

Linking Displaced Populations to Global Skill Gaps through Regular Labor Migration

Selected Remarks Delivered at a Side Event of the Global Compact for Migration Adoption Conference

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The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of 2016 and the subsequent Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) call for a comprehensive approach to our global migration systems that will ultimately “work for all” and reduce the incidence of dangerous and/or irregular migration. Objective 5 of the GCM commits to “enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration” with a view to “[facilitate] labour mobility and decent work reflecting demographic and labour market realities...and responds to the needs of migrants in a situation of vulnerability, with a view to expanding and diversifying availability of pathways for safe, orderly and regular migration.”

Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) hosted a side event that will explore enhanced availability and flexibility of labour migration pathways as a solution to the private sector’s need for talent and as a regular migration solution for migrants in “precarious situations” or crisis, as described in Paragraph G of Objective 5. TBB is a non-governmental organization facilitating international skills matching and migration for displaced populations in cooperation with the Governments of Canada and Australia. TBB has been actively engaged with the Global Forum on Migration and Development’s Business Mechanism and has participated every negotiation session for the GCM.

This side event shared learnings from the TBB program and highlighted its alignment with the goals of Objective 5 specifically, and the GCM more broadly. The panel consisted of representatives from the private sector, governments, civil society, academia and the philanthropic sector explored the potential direct and indirect impacts of increasing access of displaced populations to the global labor market to fill skill gaps.

Opening Remarks



Gary Slaiman

Corporate Outreach Advisor
Talent Beyond Boundaries

“We have 68.5 million displaced people in the world, 37% of whom are refugees and less than 1% of these people get access to help through resettlement. Others stay in place or get humanitarian assistance but they do not move. There are few options for regular migration, for the vast majority of 68.5 million people. The rest are left to migrate irregularly, stay in the host countries, meaning they either work irregularly or not all in their fields of training. We have is a labour mobility crisis for which there is a solution.”

“Countries around the globe are facing skills gaps that are impeding economic growth. **45% of employers report that talent shortages and difficulty filling positions.** But the Global Compact on Migration, particularly objective 5, creates more options. Migrants need more options for legal migration and companies need more flexible immigration systems so they can recruit internationally when they cannot find the local talent. The Global Compact on Migration includes commitments from countries to “enhance the availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration.” In the compact countries are committing to “adopt options and pathways for regular migration in a manner which will facilitate regular migration and decent work. Reflecting demographic and labour market realities.” and “further responses to the needs of migrants compelled to leave their countries of origin due to precarious situations with a view to expanding and diversifying the availability of pathways for safe, orderly, and regular migration.”

“The work being done by Talent Beyond Boundaries is a real example, in action today, of a partnership that exemplifies the hopes and aspirations of the Global Compact for Migration. This is happening now, even before implementation of the compact, because it is a practical real-world solution that is private sector driven. Companies are trying to fill skills gaps and can find a hidden talent pool in the displaced populations. **With the help of government and civil society we can give the opportunity for the displaced to fulfill their own capacity and the dignity that comes with this, but also contribute to the economy and to the development of society rather than ask the society and economics to give to them.”**

“It’s a partnership and an important one. **It’s important for the for the individuals and the businesses but it is also important that it changes perceptions, it changes the narrative.** People are asking when this is going to come out of the closet. The businesses that have committed to this project, that have identified with skills gaps are talking about the opportunity with displaced populations. They are out of the closet, on a daily basis. They are working on solutions, bringing to the public and the governments, solutions that work and it’s an important part of the narrative. These people have capacity and businesses need them.”

“Part of the solution that TBB is exploring is really about system change. **The current system divides skilled migrants and refugee solutions apart as if they are two different things. Talent Beyond Boundaries is saying “No, those hard boundaries can be broken, that there are complementary pathways.”**

Panel 1: Private Sector Insights on Meeting Global Skill Gaps



Lynn Shotwell

Head, Global Outreach and
Operations
Society for Human Resource
Management

"I think the Global Compact is a good step forward; it raises the visibility of the needs for legal pathways. **Talent Beyond Boundaries is doing some skills matching and it is one of the things that I would like to see the HR community to do.**

"We are working on different levels to say, how do we better match people, how do we create legal pathways? **Working on legal pathways is really important because sometimes there are impediments put up by the governments even though employers might want to hire migrant workers.** Either there is no legal pathway or in some cases, there are licensing requirements that have been in place for many years that may or may not be justified in today's environment."



Mohamed Slassi

Representative
Confédération Générale des
Entreprises Du Maroc

"The survey from Haut-Commissaire au Plan shows that the sectors that employ most migrants are service, construction and industrial sector. We need to better organize labour migration to fit the needs of these sectors. By giving migrants legal and equal access to the labor market and vocational training we can meet the skills gap in various sectors. Labor mobility between West African countries and Morocco is the key behind Morocco's success in some sectors, especially in the service sector."



Sandra Saric

VP of Talent Innovation
Information and
Communications
Technology Council

"For us the work that Talent Beyond Boundaries is doing is huge, because across the board we need talent from everywhere. It always breaks my heart that individuals who are displaced and who have technical skills are out of work. Especially in the tech sector, the further you are away from the job the harder it is for you to upskill and re-skill and retool to find those opportunities. Being able to create that bridge and find a place through the immigration process to bring them in is great. **We have a lot of employers who have expressed interest and when we did the mini pilot we actually had to cut off the number of employers because it was such a small pilot. We stopped at eleven employers but we have a list of I think 25 that were interested.**"

"We are facing some difficulties to find the right persons for different positions and for example engineering positions, project leaders, programmers and also especially women workers. If we can take advantage of the skills of the individuals who can't work in some countries, we can fill this gap."



Ahmad Ras

HR Development
Responsible Morocco
Fujikura Automotive

"Labor mobility has a lot of potential and it can be very positive for the private sector growth. **It accelerates the growth and consequently creates more job opportunities or for other migrants as well as the local population.**"

Panel 2: Government, Academic and Philanthropic Insights on Labor Mobility for Refugees



Veronica Coulter

Immigration Program
Manager
*Immigration, Refugees and
Citizenship Canada*

"I find it very heartening that this segment really exists, I think to have civil society, businesses, government all involved, it exemplifies what we want out of the Global Compact."

"My colleagues in the department and people who have heard that this pilot program exists are so excited about this idea that it is possible. Yes, the numbers are extremely small compared to the number of migrants Canada accepts every year, but we're showing that it's possible and we're saying that "Of course it should happen." It has the power of sparking people's more innovate side. We can and we are changing the narrative. **If you even have a small number of migrants who enter, who businesses want and support the economy in a way that is necessary for the good of that state then that's good news and it's very important to have that."**



Michael Clemens

Co-Director of Migration,
Displacement, and
Humanitarian Policy and
Senior Fellow
*Center for Global
Development*

"More migration in not an adequate answer. What is needed is innovation. What is needed is new kinds of immigration, new ways for migration to happen."

"[One] answer to this conundrum, among the hundred different ones we need is in the work of Talent Beyond Boundaries, which I have just admired for years. If you look superficially, it's a nice project helping out these people in conditions of displacement, helping them get jobs and improve their lives. It's much more fundamental than that. **It's creating a new kind of migration. It's not traditional refugee resettlement, it's not gate-keeping at the border of Canada, selecting among those who show up and might get a job. It's directly facilitating job placement, finding this legal space within displacement, treating them as a resource rather than a burden.** It's a kind of migration the world has never seen, and TBB is inventing that."

"I think we need 98 other innovations of this kind. A broad portfolio of different kinds, but the traditional answers of 'just more migration' 'just some more aid for Africa' 'just some more boats in the Mediterranean' are just so woefully inadequate that **there is an urgent need for the kind of work that Talent Beyond Boundaries does."**



Natalia Gavrilita

Managing Director,
Global Innovation Fund

"Talent Beyond Boundaries, is the only organization that is collecting information about qualification, experience of migrants and the talent capital and is promoting an alternative pathway to settlement is actually mind boggling."

"We certainly need a lot more models like Talent Beyond Boundaries that innovate and help prove that other ways are possible. TBB's skills matching can certainly be a very good way forward for the migrants themselves, the refugees themselves, but also for the international community."

“Global Innovation fund is a fund that is supported by governments of US, UK, Sweden, Australia, and some foundations but for us it is imperative to provide evidence to the donor community and governments to help them understand this is in their self-interest and why. The work that Talent beyond Boundaries is doing is critical in that sense: understanding the process, understanding the costs and benefits for each of the actors is key to push this initiative forward.”

Panel 3: Labor Mobility for Refugees in Action



Noura Ismail

Lebanon Country Manager,
Talent Beyond Boundaries

“The process to connect companies with our talent always begins with our Talent Catalog. It is an online platform that we’ve created to collect the professional backgrounds of candidates comprehensively and thoroughly. When we first started working in Lebanon and Jordan, we assumed that this data already existed but we very surprised when we found out that it did not. **There is a lot of data collected on refugees but they were never really asked “What are your skills?”, “What did do in your country of origin?”, “What skills can you contribute?”.** **That’s really why the Talent Catalog has become so significant, because nothing currently like it exists.”**

“We collected over 10,000 profiles of refugees and displaced peoples. The range of talent honestly has blown us away: there are over 200 professions that are represented in our Talent Catalog, 65% have bachelor’s degrees, 11% masters and 2% PhDs; 55% speak some level of English. We have over 800 people skilled in trades including mechanics, technicians, blacksmiths; we also have 500 engineers, 350 people in IT, 400 in health care. It’s just such a wide range of professions.”

“One of our candidates has a job offer as a carpenter in Canada. When we contacted him, he was considering escaping through an illegal route to Turkey and potentially going to Europe. He has a five-year old son who hasn’t been able to enroll in school Lebanon because the schools are overcrowded. When we stepped in and showed him a different pathway is possible, he changed his plans and he is going to move to Canada with his son and start working there. This shows you if you’re offering regular routes, that’s what honestly people want. ”



Hortense Minishi

Resettlement Senior Officer
Refuge Point

“The job opportunities are not always available to refugees and displaced peoples because of their illegal documentation or lack of funds. It’s especially very hard to find formal work in the area of their expertise. For example, the people who studied nursing can’t work as nurses in some of the host countries because of the prejudice against migrants or licensing requirements when in different countries need nurses or with a particular skillset. That’s how RefugePoint came into the narrative of creating complementary pathways: **we fill that gap where we are identifying skills and market experience and we are fitting them into international labour markets where they can work, where they can be self-reliant, where they can go back to being at a place of dignity which is the human rights side for the Global Compact for Migration.”**

“For the longest time, we have approached humanitarian aid with band aid approach, where we offer remedies for a very short time. We cover up the wound, but we don't look into what is causing it, so it keeps coming back, it doesn't heal. **The complementary pathway offers more than a band-aid approach, it offers a lasting solution because at the end of the day, people are able to go work and build up their own income, build up their own investments, feed their families, move on and create a new future.** This is something dynamic, simply new and very different from the old perspective.”



Rachel Lawrie

Global Outreach Manager
Talent Beyond Boundaries

“**We’ve seen immense interest from both the provinces and businesses in Canada.** Provinces invest a lot of time and money into helping businesses, especially SMEs, connect with talent abroad. SMEs don't have the capacity to, one, find the talent abroad and two, to navigate the immigration system to bring them in. Provinces really have to assist in doing this: they do recruitment pitches and they put a lot of time in helping companies navigate the process. Provinces have been really excited to partner with TBB because we are actually providing the service of finding the talent. SMEs are also very excited that there is a group that is performing this recruitment service for them for free and also that they get to partake in such an innovative solution that is bigger than just filling a talent gap. Larger companies also see the value in this initiative.”

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