

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

12 August 2013

“Youth Migration: Moving Development Forward”

This year’s observance of International Youth Day focuses on the issue of youth migration. Of the annual total of some 214 million international migrants, young people constitute more than 10 per cent, yet too little is known about their struggles and experiences.

The reasons young people migrate are many. Some are fleeing persecution, others are escaping economic hardship. Some are alone, others part of a family – with parents, siblings and even children of their own. Some have communities to go to, others must make new connections. In transit and at their final destinations, many young migrants face equal or greater struggles, including racism, xenophobia, discrimination and human rights violations. Young women, in particular, face the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Poverty, crowded and unsanitary living conditions and the challenges of finding decent employment are regular features of the migrant experience. These challenges are exacerbated by the current global economic and financial crisis. Migrants are also often accused by communities and politicians of taking jobs from local people, exposing them to further risk of discrimination. In other cases, young people left behind by migrating parents face psychological and social challenges and greater vulnerability.

It is important to emphasize the positive contribution young migrants make to societies of origin, transit and destination – economically and by enriching the social and cultural fabric. Most work hard to earn a living and improve their circumstances. The remittances they send to support families in their home countries are a major contributor to economies worldwide. When they return home, young migrants often enhance development by applying skills and ideas acquired abroad. And, in many cases, women are empowered through migration as they gain financial and social independence.

In October, the United Nations General Assembly will host the second High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development. I urge Member States to consider youth migration. Working with and for young people is one of my top priorities. On this International Youth Day, I encourage Member States, youth-led organizations and other stakeholders to act to promote the rights of all young migrants and maximize the development potential of youth migration.