MPI MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE   Enabel *Agence belge de développement enabel.be*   **UNDP**

Making Social Cohesion Work for Everyone:

What can we learn from development interventions on how to promote inclusion and reduce xenophobia?

Virtual Side Event of the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF)

Jointly hosted by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI); Enabel, the Belgian development agency; and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Tuesday, May 17, 2022
8:30–9:30 ET/ 13:30-14:30 WEST/ 14:30 – 15:30 CET

Register here: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/events/social-cohesion-development-interventions

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Concerns that xenophobia and discrimination are on the rise have sparked a panoply of investments in promoting social cohesion and combatting prejudice against people on the move. These concerns are particularly acute in the wake of rising forced displacement and a global pandemic that triggered widespread scapegoating of migrants, and whose economic devastation may further fray the social fabric of communities.

Governments, NGOs and international organizations have called for new ideas to harness solidarity and reduce conflict, and these ideas have featured prominently in the Global Compact on Migration (objectives 16, 17, and 21). Yet not enough is known on what actually works to reduce prejudice and mitigate social tensions, especially as so few interventions—from digital campaigns to community-building interventions—have been rigorously evaluated. The stakes are increasingly high, as existing evidence suggests that not all contact is equally positive, and what works in one setting may fall flat or even backfire in another. **This side event aims to spark a much-needed, practical dialogue around "what works" to promote feelings of trust and blunt tensions and prejudice before they take root.**

We propose an innovative approach, **looking at development interventions to build socially cohesive and inclusive societies**—including investments in livelihoods and economic sustainability—to pull out lessons that can be applied to broader migration contexts. We will look not just at what has been effective—including sometimes overlooked lessons from post-conflict settings on how to build intergroup trust—but also examples of promising ideas on paper that may have fallen short in practice, and why. We have three main objectives:

- **Generating Evidence around "What Works and Why:"** We will map out the key ingredients and optimal conditions that allow social cohesion initiatives to succeed, as well as the risk factors we should take into account when designing programs. We will explore what kind of assessments and analysis should be

carried out before implementing social cohesion programs; what works for different migrant populations; and what types of activities offer the greatest return on investment?

- **Developing a policy blueprint:** This event will shed light on the gaps in GCM implementation regarding the promotion of social cohesion in societies affected by migration and displacement (including countries of destination, transit countries, and countries of origin welcoming return migrants) and put forward strategies for how countries can implement programs successfully.

- **Building new networks**: This event also aims to bring different policymakers and experts together and spark new forms of cooperation among academia, donors, implementing agencies, and local authorities in both higher- and lower-income countries. The discussion will elicit different perspectives around what concrete strategies have worked in different contexts around the world, and create a repertoire of projects that can serve as a reference point for future research and dialogue.

AGENDA

8:30 – 8:35   **Welcome Remarks**
Asako Okai, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director, UNDP Crisis Bureau

8:35 – 9:00   **Panel Discussion: What Concrete Interventions Work for Social Cohesion**
Even as initiatives to reduce prejudice and discrimination proliferate around the globe, there is no agreed-upon "recipe" for what ingredients are needed to foster social cohesion, nor any consensus on how practitioners should evaluate success. Even where small-scale examples of good practice exist, there is a lack of evidence on how to adapt success in one community to a different cultural and historical context, which this session will attempt to bridge. The goal is to highlight concrete strategies that have worked in different contexts around the world—and those that may have fallen short once implemented on the ground—and begin to draw out the key ingredients of success and conditions under which interventions are most effective.

Moderator: Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, Associate Director, International Program, MPI
Panelists:
- **Alexander Vandersmissen,** Mayor of Mechelen, Belgium
- **Maybelis Ávila Barona**, President of the Association Salto Angel; Responsible for the Banco Amable project in Colombia
- **Raffaella Greco Tonegutti**, Lead expert Migration and Development, Enabel, the Belgian development agency
- **Alpha Camara**, "Agent Communautaire" for the National Employment Agency (ANAPEC) in Morocco; Member of the Guinean diaspora community in Morocco

9:00 – 9:25   **Interactive Discussion: Conditions for Success**
We will open the floor to all participants and foster a conversation around what works and why. What can we learn from development interventions on how to ensure face-to-face contact can break down rather than entrench stereotypes? What good practices exist, and what have been the major challenges or misconceptions (including things that look good in theory but do not work in practice). What are the barriers to scaling up or replicating?

9:25 – 9:30   **Closing Remarks**