Hall (2014).
[46] See Samuel Hall (2015).
[47] See Heckert, J. (2015).
[48] See Valentine, Jessa Lewis, Brad Barham, Seth Gitter, and Jenna Nobles (2017).

However, the same study finds that migration to the United States may lead to unskilled jobs and be delinked from the original education goals. As such it can disrupt the school-work transition. Such education decisions can substantially alter young migrants' life course. Researchers also point to the broader repercussions of education as a key driver for migration that goes beyond the individual level. For instance, Bakewell and Bonfiglio (2013) highlighted in their study that children's education, which is often viewed as a long-term investment, can also shape the migration choices of families.[49]

At the same, higher education levels can also increase the chances that young people will migrate. It is therefore important to see education-driven migration as a continuum whereby migration for educational purposes can shape future migration decisions. Migration can open access to educational opportunities that otherwise would not be available to young people.[50] Lulle et al. (2019) find that "[t]ertiary level graduates are generally more mobile than the rest of the population […] and migrants with a lower secondary education are also over-represented in the mobile population."[51] Milasi (2020) observed a similar trend, noting that postsecondary education increases the aspiration to migrate among youth in developing and emerging countries, with the highest educated more likely to effectively make plans to leave.[52]

Education, however, can also be interrupted as a result of migration. In fact, migration has a negative effect on educational attainment for both young male and female migrants.[53] Research focused on Ethiopia shows that young women are at times forced to leave education and to migrate to fulfill parental and extended family needs. They are sent to the Middle East, where there is great demand for domestic workers.[54] Young men, instead, decide to leave school as they are attracted by the success stories of migrants who migrate to South Africa and achieve financial rewards.[55]

2.3. Technology Can Empower Youth at All Stages of the Migration Process

The expanded use of technology shapes migrants' aspirations: access to technology provides access to images of new lifestyles, allows potential migrants to gain insights into their possible destinations, and provides access to information on how to get there.[56, 57, 58, 59] Nonetheless, access to technology is neither universal nor equal: most of those who do not have access to the internet are concentrated in poorer countries.[60] As concerns youth specifically,[61] only 30 percent have access to the internet in least-

[49] See Bakewell, O., and Bonfiglio, A. (2013).
[50] See Belmonte et al. (2020).
[51] See Lulle et al. (2019).
[52] See Milasi, S. (2020).
[53] Dustmann and Glitz (2011), Chapter 4 in *Handbook of the Economics of Education*.
[54] See Semela and Cochrane, L (2019).
[55] Ibid.
[56] See Bakewell O. et al (2009).
[57] Martin and Herzber (2014), Chapter 4 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[58] de Haas, H. (2020), Chapter 1 in Routledge Handbook of Migration and Development.
[59] European Commission (2019), *10 Trends Shaping Migration*.
[60] https://www.statista.com/statistics/269329/penetration-rate-of-the-internet-by-region/
[61] The report defines youth as those between 15 to 24 years.

developed countries, 67 percent in developing countries, while 94 percent have access in developed countries.[62] Access to the internet also varies based on gender: at the global level women have lower access to the internet by 12 percentage points, a gap that between 2013 and 2017 widened in Africa. This digital divide has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic as millions have been excluded by access to the internet, despite its relevance in spreading information on how to protect oneself from the virus.[63]

Technology plays a greater role once youth are on the move, as a source of guidance, facilitating their choices of destination, routes, and services along the way, and also as a means to stay in touch with loved ones back home, or as a line of credit to family members.[64] Young migrants have the capacity to use and adapt to technologies better than older cohorts, as they have been acquainted with these new tools from an early age. For instance, technology is leveraged to maximize young migrants' access to services and enhance their protection, especially that of children, adolescents, and girls. The potential for ICT to protect youth who are far from home is a key hope in the way that technology can support safer migration. Research has shown that young migrants use ICTs[65] to extend their social networks, find new jobs, send remittances, and keep in touch with family back home. This raises the possibilities of technology to address the social exclusion of women, and their vulnerability to abuse, trafficking, and other negative experiences during migration.

Technology may also be a possible outlet for supporting regular migration channels for young people as most immigration processes now require appointments made online, and follow-up communication and sharing of documents by email. International coordination and migration agencies, relevant governmental departments, nongovernmental organizations, civil society organizations (including youth organizations, movements, and networks) as well as local legal or support agencies are now also increasingly setting up digital platforms, using ICTs and social media, to provide young migrants with information on their rights during their migration. In the United States, different platforms connect young migrants and students to advocacy activities such as the "pocket DACA"[66] mobile app which helps young immigrants apply for deferred action to avoid deportation.

However, risks need to be mapped and understood. Youth can be approached and lured into trafficking or sex work through scamming sites, smugglers can take advantage of technology and new platforms to advertise their services, and governments or armed groups can also monitor and target certain youth populations. As Rima, 29 years of age and living in Dubai, explains "The world is at our fingertips. If each country's Ministry of Interior produced a smartphone app or website for potential youth migrants, this could simplify the process and ensure that fewer people fall into the trap of untrustworthy travel agents."[67]

[62] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2017.pdf.
[63] See Broom, D. (2020).
[64] https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/modern-mobility-role-icts-child-and-youth-migration.
[65] https://www.ictworks.org/how-technology-can-support-migratory-children-and-youth/#.YNCPUzaA79E.
[66] https://www.aila.org/advo-media/press-releases/2013/new-pocket-daca-mobile-app-helps-daca.
[67] https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wyr/2013/report.pdf.

2.4. Young Migrants Rely Heavily on Their Social Networks

A 2017 research report found that social connections are considered the most reliable source of information among young migrants: information provided by family and friends at home exerts a significant influence on the ultimate decision to migrate. Information gathering often takes place by "word of mouth," and the experiences of returnees and family members on the move or abroad.[68] Gathering information prior to departure raises expectations. Nonetheless, the information received is not always accurate or complete. For example, the same report argues that most of the young West Africans interviewed were not aware of the real situation in Libya before reaching the country.[69]

Once at the destination, empirical studies have found that those most vulnerable to unemployment—the young and the less educated migrants—are especially likely to rely on social networks to find jobs. These jobs, in turn, are likely to lead to improved working conditions for young migrants.[70] However, while networks explain migratory decisions and outcomes, for young migrants they are linked to risks related to the reciprocity they may require.

Box 2. Youth Migration in, out of, and to India

A study[71] on patterns and drivers of internal migration among youth in India and three other countries—Ethiopia, Peru, and Vietnam—suggests that young people tend to migrate between the ages of 15 and 19, moving multiple times during this age span. In India, the study finds, the main reason for internal migration is education among young men, whereas marriage is the biggest reason for migration among young women. Individuals living in poorer households, however, tend to move for work. India's students abroad increased from over 62,000 to almost 182,000 in 13 years.[72] The largest majority of outbound Indian students choose to study in North America and Western Europe, even though this share decreased from 76 percent in 2000 to 61 percent in 2018, in favor of intraregional student mobility toward East Asia and Pacific. Between 2000 and 2019, the share of outbound Indian students to East Asia and Pacific increased from 9 percent to 19 percent.[73]

India continues to be a destination hub for higher-education students. The total share of students migrating to India for educational purposes has significantly increased since the early 2000s, from almost 7,000 students to 47,424 students in 2019 (a sixfold increase).[74] In the early 2000s, the majority of inbound students came from within the subregion, with Sub-Saharan African students accounting for the largest share (32 percent).[75] In 2019, Sub-Saharan African students accounted for the second-largest share of

[68] REACH (2017), *Investigating decision-making, migration trajectories and expectations of young people on the way to Italy, Mixed Migration Platform*.
[69] Ibid.
[70] https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-social-sciences/social-policy/iris/2015/working-paper-series/IRiS-WP-6-2015.pdf.
[71] See Gavonel, M.C. (2017).
[72] See Hercog, M., and van de Laar, M. (2017).
[73] UIS (2021), *National Monitoring: Outbound internationally mobile students by host region*.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

inbound students in India. They were surpassed by students from South and West Asia, which today represent half the share of inbound students in India. With a 500 percent increase in inbound students over 20 years, India is a prime example of a country that managed to capitalize on intraregional student mobility, even though recently the number of foreign students has been growing more slowly, in contrast with China's rise as an education hub.[76] The issue of recognition of qualifications is increasingly topical in India:[77] young students who have acquired their qualifications abroad need to have them recognized in India to be able to come back and exercise their profession.

Underdevelopment and unemployment are other factors for migration among Indian youth, who leave poorer regions such as Kerala or the northern states, to find employment opportunities in countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The migration corridor from India to the Gulf region was for many years the second largest in the world but is slowly narrowing.[78] Other channels are opening up, particularly for young skilled Indian workers: between 2016 and 2019 more than 40,000 Indians acquired permanent residence in Canada, which is attracting increasing numbers of young tech workers.[79]

The high number of nonresident Indians makes India the biggest recipient of remittances,[80] as many migrants keep sending money to their families back home.[81] Khadria finds that young migrants, in particular, tend to remit to their family while abroad, until they start their own family.[82]

2.5. Policies and Policy Frameworks Are Key Parameters in Youth Migration Decision-Making

Another decisive factor in young people's decision to migrate is the policy frameworks that exist in the country of origin or country of destination. Policies can be of two orders: they can either be migration policies with direct impacts on the migration decisions and trajectories of young people, or employment/vocational training policies with indirect impacts on migration decisions insofar as they can encourage or disincentivize young people to stay in their country of origin.

Several countries including Australia, New Zealand, and recently the United Kingdom have adopted a points-based system as part of their migration policy.[83] These are used to select skilled migrant workers.[84] Governments use this approach to rank or prioritize applicants for jobs based on their characteristics, such as education, language skills, and work experience. Candidates who score the highest number of points based on these characteristics are invited to submit a visa application. While in Australia maximum points

[76] See Constantino, X., et al. (2020).
[77] UKCISA (2020). *UK and India agree to work towards mutual recognition of academic qualifications.*
[78] https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-gulf-migration-testing-time
[79] https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2020/02/03/indians-immigrating-to-canada-at-an-astonishing-rate/?sh=1ea44f952b5f
[80] IOM (2019), *World Migration Report 2020*.
[81] Key Informant Interview with Binod Khadria, March 2021.
[82] See Khadria, B. (2020).
[83] See Papademetriou, D. and Madeleine Sumption (2011).
[84] https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/reports/the-australian-points-based-system-what-is-it-and-what-would-its-impact-be-in-the-uk/

can be granted for those aged 25–32, the more skilled work experience prospective immigrants have, the better. Such criteria may prevent younger people from migrating, especially those with little to no work experience, in favor of older, more experienced cohorts.

The employment policies governments adopt can also have implications for youth migration. Based on a survey of 10 countries, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that government employment agencies who contribute to matching supply and demand on the labor market tend to curb emigration flows.[85] Indeed, people who can find jobs on the local labor market through these institutions may choose to stay. In most countries surveyed, the share of people with no plans to emigrate is higher for those who secured employment through these agencies, in most cases public jobs, than those who did not. Evidence on the impact of vocational training is, however, nuanced. On the one hand, vocational training may help job seekers become more qualified and in a better position to find a job on the domestic labor market. On the other hand, by enhancing people's skills, vocational training can increase the employability of people on international labor markets, thus creating an impulse for migration. The OECD finds that in most surveyed countries people who had participated in a vocational training program had a higher likelihood of planning to migrate than those who did not, with the exceptions of Armenia and Cambodia.

2.6. Exposure to Migration Can Prompt Further Migration

In many cases, youth migration is not a one-time event but rather a pathway for cyclical and continuous migration. In some countries, migration has become inherent to the culture and traditions of local societies, explaining its high occurrence. For instance, in Mexico,[86] Mali, or Senegal, [87] migration is a rite of passage into adulthood for young men. In southeast Nigeria, young men who do not migrate to urban areas may be negatively perceived.[88] For young women in rural areas, migration has turned into a means of empowerment and escaping oppressive societal expectations (as to the way they lead their lives, for instance).[89] In China, migration is increasingly seen as an opportunity to "become more modern, independent and beautiful" among young women.[90] Overall, migration is a widespread phenomenon within families and opens the door for future migration trajectories over time and generations. Those who migrate when young are more likely to migrate again as they become older,[91] and young migrants are likely to have had parents who had migrated.[92] A better understanding of youth migration as a dynamic phenomenon can therefore enable more adapted development planning.

[85] OECD (2017), *Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development.*
[86] See Kandel, W., and Massey, D.S. (2002).
[87] See Carling J. and Schewel K. (2018).
[88] See Tacoli, C. et al. (2000).
[89] See Castagnone, E. and Termine, P. (2018); Juarez et al. (2013); Martin, S., and Herzberg (2014).
[90] See Chiang Y.L., et al. (2015).
[91] See Bailey, D.B, et al. (1993).
[92] See Jones, C. I. (1995).

2.7. A Response to Crises and Personal Transitions

A final but no less important driver is migration as forced displacement, notably in contexts of humanitarian crisis.[93] Findings from a systematic review of migration aspirations highlight that "migration aspirations rise with the level of violence and insecurity; whereas data reveal that dissatisfaction with institutional and contextual factors—for example, corruption, lack of trust in the government—increased the likelihood of young individuals to aspire to migrate abroad as well, across all country groupings."[94] Crises may also be personal. Deciding to get married and have children affects young people's migration decisions in either direction.[95] Young men migrate when a child is planned to arrive, or after one arrives, to be able to better provide for the expanding family through more regular, higher earnings available abroad. What is often less expected are the personal crises that migrants face en route. In recent years, increasing evidence has shown the "high levels of abuse, trafficking and exploitation"[96] on "harrowing journeys" taken from the North to the South of Africa, a result of increasingly restrictive migration policies that create new vulnerabilities for young migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. Such evidence reveals that youth migrants are more at risk than adult migrants on irregular migration journeys—with implications for their ability to contribute as they transition into adulthood with new layers of vulnerabilities and marks of trauma accumulated through their migration. The same report highlights that adolescents with lower levels of education are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation.

Box 3. Youth Migration out of Somalia and Afghanistan

Research conducted in Afghanistan and Somalia[97] tested assumptions about the root causes of and potential solutions to youth migration. Key findings reveal that:

- The impact of employment on young people's intentions to migrate is mixed. Data from Afghanistan lead us to conclude that employment is positively correlated with higher intentions to migrate, while data from Puntland and Somaliland suggest that employment increases rootedness, or young people's desire to remain in their country of origin.
- Economic well-being and ownership of assets are positively linked with greater migration intentions.
- Secondary education may or may not have a positive impact on young people's intention to migrate. In Puntland and South-central Somalia, access to secondary education lowered youth's intentions to migrate illegally, while in Somaliland no effect was observed.
- Vocational training programs were not found to impact intentions to migrate, although they do increase young people's employability and access to the labor market.
- Young people who perceive their sense of safety and security as high tend to have lower intentions to migrate.

[93] https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-migration.pdf (last accessed December 14, 2021).
[94] See Milasi, S. (2020).
[95] See de Brauw (2019).
[96] UNICEF and IOM (2017), *Harrowing Journeys, Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation*.
[97] See Mercy Corps and Samuel Hall (2018).

- Insecurity and lack of a positive outlook on their future conditions encourages youth to migrate. Combined with a sense of security and social inclusion, youth that have positive expectations for their present and future are less likely to leave their country of origin.

Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis constitutes a test of an unprecedented nature for all countries and regions of the world. It is weakening governance systems and numerous economic sectors, in particular sectors where young people are employed, in most cases for the first time. From an economic perspective, global crises are known to affect the youth[98] the most.[99] Even during ordinary times, at the global level, youth represent the biggest group among the working-age population seeking employment.[100] Unemployment is particularly high among youth, and young migrants often find themselves in vulnerable, exploitative situations.[101] A 2013 consultation of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and International Labour Organization (ILO) highlighted that young migrant workers, "especially low skilled migrants, those in irregular status, indigenous migrants, female domestic workers, and other low-skilled migrants—are most at risk from labor exploitation and various forms of abuse."[102] The OECD suggests that "[n]ew arrivals tend to be particularly hard hit during the crisis, with lasting negative impact on their long-term employment prospects."[103] Young migrants who arrived in new countries just before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have been at an even greater risk of vulnerability.

As the pandemic has progressed, entry restrictions have been implemented by all countries (especially of the OECD) with a historic collapse in visa issuance of 72 percent between April and June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. We can identify very direct and sometimes less perceptible consequences of the pandemic on young migrants. Young migrants are particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of the pandemic. On the one hand, this is because their often-precarious conditions expose them directly to the disease; on the other, the large contingents of young migrants in the service sectors (especially health care and domestic work) put them on the front line. Moreover, language and cultural differences, especially for youth with less educational or social capital, create barriers in terms of access to care and information on the pandemic. This is particularly so among undocumented migrants who do not benefit from national health and social protection programs: "many do not seek health care, including for COVID-19, due to financial constraints or fear of deportation."[104]

By contrast, the COVID-19 crisis has also brought a new emphasis on the critical role of migrants in the global workforce. Young labor migrants "were key to our economies and societies before the pandemic and are likely to become even more essential in the recovery to sustain our weakened economies and

[98] Data on youth unemployment at the global level are provided by the ILO. For statistical purposes the ILO identifies youth as the 15–24 age group.
[99] Ibid.
[100] ILO (2020), *Preventing exclusion from the labour market: Tackling the COVID-19 youth employment crisis*.
[101] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/policy-areas/youth-and-migration/lang--en/index.htm.
[102] UN (2013), *World Youth Report: Youth and Migration*.
[103] OECD (2020). *What is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrants and their children?*
[104] WHO (2020), *Apart Together survey - Preliminary overview of refugees and migrants self-reported impact of COVID-19.*

exhausted societies."[105] According to a Joint Research Centre analysis, in the European Union, migrants (i.e., defined in the report as both non-EU born and mobile EU workers) account for the 13 percent of workers that are deemed "essential" to keep the EU economies running. Foreign-born workers constitute up to a third of the workforce in essential low-skilled professions, including cleaners and helpers, and laborers in mining and construction. According to the same report, despite natives making up the majority of key workers (which constitute approximately 31 percent of employed working-age individuals), non-EU born migrants and EU mobile citizens are essential in filling vital roles (e.g., personal care workers in health services, drivers, transport and storage laborers, food processing workers).[106] As pointed out by the European Commission, "low skilled workers from third-countries are especially over-represented in a number of key occupations that are vital in the fight against COVID-19, underscoring their often-neglected value within European economies."[107] Faced with a shortage of essential workers due to mobility restrictions, many EU Member States implemented measures to facilitate access to the labor market for third-country nationals already residing in their territory in order to address labor shortages in essential sectors, especially agriculture and health care.

The switch from forced restriction, made necessary by the pandemic crisis, to the opening up required to mitigate economic crisis, is a hallmark of the global North countries' long-time ambiguity in handling migration. It also provides a truly historic opportunity to analyze, rethink, and rebuild mutually beneficial trade routes for both countries of origin and destination by promoting better protection and respect for the rights of young, low-skilled migrants, by taking better account of diversity and gender issues in this effort, and by avoiding brain drain during the upcoming reconstruction of economies hard hit by the crisis. In this sense, the crisis reveals systemic flaws in the migration management systems of both countries of origin and destination, while giving an opportunity to support more equitable and sustainable dynamics. The OECD recommends that a youth and intergenerational lens be adopted in the response to the effects of the pandemic.[108] And finally, it will be essential to take into account the heterogeneity of young migrants and, in particular, the specific vulnerabilities of women, the disabled, the most vulnerable, and those suffering from psychological trauma due to the pandemic, marginalization, or perils faced along migration routes.

[105] See Foresti (2020).
[106] See Fasani, F. and Mazza, J. (2020).
[107] https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/inform-3-maintaining-labour-migration-in-essential-sectors-in-times-of-pandemic-covid-19
[108] Ibid.

3. DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE LENS OF YOUTH MIGRATION

Current development paradigms are rarely inclusive of young people, erecting barriers that prevent full-fledged recognition of youth as active members of their societies. Across OECD countries, the unemployment rate is on average higher for young people aged 15–24, at 12 percent in 2019, compared to 5.4 percent for all working-age people.[109] Certain regions of the world have also recorded their highest youth unemployment rates in a few decades.[110] As previously shown, the fact that young people feel left out of domestic labor markets can be a catalyst for migration. Voter turnout is also particularly low among youth, especially across developing countries,[111] an indicator of their dissatisfaction with the government and political inclusion. In more traditional societies, notably in Africa, gerontocracy prevails, which means that young people often have little space to voice their concerns.[112] Finally, in contexts where unemployment, underemployment, and job precarity are high, young people suffer from a lack of access to social protection mechanisms, which are usually key to prevent social dislocation in times of hardship.[113] The stigmatization of young people may increase their disenchantment with the current status quo and push them to search for new opportunities elsewhere.

Migrants, too, continue to be stigmatized and portrayed as outsiders in their countries of destination. Rather than recognizing them as actors of change and innovation, politicians often frame them as an economic and social strain on societies. At the same time, increasing their involvement in political processes and policy making is not sufficiently placed as a priority on national agendas. Falling under two categories—youth and migrants—at once, young migrants often find themselves in several systems of exclusion. Their predicament highlights the need for policy makers to reassess how current policies are tailored to their needs and reflect their aspirations and lived realities.

Both the dysfunctions and successes of dominant policies and economic models can be seen in the trajectories, daily challenges, and opportunities of young migrants. Such lessons can contribute to imagining, inventing, identifying, and implementing solutions to crucial contemporary issues. Young migrants show us that one of the limitations of existing development models might be to think of equality as an end goal to be reached only after having put an end to socioeconomic inequalities. It may be time to place equality—instead of inequality—as the starting point for all human actions, for a truly alternative understanding of development.[114]

[109] OECD's unemployment rate (indicator, last accessed on 17 June 2021) and youth unemployment rate (indicator, last accessed on 17 June 2021)
[110] For instance, the ILO finds that youth unemployment rates in 2020 were as high as 29.6 percent in North Africa, 22.9 percent in the Arab States, and 18.9 percent in Southern Asia. See ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2020.
[111] See Sundjo, F. (2020).
[112] Drawn from key informant interview, April 2021.
[113] Murthy S., and Winder, N. (2014), Chapter 3 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[114] On equality, see in particular Rancière, J. (1987), *The Ignorant Schoolmaster.*

3.1. Rethinking Mobility: Socioeconomic Equality as a Starting Point

Youth migration urges policy makers to go beyond the dichotomic view that tends to characterize current economic models. To this day, assessments of the viability of economic systems have largely relied on a relatively binary understanding. Members of the labor force fall under one of two opposite categories: active vs. inactive; employed vs. unemployed; skilled vs. unskilled, and so on. Young migrants, thanks to their diverse skillset and economic profiles, challenge these dichotomies and push policy makers to rethink the essential roles they play in the functioning of economies.

3.1.1. A Circular Understanding of Mobility and Integration

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, the economic contribution of migrants, and especially young migrants, in destination countries has become visible.[115] Several EU countries adopted measures in extremis that eased the access of third-country nationals residing in their territory to the labor market in an effort to address workforce shortages in essential sectors such as agriculture and health care.[116] These measures come at a time of recognition of the importance of "key" or "essential" workers across the European Union, who were in the front line of the fight against COVID-19.[117] Fasani and Mazza find that "even if the majority of key workers are native, extra-EU migrants and EU mobile citizens are essential in filling vital roles" that kept the European economies afloat in times of crisis.[118] Research conducted by Nándori et al. also reinforces arguments that young migrants bring skills and abilities to the labor market that complement, rather than supplant, the skillsets of the domestic workforce. The authors find a positive effect of youth mobility, at least in the short term, on youth unemployment rates, social development, and economic growth in countries of destination. This positive effect is also presumed to be long-lasting "as the growth of GDP may create new demand on the market, which then may improve labour market balance and therefore reduce unemployment."[119]

Bolstering the skills and competences of young migrants not only benefits the country of destination but also generates positive outcomes for the country of origin, namely through remittances, and for migrants themselves. Indeed, young migrants question the traditional logics of mobility (push/pull factors, supply/demand) and call for a circular understanding of how migration and development intersect. The final report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Task Force on Circular Migration, for instance, considers circular migration to produce a triple-win situation that benefits (1) countries of origin

[115] European Migration Network and OECD (2020), *Inform 3: Maintaining labour migration in essential sectors in times of pandemic.*

[116] As described in Inform 3 of the European Migration Network, "a few [countries] granted or extended the right to work in essential sectors to asylum seekers; facilitated changes in status (for example, from student to work status); or introduced flexibilities to improve access to work in key sectors. Regularisation of third-country nationals who had been employed in certain key sectors was also permitted in a limited number of cases."

[117] While Fasani and Mazza do not disaggregate key workers by age, it can be assumed based on the Eurostat age-disaggregated databases on immigration that the working-age migrant population (15–64) across EU countries is largely made up of young. migrants aged 15–34. For instance, more than 60 percent of the working-age migrant population in Germany, France, and Italy is aged 15–34.

[118] Fasani and Mazza define EU mobile citizens as "all those workers who are born in a member state other than the one where they currently work and reside" and extra-EU migrants as "all those workers who are born outside of the EU."

[119] Nandori E.S., et al., "Action and Reaction" – the Impact of European Youth Mobility on the Economy and the Labour Market" Eastern European Business and Economics Journal 4 (1 - special issue Hungarian youth mobility in Europe): 56-78.

through unemployment relief and the consolidation of financial and human capital, (2) countries of destination by addressing labor shortages and boosting economic production, and (3) migrants themselves by providing them with opportunities for human development.[120] Using a transnational perspective, Mazzucato (2008) demonstrates how the multiple benefits of migration materialize in practice.[121] She shows how Ghanaian migrants are doubly engaged: (1) in their country of origin, by investing in various key economic sectors such as housing and education, and (2) in their destination country, by acting as a driving force of the Dutch economy.

However, if their skills and qualifications are not continuously bolstered and upgraded, young migrants may be at risk of engaging in low-skilled, underpaid, indecent jobs—a suboptimal outcome for all three parties of circulation migration. This has particularly been the case for young female migrants, who often "have lower levels of school attainment and [… are] more likely to be stuck in low-productivity jobs."[122] A first step is to recognize diplomas and qualifications obtained predeparture. This ensures that young migrants already have formally recognized tools at their disposal to actively and meaningfully participate in the labor market of the destination country. Meanwhile, young migrants who choose to return back home need to find an enabling environment that creates the necessary conditions for their labor market integration. In the absence of adequate policies and measures, young migrants may see themselves constrained to migrate again and to countries where their skills may still not be recognized.

Looking at the integration of young refugees in Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency recognizes that providing access to vocational training to those in need of international protection can "help [by] validating previously acquired skills."[123] As the ILO also suggests,[124] the recognition of skills accrued in the country of origin, even in nonformal or informal avenues, is a significant component of the social integration of immigrants in destination countries, where migrant workers (and also young people from immigrant background)[125] tend to be disadvantaged. Similarly, the recognition of qualifications acquired during the migration experience should take place upon return in countries of origin as well, enabling young migrants to practice at home and preventing de-skilling or skills waste, should they decide to return. This is even more relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which "has resulted in increased waves of return migration, and the need for effective policy measures for labor market and social reintegration."[126] Examples of existing programs in destination countries targeting young migrants specifically include the Promoting Integration for Young Migrants project[127] and the MIMY (EMpowerment through liquid Integration of Migrant Youth in vulnerable conditions) program.[128]

[120] UNECE (2016), *Defining and Measuring Circular Migration, Task Force on Circular Migration.*
[121] See Mazzucato, V. (2008).
[122] See Bizas and Dr. Elie (2014), but also IOM (2018), *Youth, Employment and Migration Strategy in West and Central Africa*.
[123] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2019), *Integration of young refugees in the EU: good practices and challenges.*
[124] ILO (2020), *How to Facilitate the Recognition of Skills of Migrant Workers, Guide for Employment Services Providers*.
[125] See OECD (2014).
[126] ILO (2020).
[127] http://database.centralbaltic.eu/sites/default/files/PRIME_training_programme.pdf (last accessed December 20, 2021).
[128] https://www.mimy-project.eu/about/key-facts (last accessed May 27, 2021).

While ensuring that young migrants are able to maintain, if not increase, their skills level is crucial, it is also important to highlight that immigrants may not necessarily be worse off than local citizens, notably in terms of access to employment, especially in developing countries where informality is high. The relative economic advantage young migrants have vis-à-vis young nationals has been documented in the case of young Burkinabe migrants in Côte d'Ivoire. It was found that young Burkinabe migrants have lower unemployment rates than local Ivoirian youth.[129] Gender differences can, however, be observed. This trend is true for young men in general, across low- and middle-income countries, but not for young women.[130] Similarly, it was concluded that young Burkinabe migrants are mostly concentrated among groups with more professional experience, contrary to popular belief.

Box 4. Youth Unemployment Rates in Italy

The complexity of structural problems faced by today's youth and the impact that unsupportive and inadequate policy frameworks have on both local and immigrant youth is well illustrated by the case of Italy. Despite a consistently high unemployment rate over the past decade, particularly for the younger youth cohort (15–24),[131] Italy has been continuously attracting young migrants who take on low-skilled, but often essential, jobs either in the formal or informal economy and coexist with young natives that are out of employment, particularly in the south. As reported by Bonatti, the numbers of those who are immigrants and have medium- or high-skilled jobs are low, while the number of those with high-level degrees, especially in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics, taking on unqualified jobs is high.[132] It comes as no surprise that the majority of immigrant households in Italy are "poor or very poor."[133] Nonetheless, remittances are circa €5 billion per year, which means that "0.3 percent of the value added produced in Italy is spent in the migrants' native countries."[134] Bonatti argues that better employment policies, rather than immigration policies, are needed to foster the economic recovery of Italy and the overcoming of demographic challenges. The above also highlights how a lack of fair, equal, and inclusive policies, aimed at integrating young immigrants into the receiving society and enabling them to access decent and better paid jobs, ultimately deprives the country of human and economic gains, instead fueling dissatisfaction among the native youth and exacerbating the lack of decent opportunities for young immigrants.

3.1.2. Starting with Socioeconomic Equality

In the course of their migration trajectory, young migrants may face a multiplicity of risks and vulnerabilities that affect their social inclusion.[135] In countries of destination, young migrants "may become victims of discrimination and social marginalization." Precarious working conditions, indecent

[129] OCDE/OIT (2018), *Comment les immigrés contribuent à l'économie de la Côte d'Ivoire*.
[130] OECD/ILO (2018), *How Immigrants Contribute to Developing Countries' Economies*.
[131] http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCCV_TAXDISOCCU1 (last accessed May 26, 2021).
[132] See Bonatti, L. (2020).
[133] Idem.
[134] Idem.
[135] See Sabates-Wheeler, R., and M. Waite (2003).

jobs, and the threat of exclusion can jeopardize the development impacts of youth migration for countries of destination and origin, and particularly for young migrants who are unable to harness their full potential to lead economic, social, and political change. Youth migration therefore calls for enlarging understanding of social inclusion and integration to encompass the multiple and diverse needs of young migrants.

Beyond skills development and vocational training, literature points to the wider spectrum of services that are crucial to the long-term integration of young migrants. Among others, a lack of access to social protection (including its psychosocial dimensions) is one of the main challenges young migrants face during their migration journey. As Mai argues,[136] young migrants who are legally considered as minors in their country of destination are not eligible to regular sources of income and can thus "experience very powerful dynamics of social exclusion and sometimes have to rely on drug smuggling, theft and sex work to survive economically." This highlights a paradoxical situation where the legal frameworks in place in most EU countries, which prevent migrant minors from working in an effort to safeguard their rights as "children," can marginalize minor migrants by failing to integrate them in the welfare systems. When they are legally authorized to work and have found a job on the formal labor market, young migrants may face other drivers of social exclusion.[137] In many cases, the access of young migrant workers to social protection is contingent upon their migration and/or work permit status. Young migrants often lose their social protection coverage while waiting for their migration status to be regularized. During this transition period, many slip into informality, thus further exacerbating their social marginalization.

Ensuring that young migrants have access to social protection, irrespective of their socioeconomic and migration situations (irregular, unauthorized, undocumented), is therefore key to address the risks and vulnerabilities they face and maximize their economic and social contributions to their countries of destination.[138] Murthy and Winder note two key aspects of social protection and two complementary measures that are particularly relevant for migrants: namely (1) access to social protection programs; (2) the portability of social security benefits, understood as "the ability to preserve, maintain, and transfer vested social security rights or rights independent of nationality and country of residence";[139] (3) access to informal support networks; and (4) the design and implementation of policies addressing labor market access and employability.[140]

Box 5. Internal Migrants' Access to Social Services

Access to basic social services may also be an issue when young people migrate internally, in most cases from rural to urban settings. This is generally because governments fail to understand the needs of internal migrants, leading them to devise policies that do not address their social exclusion. The struggles of young pastoralists living in towns and cities in Burkina Faso and Chad is a case in point. In a recent study

[136] See Mai, N. (2011).
[137] Murthy S., and Winder, N. (2014), Chapter 3 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[138] The universal right to social security is enshrined in various international conventions and regional human rights agreements. The ILO Social Protection Floor Recommendation No. 202 adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2012 is a major milestone in this regard.
[139] See Sabates-Wheeler, R., et al. (2010).
[140] Murthy S., and Winder, N. (2014), Chapter 3 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.

of pastoralist youth in towns and cities,[141] the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations examined the preconditions to the economic and social integration of pastoralist youth once they settle in urban areas. Young migrants in Burkina Faso and Chad go through a rural-to-urban transition as part of a broader pathway to adulthood. Yet, and contrary to government beliefs, when young migrants settle in urban spaces, "they do not abandon livestock farming, but rather play a new role in pastoral economies."[142] To date, two options have been put on the table to guarantee the social integration of young pastoralists: some advocate for developing access to basic services within the camps in an effort to halt pastoral mobility; others seek to sedantarize pastoral systems as a precondition to accessing citizenship and the rights it entails (e.g., education, training, health, etc.). However, the binary approach that currently prevails does not meet the dual need for pastoral mobility and territorial anchoring. As young pastoralists are by essence "people on the move," they force governments to think outside the box and envision social inclusion strategies that account for dynamic rural-urban interactions.[143]

3.2. Questioning Political and Governance Models

Whether they have returned to their countries of origin (at times on a temporary basis), or are still in their countries of destination, young migrants have proven capable of shaping political institutions at the national, regional, or local level. The transnational identities they develop throughout their migration experience equip them with the tools to "challenge people's ideas, beliefs and views about, among other things, democracy, politics, institutions, health, culture, society, religion, technology, science, business, economics, education, and gender issues."[144] For this reason, rethinking politics in more inclusive terms is crucial to harness the transformative potential of young migrants and build on their capacity to drive change in their countries of destination or origin.

While young migrants still face barriers hindering their active participation in political processes abroad,[145] a significant body of literature shows how the very experience of migration increases young people's likelihood and desire to instigate political changes at home. For instance, Chauvet and Mercier (2012) explore the links between return migration and participation in local elections in Mali. They find evidence that returnees from non-African countries diffuse political norms at home that positively change electoral behaviors.[146] Similarly, Docquier et al. find that the openness to emigration is positively correlated with

[141] See Ancey, V., Rangé, C., Magnani, S. and Patat, C. (2020).

[142] The authors explain that young pastoralists continue to maintain strong links with the camps after having settled in towns and cities. In Chad, young pastoralists "continue to invest in the family herd and bring children and young people from the camps to work for them and/or to school them." Trade, a major driving force of internal migration, is seen as correlated with higher school enrollment in urban areas.

[143] The authors put forward three key measures to support the connections between towns and cities on the one hand and camps on the other: "1) recognizing the role of pastoralism in territories and in agricultural policies; 2) extending basic public services and in particular access to education in rural areas; 3) developing new forms of support."

[144] See Akkoyunlu, S. (2013).

[145] This is especially true for formal participation, such as having the right to vote or to join a political party, which is generally contingent upon an individual's access to citizenship. Nonformal participation, such as in consultative bodies, civil society organizations, and grassroots initiatives, may provide migrants with an avenue to engage in local politics. Nonetheless, less structural and more implicit barriers, such as the fear of discrimination, can still act as an impediment to participation. See, for instance, Bekaj, A. and Lina Antara, Political Participation of Refugees: Bridging the Gaps, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2018.

[146] See Chauvet, L. and Marion Mercier (2012).

democratization in the countries of origin.[147] The migration experience can also modify political participation patterns at home. For instance, a study found that Turkish emigration to EU and OECD countries increased the share of women in the Turkish parliament, thus serving as a catalyst for women's empowerment and gender equality.[148] Internal migration can also lead to further political involvement. In Burkina Faso, young pastoralists who assimilated new urban identities were at the forefront of the 2014 popular uprisings.[149]

Young migrants can also individually benefit from participating in political processes. Political engagement allows young migrants to gain transferrable soft skills, expand their social capital, and develop greater self-awareness and sense of identity, among others.[150] Participation in policy making also helps young migrants overcome a sense of alienation and enables them to feel more valued and accepted in countries of destination.[151] At the same time, politically active young migrants are in a better position to debunk the misperceptions around migration and raise awareness on the benefits it entails.[152] Examples of initiatives targeting young migrants' participation include the Young Mediterranean Voices Initiative[153] and the AU-EU Youth Cooperation Hub.[154]

3.3. Putting Knowledge, Innovation, and Agency at the Center

The revolution produced by the explosion of ICTs and especially digital technology in the information age represents one of the main vectors of the cosmopolitization of our societies and the transnationalization of social structures.[155] According to Ulrich Beck, the more that television, cell phones, and the internet become commonplace, the more the sociological categories of time, space, place, proximity, and place change in meaning. In fact, this domestic information technology transforms "the absent into the present, always and everywhere."[156] From this point of view, there is no doubt that ICTs and digital skills are a key to a cosmopolitical reading of the articulation between integration and transnationalism.[157]

The ICT revolution is not only changing the way people work, but also modifying the sectors with high growth potential, and the sectors that employ migrant workers. In this rapidly changing scenario, young people are de facto one of the most affected population groups. To anticipate the challenges young people may face, and ensure they harness their full potential—be it at home or abroad—both sending and receiving countries need to account for these changes in their development strategies. For instance, incentives may be created for youth to upskill in new technologies, which may as a consequence increase

[147] See Docquier, F. et al. (2016).
[148] See Akkoyunlu, S. (2013).
[149] See Ancey, V., Rangé, C., Magnani, S. and Patat, C. (2020).
[150] OECD (2017), Chapter 8 in *OECD Development Policy Tools, Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being.*
[151] Taran, P., and Raphael, A. (2014), Chapter 15 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[152] Ibid
[153] https://youngmedvoices.org/primary-activities (last accessed May 27, 2021).
[154] https://www.aueuyouthhub.org/ (last accessed May 27, 2021).
[155] See Castells, M. (2008).
[156] See Beck, U. (2002).
[157] See Nedelcu Mihaela (2010).

their employability on international labor markets, but also to acquire skills related to sectors with high growth potential, including soft skills.

This calls for a shift from the dichotomic distinction between "brain drain" and "brain gain"[158] to an acknowledgement of the circular nature of migration, which is already a technological and digital reality.[159] Beyond remittances, youth migration also generates positive outcomes for countries of origin through the transfer of knowledge, skills, and innovative ideas. The diaspora, in particular, can be a source of "technology transfer, investments and venture capital for countries of origin."[160] Among others, Khadria provides a nuanced picture of the knowledge, innovation, and productivity gains or losses countries experience depending on prevailing migration dynamics: while some countries may experience productivity losses due to emigration, others can leverage the innovative thinking young migrants bring with them, especially when they join cutting-edge sectors, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.[161]

The links between migration and agriculture also provide an interesting case in point.[162] Because the agricultural sector heavily relies on manual labor, migration dynamics including departure and return can have spillover effects on household activities and the sector's performance as a whole. On the one hand, youth migration entails a loss of labor—pushing the household, primarily in developing countries, to rethink its economic model and how tasks are distributed. On the other hand, youth migration can also open doors to investment and innovation in the agricultural sector, building on remittances as well as the social and financial capital returnees bring back with them.

Social remittances are also critical in a context where young migrants have a higher propensity to resort to iterative migration.[163] Social remittances are understood as "the ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending country communities."[164] They are, in the words of Peggy Levitt, "migration-driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion."[165] Social remittances are transferred through

[158] Brain gain here is understood as the phenomenon by which countries of destination reap the skills and experience of migrants whose skills they desire. These can be both skilled migrant workers or students. For more information, see definitions of "brain drain" and "brain gain" by the Migration Policy Institute and by the European Commission Migration and Home Affairs webpage.
[159] While the notion of circular migration was first coined in the 1970s to characterize the multiple and repetitive movements of people, it has since taken on an additional layer of interpretation pointing to the multiple benefits of circular migration for all countries and stakeholders involved. See, for instance, the GFMD (2008) definition which refers to circular migration as "a fluid movement of people between countries, including temporary or more permanent movement which, when it occurs voluntarily and is linked to the labour needs of countries of origin and destination, can be beneficial to all involved."
[160] UN (2013), *World Youth Report: Youth & Migration*.
[161] Age refers to the fact that young migrants who return to their country of origin have a higher tendency to migrate again, while older migrants will tend to stay in the country of origin. Wage refers to the increased wages and cost of production that the departure of young migrants, among which returnees, provokes. Vintage refers to the skills, innovation, and know-how destination countries can benefit from when the latest generations of young graduates and young professionals migrate to join cutting-edge sectors abroad.
[162] OECD (2011), *Tackling the Policy Challenges of Migration: Regulation, Integration, Development;* OECD (2017), *Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development*.
[163] Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (2011), *A Generation on the Move: Insights into the conditions, aspirations and activism of Arab youth*.
[164] See Levitt, P. (1998).
[165] Ibid.

social interactions and local-level exchanges. They can take place when young people return to or visit their countries of origin, migrate to new destinations, or during visits of nonmigrants in destination countries. Beyond opening up avenues for a transnational dialogue, social remittances have the power to shape social life and social structures in the countries of origin, thereby creating bridges between the countries of origin and destination. Young migrants harness their position as "bridge-builders and translators" to vernacularize global norms,[166] such as universal human rights, and translate them into practice locally.[167] In addition to the impact they have on social integration and molding social identities—notably gender, class, and race identities—at home, social remittances can affect young people's perception of politics and favor greater involvement in political processes. There is therefore a need to design more open and liberal migration policies that take into account the multiple and regular movements of the younger generations and their implications for the diffusion of knowledge, innovation, and agency.

3.4. Affirming Gender Equality

Migration and the opportunities it offers, in terms of employment and education, among others, are known to be of powerful benefit for all migrants, and in particular for women and girls who may, through migration, gain greater access to education and livelihood opportunities than those available at home.[168] However, persistent gender[169] inequalities affect migration in all its forms across the migration cycle,[170] including protection risks (violence and exploitation), isolation, and limited access to resources and information, to name a few. "Mobility and employment create opportunities for female migrants, but gender norms—shared ideas about the different capabilities and 'natural' roles of women and men, girls and boys—also create vulnerabilities, as do institutional failures to address discrimination."[171] Using multilevel logistic regression analyses of pooled data from six waves of the European Social Survey (2004–14), Gkiouleka and Huijts assessed self-reported health and hampering conditions in 27 European countries. The results reveal how "the health impact of migration is subject to additional dimensions of social positioning as well as the importance of an intersectional perspective for the monitoring of health inequalities in Europe."[172] These gendered challenges play out across the cycle of migration, from predeparture, to the migration experience, and return in countries of origin, transit, and destination.[173]

In many cases, young women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable and more negatively affected by the gendered nature of these challenges, especially in forced regular and irregular migration, due to the

[166] See Lacroix, T., et al. (2016).
[167] Levitt, P. and Sally Merry (2009). The authors examine how the global notion of women's rights is applied locally in four contexts, namely Peru, China, India and the United States. They refer to vernacularization as "the process of appropriation and local adoption of globally generated ideas and strategies."
[168] See Miriam Temin et al. (2013).
[169] Momsen, J.H. (2010). We use here Momsen's definition of gender as "the socially acquired notions of masculinity and femininity by which women and men are identified."
[170] See A. Petrozziello (2013).
[171] https://www.odi.org/publications/10476-women-move-migration-gender-equality-and-2030-agenda-sustainable-development.
[172] See Gkiouleka, A. and Huijts, T. (2020).
[173] See Bandita S. (2015).

preponderance of power assigned to men in traditional social constructions of gender. In many societies women's roles tend to stereotypically focus on reproductive and community engagement responsibilities, while productive activities are considered as men's role.[174] Young female labor migrants are often more vulnerable due to working in the domestic roles typically assigned to their gender due to the lower societal value of this work, resulting in lower pay and less freedom of movement, among other challenges. The professionalization of domestic tasks and high demand for nurses and caretakers also contribute to the concentration of women in certain categories, which reinforces the stereotype of women's aptitude for domestic tasks.[175] In this regard, many characteristics of female youth, in particular, make them both vulnerable through "subjugating processes of racialization and class oppression, that are also gendered, sexualized, and may be intertwined with other stigmatizing dynamics":[176] these processes include captive cheap and disposable female labor forces (in the Mexican maquiladoras[177] or Spanish strawberry fields[178]), household care of children and elders (in Milan[179]), as well as biological reproduction in a nation with low fertility rates (for example, the Republic of Korea[180]).

Looking now at existing mobility trends, migration is increasingly feminized as women are on the move more than ever before.[181] First, women—and in particular young women—are making up nearly half of all international migrants worldwide. Second, there is a growing demand for migrant young women's labor in destination countries, especially in the care, domestic, and manufacturing sectors: millions of young women from the global South are migrating to do "women's work" that women in the global North are no longer able or willing to do. And, finally, women have become independent migrants and/or primary economic providers, with fewer women moving for family reunification and more moving in search of work. Carasthasis et al. (2018) observe that "the majority of (forced) migration [and refugee] scholarship continues to approach the subject without attending to the simultaneity of experiences and co-implications of positionalities shaped by gendered, racialized, class, and sexuality-based power relations."[182]

At a time when migration patterns are becoming increasingly feminized and in a pandemic context where young migrant women (but also members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex [LGBTQI+] community) are particularly vulnerable, youth migration once again holds a critical mirror up to policy makers and stakeholders to rethink the development model. Actions can be taken to move from gender awareness to gender transformation. The collection of sex, age, and disability-disaggregated data has been found to allow for the delivery of better assistance and to increase effectiveness and efficiency

[174] Women and men perform multiple roles in their family and community in: (1) productive responsibility (income-generating activities, trade, production of goods for consumption); (2) reproductive responsibility (activities and chores relating to the generation and maintenance of the household, such as education, cooking, etc.); and (3) Community engagement responsibility (activities carried out for the collective benefit, often unpaid).
[175] See Thapa, B. and Shrestha, K. (2017).
[176] See Stasiulis, D., Jinnah, Z., and Rutherford, B. (2020).
[177] See Wright, M.W. (2006).
[178] See Decosse, F. and Hellio E. (2015).
[179] See Bonizzoni, Paola (2014).
[180] See Lee-An, Jiyoung (2020).
[181] See Lucio Maymon, P. (2017).
[182] See Carastahtis, A., Kouri-Towe, N., Mahrouse, G., & Whitley, L. (2018).

in humanitarian programming, as pointed out by the OECD: "Having disaggregated data makes a difference in the way public policy is delivered. A lack of disaggregated data has prevented countries from putting leave no one behind into practice."[183] Integrating complex variables and intersecting factors—including race, ethnicity, and nationality, where possible[184]—can enhance gender-responsive and evidence-based policies, inform advocacy, challenge negative perceptions, and prevent abuses and exploitation. Finally, pragmatic and egalitarian measures should also be considered, that:

- Target both men and women by assessing socioeconomic gender roles when designing policies and programs.
- Include LGBTQI+ community members in the design of policies and programs, given the specific and additional obstacles they often have to face in terms of discrimination and access to rights.
- Consider age differences, and in particular the needs of adolescent migrants as distinct from older age groups within the youth cohort.
- Adopt a program cycle and funding cycle that is longer term to address the generational requirements of gender-transformative approaches, and to ensure that gains are sustained over time across life stages.

Box 6. The Pandemic's Effects on Discrimination Against LGBTQI+ Migrant Youth

The pandemic crisis has increased the discrimination endured by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) migrants, with limited assistance to cope with the social, psychosocial, and economic impact of the crisis. For the IOM Regional Office for Central America, North America, and the Caribbean Region, these difficulties are reflected in:

- Limited access to health care services, "starting with the criminalization of same-sex relationships in some countries and discrimination against trans people due to their gender identity" while "some LGBTI people may avoid health services due to fear of arrest or violence";[185]
- Stigmatization, discrimination, hate speech, and attacks on the LGBTQI+ community, often blamed for the pandemic and chosen as scapegoats;
- More problematic access to decent work and livelihoods, as LGBTQI+ migrants are generally more likely to work in the informal sector without any employment protection; and
- Vulnerability to violence, human trafficking, and exploitation.

The case of Kenya is particularly revealing in highlighting intersectionality, further reinforced by the context of the pandemic but institutionally and socioculturally rooted in many countries: "LGBTQI+ Kenyans and non-citizens face laws criminalizing same-sex conduct, heightened levels of sexual and gender-based violence, threats and extortion by authorities, and inadequate or non-existent remedies for

[183] OECD (2018), *Development Co-Operation Report 2018: Joining Forces to Leave No One Behind.*
[184] Further, specific data on the number and sex of migrants in transit and at border crossings, including interceptions, detentions, deaths, abuse, and injury can contribute to improving protection response and assistance.
[185] See Astles, J. (2020).

violence and discrimination perpetrated by state and non-state actors. LGBTQI+ persons face discrimination when seeking healthcare, housing, and employment. In this generalized context of discrimination, LGBTQI+ refugees have additional vulnerabilities caused by their insecure status, the encampment policy that limits freedom of movement, and delays in accessing adequate documentation and other legal protections."[186]

Finally, during recent events related to the so-called refugee crisis in Europe,[187] it is worth noting how some members of the queer community[188] have collectively supported migrants and chosen to state their solidarity with migrants as queers: "Provided that queer is defined as a political project and not an identity, it can allow for such political complicities, and participate in the emergence in the discursive space—alongside migrants' own struggles—of migrants as subjects in their own right."[189]

3.5. Promoting Climate-Adaptive and Transformative Solutions

As explained by King and Harrington in a recent study of the inequality of global warming, countries in tropical regions will be those most affected by the effects of climate change,[190] and thus the populations of less developed countries pay the higher price if no adaptation strategies are put in place. According to Ionesco et al., "both sudden and gradual environmental change influence the propensity to migrate; (even if) it is difficult to isolate and measure the environmental factors that contribute to a decision to migrate."[191] Here two considerations should be added: first, the poorest and most marginalized tend not to migrate, as migration requires a certain degree of resources;[192] second, "if [poor people] move at all, it will not be very far, as they most likely do not have the resources to migrate over long distances."[193] This means that most of the climate-related migration will be internal rather than international. This is further supported by de Haas, who argues that natural hazards in poor regions, such as in Sub-Saharan Africa, are unlikely to result in large-scale migration movements toward the global North, at least in the short to medium term.[194]

Borderon et al. suggest that the "[m]igration response to environmental pressure is not uniform across population subgroups [as research finds that] young and middle-aged persons have higher intentions and higher propensity to migrate"[195] than other cohorts. In this regard, youth migration can then be a means to adapt to climate change by diversifying livelihoods and sources of income (through remittances from urban areas or other countries). Youth can anticipate changes to come—thinking ahead in terms of further

[186] Human Rights Center (2020), *Rights of LGBTQI+ Citizens and Non-Citizens in Kenya*.
[187] See Wihtol de Wenden, C. (2016).
[188] Conceived as a politico-sexual agency that aims to challenge the binary construction of heterosexuality, gender, and sex (masculine/feminine, male/female). On the politico-sexual identity of the queer community, see Warner, M. (2004) Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 334 p.
[189] See Abbou, J. (2018).
[190] See King, A.D., and Harrington, L. (2018).
[191] Ionesco., D., and Pawliczko, A. (2014), Chapter 16 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[192] Kelman, I. (2020), Chapter 8 in *a Moving World: Tracing refugee and migrant journeys across disciplines*.
[193] See Bakewell et al. (2009).
[194] In this regard, a recent IOM report argues that "territorial mobility" should be promoted around urban hubs, to reduce "the environmental risks of desertification and socioeconomic risks of precariousness."
[195] Borderon et al., (2009).

scenarios that might require them to move:[196] as risk takers, youth may leave before their families to identify areas of safety in response to climatic changes in their areas of origin; their movement, caused by climate change, can be an example of positive adaptation. Youth can be more adaptive to climate change and take responsibility for changes, often supporting their families to cope with environmental disasters, either through financial or in-kind remittances.[197]

Moreover, the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on youth socioeconomic integration is not linear and also depends on individual and community-level resilience and adaptive capacity.[198] Migration can either increase the challenges faced by the youth, exposing them to greater risks and vulnerabilities—for example, young women may be exposed to increased danger of rape or reduced access to health services—or create new opportunities—for example, the creation of green jobs to develop adaptation responses.[199] Other research have insisted on youth's greater willingness to migrate and rebuild, and to be part of "translocal" processes connecting people and places, relying on new relationships and flows of resources, compared to generations rooted more firmly in their locations.[200]

But beyond the migratory dynamics induced by the consequences of climate change for young people, it should also be noted that the new generations are more aware of climate change issues. What was still the subject of debate, or even skepticism, for their elders is now a scientifically established fact and a reality that everyone experiences—albeit with varying degrees of severity—in their daily lives. For this same reason, young migrants will be particularly sensitive to global and long-term issues, whose vital importance they have experienced in their country of origin as well as in their country of destination. Young migrants therefore not only have a heightened sensitivity but also a willingness to identify climate-adaptive and transformative solutions: "They are very concerned about the impact of the environment and feel responsible for climate change. This generation—especially the migrants, who have seen how global the danger is—knows it is time to act. It would actually be irresponsible not to. So, not only are they aware of the risk and the often irreversible situation, but they are also ready to be the change."[201]

3.6. Rethinking Policy Frameworks for Youth Mobility

When looking at the possible scenarios for global mobility in the post–COVID-19 world, Gamlen suggests that governments are likely to continue imposing restrictions to immigrant access, with "[t]emporary labour migration programmes and immigration points systems […] likely to proliferate,"[202] to favor new arrivals of highly skilled migrants over the extended stay of lower-skilled ones. Policy frameworks thus

[196] https://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/system/files/21._Chapter_17.pdf.
[197] https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/migration-and-youth_challenges-and-opportunities_eng.pdf.
[198] https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/environmentalmigration/files/Identifying%2BClimate%2BAdaptive%2BSolutions%2Bto%2BDisplacement%2Bin%2BSomalia%2B-%2BIOM-UNEP%2B-%2BFinal%2BDraft%2B-%2B19FEB2021.pdf.
[199] Ionesco., D. and Pawliczko, A. (2014), Chapter 16 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[200] https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/stories/reflections-climate-mobility-and-children-symposium.
[201] Samuel Hall, KII with UNEP Regional Office (East Africa), June 2020.
[202] See Gamlen, A. (2020).

cannot be underestimated and must be carefully crafted to allow for the realization of successful development outcomes.

In the contemporary policy context, youth mobility exchange programs are often used as a bargaining chip for free trade deals, enabling countries of destination to better control flows of incoming migrants. Youth mobility arrangements are becoming increasingly common among countries. Canada and Andorra, for example, have recently signed an agreement enabling young people between 18 and 30 years to work and travel to the other country, for up to one year.[203] Similarly, Canada and Italy have signed a youth mobility agreement in 2021,[204] facilitating youth from both countries between 18 and 35 years to travel and work in the other country for up to one year, twice. Portugal is also holding youth mobility agreement discussions with Angola.[205] At a regional level, examples of mobility schemes that support youth migration to different countries are the Economic Community of West African States Academic Mobility Scheme[206] and the Erasmus scheme in Europe.

While temporary and circular migration of young migrants is found to bring the most benefits,[207] as individuals bring back "new knowledge, skills, networks, purchases and savings"[208] and have the opportunity to improve "soft skills and competences such as self-confidence and language ability that […] are likely to enhance either their careers or personal development upon return,"[209] the establishment of frameworks and mobility exchange programs to promote temporary youth migration may lead to discrimination against certain groups of young migrants who would face a reduction in their possibilities to migrate legally.

Box 7. Youth Mobility Programs: The Case of India and the United Kingdom

A unique new migration agreement was signed in 2021 between the United Kingdom and India to facilitate professional exchanges between the two countries. As part of the agreement, a Young Professional Scheme was introduced, enabling Indian and British young professionals to live in the other country for up to two years.[210]

It is the first time the United Kingdom opened up to such an agreement, which ultimately favors high-skilled migration. The scheme will operate in line with already existing youth mobility schemes, which the United Kingdom has in place with nine high-income economies (Australia; New Zealand; Canada; Japan; Monaco; Taiwan, China; Hong Kong SAR, China; Korea; and San Marino).[211] When it comes to supporting

[203] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2020/06/canada-signs-new-youth-mobility-arrangement-with-andorra-in-a-virtual-ceremony.html.
[204] https://www.canadianchamberinitaly.com/canada-and-italy-sign-new-youth-mobility-agreement/.
[205] https://www.verangola.net/va/en/042021/Politics/25113/Portugal-is-discussing-visa-and-youth-mobility-agreements-with-Angola.htm.
[206] Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2015). Ecowas Launches Academic Mobility Scheme.
[207] Mashayekhi, M. and Twarog, S. (2014), Chapter 9 in *Migration and Youth: Challenges and Opportunities*.
[208] Ibid.
[209] See Lulle, A., et al. (2019).
[210] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-india-agree-partnership-to-boost-work-visas-for-indian-nationals.
[211] https://www.freemovement.org.uk/uk-youth-mobility-visa/.

youth, India and the United Kingdom are not new partners: Indian students represent almost a quarter of all international students in the United Kingdom, and numbers have been increasing by 42 percent in the past year.[212] To support young Indians' ability to stay in the country post-graduation, the UK government has developed a new Graduate Route, which will open for applications from July 2021, enabling recently graduated students to find employment opportunities in the country up to two years from graduation.

[212] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-india-agree-partnership-to-boost-work-visas-for-indian-nationals.

4. FURTHER RESEARCH AREAS

The policy gaps are numerous and all of the stakeholders interviewed for this study, whether experts in the field of youth, migration, gender, or protection, agree that additional research and sufficiently nuanced data are needed to inform future policies and programs. With this in mind, this section aims to identify not only the types of data that would be useful, but also the key themes that could support the youth and mobility nexus, in order to better rethink future development models. Following this logic, only a more systematic mixed methodological approach, with micro-data driven analysis as well as qualitative methods throughout the migration cycle, could better inform policy makers about how to achieve productive outcomes with targeted macrolevel and localized interventions in countries of origin, transit, and destination. Different methods and tools are appropriate for each indicator—including innovative qualitative approaches to complement quantitative data. Likewise, any measurement of socioeconomic vulnerability or well-being (regarding the employment, education, housing, and health of youth) as well as civic engagement and the role of youth in inclusive governance will need to include:

1. Disaggregated data, covering both a narrow 15–24 age group, and the broader 24–34 cohort as they present different transitions into adulthood, and different profiles.
2. Gender-specific analyses to factor in the intersectional lens *to enrich our understanding of the complexities of migration, the vulnerabilities of migrants, and the oppressions built within migration policies.*[213]
3. Longitudinal and meta-indicators on processes (to know and learn from how change has happened).

As highlighted by one interviewee, "it is not only about methodologies, but also about the mindset with which we, as policymakers, deal with data. Evidence is here to support and question our work, not to validate decisions that have already been taken."[214] In this regard, studies conducted alongside interventions, and designed from the outset of the intervention, can help to develop a true culture of learning among policy makers and alleviate the scarcity and paucity of data and knowledge. An important conclusion of this study is that only a better understanding of the dynamics of mobility and youth will allow us to: (1) prevent risks and vulnerabilities specifically related to young migrants, especially during economic, social, or pandemic crises; and (2) optimize their possible contribution to future development models.

4.1. Descriptive Analyses: Socioeconomic Profiles and Patterns of Exclusion

Thematic gap #1: Contextualized and localized risk analyses

Migration may lead to different outcomes depending on contextual factors such as sectoral policies and cultural norms, and sectoral work. A few studies on youth migration notably point to the specific risks and vulnerabilities young people may be exposed to largely due to their age, and the implications these may have for their integration capacities. For example, it has been shown that North African youth working irregularly in the agricultural sector in southern Italy (Salerno) are subject to specific modalities of exploitation, such as violent recruitment and slave-like working conditions, due to their lack of legal status and the relative seclusion of the rural farms where they work.[215] It is therefore important to identify the risks, vulnerabilities, and factors that influence human trafficking, modern slavery, and all forms of exploitation.

[213] See Cho, S., Crenshaw, K.W. and McCall, L. (2013).
[214] Key Informant Interview, ILO, June 2021.
[215] See Avallone, G., Molinero-Gerbeau, Y., and Lopez-Sala, A. (2018).

More importantly, it is important to understand the dynamics of exploitation, often associated with economic and migration contexts.[216]

Thematic gap #2: Diversity of migration trajectories through the migration cycle

Migrants may face significant challenges throughout the migration cycle (before departure, during the journey, in the destination country, and after a possible return). Most studies have largely focused on the challenges young people face prior to their departure and which often motivate them to leave. Limited research exists on how race, gender, and other types of individual characteristics interact, and generally amplify, the challenges young migrants face throughout their migration journey. However, it is important to assess the challenges young migrants face during the migration cycle through an intersectional lens. For instance, this implies looking at how gender, race, or other forms of diversity (cultural, geographic, linguistic) intersect with youth migration at every phase of the migration process.

Thematic gap #3: Geographic analysis of youth migration corridors.

Studies point to the existence of migration corridors that are specific to youth. However, there is a need to provide further geographic and spatial analyses of these youth migration corridors, in particular in countries of origin and transit. As highlighted by Goldin et al. (2015), South Asia to the Middle East and North Africa represents the most popular migration corridor in the world, with many migrants from South Asia seeking economic opportunities in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries; other corridors within Sub-Saharan Africa, or from Latin America to North America, are also used by young migrants.[217] These corridors are often gendered and sometimes the result of formal bilateral agreements between governments or more informal agreements; they can be seen as an opportunity, provided that standards of protection and labor rights prevail at each stage of the migration process. To this end, it is essential to identify the characteristics of the main and secondary geographic corridors in order to obtain data (supply and demand dynamics, skill distribution of migrant youth, variances between men and women, routes, flows, hubs, socioeconomic profiles, age, and gender) to inform decisions and programs. Finally, the role of youth at each stage of their journey within the corridor should be emphasized. What is their real role and weight in the decision-making process? What are their expectations and aspirations?

Thematic gap #4: Labor market systems analysis, with a dual emphasis on both formal and informal sectors

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of key workers during the COVID-19 crisis and, in particular, the place of young migrants in the global North. Whether they are skilled or low-skilled workers, young women or young men, regular or irregular workers, documented or undocumented migrants, they all play a decisive role in the sustainability of the economies of OECD countries. However, there is a need to further explore the labor market integration challenges and opportunities young migrants face, especially in a post-pandemic world. In this respect, it is important to extend and deepen the wave of studies conducted during the crisis, not only to better adjust economic supply and demand but also and above all to ensure the respect of rights and apply social protection standards for young migrants in destination countries—whatever their profiles. Both formal and informal sectors and jobs should be considered (e.g., international students; health

[216] In the case of Italy, for example, Caporalato is an ancient practice of the southern countryside that has only been revived in the last 20 years, favored by economic demand, the presence of organized criminal networks, and the gradual establishment of human trafficking from Romania, Albania, and Morocco, in particular. See Avallone, G., Molinero-Gerbeau, Y., and Lopez-Sala, A. (2018).

[217] See Goldin, N., Hobson, M., Glick, P., Lundberg, M., & Puerto, S. (2015).

care, construction, and seasonal workers, etc. broken down by gender and age, as suggested). Finally, a comparative analysis of the most binding employment constraints for migrant youth (compared to local youth) should be conducted: what are the specific determinants (regulations, institutions, policies, market supply-demand, marketable skills, discrimination, gender, etc.) that affect the employment situation of migrant youth?

Thematic gap #5: Anticipating the "new normal" of work

The pandemic brought about several organizational changes that rupture traditional economic models. The establishment of horizontal structures, new forms of interpersonal solidarity, accelerated digitalization within organizations, drastic changes in the workplace, and widespread virtual communication are some of the new trends that have emerged as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. For young migrants working in the service sector in particular, who are both open to new developments and more vulnerable in terms of working conditions, it is important to analyze the risks and opportunities in order to both respond to the opportunities created by the "new normal" and ensure decent and fair working conditions.

Thematic gap #6: Mapping communities of belonging

The multiplicity of youth migration trajectories and the circular nature of youth migration call for the need to map communities of belonging at different stages of the migration cycle. As this paper has shown, young people who migrate once may be inclined to migrate again, either to return back home or to resettle elsewhere. Moreover, young migrants may see themselves as *belonging* to two or more places at once, including their countries of origin and destination. There is therefore a need to develop a better understanding of communities of belonging in their broad sense, to include not only national or economic communities, but also cultural, symbolic, and virtual communities. The relationship with communities of origin and the potential link with the diaspora in destination countries, is essential not only for integration purposes but also for creating networks of social, economic, and psychosocial resilience in times of crisis.

4.2. Contribution Analyses: Youth as Socioeconomic Agents and Changemakers

Thematic gap #7: Use of technology (identities, inequalities, innovations, participation)

Digital instruments play an increasing role in access, whether for biometric passports or cards to access work, services, transport, and so on. Young migrants are better equipped than their older cohorts to face the increasing digitalization of day-to-day life. They possess the skills to stay connected with their communities of origin, notably through social media and applications. Subsequently, digitalization makes migrants' journey and way of life very different to the way it would have been a few years ago. It is now easier for those who were previously hard to reach to exercise their rights and access services, such as virtual education, training, counselling, linguistic skills, and digital literacy. However, the benefits of digital innovation are not equally distributed and digital devices and tools can also be a way to control migrants. There is therefore a need to further explore how to democratize the use of digital tools and to mitigate forms of digital exclusion and inaccessibility.

Thematic gap #8: Direct and indirect contributions by young migrants (impact on destination countries)

The contributions of young migrants to countries of destination or residence can be direct (as taxpayers, economic agents, and civically engaged community members) and indirect (as consumers). It is important to be able to measure these contributions, both in positive terms and in terms of possible opportunity costs. More particularly, the data gathered should serve to highlight how the contributions of young migrants may

differ from that of older cohorts. In Switzerland, for example, following the decision of the cantons and the Confederation to take measures to better integrate the untapped labor force represented by refugees, Trantina and Moreno Diaz have shown that the "nonintegration" of refugees would cost about Sw F 1.2 billion per year.[218] This type of analysis can initiate policy dialogues among the population and promote positive advocacy messages, especially at a time when populist messages often predominate.

Thematic gap #9: Remittances and contributions by young migrants (impact on contexts of origin)

The COVID-19 pandemic confirmed the "countercyclical nature" of the functioning of remittances to low- or middle-income countries. The World Bank's preliminary analysis in 2020 predicted a decline in remittances for all low- and middle-income countries of 7 percent in 2020, followed by a further decline of 7.5 percent in 2021. However, the latest revised estimates from the World Bank show that the decline in remittances to low- and middle-income countries was smaller than previously projected, amounting to $540 billion in 2020 compared to $548 billion in 2019, or a 1.6 percent decrease.[219] While many explanations have been put forward *a posteriori*, it seems that the functioning of remittances, in times of crisis or prosperity, remains largely unanalyzed. In addition to the analyses conducted by the World Bank and KNOMAD on remittance costs, interoperability, opening of markets, and new technologies (in line with SDG 10.c.1), it is important to better understand individual behaviors, in particular the differences between the remittance patterns of young migrants compared to those of older cohorts, and the digital financial services that can promote greater financial inclusion (especially for young migrants).

Thematic gap #10: Young migrants as changemakers

The present study assumes that migrant youth can significantly contribute to questioning and rethinking existing development paradigms. It is necessary to further test this assumption by assessing the contribution of young migrant men and women to key development topics: socioeconomic integration, political dialogue and influence on decision-making, knowledge and innovation, gender equality, and adaptative models to climate change. How are young migrants using their awareness and experience to promote integration? How do they contribute to shaping collective debates and solutions? Qualitative research approaches (local case studies, individual stories) will be crucial to stress how young migrants' struggles and success stories are of interest to both migrants and nonmigrants.

[218] Trantina P. and Moreno Díaz, J.D. (2018).

[219] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/12/defying-predictions-remittance-flows-remain-strong-during-covid-19-crisis.

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