



Talent Beyond Boundaries
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Linking Displaced Populations to Global Skill Gaps through Regular Labor Migration: A Practical Intervention to Advance Objective #5 of the Global Compact for Migration

Discussion Paper

Introduction

The world today faces twin challenges: how to respond to the legal, economic and humanitarian consequences of over 244 million migrants and how to address demographic trends and skills gaps which undermine economic growth in developing and developed countries alike.¹ The nations of the world gathered in Marrakesh, Morocco to adopt the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) to meet these needs. As countries look to implement the Compact, innovative solutions will be essential. Talent Beyond Boundaries is just one such solution and one that is already being implemented today.²

Significantly, the Compact provides essential language that will assist in the realization of TBB's mission. Countries commit in objective 5 to **“enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.”** The Compact encourages countries to adapt their migration systems to enable migrants, including a heretofore hidden talent pool among the displaced, to contribute to economic growth through global mobility. All stakeholders: the private sector, governments, civil society and the displaced populations of the world benefit when this is done.

Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) is a non-profit organization pioneering innovative skills-matching by linking displaced populations to global skill gaps, and supporting their movement through safe, regular labor migration.³ TBB partners with governments to expand

¹ The International Organization of Migration, “World Migration Report 2018,” https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2018_en.pdf, p. 13.

² TBB was selected to speak at the Intergovernmental Adoption Conference of the Global Compact on Migration, Dialogue 2, Partnerships and Innovative Initiatives for the way forward at the Intergovernmental Conference, to provide an example of the implementation of Objective 5. [TBB's Intervention at the GCM Adoption Conference](#), Marrakech, Morocco, December 11, 2018.

³ TBB has received support from the U.S. Department of State; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada; World Bank; The Rockefeller Foundation; Roy and Patricia Disney Family Foundation; Global Innovation Fund; Tent Foundation; Cameron Foundation; and Journey Fund.



regular economic immigration pathways to accommodate the unique barriers that displaced populations face in accessing these pathways. This solution provides countries the talent they need, and assists in the global response to displacement by providing a legal immigration pathway for a population otherwise at risk of moving irregularly.

TBB is an active participant of the Business Mechanism (BM) of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), and participated in every negotiation session for the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). Drawing on TBB's participation in both the GFMD BM and the GCM negotiations, this paper will outline stakeholders benefited by Objective 5 and describe how countries can implement it by facilitating the connection of displaced people to hiring needs through economic immigration pathways.⁴

Stakeholders

The Private Sector

The private sector is a critical stakeholder in the creation of effective immigration policies; companies rely on immigrants to fill hiring needs necessary for their operation and growth. The GFMD Business Mechanism (the primary voice of private sector input to the Compact) notes in the Global Forum on Migration and Development's paper, "The Business Case for Migration":

Around the world, developed economies are facing the labor impact of aging populations and falling birth rates. The shrinking domestic labor pool means shortages of workers at all skill levels... By 2030, a shortage of up to 40.9 million workers is predicted in Brazil, 2.3 million in Canada, 24.5 million in China, and 10 million in Germany. **There is a global mismatch of worker skills with the needs of the labor market, in both high-skilled and low-skilled occupations.**⁵

The global skills mismatch is a barrier to growth for companies and countries alike. Private and public actors deploy a range of strategies to address this mismatch, including education and workforce development and inclusion programs. The paper notes that:

⁴ See TBB's detailed summary of its event at the Intergovernmental Adoption Conference of the Global Compact on Migration, [A New Private Sector Talent Strategy and Emerging Solution to Displacement through Regular Migration: Linking Displaced Populations to Global Skill Gaps](#), December 9, 2018, Marrakech, Morocco.

⁵Austin Fragomen, The Business Case for Migration: The The GFMD Business Mechanism's Position Paper and Recommendations for Presentation at the Ninth GFMD Summit, 2016, p. 5.

“Mobility of talent across borders is a small but important piece of maximising global economic opportunity. Eighty-three percent of respondents report that their organisations hire foreign workers to fill key positions... and 66% cited the need to address skills gaps in the domestic labor market as a reason for hiring or transferring foreign employees.”⁶

Employers frequently cite insufficient availability of visa pathways for needed workers, complicated and lengthy visa processing times, and lack of transparent procedures as barriers to talent mobility. 70% of respondents to the Business Mechanism’s survey cited lack of available visas and/or work visas as a roadblock to talent mobility.⁷ Objective 5 responds to private sector input, reflecting an aspiration to ensure migration systems equip employers to connect to necessary talent and facilitate the growth of enterprise as well as local and national economies.

Governments

Increased flexibility and adaptability of regular pathways increase countries’ ability to meet their demographic challenges and development goals. By facilitating greater efficiency in processes to fill labor market gaps, governments can ensure their national enterprises have the human capital to thrive. Governments are also interested in “raising the global talent pool,” exploring ways in which initiatives like the Global Skills Partnership could create benefit for countries of origin as well as destination while increasing possibilities for safe and legal migration.⁸

The fundamental goal of the GCM is to develop a framework to promote safe, legal migration while decreasing the “incidence and negative impact of irregular migration.” The Global Compact for Migration is undertaken in the context of “an unprecedented level of human mobility” which includes large mixed migration flows of refugees and migrants.⁹ Solutions must respond to the diverse drivers of migration, and reflect the reality that due to conflict, natural disaster, or other precarious situations, many people on the move today find themselves

⁶ Ibid, p. 5.

⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸ Global Forum on Migration and Development, Morocco and Germany, Draft Concept Paper note roundtable 3.1 “Raising the Global Talent Pool”

https://gfmd.org/files/documents/gfmd_2017-2018_co-chairmanship_draft_concept_paper.pdf

⁹ UN General Assembly, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 3 October 2016, A/RES/71/1, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57ceb74a4.html> [accessed 19 December 2018].

compelled to migrate. The Center for Global Development has found evidence that **“expanded lawful channels can be a critical ingredient of an overall strategy to suppress and displace irregular migration.”**¹⁰

Responding effectively and humanely to irregular migration is an important political imperative for nations around the world. By making pathways flexible and adaptable to the diverse situations from which migrants come, nations may promote the use of regular pathways while maximizing economic development.

Migrants in a Situation of Vulnerability

Objective 5 makes special consideration for **“migrants in a situation of vulnerability,”** noting that they may have unique needs to which **“expanding and diversifying availability of pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration”** may respond. The years since 2010 have seen massive numbers of migrants in situations of vulnerability, and these numbers are likely to grow in the years ahead as drivers of migration including conflict, environmental degradation, and lack of economic opportunity continue to afflict millions around the world.

Objective 5, paragraph (g) calls for countries to **“Develop or build on existing national and regional practices for admission and stay of appropriate duration based on compassionate, humanitarian or other considerations for migrants compelled to leave their countries of origin, due to sudden-onset natural disasters and other precarious situations, such as by providing humanitarian visas, private sponsorships, access to education for children, and temporary work permits, while adaptation in or return to their country of origin is not possible.”**

Border-countries of conflict and disaster often disproportionately host vulnerable migrants and refugees, while their labor markets and infrastructure are ill-equipped to bear such population influx. When other governments build and expand national practices of admission for vulnerable migrants, they contribute to greater stability in key regions of the world, and more equitable responsibility-sharing.

A Practical Intervention

¹⁰ Michael Clemens and Kate Gough, “Can Regular Migration Channels Reduce Irregular Migration?” Feb, 2018, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/can-regular-migration-channels-reduce-irregular-migration.pdf>



Facilitating the use of labor migration pathways as an additional and complementary solution to displacement is a practical implementation of concepts put forward in the Global Compact, and Objective 5 specifically. Countries voice in the compact the needs to both provide additional solutions to displacement, as well as address demographic challenges through immigration. Businesses fill hiring needs through international recruitment, while displaced people are at risk of migrating irregularly out of desperation, despite having skills compatible with global needs. By facilitating the connection of companies looking to recruit from abroad to displaced people with the necessary skills, countries accomplish the GCM’s goal to encourage regular migration by expanding the availability of regular pathways for displaced populations through an employment based solution. With “enhanced flexibility” of migration systems as proposed in Objective 5, **this approach fits into many countries’ current approaches to growth through skill based immigration.** It is also an approach that benefits the private sector by opening access to a new talent pool, while at the same time unleashing the private sector’s potential as a driver social impact.

The potential of labor mobility as a solution to displacement is also recognized in Paragraph 95 of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), the GCM’s sister compact, which seeks state contributions to facilitate labor mobility “through the identification of refugees with skills that are needed in third countries,” as a complementary pathway for refugee resettlement. The GCM elucidates that labor mobility as a solution to displacement can also be applied to migrants whose status’ lie outside the purview of the GCR.

The paragraphs below outline the Talent Beyond Boundaries program, as the pioneer of labor mobility as a solution to displacement, and offers key lessons for other governments and stakeholders who wish to implement such programs as a means to advance Objective 5 of the GCM.

Skills Matching

Talent Beyond Boundaries is a private-sector driven initiative, which links displaced people who are typically excluded from local and global labor markets, with international employment. In 2016, TBB partnered with local and international civil society organizations to map the skills, work experiences, and educational qualifications of 10,000 displaced people living in Lebanon and Jordan where their formal access to the labor market is restricted and their pathway to integration unclear. TBB developed its mapping tool, the “Talent Catalog” in consultation with private sector representatives from Bayt.com, Ericsson, and others. Unlike other data tools used to collect information on migrants and refugees, TBB’s Talent Catalog collects a detailed work history akin to a CV such that employers can evaluate suitability for



employment. **This mapping has demonstrated that displaced people are a source of human capital that is often rendered invisible to global employers.** The individuals represented in the “Talent Catalog” span more than 200 occupations from engineers, IT developers and healthcare professionals to carpenters, tailors and chefs. One-third have tertiary education, and more than 40 percent report some level of English, while another 4 percent speak French.¹¹

Equipped with relevant data, TBB has approached employers who, for the first time, can consider the previously hidden talent pool of international refugees when sourcing talent. Using the Talent Catalog and video communication technology, TBB has supported remote international recruitment efforts for dozens of companies, primarily from Canada and Australia, and demonstrated that the international recruitment of displaced people can be part of an innovative talent sourcing and retention strategy that also accomplishes a social good. TBB has received special interest from employers in rural and remote areas who struggle with retention, as well as in industries facing considerable skills shortage (from skilled trades to healthcare and information technology).¹²

Employers are best-placed to determine whether or not individuals meet their skill needs. Employers have conducted remote interviews and technical tests through online platforms like codility.com, asked candidates to review technical drawings, or complete case studies. Other employers have been able to conduct in person interviews of candidates in their host countries (Jordan or Lebanon). Employers have been able to make offers of employment to these individuals, and support their migration through regular skills-based migration pathways. The average salary offer to date for TBB candidates is \$45,000 USD, which represents more than a 500% increase for many candidates.

Enhanced Flexibility and Availability of Regular Pathways

Despite the fact that displaced people can fill international hiring needs of the private sector, they often times face unique barriers to accessing regular economic pathways. **Talent Beyond Boundaries is collaborating directly with the governments of both Canada and Australia to**

¹¹ For profiles of IT candidates in the Talent Catalog, see: <http://talentbeyondboundaries.org/s/TTB-IT-Candidates-Packet.pdf>; for information on the Talent Catalog, see: <http://talentbeyondboundaries.org/talent-catalog.html>; <http://talentbeyondboundaries.org/s/TBB-Analytics.pdf>.

¹² Talent Beyond Boundaries, “Global Refugee Talent: Business leaders share insights on the skills and potential of the global refugee talent pool,” September 2018, <http://talentbeyondboundaries.org/s/TBB-BusinessPerspectivesReport-Sep2018.pdf>.

identify these barriers which hinder private sector access to critical talent, and prevent vulnerable migrants from migrating to self-reliance through a regular pathway.

Identifying and addressing the barriers that those displaced by conflict, disaster, or other precarious situations may face is a critical investment in ensuring that the expanded flexibility and availability of regular pathways can serve vulnerable migrants. In the course of supporting the migration of several displaced individuals with international job offers to Canada and Australia, TBB has begun to build an evidence base of such barriers. Some examples of barriers that displaced individuals may face to accessing regular migration include:

Lack of a valid passport: Many skills-based pathways require a valid (current) passport as part of the application process. This may be a formal requirement written in document checklists or, in other cases a valid passport number is a required field in an online application system. Those forced to migrate on short notice and compelled to remain outside their country may have an expired passport or no passport, and they may be unable to renew or obtain a new one. Such a requirement excludes these displaced individuals even if they have alternative means of identification.

Lack of lawful residency: Lawful residency in the current country of residence is another common requirement in regular skills-based visa streams. This requirement is also often written in document checklists, for example: “If you live in a country other than your country of nationality, include a photocopy of your visa for the country in which you are currently living.” Many vulnerable migrants do not have lawful residency in the countries where they are compelled to seek temporary refuge.

Inability to access police reports: Many economic migration pathways require police reports from any country an applicants has lived in for more than 6 months. Many displaced people cannot return to their home country or the embassy of their country due to the circumstances in which they fled (conflict, persecution, etc.). Many in this population can also not secure police reports from the country of current residence due to not having lawful residency.

Lack of educational records: Many economic migration pathways require formal accreditations of their university or other higher education degrees. This often requires sending transcripts or other documentary proof directly from institutions of higher learning in one’s home country. For those displaced by conflict or disaster, it may be

exceedingly difficult or impossible to reach a home-country institution which may no longer be operational.

Lack of settlement funds: Many pathways include a settlement fund requirement as an assurance that an individual will be able to provide for him or herself after arrival in their country of destination. In many cases such funds cannot be borrowed. Proof of sufficient funds include bank statements, proof of a savings balance, and deposit statements. This requirement may be prohibitive for displaced people with few to no savings after years outside their home country and no access to legal employment. Further, their funds may not be in accepted forms such as bank accounts or other savings vehicles due to limited banking access.

Flexibility and adaptability that contribute to solutions to barriers like the above would increase access of displaced people to regular migration pathways, allowing them to fill global skills gaps.

Case Study: Economic Mobility Pathways Project (EMPP)

In 2018, the Government of Canada, through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), created and is funding the Economic Mobility Pathways Project (EMPP) to test refugee access to federal and provincial economic pathways, and to identify barriers unique to this population with a view to developing solutions. The EMPP is implemented by IRCC, Talent Beyond Boundaries and RefugePoint, with participation from the UNHCR. Provinces and territories taking part in this project are Manitoba, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and the Yukon. It includes refugee and displaced populations living in East Africa and the Middle East.¹³ Program innovations include accepting expired passports as proof of identification, issuing one-way travel documents, allowing grants to be accepted as “proof of funds,” and providing alternative evaluation processes to ensure program candidates are processed on timelines competitive to other applicants. This unique, innovative pilot speaks to Canada's commitment to understanding how the talent in displaced populations can contribute to Canada's economic competitiveness, and how expanded access to regular migration can be a critical tool in solving the global crisis of displacement.

¹³ See Government of Canada, August 8, 2018, “Minister Hussen wraps up trip to Uganda and Tanzania.”; and Ahmed Hussen, Marie-Claude Bibeau and Jean-Nicolas Beuze, “Why Canada will lead the charge on the UN’s global refugee plan,” *Maclean’s*, September 24, 2018.

Looking Forward

Other national governments can pilot programs to expand the availability and flexibility of regular economic pathways with a mind to advancing development and opening additional solutions to displacement. Some practical recommendations for implementing such a program include:

1) Advance test cases.

Barriers to regular migration become readily apparent through the testing of regular pathways by displaced individuals. Governments can undertake limited pilot projects to uncover the unique barriers displaced people face to accessing their particular economic migration programs, even when they have job skills relevant to the labor market and an invested, sponsoring employer. Undertaking such test programs takes thoughtful planning and appropriate expectation management for participants and employers alike, but is the surest way to produce genuine learning about needed flexibility or enhancement. The Economic Mobility Pathways Project in Canada is an example of a government-sponsored pilot that has been carried out in partnership with civil society and private enterprise; the Department of Home Affairs in Australia is similarly engaged in a pilot project of limited scope that will inform future policy development.

2) Encourage private-sector leadership.

TBB's experience has demonstrated that given the opportunity, employers are eager to lead on generating new solutions to global skill gaps as well as to displacement. By enlisting them as partners in efforts to enhance the flexibility of regular migration pathways, governments can ensure that solutions to enhance the flexibility of regular pathways for vulnerable migrants genuinely meet employers' needs. Employers can lead by identifying suitable talent from a talent pool of displaced people for their hiring needs and supporting immigration processes for these candidates.

3) Engage long-standing civil-society infrastructure, as well as the latest technologies.

Groups around the world are doing capacity-building and livelihoods work with vulnerable migrant populations, and are ready to engage in new and innovative programming that creates a pathway to self-reliance for their clients. Civil-society groups in migrant transit and hosting countries have deep penetration in local



communities; if they are supplied with sufficient resources and the appropriate technology to both map skills and facilitate remote recruitment, these groups can be key partners in facilitating international skills-matching and regular migration for qualified individuals.

For more information on developing programs that link displaced populations to global skill gaps, please contact Rachel Lawrie, rlawrie@talentbeyondboundaries.org.