



The Global Debates

The Global Debates are a year-long initiative developed to give high school students and their teachers an opportunity to initiate and actively participate in public discussion around critical international issues. It is also a platform to exchange views and share courses of action that need to be taken around the world to combat these issues. The initiative consists of 2 campaigns taking place from October to December and from February to April. The main theme for the school year 2010/2011 is international migration. The topic of the autumn campaign is: Nations of the world should increase protection of the economic and social rights of migrants. Any high school anywhere in the world (grades 9-12, ages 14-19) can participate in the Global Debates. Register your school online now! In the past 3 years we have had schools from more than 90 countries participate in the Global Debates. Make sure you and your community are represented this year too!

Who are we?

We are a group of people from the International Debate Education Association (IDEA) who in cooperation with UN Foundation and National Forensics League (NFL) believe that current affairs are our common shared responsibility. We believe that it's not just world leaders and elected officials who can make a difference but students and educators who are instrumental to make this change by activating their peers and communities to take action. So join the Global Debates and see the change you want!

Why should our school participate?

This project offers students a unique opportunity to develop life skills and participate in an international activity where they feel they matter and can make a change. People who get engaged and involved in issues are more successful in getting to college and pursuing the careers of their choice. Participating in this project will help students and put your school on the map worldwide.

How can I make a difference by joining in?

Not only will this initiative help you understand the issues underlying international migration, but you will be able to impact on the life of your community. Are you fed up listening to people in charge talk about what is best for you and people around you? Design your own plan, debate it with others, make it happen and let everyone know!

What's in it for me?

You can learn more about the problems you and people around you face and help find solutions to these problems. By debating them, organizing events to address them and informing others about these issues, you will learn how to present yourself, argue for what you believe in and how to work in a group to advocate change. These are skills that you will need in your future career, no matter what you end up doing.

Win great prizes!

The schools that earn the most points will win the yearly final prize. This is your chance to fill your library with books from Idebate press and the bi-annual Idebate magazine. All actively participating schools will receive a certificate and the most successful schools will win a trip to the IDEA Youth Forum, which will take place from July 19-August 1 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey. Apart from getting to know the city of Istanbul, you will meet other students and teachers from over 40 countries of the world to engage in discussions, workshops and social activities that will change your life.

For more information visit
www.theglobaldebates.org or contact
Veronika.vvlckova@idebate.org

Concept Paper
Neill Harvey-Smith

2011 IDEA Youth Forum and the Global Debates: Migration

“The nations of the world should increase the protection of the economic and social rights of migrants.”

Introduction

Right now, all over the world, millions of people are on the move. Scientists, academics and business people are making international transfers. The oppressed and war-weary are fleeing their homes. Rural people are flocking to cities. Inner-city dwellers are escaping to the suburbs. Some are making a temporary move, to work and save for their family; some are trafficked against their will; others are building a new life on the other side of the world.

The public debate about immigration tends to lump everyone in a pot marked “immigrants”. Each person has their own reasons for moving, and their own story to tell. In order to understand the dynamic forces at work, we need to group people together. But we must not let that be an excuse for over-generalisation.

Types of Migration

Economic Migrants v Refugees

This is an important distinction, often glossed over in debates. Economic migrants move to seek a better life, usu-

“Global Migrations”: A Zesty Start to the Global Debates

Need a merry way to ease back into the school year? A new game developed by FUND, a European Commission project that aims to promote scientific thinking in European cities, will keep you zippy, while at the same time giving you a head start on this year’s Global Debates.

The game, called Global Migrations, is one of many in the “PlayDecide” series, a unique discussion-based game format developed by FUND. In Global Migrations, players harmonize to reap information from playing cards on important migration issues, such as the labor market, the Geneva Convention, and ethnic conflicts. Over the course of eighty minutes, they zealously debate the issues, ultimately voting on a policy position. Finally, players can upload their results online, and discover which policies have been voted for in other “decide sessions.” Stay tuned for more information on how playing this high-spirited and mirthful game can even earn you points!

This game, as well as others, can be downloaded in pdf format from the PlayDecide website, <http://www.playdecide.eu>.

ally with greater material rewards. Refugees are people who leave their country due to the fear of persecution.

Immigration policies governing economic migration include laws on the right to work, buy property, gain residence, receive welfare. For example, the European Union's single market allows the free movement of workers for EU citizens, while member states impose varying levels of restriction on labour market participation by people from outside the EU. This is a stark divide in the conferral of economic and social rights.

Policies governing the treatment of refugees are guided by the UN Refugee Convention 1951 and its 1967 Protocol. The UN estimates that there are currently 15.2 million refugees, of whom less than a million are asylum seekers, i.e. people who have requested asylum in a specific country as a result of their refugee status¹.

The tone of debates often suggests that refugee crises are a developing world issue which creates a developed world problem, with a flood of people pouring into western countries. As such, rich countries often incarcerate asylum seekers and deny them the right to work. Yet four fifths of refugees are accepted by developing countries, with Pakistan, Iran and Syria each playing host to over a million people. The top destination for asylum applications is South Africa. And almost half the world's refugees are fleeing from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan².

Internal v. External

The focus of most discussion is external migration – movement across national boundaries. This can take either of the forms described above. But internal migration is also an enormous issue.

At the hard edge, the UN estimates that there are 27.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), forced from their homes by conflict or catastrophe³. Despite residing within their own borders, these people are often in terrible need.

Even where there is peace, there can be massive upheaval. As new areas of the world industrialize, rural to urban migration accelerates. Whereas 19% of China's population was urban in 1980, by 2025 that figure will be 59%. In 1980, 51 Chinese cities had a population of over half a

million; by 2025, they will have 343 such cities⁴. With urbanisation comes social change, and a greater economic divide between migrants and the villages they left behind.

In those countries which industrialized earliest, there are new trends with a profound influence on people's lives. As economies restructure towards the service sector, former industrial heartlands are undergoing redevelopment. Migration out of city centres, towards the suburbs and rural areas, are changing the character and infrastructure requirements of towns and villages.

Though internal migration gets less press attention, it has a huge impact.

Voluntary v Involuntary

Another way to divide migration is between those who choose to move and those who are forced or coerced into it.

The problem of trafficking was the subject of a UN resolution as recently as August 2010, with the adoption of a global plan of action to combat the practice⁵. The UN population fund estimates that between 700,000 and 2 million people are trafficked across international borders annually⁶. Exact numbers are impossible to calculate. Victims suffer forced labour, and many are coerced into sex work.

Criminals often promise help to get into a country, then confiscate passports, and use threats, fear and violence to control their victims. The system regulating migration becomes a weapon for the people traffickers, exploited to meet their ends.

Others

There are a lot of terms out there to describe people's varied migrant journeys. Step migration describes the small moves many take to get to their final destination. Chain migration is where one person moves abroad, settles, then others among their extended family or network join them in that area. Return migration is about

moving home after a period abroad, just as many Poles have returned from the UK since the 2009 recession. Seasonal migration follows seasonal work.

Addressing the Issue

Framing

Given all the different types of migration, and the time limitations of a debate, the golden rule is: clarity, not caricature.

Sentences like “these people are just after a better life” or “it’s going to cause a backlash” are too vague to get deep into the migration issue. Ensure you delineate between people’s motivations and situations, as explored above.

But once you have drawn proper boundaries between types of migration in your mind, don’t be afraid to fight for language. When people of a particular ethnic background all live close together, is that a “ghetto” (boo!) or a “migration field”? Is the other side saying “asylum seeker” when they mean “refugee”? Think carefully, because the tone of your language reveals as much as the content of your arguments.

Principles

Who gets to be where and why? It is easy to make lazy assumptions about the rights and wrongs of migration. Remember that, in debates, we are less interested in what the law says than what it should say. Signing a convention does not prove that we should offer asylum to those who apply. Being a nation state does not prove that we should have the right to control our own borders. Think these questions through from first principles. Not everyone is under the protection of a state – there are around 12 million stateless people⁷ – where should they go?

Be clear which social and economic rights you think are being denied to the particular group you are considering – and from where you believe those rights are derived. Does a restriction on

wives and children joining husbands interfere with the right to respect for private and family life (article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights) or is there some other rights basis for opposing it?

Practicalities

How can you police every border and the length of every tourist’s stay? In a globalized world, the workability of regulations aimed at controlling migration is a severe hindrance to any grand schemes: illegal immigration is a reality. Debaters have to be careful to avoid two extremes here. The first extreme is to say, because no immigration regime can work perfectly, that any immigration policy short of open borders should be opposed. The second is to say that practicalities don’t matter, so long as a policy sends the right message. Practicalities are a fruitful area for discussion, and need to be handled with a nuanced appreciation of the real world difficulties.

Consequences

How will the future be different? There is so much richness and possibility in debates on migration. One side sees the importance of protecting indigenous culture. The other calls that racism and argues multiculturalism is inevitable. One team calls for greater generosity in welcoming refugees. Another warns that the bonds of civil society will break if people no longer feel kinship with the fellow citizens. For some, an infusion of low-paid workers is the saviour of Europe’s sclerotic economy. To others, competition from outsiders is the source of defeatism and racism.

Endnotes

- 1 UNHCR Global Trends 2009 - <http://www.unhcr.org/4c11f0be9.html>
- 2 UNHCR Global Trends 2009
- 3 UNHCR Global Trends 2009
- 4 UN figures cited in People’s Daily - <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6931823.html>
- 5 <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/resins.htm>
- 6 http://www.endhumantraffickingnow.com/About_human_trafficking/Pages/Facts_figures.aspx
- 7 UNHCR Global Trends 2009