

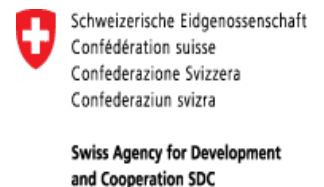


KNOMAD PAPER 53

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

Case Studies from Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico,  
Pakistan, Senegal, Thailand, and Tunisia

Samuel Hall  
November 2023



The KNOMAD Paper Series disseminates work in progress funded by KNOMAD, a global hub of knowledge and policy expertise on migration and development. KNOMAD is supported by a multi-donor trust fund established by the World Bank. The European Commission, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH commissioned by and on behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) are the contributors to the trust fund.

The research presented in this paper is funded by the Thematic Working Group on Special Issues. Please cite the work as follows: **Samuel Hall, 2023. Youth, Migration and Development: A New Lens for Critical Times - Case Studies from Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Thailand, and Tunisia, KNOMAD Paper 53.**

The views expressed in this paper do not represent the views of the World Bank or the sponsoring organizations. All queries should be addressed to [KNOMAD@worldbank.org](mailto:KNOMAD@worldbank.org). KNOMAD working papers and a host of other resources on migration are available at [www.KNOMAD.org](http://www.KNOMAD.org).

***Youth, Migration and Development: A New Lens for Critical Times  
Case Studies from Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal,  
Thailand, and Tunisia***

**Samuel Hall\*\***

**Abstract**

Youth is a period of transition, open to the future and to possibility. Today's youth are however faced with high unemployment, underemployment, flexible labour arrangements, poor governance, persistent gender inequalities, social exclusion and climate change. Migration is a way to cope with these issues. International migration can be an opportunity for young people to improve their lives and those of their families by pursuing education or employment opportunities and to leave behind a context where they do not feel safe or where their political rights are not always taken into account. However, in academic literature and policy discourse, integration is often considered from a 'Global North' perspective (Europe, North America), which not only shapes the conceptualization of integration but also the way of thinking about the possible socioeconomic contribution as well as the problems of young migrants. This paper builds on a KNOMAD scoping paper produced in 2022 (KNOMAD, 2022), which set an agenda on how the migration of youth contributes to development in host and origin countries and how it can be meaningfully integrated into development strategies. This paper aims to empirically validate the conclusions of the scoping paper (KNOMAD, 2022) with regard to the experience of inclusion and integration of young people, including that of migrants, in their country of residence, or through which they are transiting.

---

\* The KNOMAD Thematic Working Group on Special Issues is co-chaired, coordinated, and managed by Jason Gagnon (OECD Development Centre) and David Khoudour (UNDP), whose focus has primarily been on youth migration and transit migration. The co-chairs provided overall direction, supervision, and editorial support for the project. The KNOMAD focal point for this paper was Eung Ju Kim (World Bank). Funding for the project was provided by KNOMAD, a global hub of knowledge and policy expertise on migration and development. KNOMAD is supported by a multi-donor trust fund established by the World Bank. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and most recently the European Commission are the contributors to the trust fund.

\*\*Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes, and designs policies in contexts of migration and displacement. This paper was authored by Hervé Nicolle, Lisa Pfister, Jared Owuor, Marion Tolboom, and Saliama Taiwa, at Samuel Hall.

# Youth, Migration & Development: A New Lens for Critical Times

*Case Studies from Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Thailand, and Tunisia*

*If the contribution of young migrants to the socio-economic development of low- and middle-income countries is not in doubt, it requires a renewed approach to integration, breaking with assimilationist and identity-based discourses.*

---

*In a context of complex and multi-dimensional crises, integration is first and foremost a local and supranational reality, which national institutional actors need to foster through an enabling legal, regulatory, social and economic framework.*

---

*Affirmation of rights, non-discrimination, gender equality, economic contribution (work permits, recognition of diplomas, skills) and civic participation are prerequisites to optimise the effective contribution of young migrants to development.*

## Executive Summary

Youth is a period of transition, open to the future and to possibility. Today's youth are however faced with high unemployment, underemployment, flexible labour arrangements, poor governance, persistent gender inequalities, social exclusion and climate change. Migration is a way to cope with these issues. International migration can be an opportunity for young people to improve their lives and those of their families by pursuing education or employment opportunities and to leave behind a context where they do not feel safe or where their political rights are not always taken into account. These phenomena are particularly prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, which explain why migration aspirations tend to be strongest in these countries.

However, in academic literature and policy discourse, integration is often considered from a 'Global North' perspective (Europe, North America), which not only shapes the conceptualization of integration but also the way of thinking about the possible socioeconomic contribution as well as the problems of young migrants. This paper builds on a KNOMAD [scoping paper](#) produced in 2022 (KNOMAD, 2022), which set an agenda on how the migration of youth contributes to development in host and origin countries and how it can be meaningfully integrated into development strategies. This paper aims to empirically validate the conclusions of the scoping paper (KNOMAD, 2022) with regard to the experience of inclusion and integration of young people, including that of migrants, in their country of residence, or through which they are transiting.

On the basis of group discussions and workshops conducted in eight countries<sup>1</sup>, a collective, critical and constructive analysis of the notions of 'migration', 'youth' and integration was carried out from February 2022 to March 2023. By using qualitative analytical tools, the methodology allowed young migrants – as well as non-migrants – to express themselves in their own words, with their own interpretative grids, rather than superimpose predetermined interpretative categories and an objectivist approach on the facts under study. This permitted crucial aspects to be explored further – in particular issues of trauma, discrimination but also conceptual or terminological aspects. A co-participatory approach was used for the group discussions and workshops, including:

- 1) preliminary work on the definition of key words (migration, youth, integration, inclusion), focusing on empirical examples and translations;

---

<sup>1</sup> Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Thailand, and Tunisia

- 2) a discussion on the different meanings and senses gathered in the definition phase in order to understand tensions and contradictions;
- 3) a collective co-conceptualization on the basis of the discussion phase, in order to bring to light the nuances specific to each concept or notion.

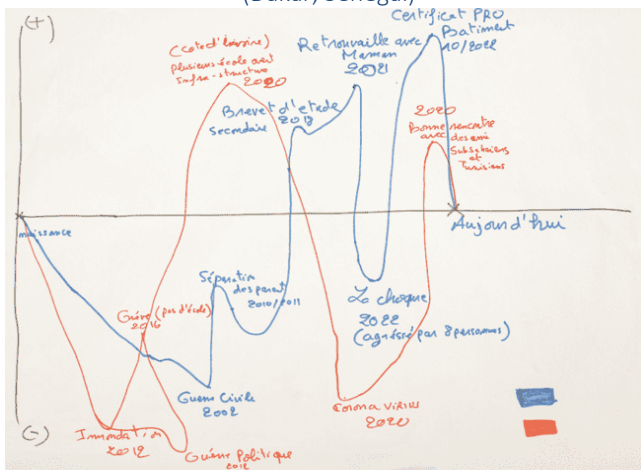
### Key findings

Young migrants and non-migrants share commonalities in terms of their experience of inclusion and their perception of society.

- Youth often express distrust of neo-liberalism;
- They recognise that access to the labour market is the primary driver of integration;
- Both migrants and non-migrant youth – regardless of the country – emphasise a willingness to become politically engaged.

Looking at the differences, young non-migrants do not always feel a need to be integrated, while young people all report various forms of legal, economic and social exclusion which raises the question of integration in law and in fact. The 'migrant' label is a compounding factor of discrimination and instrumentalization, leading to xenophobic scapegoating. Finally, lifeline experiences differ across migrants and non-migrants. It is more linear and predictable for non-migrants, and more erratic and unpredictable, with moments of acceleration followed by moments of waiting for migrants.

Picture 1: Lifeline of a young Ivorian migrant (Dakar, Senegal)



Beyond migration labels, other variables strongly influence the integration of young people (and young migrants in particular): 1) country of birth and nationality; 2) gender; 3)

religion; 4) ethnicity; and 5) sexual orientation. Contextually, participants noted that the degree of discrimination depends on macro variables (regional migration dynamics, climate change, global economic and political crises) and meso-variables (colonial history, national economic resilience, social cohesion). These parameters are seen as a source of influence on political and populist narratives and reinforce (or mitigate) discrimination.

Finally, integration, often defined according to an assimilationist and politicised approach, is understood differently by young migrants compared to non-migrants according to four interrelated concepts: time, the global, the local, and commonality.

- **Time:** Including individual and collective history and memories to non-static and non-linear concept of integration;
- **The global:** Transcending national borders to reflect an integration aligned with the global reality of today and tomorrow (technology, mobility, culture, politics);
- **The local:** Co-shaping what the community will look like tomorrow in a constantly changing political, social, and economic context;
- **Commonality:** Deconstructing people's (objectified) identities to build common grounds (political, cultural, artistic, social, economic).

### Policy implications

Young migrants arrive with baggage, history and traumas, but also the potential for creation, innovation and production. Allowing for a new conceptualization of the integration process of young migrants can positively challenge the logics of national withdrawal and static closure on identity to allow for the accompaniment of the future of communities of (temporary or permanent) residence.

#### 1. INTEGRATION: Focusing on integration at subnational and supranational levels

It is important to rebuild the link between a national level that often considers young migrants as a political issue, and municipalities that consider them as socio-economic opportunities (or risks). To do so, it is recommended to promote the integration of municipalities in national and international debates, strengthen the administrative, legal and technical capacities and skills of institutional counterparts in countries of origin, transit and destination. It is equally essential to better connect the local level with the supranational and transnational levels. This can be done by ensuring data sharing and coordinating with migrants' municipalities of origin. It is also essential at the

transnational level, because many integrating communities are beyond geographical or administrative borders (diaspora, culture, virtual communities in technology or digital). This requires rigorous and systematic data collection at different administrative levels (regional, national and local).

### 2. EQUALITY: Removing obstacles in the *de facto* inequality on the rights of young migrants

Administrative, bureaucratic, and material obstacles to the integration of young migrants must be identified and addressed, in compliance with the laws and conventions and with the support of associations for the legal protection of young migrants. In particular, at the political level, it is essential to engage discussions at the local level on the concept of 'disaggregated citizenship' for migrant youth. This includes on differential rights regimes based on residency rather than citizenship, to promote better access to civic debates and to the rights of political communities of which young migrants are *de facto* actors. Protection, health and education must also be better taken into account, by establishing or strengthening national and sub-national information and resource centers for migrants, while increasing unconditional access to basic services such as health, education, social protection and psychosocial support.

### 3. GENDER: Putting gender at the heart of integration policies and strategies for young migrants

Policy makers need to develop a specific understanding of youth migration that is gender sensitive and adaptive. This has direct implications in terms of collaboration with international networks, to raise visibility on discriminatory practices and address concerns of young migrant women as part of decent work agendas and efforts to promote their economic empowerment. It also implies the prevention of intersectional stigma and discrimination through awareness raising, denunciation of discriminatory speech, and specific support for those stigmatized due to their gender, as well as the improvement of working conditions in formal and informal jobs, for all female migrant workers and access to financial institutions for sending and receiving funds for young migrant women.

### 4. ENGAGEMENT: Optimising the social, civic and political contribution of young migrants at community level

A coordinated action is crucial to achieve the goal of actual engagement of young people in political and decision-making processes at the local and national levels (on social cohesion, societal issues, climate change, equality, innovation). In particular, supporting climate change activism can be a path towards civic engagement, by building on the experiences of young migrants in impacted environments. Likewise, more emphasis should be placed on

the inclusion of young migrants in the governance and decision-making processes of international migration fora and organizations. For the United Nations, for example, agencies that focus on labor mobility, voluntary migration and forced displacement (IOM, UNHCR) as well as key social, economic, and environmental issues (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, UNEP or HABITAT) should structurally include migrant and non-migrant youth as active stakeholders.

### 5. CONTRIBUTION(S): Optimising the dual social and economic contribution (host locations and communities of origin)

Labels such as legal-illegal, formal-informal, regular-irregular, and documented-undocumented, should not be a discriminating element in the integration promoted by policies, strategies, and programs. One of the challenges is to move from the paradigm of low-skilled, underpaid and indecent jobs to a more positive and contributing socio-economic image and status. In particular, it is recommended to adopt a pragmatic and critical approach to digital skills with many young migrants, and have a significant integrating potential, by considering the whole relevant ecosystem, beyond simple skills: presence of technical and material resources, existence of a market, decent work standards. Another avenue is the promotion of financial remittances from young migrants to their home countries-often through investments in key sectors such as housing, health, or education-can be facilitated by secure agencies. Policies should facilitate the ability of young migrants to contribute (1) in their home country, through direct/indirect investments in various key economic sectors such as housing and education, and (2) in their destination country, by acting as drivers of local economies, in sectors such as agriculture, services, hospitality and information technologies, and across lower-s killed and higher-skilled profiles. Beyond economic ties, social remittances can actively contribute to reshaping the dynamic and evolutive dialogues between communities of origin, young migrants, and the diaspora.

Picture 2: Conceptual analyses in Mexico City (Mexico)





# Table of contents

Introduction: listening to young people to analyze contemporary complexity .....	9
Learning from individual migration experiences .....	9
Key research questions and objectives .....	10
Structure of the report .....	12
Methodology .....	14
Qualitative research as a touchstone .....	14
Concepts in context.....	17
Conceptualizing ‘youth’ .....	17
Conceptualizing ‘migration’ .....	20
Problematizing integration.....	27
Commonalities between youth migrants and non-migrants.....	28
Differences between migrants and non-migrants .....	30
Conceptualizing “integration” .....	37
Policy perspectives for critical times .....	44
INTEGRATION: Thinking about integration in subnational and supranational terms .....	45
EQUALITY: Rejecting the de facto inequality that contradicts the rights of young migrants .....	46
GENDER: Putting gender at the heart of integration policies and strategies for young migrants .....	47
ENGAGEMENT: Optimising the unique social, civic and political perspective of young migrants at community level.....	48
CONTRIBUTION(S): Strengthening a dual socio-economic contribution (host communities and countries of origin) .....	49
Annexes .....	51
Workshop on the African chapter of the study .....	51
Country profiles (UNDESA & UNFPA data).....	52
Bibliography.....	63





Picture 3: Terminological and conceptual workshop in Bangkok with migrant youth (2022)

# Introduction

# Introduction: building on young people's experience

Youth is a period of transition, open to the future and to possibilities. Yet, for migrants and non-migrants alike, it is currently taking place against a backdrop of high unemployment, underemployment, labor flexibilization, governance failures, persistent gender inequalities, social exclusion and growing concerns regarding climate change. International migration can be an opportunity for young people to improve their lives and those of their families by pursuing education or employment opportunities and to leave a context where they do not feel safe or where their political rights are not always taken into account. 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.

In 2022, Samuel Hall and KNOMAD produced a [scoping paper](#)<sup>2</sup> (KNOMAD, 2022) to set an agenda on how youth migration can contribute to development in host countries and how it can be meaningfully integrated into development strategies. The paper analyzed secondary data and conducted key informant interviews with experts to develop a more holistic understanding of the contribution of youth to society through the prism of migration. However, the critical limitation of the scoping paper was the lack of in-depth qualitative data on mobility trajectories, as most available secondary data on migration stocks is static and provides limited insights into irregular youth migration.

Based on the research gaps identified in the scoping paper, the present research paper centers on the voices of youth migrants and non-migrants to better understand the youth-mobility-development nexus in eight countries from February 2022 to March 2023: Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Thailand, and Tunisia. It also provides policy recommendations drawn exclusively from the dialogue and interactions with young people and youth organizations in the eight countries and ten communities studied. It builds on the quantitative data analysis of the scoping paper, emerging evidence, and qualitative field research to expand on a micro level analysis of youth integration and explore patterns of exclusion and inclusion.

## Learning from individual migration experiences

In the same way that this paper moves away from a strict binary idea of migrant and non-migrant youth, the choice was made not to split the group of "young migrants" by administrative labels or legal categories, even if some references to the contextual situation of some young migrants are sometimes mentioned in the paper to nuance the analysis and to better understand the difficulties or opportunities they face. Instead, this study explores the commonalities between the various groups in a global context of growing inequalities and the complexity of youth integration along intersecting social categories.

During the last exchanges and feedback workshops with NGOs, CSOs, and institutional partners (OECD, United Nations World Bank, government representatives), a recurrent remark was made about the choice of the label "migrant" in this study. Should we indeed put Senegalese and Ivoirian international students who have come to study in Tunisia under the same category as economic migrants in the hospitality or health sector in Thailand, Ethiopian asylum seekers in Kenya who have lost everything and suffered traumas linked to the Tigrayan conflict, or Afghan refugees in UNHCR camps in Pakistan? In other words, the choice not to distinguish and think by label is not common and it is often more familiar to policy makers and organizations working on mobility issues to start by identifying and distinguishing between voluntary and involuntary migrants, regular and irregular migrants, economic migrants, conflict- or climate-induced.

---

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Hall. (2021). "Youth, Migration and Development: A New Lens for Critical Times." KNOMAD Paper No 41, World Bank, Washington, DC.

In this study, however, the choice was made to focus on a single category ('young migrant') to cover a spectrum whose authors are aware of the legal, political, social and economic nuances. This aligns with emerging research and scholars<sup>3</sup> who argue for the need to combine youth and migration studies in a new conceptual framework for researching youth mobility. There are three main reasons for this. First, participants in the study are often reluctant to identify themselves as "economic migrants," which would in many cases designate them as migrants in transit to more economically developed regions (North America, Europe). Second, for this reason, the focus has been on the dynamics of mobility rather than on static labels, which may change over the course of the journey. A young migrant may, for example, claim 'refugee' status in one country and become an 'irregular economic migrant' as soon as he or she crosses the border of another country. Finally, the qualitative methodology was based on an in-depth examination of life paths, of individual experiences, without claiming statistical representativeness. In this sense, this study tries more to understand subjective trajectories that are first and foremost stories of exile, attempts at integration, failures and successes experienced by real people – and not labels, routes, hubs, networks, administrative or legal distinctions, even if these efforts at categorization are also essential to understanding the migration phenomenon.

The choice of methodology was therefore, perhaps more than usual, intrinsically linked to the aims of this study. To capture the differences and similarities between migrant and non-migrant youth, the research focused on comparative research where each participant is asked to give their opinion and comment on the opinions of others. The different interview methods – individual and collective, verbal and non-verbal, terminological or thematic – produced a triangulation at several levels. This methodological cross-fertilisation allowed for the emergence of real contradictory debates as well as strong or new critical perspectives on integration issues. In the same vein, this research adopts an intersectional lens to enrich the understanding of the complexities of migration, the vulnerabilities of young people, and the nature of the discrimination that young migrants face.

Further, the research adopts an intersectional lens that seeks to understand the impacts of gender, ethnicity, and other relevant factors of marginalization critical in understanding the experiences of youth, both migrant and non-migrant. Youth are not only more likely to migrate, but the ongoing feminization of migration is a known trend, as is the vast difference in experiences of mobility along gender identities, beyond the binary of female and male, depending on countries of origin or destination, forms of migration, and a variety of other factors. Furthermore, youth with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and, gender expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are often subject to reinforced discrimination and socio-cultural barriers. Therefore, an intersectional framework<sup>4</sup> is essential for conceptualizing the phenomenon of youth integration affected by discriminations and disadvantages, in order to do justice to youth's overlapping identities and experiences and understand the complexity of the prejudices they face. Finally, it is hoped that by focusing on the voices of young people, this paper provides insight into the potentials of our time and how young people envision a successful life and challenge existing economic and political paradigms.

## Key research questions and objectives

Research on the challenges youth face in various developing contexts has highlighted the importance of engaging with youth voices in policymaking<sup>5</sup> directly through research, along with the emphasis on the challenges they face in terms of integration and inclusion in various contexts. The present research defines youth as all persons between the ages of 15 and 29. It is a significant development period people experience the world through increasingly demanding means. Facing multifaceted challenges, such as the impacts of climate change, access to health, education, and employment, and transitioning between education and the workforce, youth require the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive.

Further, research has demonstrated the strong linkage between inclusion and migration – for instance, in Somalia and Afghanistan, where a cross-country analysis found that *“youth who feel safe, socially included (predominantly in the presence*

---

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, S; Harris, A. & Baldassar, L. (2018) Mobile transitions: a conceptual framework for researching a generation on the move, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21:2, 203-217.

<sup>4</sup> Cho S, Crenshaw KW and McCall L (2013) Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38(4): 785–810.

<sup>5</sup> For instance: 1) World Bank (1994), *The World Bank and Participation*, World Bank, Washington, DC; 2) OECD (2017), *Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit*, OECD Development Policy Tools, OECD Publishing, Paris.

*of safety), and have a positive regard of their current or future situation are more likely to intend to stay in their current location than youth who have experienced insecurity (either directly or in their community at large), who lack social connections or networks, and who are pessimistic about their current or future situation in their current place of residence.”<sup>6</sup>*

In this respect, the research questions, methodology and tools were all guided by the need for an ecosystem approach, which scoping paper (KNOMAD, 2022) considered fundamental to understanding the impacts and factors occurring at multiple levels that affect experiences of integration and disenchantment, from social norms and governance to community and individual levels. Furthermore, this approach ensures that a holistic picture of subjective experiences and behaviors, as well as more objective drivers and challenges, can be captured in the research and furthermore allows the development of policy recommendations that can be applied to complex processes such as mobility and development. **The main objective of this paper is to understand the reality of the "integration" of young migrants (but also non-migrants) within the societies and communities through which they transit or in which they reside.** This cardinal question was further disaggregated into the following sub-questions and key issues:

Table 1 Research questions

Youth integration across contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does youth integration, behavior, and experience differ across migrants and non-migrants?</li> <li>• How does youth migrant integration behavior differ across age cohorts, gender, sexual identity, religion, regions, and countries of origin?</li> </ul>
Youth perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the reasons, drivers, and motivators for youth disenchantment across migrants and non-migrants?</li> <li>• How do youth migrants and non-migrants view and understand successful integration into society?</li> </ul>
Youth engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are youth engaged and/or participating in discussions on national and global processes related to youth and migration?</li> </ul>
Migration & development cycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the cycle of migration and development look like today, particularly focusing on youth and their experiences and needs, including their relationships with their country of origin?</li> </ul>

## Choice of countries and locations

Eight countries and ten cities were selected for the data collection, to represent a broad geographic scope and diverse mobility dynamics. The research locations were selected to represent diverse mobility and integration dynamics affecting youth across the world. Considering, for example, the choice of the three African countries, note that the study examines very different contexts: refugees in protracted displacement situations with limited integration opportunities in Kenya; labour migrants working through regular labor migration agreements with European countries in Tunisia; irregular transit migrants from sub-Saharan Africa, and growing xenophobia; and very progressive migrant integration policies and where mobility is a rite of passage for some communities in Senegal.

While the geographic distributions of having locations from different continents and regions allows for comparisons across cultures and socioeconomic contexts, it also shows the connectedness of mobility journeys and the commonalities of the impact of global trends in the different locations. The annex provides a brief overview of each context based on secondary data and qualitative data collected during the field research to give a background for the subsequent findings section.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel Hall and Mercy Corps (2018) "Driven to leave: aid and migration – assessing evidence from Somalia and Afghanistan."

Figure 1: Map of surveyed countries



### Structure of the report

The first section of this KNOMAD report details the methodology of this research, whose originality is to mix the subjective voice of young migrants and non-migrants (life stories, individual experiences of mobility) and an institutional counterpoint (NGOs, CSOs, youth movements, activists, governments), in order to produce a participatory conceptual work. The second and third sections present the results of the interviews and workshops - focusing on the concepts of 'migration' and 'youth', as well as the contextualization of the blurred and vague notion of 'integration'. The final section proposes a series of pragmatic recommendations, drawn directly from the exchanges in the eight countries, to promote better integration of young migrants into communities defined by their local and supranational character. With such an approach, the role of policy makers is of course bound to evolve by going beyond the strict national prism, which is generally retained to think about mobility and integration issues.



Picture 3: Participant to a Focus Group Discussion in Mexico City (2022)

# Methodology

# Methodology

The starting hypothesis of this research is that mobility is a relevant perspective for understanding the possibilities of integration of young people in today's societies. Of course, it is not possible to generalize on the basis of the eight cases studied in different continents. Each country presents significant contextual variations, whether in terms of socio-economic determinants, political contexts, cultural or linguistic dynamics, or post-colonial genealogies. Nor is there any question of presenting a Senegalese 'reality', a Colombian 'society' or a Pakistani 'community' in a homogeneous and uniform manner, on the basis of a few qualitative interviews. It is not a question of describing the mobility dynamics or integration logics within each community, society, country or sub-region. However, contrary to any claim to generalization, this research is based on a comparison of the experiences shared by young men and women, migrants or non-migrants, present in the communities studied during the interviews conducted by the research team.

## Qualitative research as a touchstone

This research does not claim to be exhaustive or representative: *“The goal of qualitative research is the development of concepts which help us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants”*<sup>7</sup>. The *‘thick description’*<sup>8</sup> of human behavior includes not only the focus of the study, but also its context, so that it makes sense to an external observer. The advantages of qualitative research is not only to describe, but also to help obtain more meaningful explanations of a phenomenon. Qualitative research is also useful for generating hypotheses (Sofaer, 1999), and this study may open avenues for further research, including quantitative analysis. The types of research questions, methodologies, and methods used by qualitative research aim to trace the meanings that people give to social phenomena, understood as “interaction processes” that include the interpretation of these interactions by the people who experience them.<sup>9</sup>

To put it differently, the aim of this study is to allow young migrants – as well as non-migrants who also look at the phenomenon of migration – to express themselves in their own words, with their own interpretative grids, rather than superimposing predetermined interpretative categories and an objectivist approach on the facts under study. In this regard, the group discussions and workshops followed a co-participatory approach, with: 1) preliminary work on the definition of key "words" (migration, youth, integration), focusing on empirical examples and translations; 2) a discussion on the different meanings and senses gathered in the definition phase in order to understand tensions and contradictions; 3) a collective co-conceptualization on the basis of the discussion phase, in order to bring to light the nuances specific to each concept or notion.

The study followed a phased approach from February 2022 to March 2023 with multiple rounds of data collection and validation of findings. A literature review on mobility, youth, and integration was conducted during the extensive inception phase. The tools were developed based on the literature review, and relevant research locations were chosen. The subsequent data collection phase included primary data collection in eight countries. The primary research group was migrant and non-migrant youth aged between 18 and 30 years old in the countries of research, from both primary and secondary cities. The composition of these groups in each research location in terms of nationality, ethnicity, migration status, and other demographic factors varied according to context; specific groups of interest were targeted within this broader sample, in particular youth with SOGIESC. In addition to youth, interviews, and workshops were conducted with civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), NGOs, and other stakeholders relevant to the youth integration ‘ecosystem’.

---

<sup>7</sup> Pope, C. and Mays, N. (1995) Qualitative Research: Reaching the Parts Other Methods Cannot Reach: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Health and Health Services Research. *British Medical Journal*, 311, 42-45.

<sup>8</sup> Geertz, C. (1973) *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture*, New York, Basic Books.

<sup>9</sup> Pope, C. and Mays, N. (1995) Qualitative Research: Reaching the Parts Other Methods Cannot Reach: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods in Health and Health Services Research. *British Medical Journal*, 311, 42-45.

The following methods were used simultaneously:

1. Key informant interviews were conducted with CSOs, CBOs, NGOs, government representatives, and experts relevant to the 'ecosystem' that could support the understanding of the barriers, challenges, and opportunities for youth integration in these contexts;
2. Focus group discussions and workshops with migrant youth, non-migrant youth, and stakeholders provided a space to engage with community members on key known challenges faced by youth;
3. Semi-structured interviews with migrant youth identified incidents and dreams related to mobility and integration in countries of destination or transit;
4. Indicative and non-representative quantitative data was collected from participants to provide individual sociodemographic profiles.

Some of the limitations of this sampling approach included i) the difficulty in mobilizing migrants who belonged strictly within the age parameters of youth, ii) difficulty in mobilizing migrants who were not refugees - there was a lack of diversity in the migration status of participants iii) the sampling was not random and therefore could not be accurately representative of the diverse perspectives of youth. To mitigate those challenges, mobilization was facilitated by CBOs and CSOs engaged with youth from diverse backgrounds and mobility profiles.

Table 2: Sampling tools and target groups (462 contributors)

Target Group / Tool = 360 contributors in total (55% women)	Total	Interviews per country							
		Kenya	Colombia	Mexico	Thailand	Pakistan	Senegal	Tunisia	Jordan
Focus Group Discussions with Youth Non-Migrants	17	9	-	-	-	2	2	2	2
Focus Group Discussions with Youth Migrants	20	8	-	-	-	3	3	3	3
Semi-Structured Interviews with Youth Migrants	52	20	-	-	-	8	8	8	8
Workshops with Youth Migrants	3	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Workshops with Youth Non-Migrants	3	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Workshops with Stakeholders	3	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Key Informant Interviews	50	10	4	4	4	4	4	4	4





Picture 4: Semi-Structured interview in Colombia (2022)

# Concepts in context: *youth & migration*

# Concepts in context

The idea that we all speak the same language is generally taken for granted in field research – whether interviewing institutions or individuals, groups representing hegemonic narratives or minority groups. However, the interviews show that this assumption is not without problems. In the eight surveyed contexts, the words "youth" and "migration" are thus understood, interpreted, and used in ways that are often very different, even opposed, depending on the social, economic, and political position of the actors considered. The objective of this section is precisely to explore the contradictions in the denotation and connotation attached to each word, in order not to close their meanings but to better show how these concepts are problematic. It is not, in other words, to close the meanings but to show that the concepts of 'youth' or 'migration' must be thought in their tensions, in order to develop policies that are commensurate with their complexity.

## Conceptualizing 'youth'

When asked about the different possible meanings of the word 'youth', interviewees often started by proposing a two-step definition: administrative and restrictive. The administrative definition limits itself to delimiting the field in a neutral manner, without taking into account the subjectivity of individuals and by proposing an identification by age, with national, regional, or institutional variations<sup>10</sup>. In Jordan, reference is made to a group whose age ranges from 18 to 30 in general, or even 34, to suggest that the so-called youth stage is that of entry into the labor market, into active life, before taking on adult responsibilities. The administrative definition therefore also associates youth with a more limiting or negative dimension in the minds of many participants, that of inexperience and incompleteness. An NGO representative working for two different youth associations in Amman adds that young people are "a social group", which suggests that the relationship to age is in relation to a social dynamic, to an entry into the socio-economic community. In Kenya, the Constitution defines youth as *'a group between 18 and 34 (...) which corresponds to the entry into life and responsibilities'*<sup>11</sup>.

Young people, then, are non-adults *"who need to learn more and understand life better"*<sup>12</sup>, said for example a young migrant we met in Dakar. In this perspective, we see a first difference between migrants and non-migrants, since what many West Africans (Maliens, Guineans, Cameroonians, Senegalese) we met in Tunis or Sfax in Tunisia call 'adventure' is also perceived as a way of learning towards adulthood: *'Migration makes you an adult. I don't think I'm a 'young person' anymore. At least I don't see myself like that anymore, even though I'm only 25. Because I am not immature anymore. (...) I make my decisions, I make my choices, I take responsibility for my mistakes and I pay for them. And I had to learn this at every step of the migration journey. So, I am not protected, nurtured, as I was in my youth.'*<sup>13</sup> Migration is thus a way of accelerating the exit from childhood; for some Malian migrants, particularly from the Soninké ethnic group, it is a rite of passage (Box 1).

### Box 1: Migration as a social rite in West Africa

Throughout history, West Africa has been a hub of migratory movements driven by a variety of factors, including the search for new lands for cultivation or grazing, and the development of valuable and perennial trade routes. These migrations have had significant socio-political implications, particularly in the Sahara region, which has served as a space of circulation between poles of political, economic, and cultural organization. The cities of Gao and Timbuktu in Mali or Agadez in Niger were highly coveted spaces, where Tuareg, Mandé and Fulani merchants used to move along the trade routes. These exchanges have been based on the complementarity of geographical spaces, and pre-colonial organizational logics have left spatial, economic, socio-cultural, and linguistic continuities that challenge current borders as limits of what would now be considered international migration. In that logic, mobility plays a significant role in shaping societies and cultures, and is often linked to memories and social relations. Migration, in particular, has been an integral part in the shaping of ethnic identities, and even serves as an initiation rite for some. For example, in Mali, migration shaped the specificities of certain communities, such as the Peul and Soninké, as reported by a 24-year-old in Dakar who says he has spent as much time on each side of the Senegalese-Malian border: *'In our country, it's common, especially during the dry season. We don't all want to go to Europe, but we want to diversify*

<sup>10</sup> The United Nations defines Youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Under the African Youth Charter a Youth is a person between 15 and 35 years. Like other states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, Tunisia considers youth to cover the period between 15 and 29 years.

<sup>11</sup> WS 25, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>12</sup> KII 11, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>13</sup> SSI 71.

our income, to go where the work is in the region, for example where there are other Soninkés.<sup>14</sup> The rite of passage here is therefore linked to leaving the minority. Nevertheless, although the idea of migration can be considered an initiation rite for some populations, it can be reductive and cannot solely explain the origins of the migratory phenomenon.

Less frequently mentioned in the interviews, a third nuance of meaning is however mentioned by some KIIs, who note the manipulation of youth, precisely because of a certain lack of experience and critical judgement, as highlighted by a Mexican participant (non-migrant): *'young people are easily instrumentalized (...) sometimes because they are naive, often also because they are stigmatized'*<sup>15</sup>. In Kenya, for example, youth can be used as a mobilizing force to be directed politically in one direction or another: *"sometimes I think we are cannon fodder in political rallies!"*<sup>16</sup> The emphasis is then placed on the malleability of young people, who are not necessarily very politicized but can be mobilized for a cause by one political party or another. Another way of instrumentalizing young people – especially migrants – is of course stigmatization. The stereotype of the "young African migrant" is often exploited by populist currents, and reinforced by racist rhetoric (brute force for men, sexually for women), which makes it possible to turn young sub-Saharan migrants into *"perfect candidates for nationalist propaganda"*, as one NGO member we met in Tunis noted.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the narrative and instrumentalization of youth (both migrants and non-migrants) vary according to the political opportunity, in particular during periods of crisis: *"in the end, it is not so important that young migrants are young or migrants for the regime (...) but in the serious crisis that the country is going through, we need scapegoats. Young Tunisians have an enormous demographic weight. They are politically dangerous and have no jobs. We need to direct their anger against someone. In a context of social and economic disintegration, the visible group of Malian or Senegalese migrants, who have no access to rights or services, who cannot defend themselves, represent a "perfect target for the nationalist and racist discourse of the official propaganda, relayed by all the media."*<sup>17</sup> Similar words were used in group interviews in Thailand, Mexico and Colombia: "scapegoating"<sup>18</sup>, "ideal victims"<sup>19</sup>, "political pawns"<sup>20</sup>.

In contrast to such objectification of young people - and in particular young migrants - one last important connotation is often associated with youth: that of openness to possibilities. At an age when choices are not yet completely fixed and definitive, youth is indeed a period conducive to curiosity<sup>21</sup>, discovery<sup>22</sup>, openness<sup>23</sup>, innovation<sup>24</sup> and risk-taking<sup>25</sup>. But these opportunities are experienced differently depending on migratory status.

- For young non-migrants in Kenya, for example, youth is often synonymous with "strength despite social reality" and prospects for inclusion described as "difficult" or "depressing", where only nepotism and ethnic affiliations prevail. The strength of youth is therefore an asset in an environment that is sometimes contrary. In a similar vein, young migrants in Thailand insist on the fact that their "potential" and "positive contribution" is real but can only happen with a conducive *"economic planning with large public investments (...) to give everyone opportunities"*<sup>26</sup>
- For young migrants in Dakar, Bogota, Mexico City, Garissa, Tunis, Amman, Bangkok, Lahore, Sfax or Nairobi, this strength is first and foremost associated with the idea of responsibility and obligation towards their family or community of origin, as confirmed by a young Ivorian the research team met in Tunis: *"I came here because the situation in Daloa<sup>27</sup> is simply not tenable for my family. I am the youngest, so I had to try the adventure. And I must*

---

<sup>14</sup> KII 132.

<sup>15</sup> WS 32, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>16</sup> WS 25, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>17</sup> KII 73, Tunis, Tunisia. This analysis is obviously reinforced by the speech of Tunisian President Kais Saied on 21 February 2023 to the National Security Council: "Hordes of illegal immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa continue to arrive, with all the violence, criminality and unacceptable practices that this implies. As for those arrested, often without charge, they are simply described as "terrorists" and "traitors".

<sup>18</sup> WS 34, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>19</sup> WS 67, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>20</sup> KII 8, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>21</sup> KII 74, Tunis, Tunisia.

<sup>22</sup> KII 54, Senegal, Dakar.

<sup>23</sup> KII 22, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>24</sup> KII 82, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>25</sup> KII 74, Tunis, Tunisia.

<sup>26</sup> WS 63, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>27</sup> City in Cote d'Ivoire.

succeed.”<sup>28</sup> The strength of youth is therefore not only an individual asset in the face of adversity, it also implies obligations for the collective that remains in the community of origin or the family.

In both cases, youth is perceived positively, as a power of action and energy, with each time a confrontation with a reality often considered as contrary, whether it be non-migrants or migrants.

Table 3: Definitions of youth provided by participants

Connotation	Definition	Quotes from respondents
Administrative labelling	Axiologically neutral definition	“A social group aged between 18 and 30 (or even 34 years) who is transitioning to adulthood with all that this means in terms of the need for social and economic autonomy.” <sup>29</sup>
Limitative	Lack of experience (vulnerable = fragile in context)	“At the same time, they need to learn and experience more in their lives. They are also flexible and at the same time, want to know facts but need support from the community.” <sup>30</sup> “Youth is an age in one's life (...) that is said to be perhaps immature, where perhaps reflection is not at the right level of maturity. So thinking is not complete and there is a lack of experience that characterizes youth. They only imitate.” <sup>31</sup>
Political	Instrumentalized actors (vulnerable = who can be targeted)	“In Sfax, youth are too often a pawn in the political game. Young migrants are used by traffickers (...) Young Tunisians are instrumentalized by nationalist politicians (...) In the end, they all lose their illusions.” <sup>32</sup> “If youth are involved they can give their ideas. We feel that the ideas of young people are not taken into account. Most often it is adults close to the government who make decisions, whether in Senegal or in Europe. (...) The decisions taken fail because the young people are unaware of the objectives; or because it does not concern them or interest them. They then show a lack of interest that will cause them not to participate.” <sup>33</sup>
Positive	Openness to the possible	“It's the time that you start forming your own identity, how you become in your adult lives, whether you'll be a selfish person, a fighter for freedoms and other personality.” <sup>34</sup> “Youth is the crucial time in a life. That's when you can still achieve anything. Everything still seems possible. Difficult but possible. I always tell people that it is not their fault that they are born poor, but it is their fault that they die poor. Because opportunities depend mainly on your choices.” <sup>35</sup>

The visualization below, based on the words and opinions collected during the qualitative interviews with young people and civil society organizations, highlights the four main meanings of the word 'youth'. The size of the characters indicates the frequency with which this type of interpretation was mentioned in the interviews; the color (green, orange, red) highlights the connotation (positive or negative) attached to the meaning of the word. Some contradictions or tensions, symbolized by the use of "double arrows", are useful to better mark out the conceptual field of 'youth': for example, the administrative label is not only a 'neutral' assignment, it can also contribute to 'political scapegoating' and reinforce the criticism of the immaturity and 'lack of experience' of young people, depending on the extension of the age spectrum (15-24 or 18-35), as suggested by the female representative of a Pakistani NGO and youth activist: *“To say that 32- or 33-year old people are 'young' is also a way of saying that they are not yet mature enough to take on political responsibilities in the country.”*<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> KII 82, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>29</sup> KII 34, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>30</sup> WS 9, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>31</sup> KII 50, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>32</sup> KII 91, Garissa, Kenya.

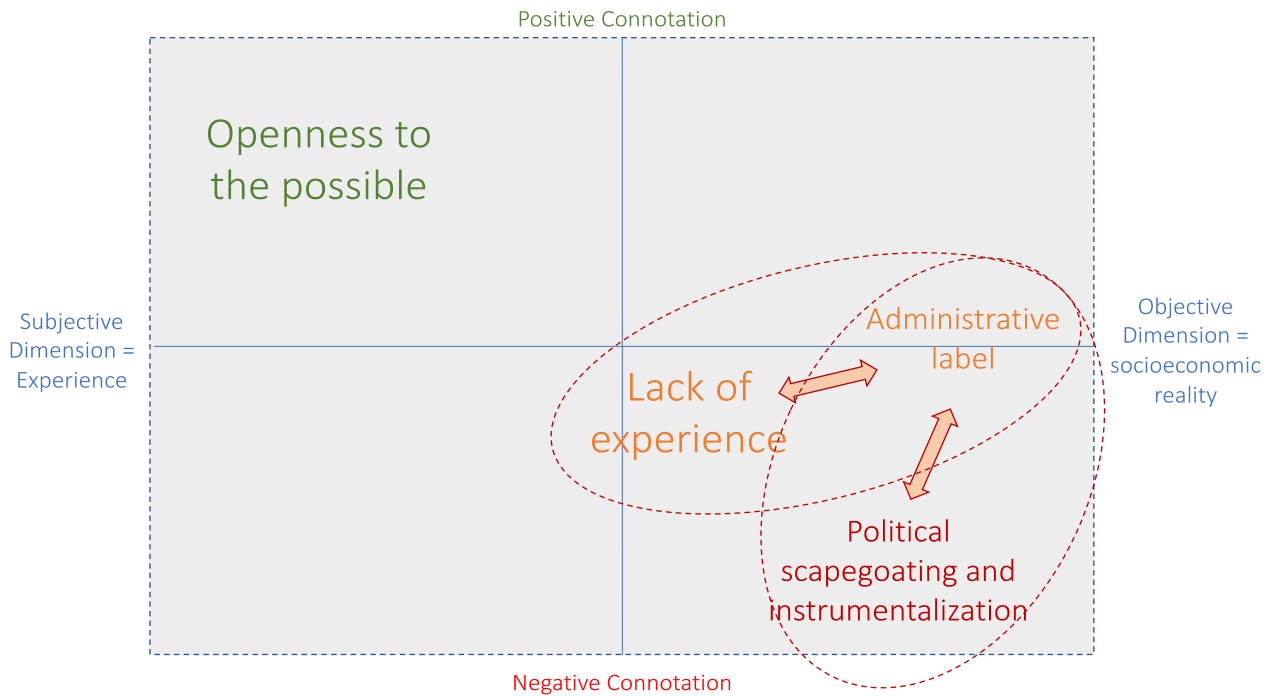
<sup>33</sup> FGD 52, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>34</sup> KII 27, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>35</sup> KII 17, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>36</sup> KII 45, Lahore, Pakistan.

Figure 2: Qualitative conceptual mapping of 'youth'



### Conceptualizing 'migration' through the eyes of youth

The meanings and nuances attached to the notion of migration by youth demonstrate both that mobility is a complex and multidimensional reality but also that it is a very relevant prism for understanding the cultural, social, economic, political and societal realities of the ten communities of this study. As with the definition of 'youth', many participants, especially those representing institutions, gave migration a rather linear or even positivist dimension. It is a movement that has identifiable causes (economic, conflict, climate, among the most mentioned) and has a point of departure and a point of destination. It is about going from one place to another, using routes, hubs, connectors; the reference to flow, to volumes, is also very present. Such a definition, which is ultimately quite close to the terminologies, customs and practices of international organizations (IOM or UNHCR in particular), often ignores time and focuses on a geographical and administrative understanding of space. However, none of the participants is satisfied with such a definition, *"which is a starting point"*<sup>37</sup> and *"requires further elaboration"*<sup>38</sup>.

The second definition also comes from associations (CSOs, NGOs, UN or IOs) and insists on the legal aspect of the migration phenomenon. Two approaches coexist here: on the one hand, the insistence on labels or categories, without which *"it is not possible to manage the phenomenon but also (without which) migrants may have no rights"*<sup>39</sup>, as the IOM office in Tunisia reminded us, for example; on the other hand, an insistence on mobility as a *"basic"*<sup>40</sup>, *"indisputable"*<sup>41</sup> human right. These two administrative-legal dimensions (categorical and legal) are of course not opposed. Finally, more marginally in the group discussions with young non-migrants, some participants insist on the distinction between what they call "legal" migration (mainly understood as "obtaining a work permit") and "illegal" or "clandestine" migration (mainly associated to economic migration from neighboring countries, to asylum seekers, to migrants in transit). The latter qualification by law (legal/illegal) reflects mostly perceptions based on populist discourses and dominant narratives in local media.

<sup>37</sup> KII 57, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>38</sup> WS 63, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>39</sup> KII 58, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>40</sup> KII 59, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>41</sup> KII 7, Bogota, Colombia.

The third definition sees migration from a political point of view, as an indicator of tensions, because it reflects the divisions between the national or governmental level and the local or municipal level: *"In Garissa, refugees are seen as an opportunity. Without them, the NGOs would not come. The level of schools, investments, health, etc. would be worse than today. And then, the refugees and the Somali Kenyans in this county speak the same language, are of the same ethnicity, are sometimes related (...). But if you ask Nairobi, everything becomes political. The refugees are a way to put pressure on the UNHCR and therefore on the international community. We've seen it over the last 10 years with the announcement of the Dadaab camp closures when the government wants something."*<sup>42</sup> Perceived as an economic engine embedded in a social fabric that it helps to energize locally, migration becomes a pawn in a political game on a national scale. The logic of instrumentalization and scapegoating mentioned in the analysis of the notion of "youth" is replicated here.

Such hypocrisy is also highlighted by the migrants present in Bangkok, beyond their differences in legal and economic status: all of them show a bitterness towards a government whose anti-migrant narrative they describe both in the absence of real efforts to improve the situations or access to services of young migrants, but also in its opportunistic silence *'since migrants are a cheap, underpaid and exploited labour force'* for the informal private sector. *'I think it's the selfishness of the government, they want migrant labourers but they don't want to give any benefits to them.'*<sup>43</sup> In Mexico, the phenomenon of migration has been heavily impacted by politicised narratives, imported from the United States and developed internally by political predators. This has had by default a clear impact on the perceptions of migrants in the host country and policies regarding their integration. Many institutions dealing with migration are perceived to be dealing with migration in terms of threat to "national security". This evidently impedes the integration process: *"I would like Mexico not to be subordinated to the politics and interests of the United States, because migration ends up becoming an exchange currency"*<sup>44</sup> and *"people who work on migration, asylum or refugee issues here do so from one angle: security. They are bought by the Americans to demonise, repress, harass migrants like police officers. And they don't know anything about human problems or the law."*<sup>45</sup>

Such opportunistic stigmatization of refugees, economic migrants or 'foreigners' also reveals the societal dimension of the migration phenomenon: being identified/labeled as a "migrant" is an aggravating factor *"especially in times of crisis like today, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the consequences of the war on prices and all the economic problems we face in this country."*<sup>46</sup> In so-called host societies and communities, the label or perception of migrant is thus an additional discriminating variable (like gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, etc.). Beyond the possible constraints in access to the law, it is indeed *de facto* social discrimination that is at stake here, according to an intersectional perspective.

The last two meanings attached to the word 'migration' are more subjective and are usually only mentioned by the migrants themselves. First, the always traumatic character of migration comes up again and again in the interviews, as emphasized by a Kenyan participant: *"Migration in another language is to face problems. It means to go to a different country because you can't find what you want in your home country. Therefore, migration is suffering."*<sup>47</sup> Of course, the experience of migration is not the same for a foreign student, well integrated in the cultural and economic life of a large capital city like Nairobi or Dakar, or for an asylum seeker who has been forced to *"leave behind a home, a family, a language or an existence"*<sup>48</sup>.

Yet, beyond the misleading dichotomy between voluntary and forced displacement, migration is described by participants as an experience of injury: 1) physical and psychological traumas of sub-Saharan migrants who arrive in Tunisia through Algeria or Libya and have experienced mistreatment, violence, detention, and various forms of human trafficking; 2) uprooting after the loss of home, of the native land, for so-called transit migrants, asylum seekers who had to flee their countries in order to avoid being victims of repression. This situation is often highlighted by young migrants, as by this young Guinean woman in Dakar: *"Leaving your place, when you don't want to or because there is no alternative, is always sad. But even when you leave because it is what you want, it is also saddening."*<sup>49</sup> A young woman from Lahore offers a similar analysis

---

<sup>42</sup> KII 124, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>43</sup> WS 62, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>44</sup> KII 37, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>45</sup> KII 36, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>46</sup> KII 134, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>47</sup> FGD 93, Garissa, Kenya

<sup>48</sup> KII 43, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>49</sup> FGD 53, Dakar, Senegal.

when it comes to the issue of Kashmir, noting the tension or contradiction that runs through their lives as exiles: *"The Kashmiri migrants came here in Pakistan with the mindset that they would go back to Kashmir after getting freedom from India. That's why they are unable to really be part of the Pakistani society. Their unhappiness is an obstacle."*<sup>50</sup> Here we are at the etymological heart of nostalgia, that 'pain of return' that prevents us from projecting ourselves into the future.

Finally, the last meaning, by far the most often mentioned by the young migrants themselves, presents migration as an experience of intersubjectivity: the uprooting already mentioned is also a decentering that forces one to meet others. Some encounters are positive and *"make you grow"*<sup>51</sup>, others are more painful. Others are more painful and *"make you hate"*<sup>52</sup>. But what is striking in the more subjective descriptions of the migration experience is that migrants consider migration as a collective 'adventure', which includes all the actors of the journey, in particular governmental institutions, smugglers, aid organizations, employers, people met on the road, etc.

In this sense, some of the more individualized exchanges with migrants have highlighted the inadequacy of purely rational and linear approaches to understanding the phenomenon: *"When people ask me why I left and why I want to go to Europe, I don't know what to answer. First of all, because one never really knows why one leaves. I know the reasons given to my family or to the people who ask me, but I am not even sure I have decided. In a way, it's the adventure that decides for me. (...) the people I meet make it possible or not possible. And what we wanted at the beginning becomes something else. You stay longer, you go somewhere else, you change your mind, you change."*<sup>53</sup> If this reality applies particularly to those who are called transit migrants, and especially to economic migrants, it applies to a large extent to other categories or labels: whether they are students, skilled expatriate workers, refugees, whether they think they will stay for a long time or are just passing through, all of them explain that mobility has changed them. The stages, the encounters, the experiences have transformed a project into a journey.

Finally, even when nostalgia is present – sometimes for a past that seems fantasized, for a native land that one has never known – young migrants all have in common that they want to *"live in the future"*<sup>54</sup>. The young migrants interviewed say that they do not live their situation passively and some even confess that this determination was forged in the experience of mobility: *"I am no longer the person I was before leaving, it changed me and made me grow"*<sup>55</sup> says for example a French-speaking student who defines herself as *"West African"* who has been in Tunis for six months, through a university exchange, and who is now thinking of leaving for Dakar. Situations obviously differ and the few Somali refugees we met in Garissa (outside the camp) or the Somali and Ethiopian refugees seen in Eastleigh (Nairobi) of course report situations that are sometimes hopeless; but even in situations of socio-economic reclusion and great psychological tension, they all insist on the fact that solidarity between migrants allows them to *"never give up"*<sup>56</sup> and to always *"stay the course"*<sup>57</sup>. Again, this openness to the call of the possible coincides with a certain aspiration of youth identified in the previous section. The same determination is found in each of the eight countries and ten contexts studied. A participant in the focus group discussions in Amman (a migrant) notes, for example, *"migration is what is imposed on us, we didn't choose it. It happens in the family and we inherit it. But you have to make it a strength and know that it is also possible, perhaps, to migrate to other places, other countries. You have to turn your life upside down for that if necessary."*<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> KII 47, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>51</sup> KII 98, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>52</sup> KII 84, Sfax, Tunisia

<sup>53</sup> WS 81, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>54</sup> WS 11, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>55</sup> KII 114, Tunis, Tunisia.

<sup>56</sup> WS 20, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>57</sup> KII 99, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>58</sup> WS 11, Amman, Jordan.

Table 4: Definitions of 'migration' provided by youth participants

Connotation	Definition	Quotes from respondents
Positivist	Linear process	<p>"The mobility from one country to another to settle, work or in a transition before migrating to a third country."<sup>59</sup></p> <p>"Migration is a process where you leave due to war or any conflicts. It is always carried out in mass."<sup>60</sup></p> <p>"Migration is movement of people from one place to another to respond to their needs, it can be a need for challenge or need for a better quality of life."<sup>61</sup></p>
Limitative	Legal approach	<p>"We are more in favor of the term "mobility", because, as already described in article thirteen for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights allows everyone to choose where they live, where they stay, how they move [...] Compared to the history of humanity, the borders are all new."<sup>62</sup></p>
Negative	Political scapegoating	<p>"Migration is often a political problem in big capitals, like Brussels or Nairobi. But, the economic reality, the social tensions and also the actual solutions only exist locally."<sup>63</sup></p>
Intersectional	Societal question	<p>"In our specific case of helping the LGBTQ community and victims of violence, we are talking about people who run away from the state. They run away from a society that does not understand them, where they don't have protection and understanding from the law, or that recognizes them. They make them invisible and from this fact is that they go out to look for other alternatives."<sup>64</sup></p>
Human-centered	Traumatic experience	<p>"Because all migration implies that there is something that you leave, there is something that stops, and there are relationships that naturally are going to have to transform for the sole fact that you no longer live in a space."<sup>65</sup></p> <p>"You don't choose, it is not under your control. Either you were forced to leave by conflict or wars, sometimes natural disasters, or you want a better life and money for your household. But you don't have much of a choice. This is like slavery and it creates trauma for most people."<sup>66</sup></p> <p>"Fight for stability (emotional and physiological stability). Fight for equality. Fear of being deported, the possibility to be deported. Vulnerability for being a foreigner. Sometimes migrants arrive in Casa Frida and they share their stories with us. It's very sad when you love your country but the situation pushes you to leave, leave your family and find a life somewhere else."<sup>67</sup></p>
Human-centered	Inter-subjective journey	<p>"However, migration is also about meeting new people, mastering new contexts... If you see it as an adventure, then it is something that is good for you and everyone."<sup>68</sup></p> <p>"Migration is the biggest opportunity in Tunisia."<sup>69</sup></p> <p>"I want to migrate and study abroad because this will open up many perspectives."<sup>70</sup></p>

The important nuances and multiple meanings attached to the word 'migration' in the figure below allow us to identify three areas of tension in the conceptual field of migration, as delimited by the participants in the survey. From right to left, a first tension between an objective approach to the migration phenomenon, conceived as a process of linear displacement, and the establishment of categories and labels according to a legal-administrative logic; a second tension can be spotted between a definition of migration according to a 'political' (or 'politicized') perspective, which objectifies migration and reduces it to being only a means to electoral ends, and the real presence of migration at the heart of today's societal issues. And finally, the last tension, on the left, is both subjective and intersubjective: on the one hand, the experience of migration

<sup>59</sup> WS 2, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>60</sup> WS 11, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>61</sup> FGD 33, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>62</sup> WS 51, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>63</sup> KII 94, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>64</sup> WS 1, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>65</sup> KII 56, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>66</sup> FGD 13, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>67</sup> WS 32, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>68</sup> FGD 55, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>69</sup> WS 70, Tunis, Tunisia (local youth).

<sup>70</sup> FGD 91, Garissa, Nairobi.



is always traumatic and associated with suffering; on the other, the journey is also a way to become an adult, in encounters, exchanges, conflicts too, with other contexts or groups. The examples of Somali and Ethiopian migrants' lifelines in Kenya reflect these different aspects, which are present in almost all the individual narratives collected in the eight countries of this study.

Figure 3: Qualitative conceptual mapping of 'migration'

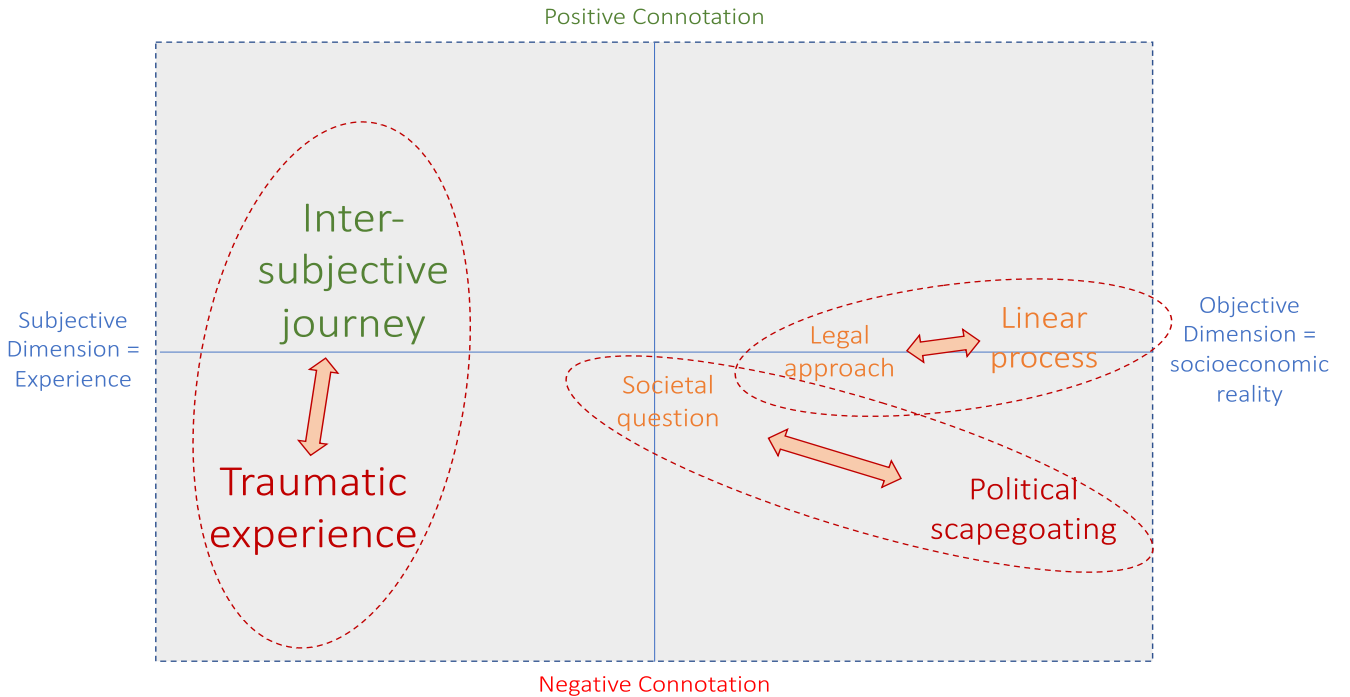


Figure 4: Example of lifeline (Female migrant in Kenya, Uganda, 30)

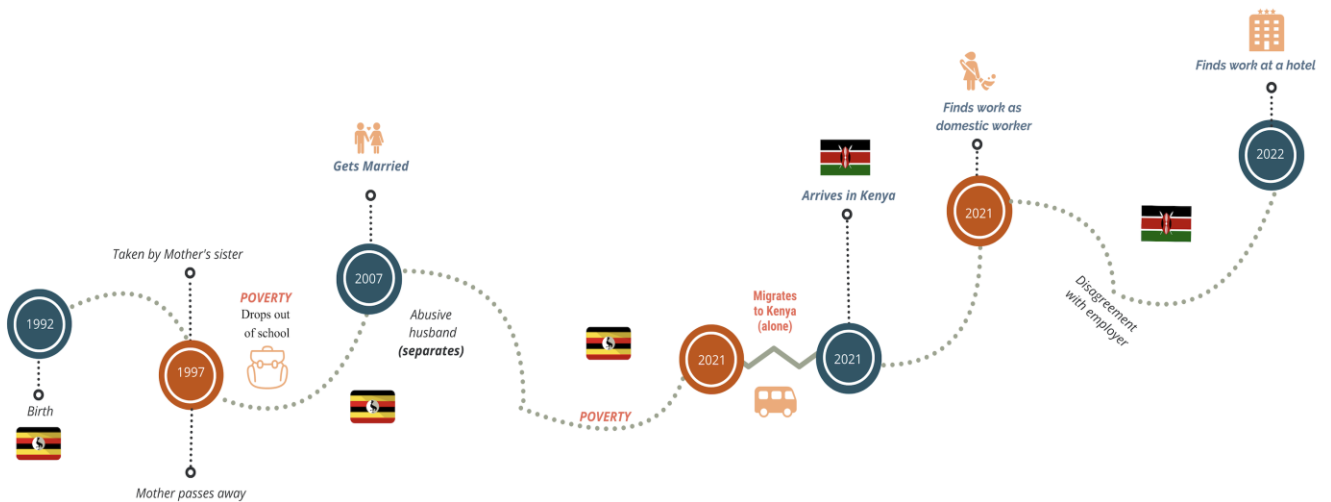


Figure 5: Example of lifeline (Female migrant in Kenya, Ethiopia, 27)

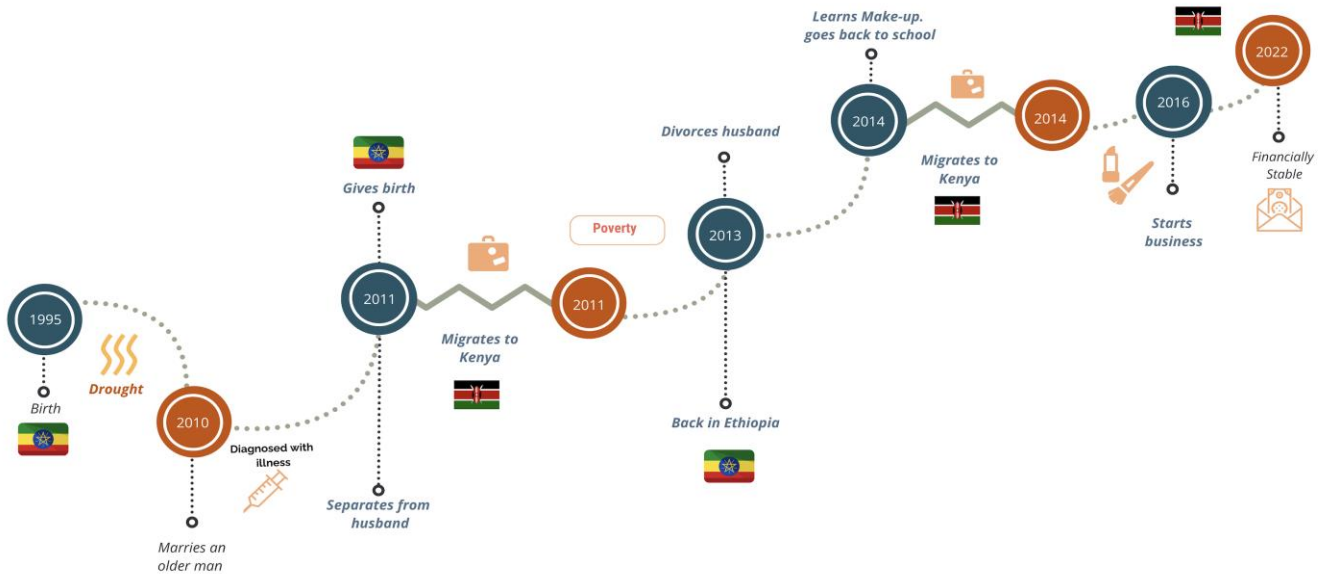
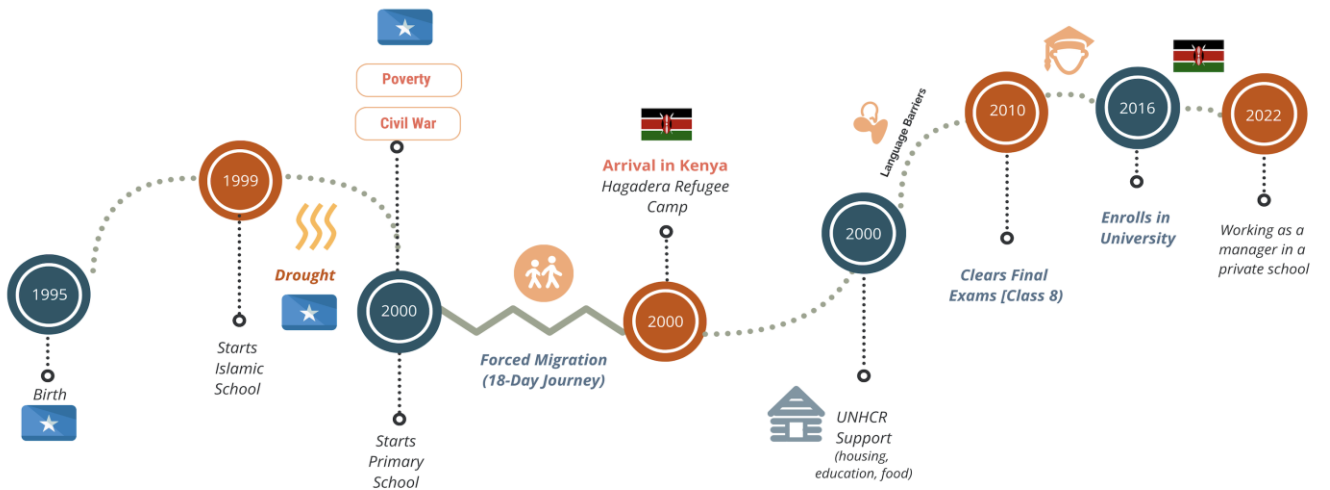


Figure 7: Example of lifeline (Male migrant, Somali refugee in Kenya, 27)





Picture 4: Portraits of participants in the study workshops

# The integration of youth

# Problematizing integration

A key objective of this study is to test the relevance of the concept of “integration” in thinking about the individual or collective experience of young people in the targeted communities. However, the notion of "integration" is not self-evident. Willem Schinkel<sup>71</sup> has recently argued that dominant approaches to immigration continue to reproduce a nationalist logic and methodology on these issues – particularly with the notion of integration of immigrants (but also of youth). Two of Schinkel's main critical arguments about the legitimacy and relevance of "integration" actually relate to aspects very explicitly emphasized by participants in all the interviews and workshops: 1) the integration of youth (and young migrants a fortiori) as conceived remains normative and implies an alignment with a narrowly defined national paradigm, which is problematic in many respects; 2) the responsibility for integration very often lies with the young person (migrant or non-migrant) as if the inability to integrate were a defect or symptom of a deficiency in the individual.

The post-colonial reality in the study countries has undoubtedly influenced the conception and perception, but also the operational translation (in so-called 'integration' narratives, institutions or programmes) of what a 'well-integrated' person is or should be. While a genealogical analysis is necessary, it was not within the relatively limited scope of this study. However, the answers to the two questions posed during the interviews allowed the participants to reveal some of the unthinkable aspects of the national or local contexts in which they find themselves immersed.

- How does youth integration, behavior and experience differ across migrants and non-migrants?
- How does youth migrant integration behavior differ across age cohorts, gender, sexual identity, religion, regions, and countries of origin?

## *Box 2: Integration: a "concept" between knowledge and power*

Integration is a sociological concept in its own right, whose paternity is attributed to Emile Durkheim in his book on *Suicide*<sup>72</sup> to characterize the process by which the individual takes his place in a given society and becomes socialized. For Durkheim, and later for the Chicago School of Sociology<sup>73</sup>, integration refers to a set of interactions between individuals, their conformation to a standardized model of passions and their adoption of similar ideals and common representations. In an integrated society, various institutions (work, religion, family, peer groups, solidarity organizations, assistance, etc.) place individuals under an implicit or explicit dependence and force them to learn how to coexist in society. As early as the 1960s, neo-Marxist sociological currents rejected this theoretical model of Durkheimian integration, emphasizing that the integrating (or regulating) role of the state was always on the side of the capitalist owners. In the 1970s, Michel Foucault's critique allowed for the denunciation of the normative and repressive function of institutions, thus challenging the Durkheimian model. This research, conducted within the framework of the CERFI (with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari), extends from the home to the school, from the life of the mining cities to the urban centers, from the asylum to the institutional psychiatry, from the crèches to the sports centers, from the militant ideal to the politics of nature, from the juvenile justice to the national accounting.

More recently, thinkers of postmodernity have noted the fragmentation of identities and reference points in the notion of integration: for Zygmunt Bauman<sup>74</sup>, for example, social integration in contemporary society (which he calls a "liquid society") is ensured by the referential framework of consumption and the valorization of the freedom to consume. In the current context, the common use of the term equates integration with the greater or lesser acculturation and assimilation of immigrant groups and their children, in European and North American societies in particular, but also in the so-called host or transit countries of migration - which applies to the cases of Senegal, Tunisia, Jordan, Pakistan, Mexico and Kenya. In this sense, integration can be broken down into several successive stages, starting with economic integration (obtaining a job), mastering the language, then the process of acculturation (which aims to master the norms, mores, customs and values of the society to be integrated) and finally the gradual social ascent. However, Alejandro Portes' recent work on "segmented assimilation"<sup>75</sup> has shown that this linear vision is often

<sup>71</sup> Schinkel, W. (2017) *Imagined Societies : A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe*, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>72</sup> Durkheim, E. (1951) *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, New York: The Free Press. Durkheim points out in particular the problems linked to the lack or excess of integration: thus, the disorders caused by a society in a state of anomie explain a certain type of suicide. On the other hand, a society that is "too" integrated induces another form of suicide, described as "altruistic".

<sup>73</sup> Thomas, W. and Znaniecki, F. (1958) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, New York, Dover.

<sup>74</sup> Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid modernity? Understanding Society*, Polity.

<sup>75</sup> Portes, A. (1995) *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*, New York, Russel Sage Foundation.

contradicted in reality: being normatively integrated does not necessarily imply social mobility, for example, just as social ascension can take place without real acculturation. The incisive political analyses of Favell<sup>76</sup> or Schinkel<sup>77</sup> have also highlighted the illusory and limited character of economic, cultural and social integration at the national level, described as "conceptual nonsense". The real normative horizon of integration is thus not so much that of an authentic scientific or sociological discourse as that of a knowledge for power, of a thought that reproduces nationalist, racist and colonial stereotypes. With this critical framework in mind, current research on integration basically suggests that the success or failure of the integration process (with many caveats), basically depends on the prejudices (race, gender<sup>78</sup>) and the genealogy (post-colonial) of the so-called host societies.

## Commonalities between youth migrants and non-migrants

Youth do not necessarily want to be integrated (membership bias)	Distrust of the neoliberal model (economic and political)	Belief that economic integration is the first step towards integration	Willingness to engage politically, despite politicised narratives
--	---	--	---

The main commonalities that emerge most in the interviews question the integration model as well as an ultimately narrow understanding of the concept in its extension. The first important commonality to be highlighted among people – migrants or non-migrants – is the contestation of the evidence that young people (migrants in particular) necessarily want to be integrated. Here we find an insight from Alex Aleinikoff who noted a certain 'membership bias', on the part of so-called host countries, described as the belief that refugees absolutely want to belong to a new state: *"refugees might prefer an ambiguity and flexibility that does not compel an immediate consideration of identity questions and that keeps options open for future return or resettlement"*<sup>79</sup>. What applies here to refugees may also be relevant to other categories of migrants. Even more, many migrants do not consider the place they are in as a final destination. This is of course the case for economic migrants on their way to Europe that we met in Tunisia. It is also the case for many refugees or victims of forced displacement, who live with the horizon of return, the fear of deportation, the uncertainty of the future, constantly in mind; it is finally more obvious for students or economic migrants, formally integrated, who live in a globalized economic space, where nomadism has become the rule.

The second commonality between migrants and non-migrants is a similar experience of the effects of what is sometimes called 'neoliberalism'<sup>80</sup>, 'capitalism'<sup>81</sup>, 'liberalism'<sup>82</sup>, and whose effects are manifested in: 1) a decline in the quality of services (especially in education); 2) increased isolation of individuals and reduced solidarity mechanisms. The interviews in Pakistan particularly highlighted these dimensions through concrete accounts and in-depth analyses of the dysfunctions experienced. In Pakistan, for example, the emphasis is on the poverty of the education system and its increasing commodification: "it has become a business accessible only to the rich and to wealthy families. The government is said to have distanced itself from young people by no longer offering the vast majority of young Pakistanis the integration services through education and training that they need: "Our government does not allocate a sufficient budget for education. Education should be free at university level. Middle class families cannot educate their children as they cannot afford expenses. (R3, FGD18) We do not see so many schemes for our generation from the government. Our generation is expected to earn ourselves, but no incentive is being provided."<sup>83</sup> This situation is even worse for refugees (especially Afghans, in Peshawar or Lahore) who receive almost no education and can only rely on themselves.

<sup>76</sup> Favell, A. (2022), *The Integration Nation: Immigration and Colonial Power in Liberal Democracies*, Wiley. See also Favell, A. (1998) *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>77</sup> Schinkel, W. (2018), *Against 'immigrant integration': for an end to neocolonial knowledge production*, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6 (1). See also Schinkel, W. (2017), *Imagined Societies, A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe*, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>78</sup> Pinderhughes, D. (1987), *Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Reexamination of Pluralist Theory*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press.

<sup>79</sup> Aleinikoff, T. A. (1992), *State-centered Refugee Law: From Resettlement to Containment* in *Mistrusting Refugees* edited by E. Valentine Daniel and John Chr. Knudsen, 257-278. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

<sup>80</sup> FGD 41, Lahore Pakistan.

<sup>81</sup> WS 1, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>82</sup> WS 31, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>83</sup> FGD 41, Lahore, Pakistan.

In both cases, migrant and non-migrant participants report feeling left to their own devices, abandoned by nepotistic institutions that increasingly serve private and economic interests at the expense of young people.<sup>84</sup>

The third point to note is the belief shared by young migrants and non-migrants alike that economic status (primarily through obtaining stable employment, leading to financial inclusion) is the main factor for integration into society. Many variables are mentioned, but the ability to find a job, most often informal, is seen as indispensable. This observation applies to Senegal: "For me, the biggest challenge faced by young people in Senegal is the lack of employment which poses enormous problems in our country. Young people are here, they have nothing to do, they have no funds, there are not enough jobs where they could integrate."<sup>85</sup> It also applies to Tunisia: "Job opportunities in the past were better. Unemployment among youth has increased and the education system in Tunisia is failing."<sup>86</sup> It finally applies to Kenya: "Jobs are scarce, precarious, dangerous. It is true for everyone here, unless you have contacts and pay some bribes. And things are worse for us (= migrants) and especially when you are a woman."<sup>87</sup> In the Senegalese and Tunisian contexts in particular, such a generalized difficulty is perceived as:

- I) A strong motive for emigration of local youth: *"Because of the high unemployment rates in Tunisia, many people decide to migrate irregularly. Even if one finds a job, he often faces exploitation at the workplace [like] unpaid overtime, low wages so he also starts considering migration to a place with better living and working conditions where he will be respected, and his efforts recognized."*<sup>88</sup>
- II) An obstacle to the possible integration of immigrants: *"It is easier for a Senegalese to find a job than a foreigner. The same applies to university enrolment, where the conditions of access are stricter for foreigners than for Senegalese."*<sup>89</sup>
- III) A source of social tension due to the lack of opportunities and competition for income-generating activities - thus pushing down wages and working conditions: *"Migrants are viewed as job thieves, if I may say so. In other words, they hold positions that Tunisians could have filled. This definitely casts a shadow over cohabitation. [...] Locals blame immigrants for their unemployment since they watch immigrants leave for work in the morning and return at night."*<sup>90</sup>

A final common thread between young migrants and non-migrants is that they all advocate for a better involvement of the government and local institutions in their integration, which indicates a certain hope and expectation of policy makers (local, national and international). At the same time, young migrants and non-migrants almost unanimously say that they want to be involved and engaged in local politics and societal debates. The various workshops conducted in Thailand show, for example, a similar perception of national policies and programmes with regard to integration (of both young migrants and non-migrants). They are considered insufficient and unsatisfactory, politicized and opportunistic. Thus, the integration of young people is most often left to civil society. Yet, as one Bangkok municipality official points out: "These people, whatever their age, I think we need to equip them with knowledge and understanding of their rights. They need to be protected by the laws, regardless of their gender, age, race, ethnicity or religion."<sup>91</sup> In this sense, there is a recognition that "the main driver of youth integration is government policy (but) if the government wants to better integrate young people and migrants into society, it will have to demonstrate this through policies."<sup>92</sup> Yet, from this point of view, there is still hope among many young people that a constructive dialogue is possible, one in which they would be natural actors; the frustrations born from the experience of inequalities, discriminations, stigmatizations, or xenophobic narratives have therefore not always extinguished political hope among young people – migrants and non-migrants alike: "Young people today are very interested in socio-economics and politics because they will have to live with it for the rest of their lives, you know, climate change, new

---

<sup>84</sup> This is clearly not the case in Iran, even if we include the recent negative impact of sanctions on the local economy and inclusion capacity of Afghan refugees. See the UNESCO and Samuel Hall comparative report (2018) Inclusion of Afghan refugees in the national education systems of Iran and Pakistan, Background paper prepared for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000266055>.

<sup>85</sup> FGD 53, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>86</sup> FGD 82, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>87</sup> FGD 21, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>88</sup> FGD 82, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>89</sup> WS 51, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>90</sup> FGD 82, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>91</sup> WS 61, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>92</sup> WS 61, Bangkok, Thailand.

pandemics, bad governments. So, it's not strange that young people today want to move from one country to another, they just want something better for their future. (...) But this does not mean that they do not care about their host country or community. On the contrary, they often want to invest more in it because they have chosen it or because they have no other choice."<sup>93</sup>

*Box 3: Religion as a vehicle for engagement in Mexico*

Similarly, the young migrants and non-migrants we met in Mexico spoke of a form of governmental dereliction. Young people in Mexico feel that they are not supported by the government, in terms of health, education, rights, access to work, etc. The question of trust is here a key issue. The issue of trust is at the heart of the integration problem here. *"The issue of trust is at the heart of the integration problem here. It is important to get young people out of their comfort zone. Maybe by organising trips and activities, like the scouts, but mixing them with locals so that both sides learn. There were also deported Mexicans, who had lived abroad for many years and now needed to be integrated. So I think we should promote intercultural forums where everyone can participate and share their experiences. In this way they could see that migrants are not a threat, that they are people whose human rights should be respected."* This is one of the reasons why some young people mentioned that joining a religious community was a good way to integrate. Nevertheless, many young people recommended intercultural forums as a means of exchange and as a basis for policy development: *"This situation has overtaken us and we cannot expect governments alone to lead change or to have the last word. We need all sectors to align: government, business, academia which is so important... and the church. The majority of shelters and community kitchens, perhaps 80% of them, are owned by religious communities. There is no recipe for this, but it can only be done if we work as a team."* An exchange with a member of the Adventist Church showed an impressive increase in the training of hundreds of young people in digital evangelism. In a context of loss of political and societal bearings, coupled with growing insecurity, the spirituality offered by religious communities appears to be both a return to the roots and a substitute. But this alternative is sometimes judged with scepticism, because if religion becomes the only refuge in the face of lack of social integration, *"the failure of policies is total."*<sup>94</sup> And religions are not only defined by inclusion, as one interviewee reminds us, *"they are primarily proselytising and exclusive"*.<sup>95</sup>

**Differences between migrants and non-migrants**

Young non-migrants do not feel the need for integration (vs. legal, economic and social exclusion for migrants)

The label of migration is a compounding factor (instrumentalization, discrimination, scapegoating)

Migrant and non-migrant youth often have very different experiences of time (memory, urgency, future, etc.)

There are several differences identified between migrant and non-migrant youth regarding the experience of integration. First, it is important to note that "integration" is not a concept familiar to non-migrant youth, as they do not see themselves as outside their society and as needing to be integrated. In the interviews conducted with migrants or non-migrants, young people or associations/institutions, it is indeed striking to note that the notion of integration is perceived in relation mostly, if not solely, to migration. When they face difficulties (family, employment, social relations, but also violence or discrimination), young non-migrants may show anger or resentment towards the society or environment in which they live and were often born and raised, but these environments remain familiar and the problems or frustrations are part of a societal continuum.<sup>96</sup> As highlighted by a CSO working with young migrants in Sfax: "the situation is different when you are desperately trying to fit into a society that doesn't want you, which is often the case with migrants, and when a young Tunisian considers that he or she doesn't want to play by the rules of that society, because of its tradition, its abuses or its patriarchal structure. Both are excluded, but with a different agency."<sup>97</sup> In practice, focus group participants generally emphasized two

<sup>93</sup> KII 67, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>94</sup> KII 37, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>95</sup> KII 39, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>96</sup> However, we have not really met any young people who say they are "at odds" with the society in which they live, which could influence the analysis or allow for possible comparisons with the situation of fragility or vulnerability reported by some of the migrants interviewed for this study.

<sup>97</sup> WS 91, Sfax, Tunisia.

main dimensions where the experience of integration (or lack of it) can only be experienced differently: on the one hand, access to law and documentation; on the other, inclusion in local information networks.

- Legal documentation and rights: access to rights, whether it is the recognition of the most basic rights, civil documentation, counseling, or the ability to file a complaint, is what most distinguishes migrants from non-migrants but also the categories of migrants among themselves. An asylum seeker is not in the same situation as a refugee. A student or an expatriate doctor in Kenya or Tunisia have absolutely no experience of access to the law as a Guinean woman in transit and without papers in the suburbs of Tunis, forced to prostitute herself to pay for a hypothetical passage to Italy: "My son was in Starehe Boys School. When he was in form four, the people registering for IDs came to their school, he was the only from Garissa and they didn't register him for an ID. How did he feel? Excluded. He wondered how the rest of his classmates were registered but he was not."<sup>98</sup> In Amman, similarly, access to civil status documents and the local labour market is different for young Jordanians and Syrian refugees: "My goal is to get some stability, to have my own shop, I mean my own job, a business and a car, but to be honest, it's hard to do that here, Syrians are not allowed to invest or you have to be an investor to own anything, only an investor can do that"<sup>99</sup>. The reality in Jordan, however, is very nuanced due to the shared history of conflict trauma, which resonates for Palestinian, Syrian and also Jordanian refugees who also share a history and family memory of displacement.
- Network and access to information: One element of distinction between young migrants and non-migrants is that the former have less a priori knowledge of local contexts. Informal networks, the circulation of information, socialization or employment opportunities, etc. often circulate through distinct channels that are not necessarily shared by the two groups, and some intermediaries even take advantage of this situation, without necessarily being smugglers, to withhold information and make money by placing newly arrived migrants, as highlighted in Sfax, Tunis and Dakar. Furthermore, in situations of forced clandestinity, undocumented economic migrants are often reluctant to take the first step and seek information on health (HIV), rights and accommodation: "The challenges are different for local and non-local youth because they can get services and information faster. It is not always the language barrier but how this information is passed. For example, free surgery would be shared through the local leaders, elders and chiefs. They usually tell specific people or through social media like WhatsApp showing a poster for free surgery at the hospital. Resources are limited and all the slots are filled before the non-locals become aware."<sup>100</sup>

Second, while young migrants and non-migrants are clearly exposed to age-specific barriers to social and economic "integration," the label of migration appears to be an aggravating factor – especially for asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented economic migrants. For these groups, the simple 'barrier' or 'age disadvantage' can turn into: i) discrimination or ii) instrumentalization (up to the worst forms of trafficking). Age is certainly a determining factor that limits entry into the labor market, involvement in the field of political decision-making, and contribution to active life in the broad sense. But the constraints associated with the age variable are in some ways reinforced by the situation of the migratory profile: young migrants have even less access to services, rights, and the labor market (especially formal) compared to others. They are more likely to be targeted by discriminatory practices (low wages, precarious working conditions, sexual exploitation, violence) simply because of their inability to file a complaint or assert their most basic rights. This situation is even more acute for women, whose quotas and relative proportions are constantly increasing in the eight countries targeted by the study. Here, the analysis must of course be disaggregated according to two important variables:

- The category or label. Economic migrants who are considered irregular are a priori entitled only to limited services or informal jobs, and are liable to arrest and deportation, depending on the national and political context. This is the case in Tunisia, where "tolerance of undocumented migrants depends on the political climate and the demands of the olive oil or almond market"<sup>101</sup>; in contrast, refugees do have status in Dadaab or Kakuma, but their freedom of movement is constrained and their rights are in fact very limited, as are their work permits (under constraints); Finally, in the case of students or migrant workers who have obtained a work permit in Senegal (or even a visa for non-ECOWAS countries), the situation is of course different and they "encounter more or less the same problems

---

<sup>98</sup>FGD 24, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>99</sup> SSI 18, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>100</sup>FGD 93, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>101</sup> KII 77, Tunis, Tunisia.



as young Senegalese, but not rejection or racism, since the student environment is rather educated and welcoming.”<sup>102</sup>

- Written laws and actual practices. In the different countries of the study, there is a constant reference between written and unwritten laws, i.e. between what the law says and what the daily life of young migrants is actually like, when they face the labor market, access to services or local institutions: “Not lack of documentation but lack of recognition of the documentation that they have. This has been the biggest challenge facing migrant youth and their ability to integrate into the socio-economic fabric of the country. I would say another challenge would be a level of xenophobia. Here where in Garissa County, so a vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers are Somali and the asylum space has been very securitized.”<sup>103</sup> This gap between the written law and the actual practice comes first of all from the fact that “ministries, institutions, police forces, are in general as ignorant of the rights of migrants in this country as the migrants themselves.”<sup>104</sup> The visions are simplistic, more or less welcoming or discriminating, and rely more on a more or less favorable and integrating overall climate, as highlighted by a Mexican activist: “it is in this area that the word of politicians – what a President, a Minister or even a mayor says – can have some importance on the real life of people, whatever their migration status. People don't care whether you are a refugee, an asylum seeker or an illegal immigrant, but they tend to conform to the hostile or benevolent discourse that comes from above.”<sup>105</sup>

#### *Box 4: Crisis of social trust and scapegoating in Colombia*

According to the discussions and exchanges in Colombia, the country is suffering from a crisis of confidence that is rooted not only in the treatment of the COVID-19 pandemic but also and above all in the repeated economic crises that give a feeling of growing inequality between different segments of the population. Pessimism and criticism focus on democracy, equal opportunities, economic development opportunities, access to employment, gender issues and media independence. In particular, the lack of trust in official institutions is a symptom of the widening gap between the government and the people. In this context, Venezuelan refugees are perfect scapegoats and the migration profile acts as a trigger (liberating and aggravating) to release and legitimize discrimination and openly racist behavior on the part of sections of the population as well as on the part of officials of governmental or local institutions. Xenophobic feelings have crystallized on migrants from Venezuela according to the usual patterns of stigmatization and scapegoating ('they come here to take our jobs'). Venezuelan migrants have become both useful scapegoats, a convenient and cheap labor force for jobs that many young Colombians would not accept, but correlatively this situation has released a word of rejection and narratives of discrimination. The question of a possible integration, based on trust ('*confianza*', '*contrato social*') between young Venezuelan migrants and Colombian institutions is thus weakened: '*Media also incites this kind of xenophobia. Multinational companies take advantage of the precarity of migrant workers and underpay them*'<sup>106</sup> a problem identified by most focus group and workshop participants. Some interviewees also suggest that migrants themselves are conditioned to trust governmental or institutional actors on the basis of the political history of their country of origin: '*Something is also at play on their side. There is a bias on the part of migrants that is difficult to avoid: if you don't trust the institutions of your own country, how can you trust Colombian institutions? There is no doubt that xenophobia is real, in different cities, in some cities more than others, in some institutions more than others, but the distrust of young Venezuelan migrants towards our policies and institutions is also real. This creates a vicious circle from which it is difficult to escape in the short term.*'<sup>107</sup>

Finally, a third essential difference that emerges in the interviews relates to the nature and intimate experience of time by young migrants and non-migrants. One cannot, of course, generalize on the basis of a few experiences, but it can be said very roughly that young migrants have a non-linear experience of time, with sudden accelerations, stops, jolts, and sometimes interminable waits. On the other hand, while many young non-migrants testify to the feeling of "*not being able to do anything with their lives*"<sup>108</sup> or of not seeing time passing even though the search for a job and the waiting for opportunities can be endless, these experiences of time remain more linear, more uniform than the experience evoked by young migrants. As one young migrant participant in a group discussion in Dakar put it "*the situation is different for migrants who arrive late in this country and may not be able to go to school early. Some have missed years of schooling, because of the conflicts, the pace cannot be the same (...) Also, if you come late to this country, it will be difficult to study because some migrants try to study in the easiest way by using private online systems to get a certificate quickly. (...) In contrast, non-*

---

<sup>102</sup> KII 58, Dakar, Sénégal.

<sup>103</sup> KII 99, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>104</sup> KII 99, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>105</sup> WS 31, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>106</sup> WS 2, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>107</sup> WS 2, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>108</sup> SSI 45, Lahore, Pakistan.

*migrants have a lot of time; they go to school early, learn a lot and maybe can go to college.*"<sup>109</sup> The blending of different time lines, which makes the linear perspective particularly inoperative for young migrants, can be highlighted by means of life lines - a qualitative exercise where participants are asked to draw a line of events that concern them (in blue), that concern their family and friends (black) and that concern the community in which they live (red). The height of the line in relation to the horizontal axis represents the positive or negative connotation attached to each event. In the case of the Ethiopian refugee interviewed in Eastleigh (Nairobi) below, we can see the intertwining of the lines, punctuated by conflicts, natural disasters, deaths, brutal deaths, successive displacements. Each of these events contributes to the creation of a traumatic time of uprooting, to which the victims of forced displacement bear witness. The coexistence of a past that cannot always be digested, the urgency of survival, the expectations born of the precarious situation, contribute to creating a fragmented time. For undocumented economic migrants on their way to Europe and in transit in Tunis, Sfax or Sousse, the memory of traumas (abandonment of bodies in the Algerian, Malian, Libyan or Nigerien desert<sup>110</sup>) goes hand in hand with the expectation of the crossing, mixing impatience and apprehension, for a few weeks, a few months and often several years.

### Hindering factors for the integration of young migrants

While access to work is still seen as the indispensable basis for any project of sustainable integration in a society, according to all the participants, the workshops have made it possible to explore other avenues that can contribute to a better integration of young migrants in particular. These variables are sometimes as important, if not more important, than securing a job, since the latter is very often illusory in the long run. **Therefore, obtaining a job and financial inclusion should not necessarily be seen as chronologically or causally indispensable prerequisites, but rather as conditions sine qua non in the long run**, as highlighted by a Guinean transit migrant who was stranded in Sfax for 5 years: *"If you don't get a job, al hamdoulillah, you can't survive here. The only chance to stay is to get by, earn a little, wait, earn a little more, etc. Now, I am stranded here, as the harvest season is in 4 months, not before."*<sup>111</sup> Following this logic, this section has two objectives:

- I) Firstly, it is a question of describing the compounding factors mentioned by the participants in the qualitative interviews. What are the aggravating variables that prevent the integration of young migrants? We will see that, according to a logic that can be described as intersectional (in the broad sense and beyond the single variable of gender), these variables also concern young non-migrants but are translated in a specific way when it comes to young migrants.
- II) Then, knowing that these variables are described as symptoms of rejection, we identified more global factors that could contribute to triggering or defusing hate speech and practices. Interestingly, many associations, NGOs, civil society actors and municipalities place political responsibility at this level: that of the narratives, practices and discourses that can promote or hinder the integration of young migrants.

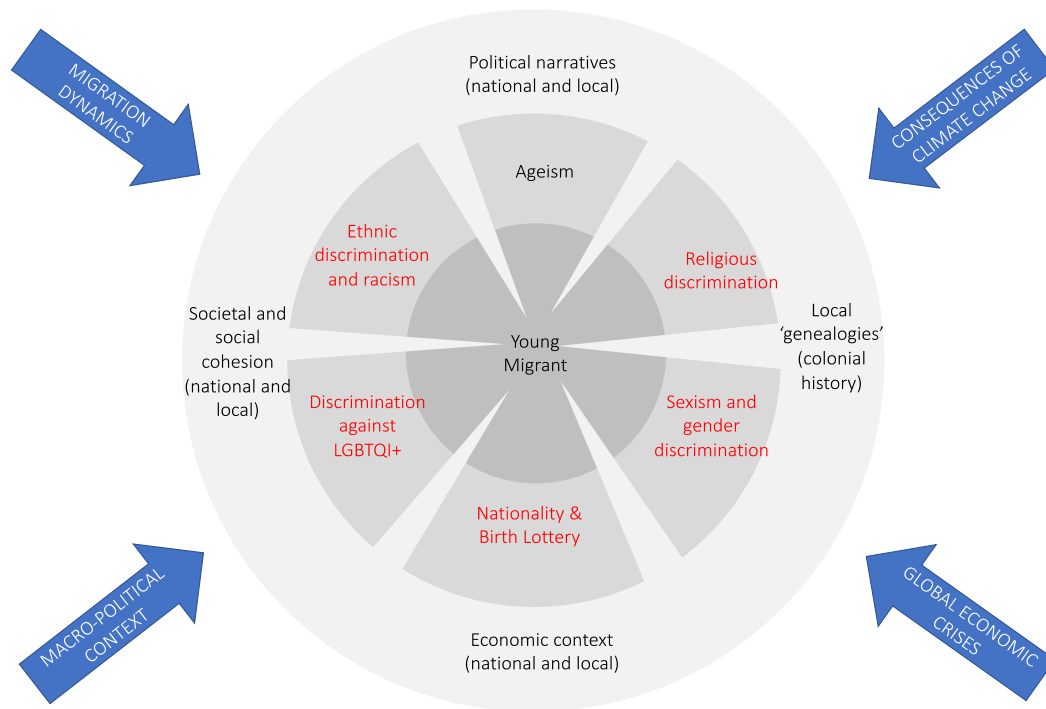
The visual below presents an ecosystem of discrimination against young migrants, with several levels: 1) the level of macro variables, with the parameters of climate change, the economic situation (cyclical crises), the political situation (conflicts) and migration dynamics (which can also generate certain political agendas in the so-called "Global North" countries); 2) the relevant regional or national **meso-level**, whose discourses and practices condition the narratives of integration or exclusion. National genealogies and collective narratives are also part of this second circle, as well as the economic situation (employment) and social and societal cohesion (values, culture); 3) finally, influenced by these first two circles of the ecosystem, the discriminating discourses and practices are presented in the words and according to the representations proposed by the participants in the third circle and specified in more detailed paragraphs (**micro- or individual level**).

<sup>109</sup> FGD 53, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>110</sup> SSI 75, 76, Tunis and FGD 84, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>111</sup> SSI 89, Sfax, Tunisia.

Figure 6: Ecosystem of barriers to the integration of young migrants (interviews, workshops and group discussions)



The following paragraphs list the concrete experiences of discrimination encountered by young migrants. These experiences reflect the interactions between young migrants and the societies and communities through which they transit or in which they settle. We are therefore at the heart of local integration, which some participants also point out can take place in terms of reception and reciprocal exchange: “I had to ask people who helped me integrate here in Senegal, to help me again. And I was very touched to see that it was not so difficult, they do not have a heavy hand to help me. And that's how I realized that we help each other a lot.”<sup>112</sup>

- Ethnic discrimination and racism: racial or ethnic discrimination, both as a social reality and as a lived experience, is an extremely powerful variable of non-integration, which to some extent overdetermines the category of 'migrant' - particularly in Tunisia – to create the figure of the 'African' (= black sub-Saharan) as opposed to the Tunisian. In Kenya and Senegal, the rejection or stigmatization of other ethnicities appears to be all the stronger during crises (pandemic, economy, politics) that force the identification of visible minorities as scapegoats. Ethnicity (as well as gender, physical disabilities, or certain visible cultural specificities) are among the markers of stigmatization. The phenomena of racism, ethnicism or xenophobia are of course found in all countries but now seem to be intrinsically linked to the very idea of the migrant. A female participant in the Tunisian workshops notes this link between racial and social discrimination seen as secondary (= because) to mobility: “Furthermore, outside of our country, in Tunisia, we face racial and social discrimination because we are foreigners.”<sup>113</sup>
- Nationality and birth lottery: The passport plays an important role in the possibilities of integration as well as in the way migrants are viewed (“integrability”). This point has, for example, been extensively analyzed by Ayelet Shachar<sup>114</sup>, who has shown how the birthright lottery constitutes an index value of nationality which is, in law and in fact, (one of) the most crucial determinant(s) of integration. For Schinkel<sup>115</sup>, the so-called expatriates (Europeans or North Americans) are even exempted from integration, as their socio-economic status (but also very often their

<sup>112</sup> SSI 59, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>113</sup> WS 70, Tunis, Tunisia.

<sup>114</sup> Shachar, A. (2009). The birthright lottery: Citizenship and global inequality. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>115</sup> Schinkel, W. (2017), Imagined Societies, A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe, Cambridge University Press.

'whiteness') integrates them without examination. With these caveats in mind, the quote below shows both the importance of nationalities of origin, which in addition to generating stereotypes have a different implication in terms of access to rights or services; moreover, the second level of analysis highlights a form of disintegration within the continent itself, based on racist distinctions that overlap with the national origin bias:

"The issue of nationality is central. Firstly, because bilateral agreements with certain countries change the situation - in training, education, but also with passports. (...) After that, a phenomenon that has become entrenched is a form of difference between "Africans" (a word that encompasses all black sub-Saharan) and "us", Tunisians, who therefore do not consider ourselves to be African in the same way as the others. Nationalities of origin do not then count as much as racism."<sup>116</sup>

A variant of this discourse is found in Thailand, with discrimination between 'expats' and 'migrants', who are treated differently and unfairly, according to participants and interviewees. Young migrants from neighbouring countries feel inferior and less privileged than people arriving in Thailand from the "global North". There is a clear difference in treatment, which is also reflected in the employment offered to them, in access to social or financial services, and in integration in general. In addition, young migrant women from neighbouring countries are often given jobs such as cleaning or housekeeping, which do not correspond to their level of education or their aspirations. They are openly discriminated against and underemployed, based on xenophobic, sexist and even racist prejudices:

"There will be integration or not depending on how we are categorised. Migrants from Myanmar, Cambodia or Laos will be considered 'foreigners' by Thai law, while those from the US, England or Singapore will be considered 'social actors' and 'expats'. I mean, the only reason we refer to them differently is because of a tacit exclusion based on racial prejudice."<sup>117</sup>

- Sexism and gender discrimination: The issue of gender must of course be considered from an intersectional perspective, as being a young female migrant exposes one to specific risks on the journey, while making socio-economic integration particularly challenging. In Tunisia, for example, mentions of cases of rape on the way (by Mali and Algeria), human trafficking (with immediate withdrawal of passports and slavery for local families), prostitution (to finance transit) are numerous in the group discussions. As shown in the quote below, in Kenya, gender stereotypes still prevail in the understanding of what young migrant and non-migrant women can and should do, and what they should not have access to. In Senegal, anecdotal cases of student prostitution or bonded labor by young migrant women have also been reported by civil society organizations.

"You can't compare the way young men and women are viewed. I don't know if it's discrimination or if it's just a mentality and what the culture has led people to believe. Young women are not seen as productive, as people who should be starting businesses or looking for work. The culture demands that you get married and keep your mouth shut, that you don't have an opinion. Society demands that the man brings money to the family, that he marries of course and takes care of the family, which means that he will have more economic power than the woman, which leads to an imbalance of power. (...) So these elements are going to be intertwined to take power away from one sex and give power to the other sex so that they can develop economically and socially."<sup>118</sup>

Furthermore, the increased feminization of cross-border migration is attributed to certain specifically gendered professional channels (nursing, care, cleaning, etc.) that make each of the five communities in the study places of origin as well as destination for economic migration in the formal or informal sectors of the economy in Africa, Europe or the Gulf States.

"Of course, there are these migratory flows in the personal care, agriculture or hospitality professions for example. It is very good if we can ensure some decent work principles and make sure that this kind of migration does not lead to human trafficking. Vigilance is also required when it comes to labor mobility, both regionally in Africa and towards the demand areas of an ageing Europe."<sup>119</sup>

- Discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community: The structural vulnerabilities faced by LGBTIQ+ persons are further compounded by their status as economic migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. The situation of stigma,

---

<sup>116</sup> FGD 24, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>117</sup> KII 67, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>118</sup> KII 99, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>119</sup> KII 59, Dakar, Senegal.

discrimination and even persecution is often the trigger (forced or voluntary) for migration. Furthermore, the study participants suggest that LGBTQI+ migrants seeking protection on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity often face discriminatory attitudes in all eight countries studied.

"LGBT migrants are often perceived as wrong elements, as immoral. It brings stigma against them, they feel discriminated against. Life does not happen normally to them. They can't just walk to the shop or get a job like any other person. It rubs off on them and internally they feel like they are not people enough. They are dealing with two things – being migrants and being LGBT. It's really a burden on their shoulders. Hearing what people say about them, it lowers their self-esteem. They blame themselves. It limits their chances of going out and looking for opportunities."<sup>120</sup>

Likewise, as this young Senegalese woman recounts, in the case of young LGBTQI+ migrants, homophobia is often added to xenophobia, sexism, racism, misogyny, ageism, socio-economic marginalization and even isolation from traditional support networks within the migrant community.

"I had to flee my home in search of a safe place where I could truly live and exercise my rights. My family hated me for who I was, the community threatened me. So, I came here and the situation is not much better, even with migrant brothers and sisters from my country, except that I am drowned in a big city."<sup>121</sup>

In Colombia, a modality often promoted for young people (digital skills) can be double-edged for queer and trans migrants, due to the increased visibility brought about by digitization. These groups often need to be invisible on the internet to avoid cyber-bullying or even social identification and physical threats, as focus group participants pointed out. Similarly, for trans migrants in Colombia, the process of obtaining documentation is often difficult because the authorities require identification documents from the country of origin. For many, however, bridges have been broken with their families of origin, who reject them and sometimes even threaten them. This highlights the contradiction in the integration process, which can be particularly acute for marginalized groups:

"Integration is a process that seeks to focus and identify people who, for one reason or another, have been excluded from a system, from a group due to particular conditions."<sup>122</sup>

- **Religious discrimination:** Like other discriminatory dimensions, religion is all the more of an obstacle to integration when it is associated with other variables, according to a logic of intersectionality. This multiplier effect is particularly true in community configurations in crisis. In the context of the pandemic, of the inflationary crisis and also of the growing deficit of representativeness of many socio-political institutions today, religion can become an element crystallizing resentment against a particular minority. Mentioned marginally by workshop participants, this variable nevertheless has a very real discriminatory weight, as the following two quotes remind us:

"I tell myself that since Senegal is a country with a Muslim majority, that a Muslim may have an easier time integrating because there are more Muslims than Christians. (...) The challenges will really be relative, it will depend on the person, it can be the same challenges for a man, for a woman, as it can be changing. It will really depend on the person, or the different factors you listed, their religion, their ability to adapt."<sup>123</sup>  
"When they found out about my religious affiliation, I started to be persecuted."<sup>124</sup>

On the other hand, some participants insist that some interactions with the community take place without rejection, without discrimination based on religion or status.

"In the place where I live, whatever your religious affiliation, whatever your social class, the problems are solved in time, that is to say you are accepted whatever your values, and your faults and all that, that's it. And young people have another chance, whether you work or not, you are also given some consideration. So, you don't feel marginalized in society."<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>120</sup> WS 2, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>121</sup> SSI 78, Dakar, Sénégal.

<sup>122</sup> KII 9, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>123</sup> SSI 79, Dakar, Sénégal.

<sup>124</sup> SSI 39, Mexico City, Mexico.

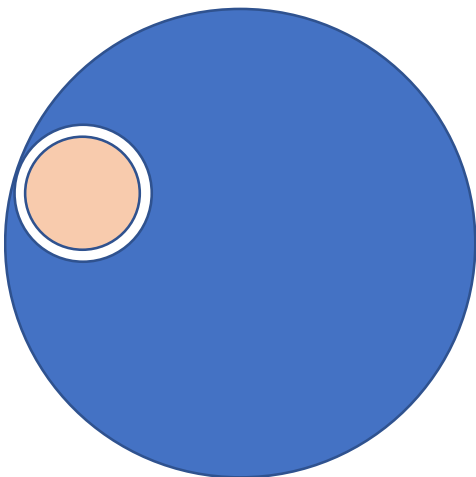
<sup>125</sup> FGD 63, Bangkok, Thailand.



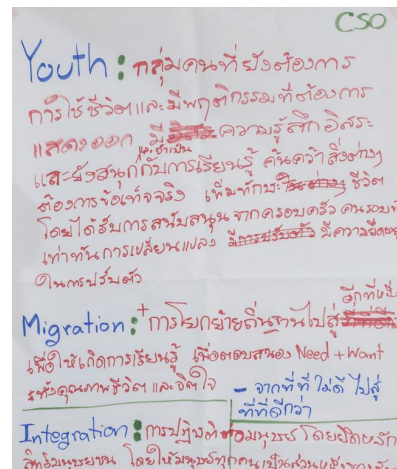
		to the urban areas, they are looked down upon by the people in the urban areas and they don't accept them sometimes, there is a negative connotation attached." <sup>129</sup>
Self-actualization	Process of constitution of the individual self, becoming oneself,	"Integration is to play a role in all places you are in. I do not like to be in any place without playing a role, I personally see that an integrated person is a person who can make an impact, without it, it doesn't mean anything. When I want to engage and get involved in any community, when I reach a level where I can influence the place I am in, this is integration." <sup>130</sup>
National political disintegration	Risk of societal fragmentation between central and local	"Very clearly, the government is in denial about migration. They say 'it is the mandate of the UNHCR and the IOM, they confuse the different types of migrants, they play the nationalist and xenophobic game, they deny the phenomenon. In the end, it disintegrates the politics of the country, between Tunis and the cities – Sousse, Sfax, etc. We don't believe in it anymore." <sup>131</sup>

The first dimension is often the one that first comes to mind, according to a conception of integration as 'membership' within a pre-existing community. In this logic, young migrants, as suggested in the figure on the right, try to integrate – that is, they try to become part of a whole.<sup>132</sup> The problem with such an approach is that the community is seen as a static reality embedded in a fixed and non-evolving cultural, social, economic and political identity. This approach can, for example, support the idea that migrants 'steal jobs' as some organizations have pointed out – and criticized the basis for this – insofar as it implicitly presupposes a fixed stock of resources, and not dynamic possibilities in production, economic development, social imagination, which can incorporate the active presence of young migrants. Moreover, behind the idea of conforming or assimilating a future member (young migrant candidate for integration) to the community, there is the erasure of the differences and particularities of the 'newcomer' – differences that may also contribute to shaping the society or community of tomorrow. As pointed out by the Syrian representative of a local CSO in Jordan: "if you give up all your culture to take everything from the host culture, it's no longer integration, it's alienation."<sup>133</sup>

Figure 8: 'Integration' as 'assimilation' and 'alienation'



Picture 6: Notes from the conceptual exercise (Bangkok, Thailand)



The second dimension, readily mentioned by migrants to underline the future and not yet achieved perspective, is the idea of self-realization, of one's potential. This is a subjective understanding of the term migration, often linked to a favorable context, but relatively centered on the individual, whose existence appears to be all the more complete as it is "integrated". This is underlined by the coincidence of the two orange circles (individual level) in the below visual (on the left). And finally,

<sup>129</sup> WS 40, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>130</sup> KII 17, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>131</sup> KII 95, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>132</sup> 'Integration' has the etymology 'integer', which in Latin means 'totality' or 'wholeness'. This root is also found in the word integrity (which points to an 'ethical wholeness'), closer to the second meaning discussed here.

<sup>133</sup> FGD, 13, Amman, Jordan.

the third attempt at definition, mainly from organizations (municipalities, NGOs, CSOs, UN, private sector, etc.) during the institutional workshops, concerns the risk of disintegration between the national and the local/municipal level. This risk of social and political disintegration was mentioned by all participants, especially between the center (governments of Nairobi, Dakar, Tunis) and the secondary cities where the reality of migration – whatever the label – takes shape. In a context of political, social and economic crisis, migration - and young migrants in particular - appear as touchstones that reveal the fragility and divisions within the national community: "either we face the problem and understand that the integration of migrants can also enable the development of the country, or we hide our faces and repeat absurd, demagogic and opportunistic splits between good migrants and bad migrants, good ethnicities and bad ethnicities, people who count for one and others who count for two, Nairobi and Garissa, Nairobi and Turkana, Kenyans and Somali-Kenyans (...) But if we do this, it is a dangerous game for the future of the region and even the continent."<sup>134</sup>

Figure 9: 'Integration' as self-actualization

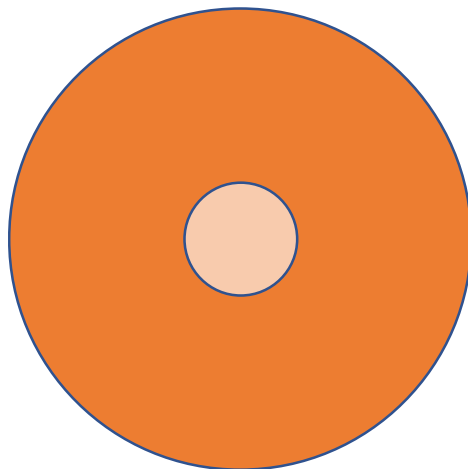
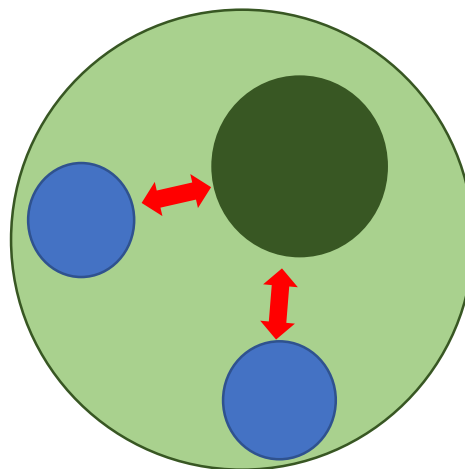


Figure 10: 'Dis-Integration' as today's national reality



On the basis of the three definitions given, it seems difficult to disagree with Schinkel's assessment that the concept of integration as it is used today "is little more than a floating signifier that works well primarily because it translates easily between academia and politics, popular discourse and common-sense descriptions, that is, precisely through communities of practice."<sup>135</sup> In each of the three models ("integration" as assimilation, self-realization, or political cohesion), it seems that the idea of integration rests on a pre-existing and already given ideal of totality. This horizon of totality is indeed abstract because it starts from an ideal of a complete society, an ideal of the completed self, or an ideal of national political unity.

In the face of this observation, the workshops also allowed for an alternative definition of "integration" in order to give political weight to the "floating signifier". The qualitative methodology of workshops and discussions has made it possible to mitigate the "membership bias" which assumes that young migrants want to integrate into society, conceived as an association of members. This bias has two pitfalls: on the one hand, it transfers all responsibility for integration onto young migrants; on the other hand, it evacuates the intersubjective experience of migration and "integration".

The table below brings together five of the points shared in the conversations held in the workshops in the five communities studied. Each of them sheds relevant light on a broadened and renewed understanding of what integration of young people (migrants and non-migrants) could be. This conceptual redefinition of integration is quite distinct from the other three definitions, with a particular focus on the dimensions of temporality, disidentification and transcending the national framework (both sub-nationally and supra-nationally).

According to such a conceptualization of integration, integrated communities are reticulate "meshworks", a term we borrow from Tim Ingold, as opposed to networks made of linear time, communication, transportation from one point to another,

<sup>134</sup> WS, 21, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>135</sup> Schinkel, W. (2018) Against 'immigrant integration': for an end to neocolonial knowledge production, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6 (1).



from one hub to another hub according to abstract routes. In contrast to this now traditional and mainstream approach, the table and visual representation below provide an outline for thinking about what integration meshwork might look like as defined by migrant and non-migrant youth in the ten surveyed communities. A meshwork can be defined as the reticular patterns left by people (in homes, human communities, small towns, peri-urban areas, etc.) whose movements and traces contribute to create a living environment of "interwoven trails rather than a network of intersecting routes".<sup>136</sup> The assumption behind an integration meshwork is that are all bearers of a past and a history (TIME), all actors in a supranational network of technologies and knowledge (GLOBAL), all anchored in a local social and political scale (LOCAL) and all likely to contribute to imagining the contours of tomorrow's integration (COMMON).

Picture 7: Focus group discussion in Amman with female migrants (2022)



<sup>136</sup> Ingold, T. (2016) *Lines, A Brief History*, with a new preface by the author, Routledge Classics. Originally, Ingold borrows and develops the opposition "meshwork/network" from Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Table 6: Alternative definition of "integration" provided by participants

Definition	Conceptual dimension	Quotes from respondents	Analysis
Co-constitution of the community with others and by others - beyond the strict identity, national, static and temporal references.	<i>Integration requires a non-static understanding of time (inclusion of the past and future)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Integrating the new community cannot be done <b>without the past, the origins</b>"<sup>137</sup></li> <li>- "Your memories stay with you. What you left behind. You try to forget but it keeps coming back until you realize it is also part of your life and that <b>you travel with it and bring it to your new home</b>".<sup>138</sup></li> </ul>	Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that integration should not be at the expense of the past and the history, the culture and the roots that each migrant brings with him. This would be harmful for the young migrant, who would be cut in two, but also for the community of destination (or even of transit), which would not benefit from the opening to another world.
	<i>Integration requires identifying what connects us beyond our constructed identities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Behind the word <i>"integration"</i> I see the connections, the synergy, the differences and the community as well, I put art and music, because I think art in general <b>connects people on a soul level</b>, on a being level, and I really like art you don't need to understand it to feel it, and I think it creates a lot of community."<sup>139</sup></li> <li>- "I <b>never understood what a nation is</b> because no one asked me but I thank God that in the community sometimes we fight, sometimes we reconcile because the five fingers are not the same hence, when I am in the community, I feel very happy because I love the way they helped me."<sup>140</sup></li> </ul>	Less frequently, the reference to integration through culture or art is often understood as what brings people together most, beyond national, gender or ethnic differences: the realm of sensibility, of the community of feeling or spirit - beyond ideologies and identity constructions. It is interesting to note that many participants suggest that "integration" requires a prior critical deconstruction of collective and individual identities: "young", "migrant", "Kenyan", "Senegalese", "Peul" or "Soninke", "Kenyan Somali", "African". Integration would then be what makes it possible to go beyond the closed identity: one is never only a woman, a young person or a migrant... one can be all these identities at the same time, while liking music, cooking, sports, politics, etc.
	<i>"National integration" is anachronic, as the relevant level of integration is global (networks and technologies), post-national and supra-national.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "I personally find it very strange to understand the integration of migrants in Tunisia as if it were 1960! First of all, the young Tunisians who leave, if they leave it is not only because they are not integrated with their society, in Tunis or in Sousse! It is because they want to <b>integrate with the rest of the world</b> and are desperate not to succeed. So, yes, the national framework for integration is too limited, it's naive even."<sup>141</sup></li> <li>- "It is about <b>integrating beyond one's new neighborhood or country</b>. It's about the world. One <b>integrates into technologies, communications, ways of thinking, professional spaces</b>, etc. that are far beyond the limits drawn by borders – especially national ones."<sup>142</sup></li> </ul>	Criticism of the idea of integration within strict national or community limits is generally made in the name of the fact that the present era is evolving on a supranational scale from the technological point of view but also in the exchange of ideas, culture, goods and services. National integration thus appears to be out of step with the changes of the current era and the real scale of integration: global. Interestingly, it should be noted that this criticism, by far the most frequent one addressed to the "floating" concept of integration by the participants - migrants or non-migrants - is also found in the academia, where Favell strongly questions the primacy of the national, which he qualifies as "nonsense" <sup>143</sup> for thinking about integration effectively.

<sup>137</sup> WS 10, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>138</sup> FGD 4, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>139</sup> KII 56, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>140</sup> SSI 95, Garissa, Kenya.

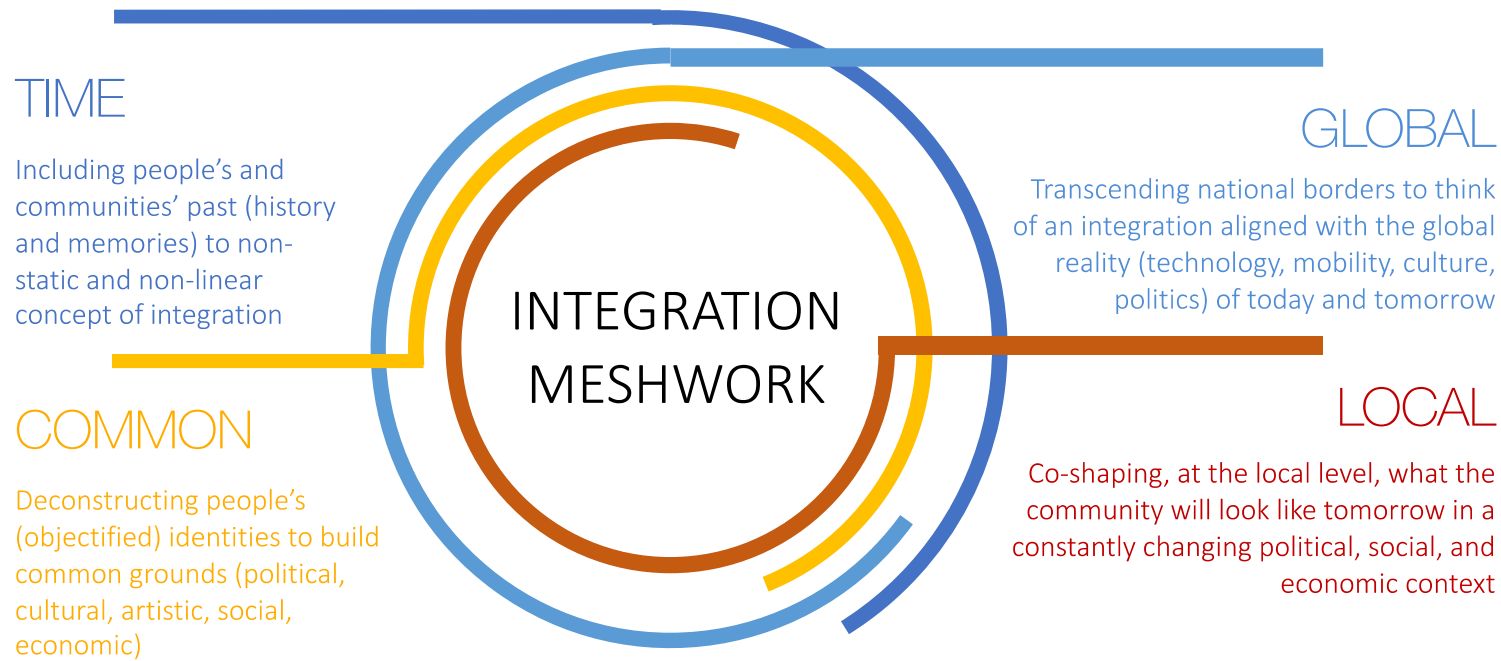
<sup>141</sup> KII 76, Tunis, Tunisia.

<sup>142</sup> KII 25, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>143</sup> Favell, A. (2022) 'Immigration, integration and citizenship: elements of a new political demography', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies – JEMS. Volume 48, N°1, p.3-32.

	<p><i>Integration is about co-shaping, locally, what the community will look like tomorrow.</i></p>	<p>“In Kenya, people think a migrant is going to be able to integrate if he or she is discreet, if they don't make waves. Fine. But this is not integration! Integration has a more positive meaning? It extends <b>way beyond being invisible, it is about contributing to your community.</b> Especially today.”<sup>144</sup></p>	<p>In contrast with the supranational scope, participants frequently emphasize that integration is played out and made meaningful at the community level - that is, the local, restricted, sub-national level. This is not contradictory, however, but suggests that integration is first and foremost a local and supra-national reality, rather than a national one, at the risk of leading to an exclusive and nationalistic identity-based approach.</p>
--	---	--	--

Figure 3: Alternative conceptualization of “integration” based on workshops in ten communities with migrants, non-migrants, CSOs, NGOs, and local institutions (governmental) in Colombia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Pakistan, Senegal, Thailand, and Tunisia



<sup>144</sup> KII 28, Nairobi, Kenya.



Picture 8: Mexican participants in the study workshops (2022)

# Policy perspectives for critical times

# Policy perspectives on the inclusion and integration of youth

In a context of multidimensional and chronic crises, what is called migration governance tends to assert sovereignty as a principle of isolation of nation states. This is true for the so-called more economically and industrially developed countries as well as for the low- and middle-income countries. It is a matter of isolating nation-states and isolating them from the world.<sup>145</sup> In this approach, "integration" is in fact a "measure of the success"<sup>146</sup> with which a society or government manages to negatively distinguish the body of the nation from its broader ecosystem. On the basis of the conceptualization work carried out by the participants in the workshops and qualitative interviews, however, we see that **the integration of young migrants can be an element of positive differentiation for each transit community or host society**. Similarly, for (non-migrant) youth, an alternative reflection on the modalities of integration of young migrants, can contribute to reinforcing the "role they play" socially, economically and politically – even if the question of integration is not posed in the same terms and if the term integration is often perceived as inadequate for young non-migrants.

This positive differentiation, which is at stake in any theoretical or practical reflection on the integration of young migrants and which Favell calls "de-differentiation"<sup>147</sup>, reminds us in particular that integration today is global and local (and not national); in contrast, narratives that emphasize national integration are often identitarian, nationalistic, populist, even racist. This de-differentiation also reminds us that integration is neither assimilation nor a denial of the past. **Young migrants arrive with their baggage, that is to say with their history, their traumas but also their potential for creation, innovation and production**. It is only by having this meshwork in mind that the integration process of young migrants can be positively differentiating (de-differentiating), in the sense that it challenges the logics of national withdrawal and static closure on identity to allow for the accompaniment of the future of the communities that temporarily or permanently host young migrant men and women. The recommendations listed in this section were either suggested by the participants in the workshops or group discussions; or deduced from the convergent analyses of the participants. This also means that this section and the proposed courses of action: 1) do not claim to be exhaustive and to offer policy perspectives applicable to all contexts; 2) recommendations that would necessarily be aligned with the views of KNOMAD (World Bank, UNDP and OECD).

<b>INTEGRATION</b> Thinking about integration in subnational and supranational terms	<b>EQUALITY</b> Rejecting the de facto inequality that contradicts the rights of young migrants	<b>GENDER</b> Putting gender at the heart of integration policies and strategies for young migrants	<b>ENGAGEMENT</b> Optimising the social, civic and political perspective of young migrants at community level	<b>CONTRIBUTION(S)</b> Strengthening a dual socio-economic contribution (host communities and countries of origin)
---	--	--	--	---

<sup>145</sup> Waldinger, R. (2015) *The Cross-Border Connection. Immigrants, Emigrants and Their Homelands*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>146</sup> Favell, A. (2018) *Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel*, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6 (1).

<sup>147</sup> Favell, A. (2018) *Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel*, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6 (1).

## INTEGRATION: Thinking about integration in subnational and supranational terms

In each of the contexts studied, there is a tension between the national and sub-national (local/municipal) levels. This tension is described as political fragmentation - even disintegration - by municipalities, civil society organizations, NGOs or the private sector: the local level does not have sufficient financial or technical resources to effectively address migration issues. On the other hand, governments tend to: 1) politicize the issue of migration as a security or sovereignty issue, while the local level needs concrete answers on services, protection, rights, socio-economic integration. It is therefore essential to rebuild the link between a national level that often considers young migrants as political problems, and the municipalities that consider them as socio-economic opportunities (or risks).

- One way to do this is to **promote the integration of municipalities in national and international debates** on mobility issues (Global Compact) in order to avoid policy fragmentation, through: 1) regional and transnational forums; 2) stronger national consultations;
- Another recommendation is to **strengthen the administrative, legal and technical capacities and skills of institutional counterparts in countries of origin, transit and destination** in order to develop common knowledge and gradually bridge the gap between formal and informal practices, written and unwritten laws.

And finally, a key issue is to better connect the local level with the supranational and transnational level.

- **Supranational by ensuring data sharing and coordination links with the migrants' municipalities of origin**; some of them are identified as cradles of economic migration and would also benefit from information sharing and collaborative forums on issues of protection, employment, qualification and training, but also culture and language;
- **Transnational, because many effectively integrating communities are actually beyond geographical or administrative borders** (diaspora, culture, virtual communities in technology or digital).
- To do so, a strong focus on **rigorous and systematic data collection at different levels (regional, national and local)** is needed, to inform decisions and depoliticize the issue of migration. While the concept of super-diversity<sup>148</sup> has been criticized<sup>149</sup> for its lack of robustness, Favell<sup>150</sup> suggests to develop, negatively, an indicator of superdiversity to criticize the outdated analytical frameworks used to consider integration and show how diversity contributes to development, societal resilience and positive socioeconomic integration.

### *Box 5: Intermediary cities as keys to urban migration in Africa (EQUAL Partnership)*

Africa is witnessing an ongoing transformation from a rural to an increasingly plural urban society. While this transformation has been well-documented, the focus of scholarship and practice has been predominantly on human mobility towards and into major urban areas and capital cities. In contrast, intermediary cities, the in-between the rural and the metropolitan, have been largely absent in academic and policy debates. The Equal Partnership project explores the opportunities and challenges of collaborative, urban migration governance in African intermediary cities. The project is coordinated by the University of Nuremberg and developed in collaboration with the city network United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), and the think tank Samuel Hall. Funded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the project works in cooperation with six intermediary cities from East, North and West Africa. Through participatory research and workshop formats, the project brings together local, national and international actors to develop practical impulses and policy recommendations for multi-stakeholder partnerships of urban migration governance in intermediary cities in Kenya, Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal and Nigeria. African intermediary cities are experiencing an urban migration governance paradox – they are increasingly becoming hubs of migration and displacement and are directly impacted by national and regional migration policies. At the same time, local governments often lack resources, political mandates and capacities to address migration in their cities. Moreover, local governments are excluded from national and regional migration debates, despite the direct impact that national and regional policies have on the ground. To overcome this paradox, both local and national governments could benefit from establishing two-way communication channels and engaging with civil society, migrant and refugee-led associations as well as international organizations to develop multi-stakeholder partnerships for inclusive, urban migration governance.

<sup>148</sup> Vertovec, S. (2007) Super-diversity and its implications, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30:6, 1024-1054.

<sup>149</sup> Czajka, M. & de Haas (2014) The globalization of migration: Has the world become migratory? *International Migration Review*, 48, 2, 283-323.

<sup>150</sup> Favell, A. (2018) Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6 (1).

## EQUALITY: Rejecting the *de facto* inequality that contradicts the rights of young migrants

The minimum understanding of integration by young migrants themselves is often quite restricted to obtaining a source of income. Many migration actors have stressed the need to broaden the scope of integration to encompass the multiple and diverse needs of young migrants, including legal (informality), psychosocial (trauma), socio-economic (inclusion). Focusing, in particular, on integrating a non-discriminatory access to social protection (including its psychosocial dimensions) is one of the key challenges young migrants face during their migration journey – regardless of their socioeconomic and migration status. The question of law and documentation is at the heart of discrimination and difficulties of economic and social integration within communities. This issue arises in three ways:

- Formally, the legal situation of many migrants remains fragile, whether it is a question of delays in obtaining and regularizing asylum seekers, work permits for refugees, the status of children born and not recognized by their fathers on the migration route, access to decent work for labor migrants, etc. These **legal obstacles must be diagnosed and dealt with pragmatically, in compliance with the law and conventions and with the support of associations for the legal protection of young migrants;**
- Informally, unwritten laws still prevail too often, either through institutional inertia, ignorance or malice. In reality, the non-application of the law has a human and societal cost, and it is a political challenge to **denounce and modify these practices, through strong political messages coming from the head of the country (narrative) as well as from the local authorities (practical)**. As one association representative pointed out: *"I think Tunisia should work on finding a fair and just solution to the migrants in the country who do not have proper documentation. I believe that socio-economic integration requires providing migrants with enough rights to live decent lives. In addition, I think that Tunisia should put the topic of migration at the heart of its political agenda and needs to put in place legislation that provides migrants with basic rights, particularly those with precarious status."*<sup>151</sup>
- Proactively, by engaging **concrete discussions at the local level (in particular) on the concept of 'disaggregated citizenship'** which can be key to the increasing acceptability of youth migrants through a productive and tangible political and societal engagement. The status of *citizenship* and the rights extended to non-*citizens* are among the most contentious and debated political issues: differential rights regimes for different groups, more dependent upon residency rather than citizenship, to promote a better access of young migrants to citizen debates and to the rights of political communities of which they are also actors.<sup>152</sup>

Moreover, in parallel with better access to rights and civil documentation, a second net of fundamental rights must also be better taken into account for young migrants. The terms sometimes differ between civil society organizations ("social protection" or "social safety net") and the young migrants themselves ("health", "social assistance", "education and training") but the idea remains the same: a minimal and universal protection must be granted to all human beings, regardless of their passport or migration status.

- Establishing or **strengthening national and sub-national information and resource centers for migrants** that provide information on their rights, legal and civil documents, and information on sexual and reproductive health services, regardless of their legal status.
- **Increasing unconditional access to basic services such as health, education, social protection and psychosocial support** for all migrant youth – refugees, returnees, transit migrants, economic migrants, etc. – given their specific vulnerabilities.

---

<sup>151</sup> WS 71, Tunis, Tunisia.

<sup>152</sup> Benhabib, S. (2005) Disaggregation of Citizenship Rights, Parallax, 11:1, 10-18.

## GENDER: Putting gender at the heart of integration policies and strategies for young migrants

According to UNDESA, women accounted for 48% of the 280 million migrants worldwide in 2020. Yet, in a context where women move – forcibly or voluntarily – as much as men, policies remain relatively gender-insensitive and the state of knowledge about women's migration anecdotal.<sup>153</sup> In all the ten surveyed contexts, women participating in the workshops confirmed that gender is not really taken into account by policies and aid agencies - with the exception of a few organizations working specifically on maternity or health issues for vulnerable people (including migrants). *"This is all the more damaging because women play a particular role in migrant communities: they not only generate informal income through care work, they are also at the heart of the dissemination of a lot of information: How to get help with health? Which NGOs can help migrants confidentially?"*<sup>154</sup> In order to better take into account the particular situation of young migrant women and the social, economic, and political role they play in migrant groups prior to departure, during the migration journey, as well as in transit or destination communities, it is thus important that all key local (community level), national, regional and global mechanisms on migration as well as migration organizations and agencies focus on recognizing how gender affects migration experiences and outcomes both during the journey and within each community. Based on the interviews in the study countries, several pragmatic approaches could inform the discussion and implementation:

- Developing a specific understanding of youth migration that is **gender-sensitive and adaptive**, given that persistent gender inequalities affect migration in all its forms across the migration cycle, including protection risks (violence and exploitation).
- Collaborating with international networks (e.g. UN High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment) to raise more visibility on discriminatory practices and address female migration issues as part of decent work agendas (ILO) and efforts to promote the **economic empowerment** of young migrant women.
- Preventing intersectional stigma and discrimination (hate speech and attacks on the LGBTQI+ community in particular) through awareness raising, **denunciation of discriminatory speech**, and specific support for those stigmatized for their gender and/or perceived sexual orientation. In particular a focus on local/national/regional awareness campaigns to sensitize local youth to xenophobia, racism, and sexism may contribute to gradually eradicating discriminatory behavior and changing the culture of stereotypes.
- Improving **working conditions in formal and informal jobs**, for all female migrant workers: 1) unskilled, by developing communications campaign to improve the awareness and status recognition of care and domestic workers as well as day laborers in the agricultural sector, who are often young migrant women; 2) skilled by fostering national and regional regulations to promote a fair access to local labor markets for migrant women in destination (but also transit) countries, through a better recognition of diplomas and qualifications. In both cases, a special focus on the enforcement of labor standards (decent work) should be made, to progressively eliminate abusive employment, GBV and discriminatory practices.
- Improving **young migrant women's access to financial institutions** for sending/receiving funds. In Tunisia in 2022-23, the problems associated with the prohibition on receiving or sending funds through traditional means (Western Union) are compounded for sub-Saharan migrant women who often have no other means than to find a chaperone or resort to prostitution to find financial agentivity in times of crisis.

"My dream is to have my own identity. As a member of a marginalized community, I just want to break all the barriers that are put on girls in my community. I think it's more about freedom. It can be financial freedom, it can be freedom to make decisions, or it can be just freedom to have your own identity. (...) I want our society to change. I want to see my fellow girls finish school, work for themselves, and create their own identity. And I want to see a society free of sexual and gender-based violence."

(Focus Group Discussion, Amman, Jordan – Syrian woman, 28.)

<sup>153</sup> [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/dataset/ds00066\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/dataset/ds00066_en)

<sup>154</sup> KII 18, Amman, Jordan.



## ENGAGEMENT: Optimizing the unique social, civic and political perspective of young migrants at community level

On the question of societal and political engagement, it is not surprising to hear that many non-migrant youths want to engage socially or as activists in their communities of residence; similarly, it seems logical that migrant youth would want to remain more discreet in the public space, knowing that their rights are often limited. The Tunisian case is emblematic of this type of tension, with the diagnosis of:

- A total lack of civic space for young people: *“There is a lack of public cultural spaces that allow young people to do extracurricular activities but also to express themselves through active engagement in social or political actions.”*<sup>155</sup>
- and a strong desire to engage: *“I have other goals; like speaking of women’s rights, I want to create a feminine reproductive cell by which I encourage women to become entrepreneurs. When I came to Tunisia, the Tunisian women inspired me with the rights accorded to them. I really want to make a change in my country.”*<sup>156</sup>

The rare experiences of engagement with authorities or socio-economic leaders often prove to be disappointing and often convince non-migrant youth to no longer "endorse" a certain type of fake involvement where youth are invited to check boxes. *“We are invited but the space is owned by the old, mostly they have already made the decisions as they make deals at night. So, youths are just called to attend for formality and to be used as a rubber stamp. And among the youths, they invite youth leaders to their night meetings, so during the meeting when a decision is made the youth leaders will agree since they have been compromised and the other youths cannot say anything because the people that represent them have already agreed to the decisions made.”*<sup>157</sup> To go beyond a fictitious engagement, a coordinated action is crucial to achieve the goal of progressive engagement of young people in political and decision-making processes at all levels:

- Promoting an **enabling environment for the participation of young male and female migrants** in a wide range of key issues (local governance, cultural and social issues, environment and climate, including peacebuilding and social cohesion) at the local and national levels. Including young migrants and taking into account their views on these issues could give substance to the idea of 'disaggregated citizenship' as mentioned in the EQUALITY recommendation.
- **Supporting climate change activism**, engaging migrant youth, to build on their direct experiences of multiple contexts and impacted environments.
- **Including young migrants in the governance and decision-making processes of international migration fora and organizations.** For the United Nations, for example, agencies that focus on labor mobility, voluntary migration and forced displacement (IOM, UNHCR) as well as key social, economic, environmental and societal issues (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, UNEP or HABITAT) should structurally include migrant and non-migrant youth as active stakeholders.

*“In the dream I had yesterday, I was the president of Somalia. In Somalia, with people I know and people I don't know. I was working for the people, helping the people, in a leadership position and doing something good. I think my dream is related to my passion. I would like to change something in the future. It is an idea that I have always had.”*

*(Semi-Structured Interview, Man, Somali refugee, Nairobi)*

*“It is necessary to involve young people in the frameworks of consultation and design, in discussions concerning youth, and also concerning the management of the country. At the level of international policies, I believe that wherever we go, youth must have a representative framework, or a threshold of representativeness where they can give their point of view, and opinions on the decisions taken.”*

*(Semi-Structured Interview, Woman, Togolese migrant, Dakar)*

<sup>155</sup> FGD 81, Sfax, Tunisia.

<sup>156</sup> SSI 79, Tunis, Tunisia.

<sup>157</sup> FGD, non-migrants male Somalia.

## CONTRIBUTION(S): Strengthening a dual socio-economic contribution (host communities and countries of origin)

Labels (formal/informal, regular/irregular, documented/undocumented) should not be a discriminating element in the integration promoted by policies, strategies, and programs. From this point of view, one of the challenges is to develop programs aimed at improving the skills of young migrants (and possibly local youth) in order to: **1) move from the paradigm of low-skilled, underpaid and indecent jobs to a more positive and contributing socio-economic image and status, and 2) generate social and economic remittances in both host communities and countries of origin.** Focus group and workshop participants highlighted the following points-not exhaustively:

- Taking into account the differentiated temporalities of young migrants, whose paths are sometimes chaotic, marked by pauses, trauma, linguistic barriers, years of inactivity: *"Empowerment is not just about getting someone to go to school, because most of them don't go to school. It's about what they can do if they never went to school. That's also empowerment - when we use the local resources we have to enable young people to grow mentally and emotionally, to recognize or realize their potential."*<sup>158</sup>
- Promoting exchanges around education and labor mobility, as well as equivalence of degrees and skills: *"I had the opportunity to leave my country to come and study here in Senegal. I seized it and now I am here for my studies and I will soon finish them and I plan to come back next year, God willing. If many people travel today, it is perhaps because of their education. Today, how many young people register on the Campus France platform? Maybe they go there to change their educational circuit, to get other training that strengthens their capacity."*<sup>159</sup>
- Adopting a pragmatic and critical approach to digital skills, which are very popular with many young migrants and have a significant integrating potential, by considering the whole relevant ecosystem, beyond simple skills: presence of technical and material resources, existence of a market, decent work standards. The box below looks at each of these dimensions.
- Promoting economic remittances from young migrants to the economic well-being of their home countries-often through investments in key sectors such as housing, health, or education-can be facilitated by secure agencies. Facilitate the ability of young migrants to contribute (1) in their home country, through direct/indirect investments in various key economic sectors such as housing and education, and (2) in their destination country, by acting as drivers of local economies (agriculture, services, hospitality, IT, etc. with unskilled and higher-skilled jobs). *"So by working, they achieve, they participate in the development of the country [of origin]. So, it is certain that those who are here, many, many send the little they have to their country of origin but do not hesitate, I would say, to inform their compatriots, to come to Senegal if only because it is a haven of peace, that they live here."*<sup>160</sup>
- Promoting social remittances, focusing on the existing formal/informal socio-economic and cultural network of youth, to ensure the development of more inclusive and innovative ideas, beliefs, and opinions regarding, among other things, politics, institutions, health, culture, society, religion, technology, science, education, and gender issues in both countries of origin and destination. As highlighted by Waldinger, *"time, however, proves corrosive, and in the end most immigrants and their descendants become progressively disconnected from their home country, reorienting their concerns and commitments to the place where they actually live."*<sup>161</sup> Beyond economic ties, social remittances can actively contribute to reshaping the dynamic and evolutive dialogues between communities of origin and young migrants (and possibly the diaspora).

---

<sup>158</sup> FGD 24, Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>159</sup> FGD 93, Garissa, Kenya.

<sup>160</sup> KII 57, Dakar, Senegal.

<sup>161</sup> Waldinger, R. (2015) *The Cross-Border Connection. Immigrants, Emigrants and Their Homelands.* Harvard University Press.

### Box 6: Digital opportunities and challenges for African youth

Let's listen to young migrants' aspirations... In Dakar, first: "My dream is to develop the Information Technology (IT) sector in my country Cameroon for it is lagging behind compared to other African countries. Also, I want to get married and have kids."<sup>162</sup> And now in Tunis: "My dream is to go back to my country Senegal and open a consultancy firm specializing in Artificial Intelligence (AI). As for my dream for the next 5 years, I would like to pursue my education and maybe get a Ph.D. in AI and Robotics."<sup>163</sup> The augmentation of internet penetration and mobile usage amongst youth across the African continent has offered great new opportunities, whether in education, health or access to jobs. This claim was supported by a key Informant Interviewee: "Online and digital tools like matchmaking platforms can help youth migrants to access the job market. It will help them select jobs and enter in contact with Tunisian employers."<sup>164</sup> It also has a catalytic effect which allows for the augmentation of investments in new startups and digital companies, as well as the creation of social-impact oriented technologies. Nevertheless, there are still some challenges and critical gaps that need to be addressed in order to better support youth migrants and non-migrants' access to technology and digital opportunities. Women's access is generally more difficult because of socio-cultural stigmas against working women, safety issues (online or physical harassment if women have to use public centers due to low Internet connectivity), and a lack of time (much of which is dedicated to caring and other unpaid responsibilities). Moreover, Internet connectivity issues, digital exclusion due to market price and added taxes, and poor WiFi coverage, are the most common challenges to digital employment for refugees. The issue of market access must be noted as many migrants do not have the necessary social capital or sufficient diaspora links to enter and remain in a highly competitive, fast-moving, and often unregulated market, where operating codes are complex. Finally, the lack of regulation in the sector, particularly for freelancers, contributes to exploitation of the workforce. Working conditions, including employee benefits, protection from abuse or exploitation, and the right to claim wages, are also difficult to enforce within the sector, particularly for migrant youth who may work in restrictive legal environments in their host communities.

Another key parameter to consider is also the huge expectations that digital skills and technologies raise among young migrants and non-migrants. For them, these technologies are both: 1) a break with tradition and the past (parents' professions, in agriculture, manufacturing, public service), adhering to work modalities (flexibility, speed) and a sector (technology, innovation) that seem more aligned with their desire for independence; 2) an escape from socio-economic situations with no prospects of employment or future, especially for young people living in peri-urban areas, on the fringes of large cities, or for migrants living in urban settlements or camps; 3) direct access to the global community, where everyone can in theory be the entrepreneur of his or her own existence, without discrimination on the basis of origin, status, race, gender, etc. (if not physical access to a computer, an internet network and basic but rapidly evolving digital skills). Symmetrically, there is an unprecedented interest on the part of aid agencies (NGOs, UN), the private sector, youth associations, vocational training and university actors or philanthropic foundations to help young people in the field of coding, digital skills, etc. This is obviously commendable, but it does not dispense with a real and concrete analysis of the needs of the market in the medium term, the qualifications required in an ultra-competitive field, and last but not least, an in-depth study of the risks linked to decent work (abuses and exploitation) due to the total deregulation of this sector, in order to avoid creating situations of "modern digital slavery" faced with young people without any bargaining power.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>162</sup> Semi-Structured Interview, Woman, Cameroonian migrant, Dakar.

<sup>163</sup> Semi-Structured Interview, Man, Senegalese migrant, Tunis.

<sup>164</sup> KII 34, Researcher at the Carnegie Middle East Centre

<sup>165</sup> Main sources: 1) Samuel Hall, WUSC & Mastercard Foundation (2022) Market Assessment of Digital Employment Opportunities for Refugee Youth; 2) ILO (2021) Market Assessment of Digital Employment Opportunities for Refugee Youth in Kenya; 3) Nicolle, H. (2022) Dialogue on Tech and Migration, A project of the Migration Strategy Group on International Cooperation and Development, GMFUS and Robert Bosch Stiftung - <https://www.gmfus.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Digital%20Livelihoods%20for%20Refugees-Examples%20Challenges%20and%20Recommendations.pdf>

# Annexes

## Workshop on the African chapter of the study

In order to present the main findings of the African chapter report for three of the eight countries (and five of the ten communities) of the study, the KNOMAD Secretariat invited regional stakeholders to a workshop on The Youth Migration and Development Lens: Empirical Evidence on the Integration of Young Migrants versus Non-migrants in African Countries. The event was both online and in person and took place in Nairobi on 16 March 2023 (Radisson Blue Arboretum, from 09.00 AM to 3.00 PM EAT). The open discussion and panel discussion that followed the presentation included speeches from the many migrants in the audience - mostly refugees or economic migrants, mainly from Nairobi and Mombasa but also from Dadaab or Kakuma. Scheduled to last 3 hours, the event gave rise to enthusiastic debates until around 16:30, with contributions from South Sudanese slammers, Kenyan poetesses and Somali dancers. Despite the rather formal setting of the event, which was held in a conference room in the city centre, with many donors, governmental actors, UN agencies, it is remarkable that the conclusions of the study were somehow 'performatively' validated: young migrants took the floor, the central socio-economic role of women was mentioned by all participants, the tension between national and local levels was also discussed. This engagement immediately gave rise to a follow-up between the authors of the research, refugee associations, and other stakeholders to ensure that the recommendations of the research were extended and explored collectively in a practical and action-oriented manner.

Picture 9: Migrant youth and panelists at the March 2023 workshop in Nairobi



Photo top right: Aisha, refugee from Uganda and CEO of The Blaze African Fashion:

*'I agree that identification is the major issue hindering refugees economically. For example, if you are well documented, you cannot have a job or start your own business. Digital Skills, yes, we have jobs for that but the major issue is that after getting these skills, where is the market? They train us but we are left hanging because skills do not match opportunities. I have a fashion line but no one can buy from me because there are stigmas from country of origin as well. The problem of self-confidence, the problem of stigmatization, are present. We do not have the chance to show our skills and show Kenya that we can help them develop or invest in something.'*

## Country profiles (UNDESA & UNFPA data)

### COLOMBIA

Population: 52.1 million (2023)  
Population aged 10 - 24 rate: 23% (2023)  
Youth unemployment rate: 24.8% (2021)  
Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2022 period)  
primary education: 99%  
lower secondary education: 99%  
upper secondary education: 83%

Net migration rate: 212 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)  
International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 3.7% (2020)  
Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 39.8% (2020)

Mobility and integration dynamics: Despite the signature of the Peace Agreement between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government in 2016, Colombia is still dealing with the consequences of five decades of violence. These factors trigger forced displacements, while the country has also been heavily affected by natural hazards 2022, and it is estimated that by 2023, there will be around half a million people with needs related to access to health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), shelter, and food security. In addition, Colombia hosts an estimated 2.4 million refugees and migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and an increasing number of migrants in transit - more than 151,000 people according to IOM<sup>166</sup>. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted the national socio-economic context, where a large margin of vulnerable people lost their economic livelihoods, and had a very limited access to social services. The current youth unemployment rate lies around 25% in 2023.<sup>167</sup> In that context, xenophobia is a feeling that is heavily perceived by young migrants in Colombia, specifically against Venezuelan migrants. It prevents the establishment of a “social contract” of trust between youth migrants and the State, as youth feel that the media also incites this kind of xenophobia. The presence of private actors, such as multinational companies that take advantage of the precarity of migrant workers and underpay them also appears to be a problem that public policy must remedy.

*“Migrants from the third world (...) take on tasks that the native population is not willing to take on, so there is the a hypocritical look, because on the one hand they say that we take away jobs, but on the other hand the companies “pocket” the impressive amount of money from transnational migration networks.”<sup>168</sup>*

*“The bottleneck is in the way that Colombian society relates with migrants, and how we interact with migration. If I did not trust the Venezuelan institutions, why am I going to come here to understand Colombian institutions? I feel that the main challenge for integration lies in trust before anything else and one I would say that the confidence of Colombian society towards migrants, but also of the migrants towards the deployment of institutional actions for them is becoming more and more common.”<sup>169</sup>*

Digital platforms provide an avenue for migrants to be self-employed, giving them more control over their economic lives as opposed to the possibility of exploitation in the informal sector, due to their lack of legal paperwork. Yet it can also be hard to access because of the cost, which is often too high for migrant workers. Digital livelihoods are especially for queer/trans migrants because of the visibility that digitization brings. They have to be invisible on the internet to survive. Yet, they are also able to find community in other queer people who have settled in the destination country as opposed to living with/seeking support from blood relatives, which they left behind to protect themselves. While this offers a sense of integration at the community level, they struggle with the process of regularization as the state requires them to submit ID documents from their countries of origin but because of severed connections with family, it is extremely difficult, even sometimes impossible, to obtain them.

<sup>166</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/colombia-crisis-response-plan-2023-2024>

<sup>167</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=CO>

<sup>168</sup> Workshop Participant, Researcher, NGO, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>169</sup> KII, Researcher, NGO, Bogota, Colombia.

*“Integration is a process that seeks to focus and identify people who, for one reason or another, have been excluded from a system, from a group due to particular conditions.”<sup>170</sup>*

Overall, state programs are not adequately targeted to the youth, and while a lot of migrant youth have immense potential, they lack the opportunities to explore their aspirations and hopes. Comprehensive policies are necessary to ensure there is access to justice, nutrition, emergency care and psychosocial care.

*“Integration requires otherness, and it is an otherness that must be managed, in the event that it is not managed very easily it ends up being like what happened in the case of the national strike with the migrants, who ended up being like a scapegoat. Integration, as if to put it to inclusion, seeks then that the people who arrive adapt.”<sup>171</sup>*

**Policy and youth involvement:** Youth migration in Colombia can be mostly contextualised through the crisis in Venezuela, which has been a push factor for a lot of migrating youth. Nevertheless, a lot of young people expressed their interest to move abroad in order to find new opportunities, and to explore, which requires the establishment of a clear and flexible policy of access to work. Better economic planning for large public investments in integration is necessary, as well as strengthening bilateral relations with neighbouring countries. Some youth also expressed the need to invest in integration not solely administratively (by helping with access to documents), but also socially, economically and politically.

*“I think it's a growing trend. Not only because of the current migration conditions, but because of the nature of the current conflicts. And above all because young people are migrating not to survive, I believe for the first time that young people are migrating not to survive; young people are migrating to transform the world. And I believe that this is much more valuable than any exodus that humanity has experienced socio-culturally.”<sup>172</sup>*

*“In my youth, I put life and all the opportunities because I feel that in my youth is where you have the crucial life to accomplish everything. For example, I always tell people that it is not the same that you are born poor, that is not your fault. But it's your fault if you die poor. Because the opportunities are in you, in the opportunities in life and in youth, you can do everything you want for your life, future and for the rest.”<sup>173</sup>*

## JORDAN

Population: 11.3 million (2023)

Population aged 10 - 24 rate: 29% (2023)

Youth unemployment rate: 40.3% (2021)

Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2022 period)

primary education: 80%

lower secondary education: 76%

upper secondary education: 63%

Net migration rate: 14.4 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)

International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 33.9% (2020)

Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 49.2% (2020)

**Mobility and integration dynamics:** According to UNFPA, “education and literacy rates and measures of social well-being are relatively high compared to other countries with similar incomes”. Jordan’s economy was heavily affected by the COVID-19 crisis and is starting to recover, yet heightened inflation and challenging factors affecting the job market are conditions that are heavily impacting Jordan’s youth and vulnerable population. Jordan has one of the highest unemployment rates in the region, where the youth is disproportionately affected - about 46.1% of youth under 25 remains unemployed. Access to higher education attainment has improved but has not led to better job creation, this has also expanded the presence of informal work. According to the OECD, three issues are crippling Jordan’s job market:

<sup>170</sup> KII, Humanitarian Officer, NGO, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>171</sup> KII, Researcher, NGO, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>172</sup> KII, Humanitarian Officer, NGO, Bogota, Colombia.

<sup>173</sup> Workshop respondent, Academic, Bogota, Colombia.

- “Mismatch between education outputs and the skills required by the labour market causes high unemployment among university graduates.
- Inability of both the private and public sector to absorb new market labour entrants and to create more decent jobs.
- Lacking access to and quality of national programs that facilitate a smooth school-to-work transition, including vocational training and career guidance. In consequence, Jordan is negatively affected by a great extent of emigration of its educational elite, resulting in brain drain.”

Due to its geography and climate, Jordan is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world, making it difficult to sustain agricultural practices. Nevertheless, its geography also makes it an important anchor of regional stability, absorbing external shocks from neighboring countries, by hosting refugees and promoting humanitarian and economic cooperation. In 2022, Jordan was said to host more than a million refugees from Syria. Jordan migration patterns are very distinct - as most of the migrants that leave in proportions have attained high-school education or higher (around 80% in 2020), it is then rather “skilled migrants” who are looking for better economic opportunities in the Gulf, or in North America. Emigration in Jordan is mostly due to the mismatch between job creation and skills. Indeed, the current economic situation allows for the creation of low-skilled jobs, or even informal work, that do not fit the criteria of the youth. On the other hand, the influx of refugees has been especially notable in the past decade due to the beginning of the Syrian war, where most of the migrants arrived in Jordan to flee violence and conflict.

Policy and youth involvement: The youth - whether migrants or non-migrants - agrees that education and economic opportunities are the things that they look up to the most when thinking about the meaning of success. There is however a gap between migrants and non-migrant youth, as refugees suffer from barriers such as administrative paperwork (work permits, identification...) and connotation from their status (a lot of respondents responded that they were suffering from bullying and that the differentiation from their origin was hurtful).

*“Stability, to have my own shop, I mean my own work, a business and a car, and to be honest, it is difficult to do it here, Syrians are forbidden to invest or you must be an investor to own anything, only an investor can do this.”<sup>174</sup>*

It is interesting to note that a lot of times however, both migrants and non-migrants youth shared similar ideals and similar views on integration. The main idea is to engage with the local community, and because of the common history of trauma due to conflict, some Syrian respondents said that they identified with Palestinian refugees, and that since they integrated well in Jordan, they could too. Both male and females also reported that young male were struggling more for integration because of the economic burden put on young males, specifically when we think of marriage where the young men need to be financially stable and independent to marry. Most youth said that they did not feel consulted or involved in the decision-making process. This is both the result of cultural practices and also a lack of openness and freedom of speech in the public sphere.

*“Youth is an opportunity. For all of us. Culture and community structure, skills and hobbies, It's a way of creating stability, if not financial, It's psychological.”<sup>175</sup>*

*“I believe that your weakest point, or the thing that made you fail, is where you want to turn it into a solid thing. If I fail at something, I'm capable of turning my life upside down and fixing everything because of it. Also, age doesn't mean you have experiences, maybe a younger person has a bigger experience.”<sup>176</sup>*

---

<sup>174</sup> FGD respondent, Syrian migrant male, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>175</sup> FGD respondent, Jordanian non-migrant male, Amman, Jordan.

<sup>176</sup> FGD respondent, Jordanian non-migrant female, Amman, Jordan.

## KENYA

Population: 53.8 million (2020)  
Population aged 10 - 24 rate: 33% (2022)  
Youth unemployment rate: 26.2% (2019)  
Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2020 period)  
primary education: 81%  
lower secondary education: N/A  
upper secondary education: N/A

Net migration rate: - 52.2 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)  
International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 2% (2020)  
Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 31% (2020)

**Mobility and integration dynamics:** Kenya is a host country to one of the largest refugee populations in Africa and is primarily a country of destination and transit for African migrants and, to a more limited extent, a country of origin. Furthermore, the effects of climate change are evident as Kenya and the East African region are currently experiencing their worst drought in 40 years, which has resulted in internal and cross-border migration amongst pastoralist communities.<sup>177</sup> Samuel Hall collected data in Nairobi and Garissa town in Northeastern of Kenya, where the migrant populations mainly consist of refugees from Somalia and labor migrants from neighboring countries. Opportunities are more abundant in urban centers, but the country still follows a strict encampment policy for refugees, which has led to protracted displacement situations for the past centuries. While Kenya has presented high economic growth rates of almost 6% annually in the past few decades, this positive macroeconomic development has not translated into benefits for its youth, who are often stigmatized based on class, migration status, gender, and sexual orientation.<sup>178</sup> One of the most significant barriers to integrating youth migrants and non-migrants is the stigma experienced by youth from under-resourced urban settlements, often seen as criminals. Many locals have negative attitudes towards migrants, perceiving them as competitors for limited business and job opportunities, which makes it difficult for migrants to realize local integration fully. In areas where large numbers of refugees reside in Kenya, such as Garissa, inhabited mainly by the Somali ethnic group, the inequitable distribution of resources is evident in the community. Kenya has a history of terrorism caused by the Al Shabab terrorist group from Somalia. This has led to the securitization of migration and social and structural discrimination of Somalis, including Kenyans of Somali ethnicity. Queer migrants in Kenya face a kind of ‘double discrimination’ by virtue of not only their migration status but also of their sexual orientation, similar to non-migrant youth with SOGIESC. Homosexuality is criminalized in Kenya, and attitudes towards queer people are heavily influenced by religion and culture. This results in the invisibility of queer migrants and their continued existence on the margins.

*“LGBT refugees are often perceived as wrong elements, as immoral. It brings stigma against them; they feel discriminated against. Life does not happen normally for them, they can’t just walk to the shop or get a job like any other person. It rubs off on them and internally they feel like they are not people enough. They are dealing with 2 things, being refugees and being LGBTI. It’s really a burden on their shoulders. Hearing what people say about them, it lowers their self-esteem. They blame themselves. It limits their chances of going out and looking for opportunities.”<sup>179</sup>*

**Policy and youth involvement:** The Kenya National Youth Development Policy of 2019 was created to improve the quality of life with the youth by empowering them and increasing their participation in economic and democratic processes. However, youth often do not feel included in decision-making as older people have a monopoly on the process at the institutional and community levels. Youth interviewed have criticized that endeavors for public participation by the government do not

<sup>177</sup> International Organization for Migration, “International Migration Snapshot,” (2021), <https://kenya.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd926/files/documents/international-migration-from-kenya-undesa-2021dec01.pdf>.

<sup>178</sup> Samuel Hall, “Youth Employment in Kenya Literature Review,” (2017), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cfe2c8927234e0001688343/t/5d42d9d220ada4000196692f/1564662260539/Samuel-Hall-Youth-Employment-in-Kenya-2017-for-the-British-Council.pdf>.

ADB (African Development Bank) (2022) “Kenya - Country Profiles,” African Development Bank - Building today, a better Africa tomorrow, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/kenya-country-profiles>.

<sup>179</sup> KII5, Director, NGO, Nairobi, Kenya.



ensure meaningful representation. CSO and activists interviewed in Garissa and Nairobi emphasized the need for youth-sensitive policies that empower youth to become socioeconomic agents and break the stigma.

*“Empowerment is not all about making someone go to school because we have most of them who don’t go to school. The question is, what can they do in case they never went to school? That is also empowerment - when we use the local resources that we have to make the youth grow mentally and emotionally, to recognize or to realize their potential” (KII1, Youth Leader, Ghetto Foundation)*

The Kenya Refugees Act of 2021 was also recently repealed, embodying more progressiveness by requiring the state to facilitate refugees’ access to the labor market by providing work permits and other relevant documents. This milestone achievement could potentially mean a significant shift in the livelihood outcomes of refugees and other migrants and better economic development for the entire country.

## MEXICO

Population: 128.5 million (2023)

Population aged 10 - 24 rate: 25% (2023)

Youth unemployment rate: 7.9% (2021)

Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2020 period)

primary education: 99%

lower secondary education: 92%

upper secondary education: 72%

Net migration rate: - 52.6 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)

International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 0.9% (2020)

Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 60.7% (2020)

Mobility and integration dynamics: Mexico has a population of nearly 130 million people, with ages 10-24 representing 25% of the population.<sup>180</sup> The country is globally underperforming economically, albeit strong macroeconomic institutions. This has had a negative effect on youth employment, and overall financial and economic inclusion of vulnerable populations. Moreover, the politicization of migration, and the dependence of the United States’ policies on migration, has made young migrants’ vulnerable, and has barred them from acceding to long-term, sustainable opportunities. According to the World Bank (2019):<sup>181</sup> A large share of Mexico’s youth is not in employment, education or training (NEET). 25 and 14 percent of the 20-24-year old and the 15–19 year olds population are NEET. For any given cohort, a 1 percentage point increase in the proportion of youth NEET predicts a 7 percent reduction in earnings for that cohort. The negative income effect of not being engaged in education or work also harms equity since close to 60 percent of the population NEET in Mexico is in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution. The majority of youth NEET are also urban women. Mothers in particular, face high barriers to paid work. This has implications not only for gender equality, but also for children. Maternal employment is strongly negatively correlated with child poverty across country. In Mexico, the phenomenon of migration has been heavily impacted by politicization, which has had by default a clear impact on the perceptions of migrants in the host country and policies regarding their integration. Many institutions dealing with migration are perceived by youth migrants to be dealing with migration in terms of “national security”. This evidently impedes the integration process.

*“I would like Mexico not to be subordinated to the politics and interests of the United States, because migration ends up becoming an exchange currency (...) Modify the immigration policy because the national migration institute works as a police force with a logic of national security. Their mechanisms are violent and corrupted. So, I would like for corruption to be reduced, training people on human rights, youth, feminism and infancy issues so they know they are dealing with different groups of the population and that they are more empathetic.”<sup>182</sup>*

<sup>180</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/MX>

<sup>181</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/es/588351544812277321/pdf/Mexico-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic.pdf>

<sup>182</sup> KII, Volunteer, CSO, Mexico City, Mexico.

Much like other case studies, young migrants arriving in Mexico face a lot of psychological violence, which impedes their integration, and their overall well-being.

*“Fight for stability (emotional and physiological stability). Fight for equality. Fear of being deported, the possibility to be deported. Vulnerability for being a foreigner. Sometimes migrants arrive in Casa Frida and they share their stories with us, and it’s very sad that you love your country but the situation pushes you to leave, leave your family and find a life somewhere else.”<sup>183</sup>*

Policy and youth involvement: Youth in Mexico feel that they are not being supported by the government. A lot of the spaces that allow freedom of expression are community-based. Youth migrants have also expressed the need to expand the social services offered by the government, where the some of the main providers are currently religious communities or civil society organizations. This is why some youth mentioned that entering a religious community was a good driver of integration. Nevertheless, a lot of the youth recommended intercultural forums as a means of exchange and as a base for policy-making.

*“To have more intercultural forums, that is, more activities with young people. It’s important to bring youth out of their comfort zone. Maybe organizing trips and activities, like the scouts, but mixing them with locals so that both parts learn. There were also deported Mexicans, who had lived abroad for many years and now needed also to be integrated. So I think intercultural forums should be promoted where everyone could take part and share experiences. That way they could see that migrants are not a threat, that they’re people who need to have their human rights respected.”<sup>184</sup>*

*“This situation has overwhelmed us, and we cannot expect that governments are the only ones driving the change or to have the last word. It is necessary for all sectors to align: government, companies, academics that are so important... also the church. The majority of shelters and community kitchens, perhaps an 80% of them, belong to religious communities. There’s no recipe for this but this can only be achieved if we work as a team.”<sup>185</sup>*

This quote is a good representation of the inner perception youth mobility, where one of the motivations is to “not settle”. Youth are looking to establish themselves in a society that respects their freedom, and that gives them opportunities to grow and feel settled. Youth want guarantees regarding respect for being able to freely express their gender identity or sexual orientation. They believe and express that these aspects configure an authentic integration in society.

*“The act of going abroad looking for different life conditions, other quality of life, other characteristics that they don’t have in their country of origin or where they actually live. It is not only about one’s mobility but a natural phenomenon of not settling for, and to be seeking for a more prosperous alternative or options to have access to rights. We’re talking about the economic issue, to have a better dwelling and education, access to better jobs. In our specific case of helping the LGBTQ community and victims of violence, we are talking about people who run away from the state. They run away from a society that does not understand them, where they don’t have protection and understanding from the law, or that recognizes them. They make them invisible and from this fact is that they go out to look for other alternatives.”<sup>186</sup>*

---

<sup>183</sup> Workshop participant, Social Worker, CSO, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>184</sup> Workshop participant, Migrant Social Worker, CSO, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>185</sup> Workshop participant, Social Worker, CSO, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>186</sup> KII, Coordinator, CSO for LGBTQ+ migrants, Mexico City, Mexico.

## PAKISTAN

Population: 240.5 million (2023)

Population aged 10 - 24 rate: 32% (2023)

Youth unemployment rate: 11% (2021)

Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2020 period)

primary education: N/A

lower secondary education: N/A

upper secondary education: N/A

Net migration rate: - 471.4 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)

International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 1.5% (2020)

Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 7.1% (2020)

The rapid increase of urbanization and internal migration in Pakistan since 1980 has had significant impacts on the economy, labor market opportunities and family structures. Limited employment opportunities, low rates of infrastructural investments, and volatility in the agricultural industry are causing a large exodus of rural populations to major urban centers, resulting in a rise in poverty and gaps in inequality.<sup>187</sup> Natural disasters, climate change, and conflict are also contributing factors to internal migration. Moreover, according to IOM, “the immigrant population as a share of the total Pakistani population decreased sharply from 1990 to 2017. In the contrary, since 2005, emigration from Pakistan appeared to be a more significant phenomenon as compared to immigration to Pakistan. The importance of emigration is also reflected in the large amount of remittances sent back to Pakistan”.<sup>188</sup> **In that context, both migrant and non-migrant youth feel that integration is both a right and a duty, they accept to integrate through adaptive strategies, cultural, social and economic but they also expect the government to support them.**

*“If you give him equal opportunities, it will be called integration. If someone comes from foreign country and he gets all the rights, it will be called integration.”<sup>189</sup>*

The biggest challenges facing the youth are lack of employment opportunities and lack of educational opportunities. Nevertheless, through the provision of the refugee card, social services provided by the government such as education, accessible and efficient transport and healthcare present opportunities for integrating migrant youth. These opportunities can be in the formal sector, but there are still issues at the administrative level that prevent migrant youth from fully integrating. Youth also mentioned the stress inducing from making their family and relative proud, because they bear a heavy financial burden, to support themselves, their family and feel accomplished.

*“I am so worried about my financial condition. But most of our family is in Kashmir. I really feel their absence in life. If our family was here, they might have helped me in this situation. I had an uncle too, there is no contact now. I wonder if family support could have helped me. Migration has caused so much distress in the community.”<sup>190</sup>*

*“Integration means “to be absorbed in the society in that country, just like Europe and America” because once you go there, you will be declared as a Refugee and then later, you will get Nationality. Integration means, he once gets absorbed in a country and subsequently, he will get the nationality. In Pakistan, there is no possibility of integration because they will not get a Pakistan nationality whether they stay here for forty years, fifty years or sixty years (only possible with marriage).”<sup>191</sup>*

**Integration is both a perception and an internal feeling, where youth migrants can be integrated economically but still feel “looked down upon” because of their origin.**

<sup>187</sup> <https://pakistan.unfpa.org/en/topics/migration-and-urbanization>

<sup>188</sup> <https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/Pakistan%20Migration%20Snapshot%20Final.pdf>

<sup>189</sup> Workshop participant, CSO worker, CSO, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>190</sup> SSI, Female migrant, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>191</sup> KII, Legal aid worker, CSO, Lahore, Pakistan.

*“Ideally integration means acceptance also. But you know some people still do not accept migrators. Like in Karachi, the term muhajir (migrator) is used in order to refer to them, this indicates that there still is a sort of division. Likewise, when people come from the rural areas to the urban areas, they are looked down upon by the people in the urban areas and they don’t accept them sometimes, there is a negative connotation attached.”<sup>192</sup>*

*“I think for everyone success means to achieve and excel. Success can also be defined as being respected in the community and the circle. Every human being deserves respect regardless of class and gender. It is a basic right. You see, the successful people in our society are always the ones who attain so much respect and worthiness.”<sup>193</sup>*

**Policy and youth involvement:** Youth feel like corruption and nepotism are impeding their prospects, where specifically economic status plays a big role in obtaining the start-up capital they need for their career. There is also a general feeling of disappointment towards the government, who does not provide basic services that the youth need. They feel neglected and unheard.

*“Almost all young ones are jobless. Second issue is the lack of quality education. Our young generation are not getting an education like the youth of foreign countries. Youth are not being given their rights. Nepotism is a common trend. For example, I am a youth who belongs to a poor family and I am unable to get my rights and opportunities. Youth has to face a corruptive environment. Moreover, youth have more problems than aged people because you can see that most of the high-profile personalities are aged.”<sup>194</sup>*

**Aspirations and the future are seen as successful if the youth has been able to feel respect and to build their worthiness according to cultural and societal standards.** This is not dependent of economic status, rather the way that they are perceived by their peers and by the host community. Some youths have noted that they would wish to go back if the situation improved in their home country, which does not entice them to fully integrate in the country. They are also looking for immediate and urgent policies that can help them sustain a decent lifestyle and access to opportunities.

*“The Kashmiri migrants came here in Pakistan with the mindset that they will go back to Kashmir after getting freedom from India. That’s why they are unable to grow in any field of life in Pakistan.”<sup>195</sup>*

## SENEGAL

Population: 16.7 million (2020)

Population aged 10 - 24 rate: 32% (2022)

Youth unemployment rate: 5.5% (2020)

Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2020 period)

primary education: 75%

lower secondary education: 40%

upper secondary education: 20%

Net migration rate: - 10.1 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)

International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 1.6% (2020)

Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 32.1% (2020)

**Mobility and integration dynamics:** Senegal has historically been a destination country for migrants but is currently also a transit and origin country for many migrants in West Africa, in particular for Malians, Guineans, and Mauritians. Senegal hosts around 16,564 refugees and asylum seekers who are allowed to reside anywhere as the government favors local integration for migrants, including naturalization, long-term residence permits, and inclusion into the national social service program.<sup>196</sup> Despite the barriers to socioeconomic mobility that youth face, they are often perceived as lazy or irresponsible by older generations in their countries of origin. **Over 40% of Senegal’s population comprises youth who often struggle to**

<sup>192</sup> Workshop participant, INGO officer, INGO, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>193</sup> FDG Participant, male migrant, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>194</sup> Workshop participant, INGO officer, INGO, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>195</sup> FGD Participant, male migrant, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>196</sup> “Migration Profile SENEGAL” (2022), <https://migrants-refugees.va/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/01/2022-CP-Senegal.pdf>.

find work after school, pushing them into the informal sector. Youth unemployment is also one of the key factors influencing emigration to neighboring countries and Europe. Many Senegalese youth interviewed also seemed to rather migrate to Europe for less prestigious work in the informal sector if it would mean better income. Migrant youth in and from Senegal have strong ties to their families, and many of their aspirations involve not only self-reliance but also self-fulfillment and the ability to support their families adequately. Other ambitions include emigration to make money, reinvest in their countries of origin, and contribute to the socioeconomic well-being of fellow migrants. In addition, it is characteristic for many young migrants in Senegal to feel a collective responsibility towards their communities.

*“I would say that since I'm not a migrant who fled from wars and abuses happening in countries, my case is a bit different because I just came for my studies, the opportunity to have other experiences since I'm a homebody, often curled up in myself, so this experience helps me learn to open up to other people and everything. So, I would say that my migration has a positive side, I'm not running away from something, but I'm rather looking for something”<sup>197</sup>*

While returnees to Senegal often actively participate in developing their country, many face challenges concerning social reintegration. The peers, families, and communities that remained in the country often hold prejudices against returnees, especially when returnees have not achieved the expected levels of success upon their return. However, some returnees create employment opportunities for fellow youth through their investments, act as role models for their peers and even influence the decision to migrate for many of the youth that remained in the country.

Policy and youth involvement: **One of the biggest challenges in youth integration in Senegal is the poor design and implementation of migration and youth policies. The inequitable distribution of funds results in extremely limited resources for the youth and thus influences the decision to migrate by any means for many.** Therefore, the onus is on the state to facilitate the socioeconomic integration of the youth through job creation and raise awareness among the youth on the opportunities available locally.

*“For me, it is the migration policy or the resource policy that we have to change. Many young people think that the distribution of our resources is inequitable. We give some and leave others. When we say that such and such funds are intended for young people, these funds should really go to young people”<sup>198</sup>*

## THAILAND

Population: 71.8 million (2023)

Population aged 10 - 24 rate: 17% (2023)

Youth unemployment rate: 4.9% (2021)

Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2020 period)

primary education: 100%

lower secondary education: 93%

upper secondary education: 68%

Net migration rate: 1.1 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)

International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 5.2% (2020)

Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 15.8% (2020)

Mobility and integration dynamics: In 2020 in Thailand, the 15-29 years old age bracket corresponded to about 20% of the total population.<sup>199</sup> Representing approximately seven per cent of Thailand's total population, the number of registered international migrants residing and working in Thailand is estimated at 4.9 million, and mostly originate from neighboring countries, such as Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. This part of the population mainly provides cheap and low-skilled labor in the construction, agriculture, manufacturing, services, and fishing and seafood processing sectors. Thailand is very vulnerable to climate change, and subsequently by climate change migration. Although the government has made strides to develop climate change adaptation policies, and to better implement climate change action at the national level, preparing and developing climate change migration policies still needs to be at the center of long-term programmatic and policy analysis. Youth are advocating for better implication from the government to help with integration - whether migrant or

<sup>197</sup> SSI 26, Economic migrant from Togo, (Senegal, Dakar).

<sup>198</sup> KII 27, Senegal, Dakar.

<sup>199</sup> <https://www.undp.org/thailand/publications/undp-thailand-youth-strategy>

non-migrant. This was especially salient during workshops and FGDs as youth migrants arriving from neighboring countries explained that they felt perceived as inferior, and less privileged than people arriving to Thailand from the “global north”. There is a clear difference of treatment, which also reflects in the job that they are being offered. Moreover, young migrant women from neighboring countries are often given jobs such as cleaning or housekeeping, which do not reflect their education level or aspirations. Currently, policies are insufficient and unsatisfying, where civil society is the one carrying the integration of youth.

*“I think the main driver for youth integration is government policy. Because policies are the reflection of society attitudes, at least the attitude of elite groups in the society (laughs). If the government wants to integrate society, it’ll have to demonstrate through policies.”<sup>200</sup>*

*“I need to see more protection for female migrant youth and I don’t mean female only, I mean all women because transgenders also work similarly to women. These groups (women and transgenders) are the people who work in the informal sectors like housemaids or sex workers. These people need extra protection from the government and from laws and we should let them enter into national health schemes.”<sup>201</sup>*

In terms of opportunities, some youth agree that digital tools are important, because they allow both economic and social integration. It also permits vulnerable groups to integrate society in a different way, and to have outlets to express themselves.

*“So do we agree that digital tools are important not only that they can access employment information but also find group support, establish their own networks, and communicate with their loved ones. This digital tool is also important to migrant youth in particular those who are more vulnerable groups like race, ethnic, genders or disabilities, providing that they are able to access it.”<sup>202</sup>*

**Policy and youth involvement: Youth are asking for platforms to speak and express their opinion at all levels of the policy process, from local to national and international.** Youth is also disappointed by the heavy politicization of migration, which is both encouraging migration to have access to cheap labor, without trying to improve their situations by proposing long-term policy planning to better integration and opportunities.

*“That’s why youth nowadays show their main interests in socio-economy and politics because they have to live with it for the rest of their lives, you know climate change, new pandemics, bad government. It is not strange if youth these days want to move from country to country, they just want something better for their future.”<sup>203</sup>*

*“At the policy level, I want to see some platforms provided by either local, national or international to youth to simulate how they would run their own community.”<sup>204</sup>*

---

<sup>200</sup> Workshop participant, Officer, CSO, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>201</sup> Workshop participant, Social Worker, CSO, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>202</sup> KII, Deputy Director, NGO, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>203</sup> KII, Officer, CSO, Bangkok, Thailand.

<sup>204</sup> Workshop participant, Officer, CSO, Bangkok, Thailand.

## TUNISIA

Population: 11.8 million (2020)  
Population aged 10-24 rate: 21% (2022)  
Youth unemployment rate: 36.3 (2019)  
Total net enrolment rate, (2010-2020 period)  
primary education: 99%  
lower secondary education: N/A  
upper secondary education: N/A

Net migration rate: - 9.2 Migrants / 1,000 Population (2022)  
International migrant stock as a percentage of the total population: 0.5% (2020)  
Share of international migrants 19 years and younger residing in the country/region: 20.2% (2020)

**Mobility and integration dynamics:** High unemployment rates, inflation, political disillusionment, and climate change are among the main drivers for the emigration of youth in Tunisia. **Within the past decade, the irregular migration of unemployed youth to Italy and France has been steadily increasing. Up to 75 percent of migrants to Europe from the Tunisian coast are Tunisians, and about 25 percent are migrants from other sub-Saharan countries who use Tunisia as a transit country.** Historically, Tunisia was known for its labor emigration to European countries to meet the demand for cheap labor in Europe. It currently has bilateral agreements with France, Germany, Belgium, Hungary, and Netherlands with the expectation that workers would return home. In addition, remittances from Tunisian migrants are a huge source of revenue for the state and help establish social safety nets for vulnerable communities in the country of origin.<sup>205</sup> Youth non-migrants and migrants reported that society often perceives them as a rebellious social group characterized by instability. However, many young people interviewed defined a successful life through phrases such as “*financial independence*”, “*security and stability*”, “*living in a society that is free of class prejudice and promotes meritocracy*”, “*good mental health*” and “*a life in which one has free access to health and education and is subject to flexible laws.*” While young migrants are seen as hard workers who fill labor shortages in agriculture (olive and almond harvesting in particular) and construction, they are also seen as competing with locals for jobs. In addition, the structural marginalization of sub-Saharan Africans has increased in the country with the Tunisian president's populist conflation of migration and criminality in several openly xenophobic speeches in February 2023. Language barriers are also a factor influencing the socioeconomic integration of young migrants, and it is easier for migrants from Arabic-speaking Muslim countries, such as Sudan, to integrate into society. Youth migrants dream of returning to their countries of origin and contributing to the economic development of their communities through investing in creating business and employment opportunities in their communities. Migrants from Europe and other western countries find it easier to integrate as they enjoy the privilege of their countries of origin and are more likely to be considered as contributing substantially to the development of the host country. Irregular migration by migrants into and through Tunisia puts them at risk of trafficking, sexual and physical abuse, or exploitation in transit. Furthermore, **there is increased precarity for young migrants in Tunisia as it is difficult to obtain legal documentation, and they are often pushed into the informal sector. While the youth in Tunisia benefit from the favorable social protection system in the country, connectedness, and social kinship, migrants are at risk of detention and deportation by Tunisian state authorities as per their migration law.**

**Policy and youth involvement:** In terms of policy, capacity building for stakeholders in the migration sector is crucial to lay the foundation for sound discourse and comprehensive youth integration strategies. Furthermore, cooperation among actors in the migration sphere will be fundamental in harmonizing local, national, and regional strategic planning and policy.

*“I think Tunisia should work on finding a fair and just solution to the migrants in the country who do not have proper documentation. I believe that socioeconomic integration requires providing migrants with enough rights to live decent lives. In addition, I think that Tunisia should put the topic of migration at the heart of its political agenda and needs to put in place legislation that provides migrants with basic rights, particularly those with precarious status.”<sup>206</sup>*

<sup>205</sup> De Bel-Air, F. (2016) “Migrationpolicycentre.eu BRIEF POLICY Migration Profile: Tunisia”  
[https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/45144/MPC\\_PB\\_2016\\_08.pdf](https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/45144/MPC_PB_2016_08.pdf).

<sup>206</sup> KII 31, Director, NGO, Tunis, Tunisia.

# Bibliography

- ADB (African Development Bank). (2022) "Kenya - Country Profiles," African Development Bank - Building today, a better Africa tomorrow.
- Aleinikoff, T. A. (1995) State-centered Refugee Law: From Resettlement to Containment" In *Mistrusting Refugees* edited by E. Valentine, J.C. and Knudsen, D, 257-278. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2000) *Liquid modernity? Understanding Society*, Polity.
- Cho S, Crenshaw K.W. and McCall L (2013) Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38(4): 785–810.
- Czajka, M. & de Haas (2014) The globalization of migration: Has the world become migratory? *International Migration Review*, 48, 2, 283-323.
- De Bel-Air, F. (2016) "Migrationpolicycentre.eu BRIEF POLICY Migration Profile: Tunisia".
- Durkheim, E. (1951) *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, New York: The Free Press.
- Favell, A. (1998) *Philosophies of Integration: Immigration and the Idea of Citizenship in France and Britain*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Favell, A. (2018) Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6 (1).
- Favell, A. (2022) *The Integration Nation: Immigration and Colonial Power in Liberal Democracies*, Wiley.
- Favell, A. (2022) Immigration, integration and citizenship: elements of a new political demography, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies – JEMS*. Volume 48, N°1, p.3-32.
- Geertz, C. (1973) *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture*, New York, Basic Books.
- ILO (International Labor Organization) (2021) *Market Assessment of Digital Employment Opportunities for Refugee Youth in Kenya*.
- Ingold, T. (20) *Lines, A Brief History*, with a new preface by the author, Routledge Classics.
- IOM (International Organization for Migration) (2021) "International Migration Snapshot".
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Nicolle, H. (2022) *Dialogue on Tech and Migration*, A project of the Migration Strategy Group on International Cooperation and Development, GMFUS and Robert Bosch Stiftung.
- OECD (2017) *Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit*, OECD Development Policy Tools, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Pinderhughes, D. (1987) *Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: a Reexamination of Pluralist Theory*, Chicago, University of Illinois Press.
- Pope, C. and Mays, N. (1995) *Qualitative Research: Reaching the Parts Other Methods Cannot Reach: An Introduction*



to Qualitative Methods in Health and Health Services Research. *British Medical Journal*, 311, 42-45.

- Portes, A. (1995) *The Economic Sociology of Immigration*, New York, Russel Sage Foundation.
- Robertson, S., Harris, A. & Baldassar, L. (2018) Mobile transitions: a conceptual framework for researching a generation on the move, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21:2, 203-217.
- Samuel Hall and Mercy Corps (2018) "Driven to leave: aid and migration – assessing evidence from Somalia and Afghanistan."
- Samuel Hall, WUSC & Mastercard Foundation (2022) *Market Assessment of Digital Employment Opportunities for Refugee Youth*.
- Samuel Hall (2017) "Youth Employment in Kenya Literature Review", British Council Kenya, Think Pieces.
- Samuel Hall (2021) "Youth, Migration and Development: A New Lens for Critical Times." KNOMAD Paper No 41, World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Schinkel, W. (2017) *Imagined Societies, A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe*, Cambridge University Press.
- Schinkel, W. (2018) Against 'immigrant integration': for an end to neocolonial knowledge production, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6 (1).
- Shachar, A. (2009) *The birthright lottery: Citizenship and global inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Thomas, W. and Znaniecki, F. (1958) *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, New York, Dover.
- UNESCO and Samuel Hall (2018) *Inclusion of Afghan refugees in the national education systems of Iran and Pakistan*, Background paper prepared for the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report.
- Vertovec, S. (2007) Super-diversity and its implications, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30:6, 1024-1054.
- Waldinger, R. (2015) *The Cross-Border Connection. Immigrants, Emigrants and Their Homelands*. Harvard University Press.
- World Bank (1994) *The World Bank and Participation*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

