

# Migration decision-making: beyond political rhetoric and guesswork

**17 September 2024**  
**Hybrid Roundtable**

**ODI, 203 Blackfriars Rd,  
London SE1 8NJ**  
**10.00am – 12.00pm**  
**(Breakfast from 930am)**

## CONCEPT NOTE

In the UK, immigration policies have long prioritised deterrence and border control regardless of which political party has been in government. Migrants have been increasingly dehumanised in dominant political and media rhetoric. At the same time those who help irregular migrants including refugees move to the UK are typically depicted as ‘criminal gangs’ or ‘human traffickers’.

Such depictions are not evidence-based. Nor are the policy approaches that are devised to address immigration in the UK. In particular, these ignore the political, economic and social inequalities that underpin international migration movements and which limit the ability of people to move safely and legally. In this febrile political environment, devising effective advocacy messages that cut through to successfully influence governmental policymaking on migration can be challenging.

This roundtable event will showcase evidence from the [Migration for Equality and Development \(MIDEQ\) Hub](#). MIDEQ works to advance the understanding and conceptualisation of South-South migration and inequalities, and to improve outcomes for migrants and their families. Since 2018, MIDEQ has been undertaking research in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean into the ways in which intersectional inequalities – including poverty, race, gender and age - shape migration processes. This includes how attitudes to inequality and perceptions of risk and religion shape the decision to move, stay or return. We have also investigated how inequalities influence how and why migrants engage with brokers, smugglers and other types of journey facilitators.

In addition, we will hear evidence from MIGNEX ([Aligning Migration Management and the Migration-Development Nexus](#)), a five-year, European Commission-funded

project aiming to forge new connections between two new policy fields: how migration is regulated and how migration and development affect each other.

Our roundtable discussion will specifically address how research evidence can be utilised by UK civil society to develop effective advocacy messaging.

The event is hosted by [ODI](#), a core partner in the MIDEQ Hub and in MIGNEX. ODI is an independent, global affairs think tank. Through research, convening and influencing, ODI aims to generate ideas that inspire people to act on injustice and inequality.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Panellists will discuss:

- How intersectional inequalities shape migration decision-making, including in accessing the people and organisations who facilitate their journeys.
- The less visible factors, including the emotional and socio-psychological, that influence why people choose to migrate, or not, and where they choose to migrate.
- Why smugglers and brokers have become so important in migration.
- How evidence on inequalities and migrants' perspectives can be better tailored to shape advocacy agendas in the UK.

## **AUDIENCE**

The event will be of interest to civil society organisations, INGOs, development organisations, policymakers, academics and advocates working on migration.

## **PANEL**

### **Chair:**

Sherine El Taraboulsi–McCarthy, Founding Director, NatCen International

### **Panellists:**

Heaven Crawley, Director MIDEQ Hub, Senior Fellow United Nations University - Centre for Policy Research

Priya Deshingkar, Professor of Migration and Development, University of Sussex

Jon Featonby, Chief Policy Analyst, Refugee Council

Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Senior Research Fellow, Migration, ODI

Daphne Jayasinghe, Director of Policy, International Rescue Committee

Katharine Jones, Professor of Migration & Social Justice, Co-Director, MIDEQ

Nando Sigona, Professor of International Migration and Forced Displacement, University of Birmingham

## FORMAT

Breakfast will be available for participants from **9.30am** allowing for networking opportunities. The Roundtable will be a two-hour hybrid discussion at ODI from **10.00am to 12.00pm**. Participants will be able to informally continue their discussions after the end of the event. Speakers will attend in person but participants are also welcome to attend online. An online Q&A function will also be provided.