



NGO Committee on
MIGRATION

A CASE FOR MIGRATION IN PEOPLE-CENTERED URBANIZATION
Intervention by NGO Committee on Migration at the First World Cities Day celebration
at the United Nations Headquarters New York, October 31, 2014

NGO Committee on Migration is a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CoNGO) in consultative relationship with the United Nations. It is a coalition of non-governmental organizations around the world working on migration and its related issues. We seek the protection and promotion of migrants' human rights, in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

We are grateful to Permanent Missions of Italy and of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, the Alliance of Civilizations, and the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), conveners of this event, for invite us to participate in celebrating the world cities day. Our appreciation also goes to the moderator for granting us the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue.

Urban and cities population is in an unprecedented rise, with a projected estimation of five billion in 2030. In their teeming numbers people are flocking towns and cities in search of opportunities for better life because they are less supported and protected by their lands and territories. The emerging phenomenon comes with economic, social and environmental challenges, sometimes overwhelming for local authorities.

There is a consensus that making our cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable are seminal to better management of our cities. These are mentioned in the Open Working Group, OWG's outcome document of 4.7, 8.8 and 10.7 respectively. Goal 16 refers to "promoting peaceful and inclusive societies development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

We want to concretize this intervention with two reports published by New York Times on October 22 and 23, 2014 respectively. New York Times of October 22, 2014 reports "Before dawn breaks and the morning light spills onto his bedroom floor, Carlos Garcia Lobo bounces out of bed, his eyes alight with anticipation, and asks his mother if he can go to school. Each time, she replies to her 8-year-old son: not yet. His is what family refers to as impassable frontier, an experience shared by dozens of unaccompanied immigrant children who have been released to relatives or other sponsors on Long Island who are still unable to register for school." The next day October 23, 2014, the Times reports of the prompt response of the New York State Education Department to the report by deciding to carry out "compliance review of school

district's enrollment procedure in an effort to eliminate barriers to schooling for undocumented immigrant children.”

This captivating story and the equally commendable response of New York State authorities make the case for the intersection of migration and urban/cities development and the attention it deserves in achieving peaceful and inclusive cities. Migration accounts for the largest percentage of the increase in cities' population. It contributes immensely to the evolving new identity and diversity of modern cities and towns. At the same time, management of migration and migrants remains a major challenge to many cities and their authorities. One of the most vulnerable and yet valuable groups in cities' life and systems is the migrants' group especially children and women. Worst forms of abuse, exploitation, discrimination and violence against migrants and their rights take place in the cities. Many of them are still denied access to essential services including, health, housing, justice system and education. Statistics show that foreign-born households are more exposed to housing affordability problems with the propensity of living in overcrowded and unsound housing. They are most unlikely to find decent and regular jobs. For some immigrant children, as in the case of Carlos Garcia Lobo mentioned above, “school is harder to enter than entering the country was” (NY Times, October 22, 2014). The situation is worse for migrants of undocumented status.

A migration-related targets added in OWG's targets 16.2, 16.9 recommend “providing legal identity for all including birth registration and ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children.”

Legal identity, through birth registration and formal migratory status, or its lack has huge impact on ordering of cities. It impacts the cities' authorities planning and implementing effective development programs. For the individual it is the right to other rights, the gateway to the enjoyment of a whole range of other rights, especially the protection of these rights and ensuring that their violation does not go unrecognized. Lack of legal identity worsens situations of poverty and marginalization (*Innocenti Digest*, no. 9; UNICEF Italy Publication, 2002). Children born in our cities must not, irrespective of the migratory status of their parents, be denied this fundamental right of being registered at birth. This would include removing foreseen obstacles that may hinder their parents from seeking the children's birth registration. Efforts ought to be made to ensure the regularization of the status of the undocumented migrants.

People-centered urbanization must work towards making our cities safe, welcoming and accommodating for all peoples irrespective of their migratory status. Every dweller in our cities must be able to find affordable house, clean environment, decent job, healthcare services and above all the protection of his/her human rights.

To achieve inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities requires action both on the local and global levels. On their own cities and urban leadership must create space for wider participation of all stakeholders including migrants (who contribute much!) and civil society in exploring practices that would promote social and economic inclusion of all especially migrants in locally implemented urban planning and development to see for the realization of proposed targets 16.2;16.9.

On the global front efforts must equally be galvanized in this direction. It is important that we all work to see that the OWG recommended targets for inclusive cities and their migration related ones be retained in the final Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs come September 2015.

While we should seek the specific and concrete mention of migration, we encourage strengthening the existing goals and targets that made direct reference to or provide entry points for pursuing the cause of migration and migrants: goals 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16, and 17.

Members of civil society are ready and open to this collaboration in all levels of policy making and implementation. In our 8-point, 5- year-plan leading to the 2013 High Level Dialogue, HLD on migration and development and our recent Stockholm agenda endorsed by over 200 civil society organizations at the last Global Forum on Migration and Development, GFMD in Stockholm, Sweden, we have developed a framework of achieving this collaboration with states and other stakeholders needed for a better management of migration for the development of cities and the protection of the human rights and wellbeing of migrants. They offer useful indicators for the monitoring of the implementations of the recommended goals and targets.

THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW!!! Thank you!