

**16th UN Forum on Minority Issues 2023**  
**Minorities and Cohesive Societies: Equality, Social Inclusion, and**  
**Socio-economic Participation**

**Session 2 – Socio-Economic Empowerment – Jackson-Preece**

**What is socio-economic empowerment and why is it important?**

- Economic empowerment is the ability of people to access and control the resources and opportunities that enable them to improve their living standards, well-being and dignity
- Minority rights facilitate economic empowerment by ensuring that persons belonging to minorities are protected from discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion and that they can participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

**Intersectional Approach**

- An intersectional approach to empowerment is necessary in this context because persons belonging to minorities often face multiple forms of discrimination, exclusion, and vulnerability - for example based on gender, age or migrant/refugee status – that produce additional barriers to their social and economic participation.
- In our previous session, we already discussed the importance of specifically empowering minority women and girls
- In this session, we are invited to think further about the socio-economic empowerment of youth, migrants and refugees from minority backgrounds, who also face additional barriers to social and economic participation

**How do we achieve socio-economic empowerment?**

- Achieving socio-economic participation for all members of society, including persons belonging to minorities requires equal treatment AND equal opportunities
- A necessary first step is comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation to protect persons belonging to minorities from direct and indirect discrimination by both public and private actors in employment,

housing, health care, social protection, public goods and services, and other relevant areas.

- While the prohibition of discrimination based on identity it is imperative that we must go further to create actual equal opportunities for social and economic participation that leave no one behind
- State should implement policies to reduce inequalities affecting persons belonging to national minorities.
- To promote the social and economic participation of persons belonging to national minorities, special measures may be necessary in areas such as employment, education and training, political representation, financial services, land tenure and property rights, pensions and social security.
- Special measures may take various forms, including funding allocations, quotas, recruitment or skills training programmes, or targeted opportunities to access grants or credit support.
- As obstacles to participation in social and economic life may vary for different communities or individuals within communities, special measures should be tailored to address specific needs and circumstances

## **Minority Youth**

- Migrants and refugees face many challenges and obstacles standing in the way of their socio-economic empowerment
- Some of the additional barriers that confront them are:
  1. **Lack of access to quality education and skills training:**
  2. **High unemployment and underemployment:**
  3. **Lack of access to mentorship and role models:**
  4. **Lack of social capital and civic engagement:**
- It is important to listen to the voices and experiences of minority youth, and to involve them and their parents in the design and implementation of policies and programs that aim to address their needs and aspirations.
- Some examples of special measures to empower youth from minority backgrounds include:

1. **Targeted scholarships, training programs, internships, teacher incentives or community-specific programmes,**
  2. **Multilingual education** including adequate opportunities to learn their minority language or to receive instruction in this language as well as instruction in the state or official language
- Empowering minority youth through positive measures creates a more diverse pool of talent within society that facilitates broader processes of integration

## **Minority Migrants and Refugees**

- Migrants and refugees face many challenges and obstacles standing in the way of their socio-economic empowerment
- Some of the additional barriers that confront them are:
  1. **Lack of identification or proof of residence**
  2. **Financial barriers** due to low incomes, limited savings, or discrimination in the labour market.
  3. **Lack of information about** the availability of services or benefits in their host countries.
  4. **Inability to speak or understand** the language of their host countries.
- These barriers can have a cumulative and compounding effect on the well-being, integration, and dignity of migrants and refugees.
- They can also violate their human rights and undermine the social cohesion and development of their host countries.
- Therefore, it is important to adopt human & minority rights-based approaches to socio-economic empowerment that ensure safe, inclusive, and non-discriminatory access to services and benefits for all migrants and refugees, regardless of their migration status
- Some examples of special measures to empower migrants and refugees include:
  - **Taking all available steps to end statelessness**, such as ensuring that no child is born stateless, implementing proper birth registration, ensuring equal access to documentation, and removing any ethnic, religious, linguistic or gender

discrimination from citizenship laws

- **Ensuring information** about how to access essential services like identity documentation, housing, health care, and education is available in a **language that they understand**;
- **Recognizing skills and qualifications** obtained in other jurisdictions;
- Offering subsidized / free access to language training in the official language of the host state, skills training and education;
- Measures such as these will help migrants/refugees find meaningful and decent work thus facilitating their integration within the host society while reducing their dependency on state aid.