

# WORKING PAPER

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| GFMD BUSINESS MECHANISM

GFMD AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON  
MIGRANTS, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

## LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19 PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

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## Part I: Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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Just as the international community is coming together to start rolling out the first ever intergovernmental Global Compact on Migration (GCM) set to cover all dimensions of international migration governance in a holistic and comprehensive manner, COVID-19 has shaken the world to its very core with global pandemic response measures and many subsequent restrictions on mobility.

Around the world, COVID-19 has triggered incidents of stigma, discrimination, xenophobia and racism against migrants and displaced persons and has exacerbated protection challenges, with some 225 countries, territories or areas having issued over 110,000 travel restrictions, many of these making no exception for people seeking asylum.<sup>2</sup> Jobless, stranded, some with expired visas and a lack of access to health care, experiencing a reduced income and ability to send home remittances – whether caught in precarious situations of transit, unexpected situations of irregularity, forcibly returned or faced with stigma, migrants are finding themselves caught in vulnerable situations and facing serious human rights violations.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the pandemic has also highlighted the extent to which we depend on the movement of people for our health, food and economy.<sup>4</sup> Due to the aforementioned restrictions on migration, many businesses found themselves with disrupted supply chains and sudden labor and skills shortages which only improved as restrictions were softened and “smartened”.

Well-governed migration, as outlined in the GCM and the 2030 Agenda, can contribute to positive development outcomes and well-functioning labor markets. In this decade of action where the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 seriously threatens to reverse the gains made towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, we cannot afford to leave *anyone* behind, including migrants. As outlined in the Secretary General’s *Policy Brief: COVID-19 and People on the Move*, the international community presented four basic tenets to guide our collective response to COVID-19 in relation to migration: (i) exclusion is costly in the long run whereas inclusion pays off for everyone; (ii) the response to COVID-19 and protecting the human rights of people on the move are not mutually exclusive; (iii) No-one is safe until everyone is safe; and (iv) people on the move are part of the solution.<sup>5</sup> In sum, if the virus doesn’t discriminate, why should we?<sup>6</sup> There is no “us versus them” here, only an inclusive public health response will enable us to move forward together, towards sustainable development.<sup>7</sup>

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, international migrants contributed nearly 10 per cent of global GDP. Migrant remittances represent a critical source of external financing in low- and middle-income countries and are directly correlated to nutrition, health and education outcomes in migrant communities depending on them and broader societies. The latest ILO estimates indicate that there are 164 million migrant workers around the world rendering migrants an

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<sup>1</sup> This Introduction was prepared by the International Organization for Migration.

<sup>2</sup> IOM (November 2020). [Global Mobility Restriction Overview: Weekly Update, 30 November 2020](#).

<sup>3</sup> IOM (June 2020). [Issue Brief: Why Migration Matters for “Recovering Better” from COVID-19](#).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> UN Secretary General (June 2020). [Policy Brief: COVID-19 and People on the Move](#).

<sup>6</sup> UN Network for Migration (March 2020). [COVID-19 Does Not Discriminate: Nor Should Our Response](#).

<sup>7</sup> UN Secretary General (June 2020). [Policy Brief: COVID-19 and People on the Move](#).

important part of the global labor force. This is particularly the case in key sectors vital to economies and societies in the context of COVID-19, such as health and food production. In collective agreement, relevant actors worldwide from the local to the global level have made tremendous efforts to ensure that the needs, rights and potential vulnerabilities of migrants as well as labor market needs are fully accounted for in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, aligned with and contributing to the UN Framework on Socio-Economic Response and Recovery.<sup>8</sup> Examples range from automatically extending migrant worker visas; ensuring equal access to health care and PPE; recruiting seasonal migrant workers to harvest crops to fill labor gaps; lifting travel restrictions for cross-border workers; waiving fees and fines for migrant workers wishing to return home; and extending social security benefits to migrants regardless of status.

What can we learn from this? A year after the start of the outbreak, as the broader international community starts to take stock of what went well, what went wrong and how we can “build back better”,<sup>9</sup> it is our responsibility to consider the key role that human mobility will and should play in building a fairer, greener and more resilient future for humanity.

## The GFMD Working Group on COVID-19

As the only informal, state-led and multi-stakeholder inclusive forum on migration and development, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) plays a vital role in fostering dialogue and building trust between governments, civil society, business, and local administrations, creating a platform for showcasing best practices, encouraging other stakeholders to replicate those best practices, for analyzing the impact of migration policies to new realities and adapt them accordingly, and helping to drive forward local, national, regional and global responses.

The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants, Migration and Development was established in April 2020 with the objective, *inter alia*, to support the GFMD by discussing and proposing effective ways in which to advance multi-stakeholder dialogue about the impact of COVID-19, building on previous work of the GFMD relating to migrants in crisis, and advancing the implementation and review of Agenda 2030. In this context, the Working Group led the development of this Working Paper, which draws inputs from the multi-stakeholder community of states, local governments, businesses and civil society groups that comprise the GFMD.

This paper offers reflections to kick-start the discussion by garnering lessons learned to better address the challenges the pandemic has provoked in the area of migration and development, identify gaps and propose solutions moving forward.

In Part II, the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Spain share their experiences as sending and receiving countries, respectively. Other non-state but crucial GFMD stakeholders, representing the civil society, business, local authorities and youth, also

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations (April 2020). [A UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19](#).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

articulate their own view on how they see the impact of COVID on migrants, migration and development.

In Part III, the paper offers a comprehensive analysis of the responses to a GFMD survey on the impacts of COVID, which was launched by the GFMD Working Group in October 2020. The findings highlight policy and programming gaps, as well as good practices that respondents have identified. The paper concludes by positing some policy interventions and partnerships for the GFMD community to consider.

## Part II: The impacts of COVID-19 on migrants, migration and development - Identifying the gaps underscored by the pandemic

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### Challenges for migrant workers and seafarers: the situation in Indonesia

#### Prepared by the Government of Indonesia

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly created new challenges for Indonesian migrant workers, which reaches 3.1 million people excluding the undocumented ones. Migrant workers are often the first group to be laid off from work, as well as the last to get medical tests or treatment compared to local workers. They are generally excluded from economic stimulus packages and policies responding to COVID-19, including wage subsidies, unemployment benefits, and other social protection measures.

#### Challenges faced by Indonesian migrant workers

Following the termination of employment, migrant workers, including from Indonesia, are often stranded in the destination countries due to international travel restrictions. This condition prompted not only the loss of income but also expiration of visas or work permits, which resulted in the undocumented or irregular status of the migrants.

This condition was worsened by the fact that they were given only short-term visa extension. These extensions of visas did not guarantee their rights to work or access essential services. Therefore, the Government of Indonesia through its diplomatic missions abroad provides protection and temporary shelter, if needed, for the stranded Indonesian migrants.

The number of Indonesian migrant workers placement in 2020 has greatly decreased due to the pandemic. The number of Indonesian workers going abroad in October 2020 was 9,639, compared to 24,732 in October 2019. This means, there is a significant decrease in remittances for the families of migrant workers back home. According to the data by Bank Indonesia, remittances from Indonesian migrant workers in the second quarter of 2020 is valued at US \$ 2.2 billion, which is way lower compared to the same quarter in 2019 (US \$ 2.78 billion). This condition poses a challenge for Indonesia as one of largest sending countries of migrant workers, where remittances contribute to more than 1% of the GDP.

The protracted health crisis that ensued from the pandemic has also disrupted migrant worker's mobility, as emigrating has become more and more difficult. Many borders are still closed and some regulations (lockdowns, travel restrictions, quarantines, physical distancing, and other stringent public-health measures) put in place to respond to COVID-19 have made it more expensive to emigrate. The most affected migrant workers are those who were not documented, casual workers who did not have a permanent employer, and those whose contract was terminated – even when they work in essential services and areas, such as health and food production. In this regard, the Indonesian government stresses the importance of those additional costs that arise from health protocols implemented to fight COVID-19, such



as quarantine and swab tests with proper standards and quality assurance, be borne by the employers.

Some migrant workers are still able to work abroad. However, the restriction of movements has increased their vulnerabilities. Those working in domestic settings, such as domestic helpers, could not go out of the house even on their non-working days and this has made them more vulnerable to work exploitation. Most of the domestic helpers also work extra hours during the restriction of movements because their employers work from home, without any overtime pay.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, women migrant workers have been hit hardest because most Indonesian migrants are women, who work as domestic helpers, as well as those who work at the frontline healthcare sector, as nurse or caregiver. Moreover, lack of facilities in detentions for addressing women's specific needs, such as proper mental healthcare and overcrowded spaces, exacerbate women's vulnerability to abuse and violence.

COVID-19 has also fueled discrimination and xenophobia that brought about the termination of employment and forced return of the migrant workers because they were labelled as carriers of the virus.

#### Repatriation of Indonesian migrant workers

As most Indonesian migrant workers work in the informal economy and sectors, many of them also faced lay off, contract termination, and had no choice but to return home either with the Indonesian government assistance or self-financing. The government of Indonesia has facilitated the evacuation of many Indonesian migrant workers back home. Until end of 2020, Indonesia has repatriated more than 142,000 overseas Indonesians, including around 26,000 seafarers, as well as deceased migrants back home to their families. The early evacuation process of overseas Indonesians also included seafarers as they were among the most vulnerable essential workers. During the pandemic, crew changes have been stopped for months and this situation has put those on board at risk of depression, exhaustion, and hence physical injury due to exhaustion.

The first stage of evacuation prioritized the seafarers who worked on cruise ships, as they worked and lived in an enclosed space without vigorous air movement, which caused higher risk for COVID-19 transmission. Nevertheless, the Indonesian Government have also facilitated the repatriation of other groups of seafarers. This was very important move considering that at the early months of the pandemic, crew changes were suspended as a short-term solution to avoid disruption to the supply system, since shipping was the lifeblood of the global economy that transported 90% of global trade.

Therefore, as one of the largest maritime and archipelagic countries, Indonesia has initiated a UN Resolution on international cooperation to protect seafarers during the COVID-19 pandemic adopted in December 2020. The Resolution urged all countries to designate seafarers and other marine personnel as key workers, to immediately implement measures allowing safe trip crew changes and allowing stranded seafarers to be repatriated, and to ensure access to medical care for all seafarers and other marine personnel.

The Indonesian migrants who were repatriated during the pandemic were facilitated by returning services in accordance to the presidential directive; that all returning Indonesian citizens from abroad must go through strict health protocols, both at airports and cross-border posts. Their data was furthermore checked and collected in the debarkation, and their condition was monitored during their travel to their home area. Upon arrival in their home, the officer from the Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers reported to the local service agency to monitor the returning migrants to carry-out self-quarantine for 14 days and monitor their health. As for the returning migrant workers, the Indonesian government places great importance on ensuring that they get a job in Indonesia. This is done by, among others, providing entrepreneurship trainings for them.

### Obstacles for the implementation of the GCM

The COVID-19 pandemic also creates obstacles in the implementation of the GCM Objectives. The efforts to ensure that migration is voluntary, orderly, and regular (Objective 2, 5, 6, 12, 18) and to protect migrants through rights-based border governance measures (Objective 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 21) faces challenges due to the termination of employment abroad and the temporary suspension of recruitment of prospective Indonesian migrant workers, which often force them to become undocumented or irregular migrants. The pandemic also became an obstacle to the integration of migrants and their contribution to development (Objective 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22) due to the decline remittances.

The obstacles in implementing GCM also mean challenges in achieving SDGs. In the context of the GCM, the COVID-19 pandemic directly impacted the fulfilment of Target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda (facilitating orderly, safe, and responsible migration and mobility of people) and Goal 8 (promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all).

## Responding to gaps caused by the pandemic: the situation in Spain

### Prepared by the Government of Spain

#### Addressing gaps in access to social protection for migrants caused by the pandemic

Spain offers universal access to basic health services. Beyond the most favourable scheme enjoyed by EU nationals covered by EU common legislation, all migrants staying in Spain, irrespective of legal status, have access to the basic national health system. This measure has proved its utility during the pandemic.

Unemployment has increased due to pandemic, affecting both nationals and foreigners alike. Foreign-borns' unemployment rate increased, however, 7-8 points higher compared to nationals during the second quarter of the year. Regular migrants have to meet the same conditions as national workers in order to have access to the national system of unemployment benefits. Third-country nationals benefited from all the measures that the government implemented to protect citizens: among others, the suspension of the minimum duration of work required to qualify for unemployment benefits (360 working days during the last 6 years).

Regular migrants have been taken on board in the new public safety net schemes created to combat the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic. In June 2020 the government approved with overwhelming support in Parliament the new scheme of “*Ingreso Mínimo Vital*” (‘Minimal Vital Income’). Regular migrants and their families residing for at least one year before the entry into force of the Law on a permanent uninterrupted basis in Spain are entitled to access to this scheme.

Spain issued instructions and recommendations for national services to prevent any refusal or withdrawal of residence permits due to economic difficulties of the applicant. Apart from the automatic extension of the validity of residence permits and other authorizations due to public lockdown, several administrative measures were approved regarding the inclusion of more flexibility in the requirements for renewal of residence permits.

The experience gained during the pandemic has been taken into consideration and will inform the future reforms of migration laws which were worked upon by the government before the pandemic.

### Ensuring the flow of remittances

Physical access to Money Transfer Operators was temporarily not possible for those operating through small businesses during the state of alarm (March-June) since they were closed during the lockdown. The pricing and the volume of the remittances sent by foreign workers living in Spain deteriorated slightly, especially in the second quarter of the year and rebounded somehow in the third quarter.

### Minimizing the impact of disruption to migrant workers’ mobility

Habitual residence in Spain, rather than having Spanish nationality, was the main criteria for allowing entry to Spain during the State of Alarm (15 March-30 June). Spain did not formally suspend visa processing but practical procedural limitations were noted. Spain adopted a number of exceptions - based on the key nature of the passenger category in question - to the EU Guidelines concerning the implementation of the temporary restriction of visa policy and non-essential travel. The list of exceptions included seasonal workers; highly qualified workers whose work was necessary and could not be postponed or carried out remotely; participants in high-level sports events; and highly qualified professionals who planned to develop a professional activity in the audio-visual sector.

As far as foreign students are concerned, those who left Spain and returned to their country of origin was allowed to re-enter the country, including those with an expired residence permit. International students’ residence and stay permits were extended in any case for six months.

Within the common EU framework of travel, internal and external movements restrictions, Spain lifted travel restrictions for some categories of migrants especially for seasonal workers in agriculture. Since 24 May, seasonal workers were allowed to enter by any type of border (land, air and sea).

Specific policies and procedures to facilitate the entry of essential workers from third countries were introduced. Streamlining and prioritization measures were taken in the processing of all files of foreign nationals with a professional profile in the agricultural and health sectors.

Especially in the primary sector, work permits of migrants expiring between 15 March and 30 June (State of Alarm) were automatically extended twice until 30 September. That applied

equally to circular migration annual programs which began before or contemporarily to the outbreaks of the pandemic.

Migrant workers whose permit expired between the State of Alarm were automatically extended until 30 September to enable them to work in primary needs sectors, especially agriculture. Third-country nationals aged 18 to 21 in a regular situation employed in the agriculture sector during the pandemic were given residence and work permits. These permits shall be valid for two years, renewable for two years and valid throughout the national territory, all economic sectors and regardless of the national employment gaps situation.

Essential workers in health and health-related sectors (for instance elderly care professionals) who were going to carry out their activity were exempt from quarantine periods, provided they had not been in contact with people diagnosed with COVID-19.

Spain automatically granted the right to work to young third-country national students or asylum seekers living in Spain from age 18 to 21.

### Facilitating the return and reintegration of migrant workers

Even during the State of Alarm, Spain kept its borders open to facilitate the return of migrant workers to their homeland. That was not possible in some cases due to refusal of entry in origin countries adopted in the framework of total ban of entries and exits. Spain adopted some measures and demarches in order to help employers to maintain support for seasonal workers blocked in Spain after having finished their contracts. Voluntary accompanied returns and non-voluntary returns were severely affected by the sanitary crisis. As far as Spanish nationals abroad are concerned, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation through the Emergency Unit within the Directorate of Consular Affairs, assured repatriation flights on its own and in the framework of EU consular cooperation.

### Combatting xenophobia and stigma towards migrants

The pandemic has made more visible to the public eye the contribution of foreign workers to the continuity of delivery of basic services (for e.g., agriculture, distribution, restoration, elderly-care, etc.) during lockdown. Attempts to foster xenophobia through public abuse of migratory dossiers or fake news have been so far unsuccessful. Individual outbreaks of public concerns were related to the extent of the sanitary prevention measures taken in highly-dense seasonal foreign workers regions or to the severe increase in irregular maritime arrivals in Canary Islands. In both cases the government activated public action to solve these causes of social concern.

### Trends in irregular migration in Spain

The number of irregular entries to Spain from maritime and land borders was contained in the first semester of the year due mainly to the limitations of movement decided to combat the pandemic in origin, transit and destination countries. Until July this decrease was -36% compared to 2019. However, a rapid increase of irregular entries began in the second semester: 2020 will end with more than 40,000 irregular entries to Spain, which would mean an increase of between +25 and +30% of irregular entries compared to 2019. More than 22,000 landed on the Canary Islands, which represent 9-10 times the volume of irregular entries in the islands in 2019. The irregular entries registered on the Spanish Western

Mediterranean/Atlantic are almost twice as many as registered in the Eastern Mediterranean Route and exceed the ones registered in the Central Mediterranean Route.

As far as asylum applications in Spain are concerned, in 2020 they will reach some 88,000 - a decrease compared to 117,463 recorded in 2019. Spain leads the EU+ list of asylum application recipient countries.

## The Perspective of Business

### Prepared by the GFMD Business Mechanism<sup>10</sup>

#### Migration and development Solutions from the employers' perspective

Recoveries from economic crises are centered on growth in jobs, skills, business investment and innovation. All are best supported by policies that are developed with consideration of employer perspectives and solutions.

Employers, like governments and others, are naturally concerned about impacts of the pandemic on labor migration that might linger or even endure beyond the crisis itself. The current crisis will change the migration landscape drastically, but it will not close the skills gap that every region of the world faced before the crisis and will continue to face after. This gap—and labor migration—has increasingly been driven by imbalances in demographics, income, labor and skills. An efficient infrastructure for cross border skills mobility remains crucial; even more so for the global economy to recover from the pandemic.

“Migration will continue to play an important role for economic growth and innovation, as well as in responding to rapidly changing labor markets”, noted OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría upon the 19 October launch of their *OECD International Migration Outlook 2020* report.

Clear and well-implemented migration policies are necessary to support business environments that are conducive to economic growth and development. Sound migration systems that are focused on satisfying the needs of the labor markets can address skills gaps and shortages.

As IOM Director General António Vitorino put it in October, “If we are unable to relaunch migration and mobility safely, the world’s ability to recover from economic recession will be limited.”

**Specific solutions.** It is clear that migrants, refugees, the diaspora and members of their families are a key part of solutions, from the work they perform to the earnings and remittances they bring to development in countries to, through and from which they have moved.

Employers regard regular migration as a necessary and positive phenomenon for workers, business, economies and development. When well-managed, it is a vehicle for fulfilling personal aspirations, for balancing labor supply and demand, for sparking innovation, and for transferring and spreading skills.<sup>11</sup> That was the case before the current pandemic and economic crisis, and it continues to be the case, during the crisis and for recovery from it.

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<sup>10</sup> The GFMD Business Mechanism was created as a platform for businesses to engage with Governments and other stakeholders on migration issues.

<sup>11</sup> IOE Position Paper on Labour Migration, 2018.

The labor market needs and migration policy interests of the private sector vary greatly among companies, industries, countries and regions. But all employers—as well as their employees—benefit from clear, predictable, transparent and efficient national immigration laws and policies that permit the movement of workers when and where they are needed. This includes:

1. **Expanding regular migration pathways.** Improving regulatory frameworks with practical pathways for mobility of labor and skills, based on predictable and transparent migration policies that reflect demographic realities and labor market needs, including skills shortages. The growing need for the whole range of admissions for work, from seasonal and short-term permits to those for the long-term, including for intra-company transfers or categories for those who are highly skilled, innovators or entrepreneurs.
2. **Fixing recruitment.** Adopting responsible recruitment practices, in particular for medium and lower-skilled migrant workers.
3. **Improving skills recognition and development.** Assessing and developing migrant skills for better matching to labor market and employment needs. This will require an alignment and better coherence between national skilling strategies with migration strategies. Employers can be a valuable partner in identifying skills needs and establishing frameworks for assessing foreign qualifications. Policies should avoid rigid qualification requirements and skills definitions, trusting employers to identify the most-qualified candidate.
4. **Leveraging technology.** Expanding technologies and innovative private sector solutions to facilitate all of these solutions, and better manage migration. Digital, information and communications technologies offer remarkable value to expanding and managing regular pathways, recruitment processes and skills recognition and development.

These solutions were reaffirmed, for example, in an Employers Declaration that 17 national Employers Organizations across Asia adopted in August—not before the pandemic and economic crisis, but right in the middle of them.

### Dialogue and partnership on solutions

**The need to dialogue and update.** The pandemic has shed light on the reality that most immigration systems were built for an economic model based upon fixed work locations and contracts for structured employment. Indeed, even before the pandemic, migration law, policy and administration had not kept pace with workplace changes.

Current systems and policies do not adequately address the new workplace flexibility in its various forms, which include work at home and work at client worksites (with or without a home base and even across borders). The so-called “gig economy” is another new development, where on-demand or crowdsourced jobs require workers available “just in time”, perhaps for multiple employers. Project-based work is increasing, in which knowledge of proprietary or unique products or services may be required and where employers may not have a permanent presence in the continuity of employment.

**Transitioning from informal to formal economies.** The COVID-19 crisis has shed light on a serious concern to businesses: informality, in particular for employers in Africa and South America. Most of the migrant workers who are now in difficult situations were working in the

informal market, with no protection or social safety net. Globally, for example in the recruitment industry rogue operators give the sector a bad reputation through the high incidence of informality.

Business and governments have to work together to counter informality, which generates huge losses for the economy. The main objectives should be to identify the root causes of the existence of the informal economy, the barriers to formalization and put in place policies to assist informal entrepreneurs to more easily formalize. Research has shown that complex, inflexible and outdated labor regulation, rather than cost of labor, is an important push-factor towards informality.

In fact, labor market policy increasingly conflicts with actual labor needs at both national and employer-specific levels. More systematic dialogue is needed between government and the private sector to understand changing realities and needs, particularly considering the needs of modern business.

**Increased interaction among line ministries and employers.** As policymakers will reflect on revised migration systems, labor market needs and modern business practices will have to be considered. This will mean increased interaction with labor and employment ministries, as well as with employers themselves, because employers are best positioned to determine the skills and business models necessary to effectively achieve their business objectives.

**Partnerships** between business and governments at all levels is key to succeeding at this.<sup>12</sup> At global level, the IOE and its members stand ready to provide expertise and on-the-ground experience in direct collaboration with governments and other actors on all of these issues.

At national and regional levels, the broad and global network of the IOE can be used to ensure that employers are at the table for action-oriented exchange when initiatives are being discussed and programmes set up. This includes the practical, real-world value of engaging with employers in countries both of origin and of employment, to forge partnerships that can respond to needs in specific industries, even tailoring training and skills development, and with innovation and partnerships for better use of emerging technologies in migration.

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<sup>12</sup> **Addendum: Examples of partnerships**

*The SNCU (Foundation for Compliance with CLA for Temporary Agency Workers)* is a bi-partite initiative in the Netherlands that supervises compliance with the CLAs. The "CLA Police" (SNC) is a bipartite enforcement initiative which is part of the SNCU. There is tripartite cooperation to educate workers about their rights under the collective labor agreement for agency workers, and to monitor user companies by looking for violations. The CLA Police have the power to start legal procedures against rogue agencies which infringe upon workers' rights, or which hinder its supervisory role. The results of the investigation can amount to significantly high monetary fines for the agency involved. It is important to note that there is good cooperation between the private and public enforcers in the Netherlands. If private inspectors see the signs of trafficking, they will immediately contact public enforcement. For user companies, it is very important to do business with bona fide companies and since registration is publicly known, it is easier for user companies and public enforcement to identify rogue companies. <http://www.sncu.nl/n>

*The Swedish Staffing Association* membership authorization scheme ensures legitimate businesses who meet high standards of professionalism. They carry out thorough checks in order to make the staffing industry in Sweden safe and sound. Companies are also required, according to the bylaws, to comply with Swedish law, to provide the Swedish Staffing Agencies and the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise with statistics needed by the association to do the best job possible. Authorization and membership require that the business is conducted as a legal entity. All companies undergo checks upon joining the federation, and thereafter once a year. Companies who, upon check, do not meet the conditions of authorization will not be able to retain membership with the Swedish Staffing Agencies. The checks are done by the authorization board and the decisions are made by the board of the Swedish Staffing Agencies Association. There is a bi-partite commission to recommend on applications and national federation board final decision. Conditions of authorization can be seen at: [www.kompetensforetagen.se/in-english](http://www.kompetensforetagen.se/in-english)

**Shared interest and common ground.** One of the lessons of the pandemic is urgency; another pandemic lesson is how much shared interest and common ground for action there is among governments, employers and other actors. In the field of international labor migration, employers continue to be interested in every dialogue whose starting point is experience and commitment is to action. With governments, this includes processes like the Global Forum on Migration and Development, and regional and international reviews of implementation of the GCM. With enthusiasm and expectation, it also includes important programmes of the International Labor Organization and International Organization for Migration, and partnership-building directly with States, Mayors and other local authorities, workers organizations, and civil society. Rather than overlap, such programmes should ensure complementarity and alignment.

## The Perspective of Civil Society

Prepared by the GFMD Civil Society Mechanism<sup>13</sup>

### Setting the scene

The GFMD Civil Society Mechanism has identified four relatively general observations on the impacts of the pandemic on migrants, migration and development

First, the COVID-19 pandemic has created almost none of the problems faced by migrants today. Today's COVID-19 related problems for migrant communities are yesterday's problems but multiplied by 20 or 30. Rather than creating them, the pandemic has accelerated and amplified, in a dramatic way, pre-existing ones.

A very large number of migrants, and not only those in an irregular situation, were already at the margin before the pandemic, were employed in the informal economy or with short-term contracts, having no or little access to basic services, including health, and living in overcrowded accommodation. Like an earthquake, the pandemic has completely destroyed those who were the most fragile and the most unprotected, while leaving shaken but relatively untouched those who were stronger or had access to alternatives, such as unemployment benefits, health insurance, and savings.

Particularly at risk and impacted are women and children. The pandemic is *exacerbating* gender-based inequalities and violence. Women are faced with increased domestic violence, which was already extremely high before the pandemic, massive unemployment, and further discrimination in access to services and social protection.<sup>14</sup> Children in migration are at significant and heightened risk of being negatively impacted.<sup>15</sup> The pandemic has *further* reduced their safe and adequate access to school, health, nutritious food, immunizations, and livelihoods. It has put children at *greater* risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, and separation from caregivers. It has resulted in *more* children under five suffering from acute malnutrition. Just as these risks have increased, access to child protection

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<sup>13</sup> The GFMD civil society mechanism coordinates the participation of the diverse composition of civil society -- including diaspora and migrant organizations, human rights, faith-based and development NGOs, labor unions and representatives from academia, think tanks and the private sector -- in dialogue and partnerships with governments and non-state stakeholders in migration and development.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1473-3099%2820%2930568-5>

<sup>15</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/covid-19-and-children/#::~:~:text=With%20COVID%2D19%20putting%20enormous,risk%20of%20disease%20or%20death>



and psychosocial services has decreased. Children are pushed to embark on dangerous journeys with reduced options of safe and regular pathways and reduced access to countries and services.

A concrete illustration on how the pandemic is not only an amplifier of pre-existing problems, deficiencies, and vulnerabilities, but also a multiplier is the case of Yemen. *“The interconnectivity of Yemen’s economy means that a decline in any of the three major sources of foreign currency – humanitarian aid, oil exports, and remittances – has a significant impact on local purchasing power. Yemen is now facing a decline in all three. The loss of remittances comes as oil prices are plunging, and as a reduction in funding is forcing aid agencies and NGOs in Yemen to close down or scale back various humanitarian programmes, including food aid and subsidies to healthcare workers. A 2 June pledging conference for Yemen fell more than a \$1 billion short of its target, and much of the money promised is unlikely to be delivered for some time”*<sup>16</sup>.

Second, migration is complex and so is COVID-19. On both fronts, there are often more unknowns than knowns, starting with insufficient and sometimes unreliable data, and ideology as well as politicization playing a disproportionate role. Here again, the COVID-19 crisis, which led to the closing of borders, the mass destruction of jobs, both formal and informal, the cordoning-off of migrant settlements or refugee camps, will probably have a lasting impact not only on health and the economy, but also on migration management, adding to its complexity. There will also be an increased risk of politicization and ideological derailing in the years to come. Willingly or unwillingly, the fight against COVID-19 has created a logic of travel restrictions, border closures and lockdowns, which runs against another logic, the logic of mobility, which is at the core of migration. At the moment it is not clear which logic will prevail, but we fear that restrictions may prevail.

Third, there have been various responses provided by governments to the COVID-19 crisis, as far as their impact on migrants is concerned. A minority of governments were inclusive and made sure that migrants were part of their public health and social policies, as well as more long-term recovery packages. A number of other governments were neither inclusive nor openly discriminatory. In some of the latter cases, it was often unclear whether this “migrant-blind” approach was unintentional, due to negligence or reflecting open neglect.

Obviously, some countries could be considered as non-discriminatory in light of the fact that, with a few exceptions, the community of States was initially caught highly unprepared and was unable to properly assess the impact of the pandemic. Every policy during the first COVID-19 wave was influenced by the legitimate fear that emergency medical facilities would quickly collapse, that treatments and vaccines were still a long way down the road, and that testing and protective equipment were insufficient. Governments were overwhelmed and after an initial “grace period” were under attack from political parties and interest groups. Being responsible, comprehensive, and inclusive in such an environment is very difficult. Unfortunately, there is also a third cluster of governments - also a minority, but not an insignificant one. They include countries which “took advantage” of the pandemic to further strengthen already existing restrictive measures or an overtly anti-migrant approach, including

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<sup>16</sup> Iona Craig in the New Humanitarian see at [https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/06/16/Coronavirus-Yemen-economy-remittances?utm\\_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm\\_campaign=d9c1879365-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2020\\_06\\_19\\_Weekly&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d842d98289-d9c1879365-75519141](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/06/16/Coronavirus-Yemen-economy-remittances?utm_source=The+New+Humanitarian&utm_campaign=d9c1879365-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_06_19_Weekly&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d842d98289-d9c1879365-75519141)

pushbacks, forced returns of migrants who were COVID-19 positive, not applying preventive and protective measures for migrants in detention or in dormitories, etc.

Fourth, many among governments, international organizations and NGO officials keep repeating that COVID-19 and its impact on migrants brings enormous challenges but also opportunities. There is some merit in this approach, and not only wishful thinking.<sup>17</sup> But “opportunities” need to be qualified. They are a tiny light at the end of a very dark and long tunnel. While the daunting challenges are obvious, not least because of the lives destroyed, and the millions of jobs and livelihoods lost, the real opportunities, beyond the symbolic, seem to be well hidden. It will take many years to get back to the kind of “normalcy” we had in 2019, a “normalcy” which often implied discriminated access to basic services for migrants, lack of regular pathways, and exploitation on the workplace. With so many of their own nationals also losing their jobs, it will require extraordinary courage from governments to have inclusive policies during the recovery phase, and start dismantling the past and present barriers placed before migrants. But this courage and basic human solidarity are absolutely necessary if we want to collectively recover.

### Recommendations to the GFMD stakeholders

The pandemic has created massive unemployment and it may not be the best of times to explore new avenues, when so much just needs to be repaired. At the same time, economic recession can only be solved through bold moves, massive financial investments, and investing in migrant workers, while genuinely involving trade unions, employers, local authorities and NGOs. In order to reverse the worst impacts of the pandemic and address pre-existing problems or discriminations affecting migrants, mobility and development, the GFMD stakeholders, in their respective capacities, are invited to:

1. Ensure that COVID-19 vaccines and treatments are both affordable and made available to all, without any discrimination and regardless of migration status.
2. Ensure, more generally, that all migrants, regardless of status, have access to basic services, including health, education, food, shelter and social support, without fear of being arrested or deported.
3. Proactively and collectively fight xenophobia, racism and anti-migrant agendas, both pre-dating and exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis, recognizing that remaining passive would amount to complicity.
4. Acknowledging that millions of jobs have been lost and that time will be needed to compensate for those losses, adopt without delay some urgent measures, including:
  - a) Putting in place additional safeguards, monitoring and checks and balances – With many people “competing” for scarce jobs, there is increased risk of exploitation and abuses on the workplace.
  - b) Expanding inclusive humanitarian programmes – Millions of people, who were previously benefitting from remittances, have now fallen into poverty.
  - c) Putting pressure on and sanction rogue employers, adopting guiding principles and a code of conduct, and building a transitional justice system to ensure the payment of wages and benefits<sup>18</sup> – Many migrants who lost their jobs returned to their country of origin or remained jobless in their country of destination, without being

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<sup>17</sup> See in particular this interesting analysis in the New Humanitarian “Coronavirus: a Window of Opportunity for Action on Migration” <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/06/10/coronavirus-migration-policies>

<sup>18</sup> See for example the campaign launched by a number of NGOs at <https://zoom.us/j/2262268155?pwd=QTNYVmthZUFiUk1oZCthZTVGdThFZz09>

paid their wages or benefits. The non-payment of wages and benefits by unscrupulous employers is particularly appalling at the time of crisis and acute vulnerabilities.

- d) Taking robust measures against unscrupulous employment agencies and government officials who may be accomplices of those agencies – Many migrant workers who lost their jobs during the pandemic are unlikely to find a new job abroad, not only because of the economic depression but also due their accumulated debts, often contracted with unscrupulous employment agencies. In this regard, countries of origin should consult closely with countries of destination.
  - e) Ensuring that aid spending and development international cooperation are not reduced, and major funders make renewed commitments – Remittances are expected to suffer an unprecedented and huge decrease, worth around 130 billion US\$, in 2021.
5. Envision, propose, and amplify multi-stakeholder partnerships that engage states - bilaterally and especially regionally - in moving forward on ways to increase the availability and flexibility of regular pathways where prospective migrants need employment opportunities, and where employers need workers, finding creative ways to develop the necessary skills and human capital while also recognizing an ongoing need in many countries for less skilled workers and ensuring that workers at all skill levels have regular pathways and enjoy the protection in practice as well as on paper that those pathways are supposed to provide.
  6. Build an environment where alternatives to detention systematically prevail. Alternatives to immigration detention work, as amply demonstrated by recent pilot projects, which involve a multi-stakeholder approach, and in countries that do not resort - or resort exceptionally - to immigration detention. Let's invest in them, while not forgetting that child detention is never an option. It is against international standards. It is unacceptable and unjustifiable. Such a stance is legal, ethical, common sense and in everyone's interest.
  7. Adopt gender sensitive measures to address violence against women and ensure that services responding to violence against women are treated as essential public services with adequate funding, and are part of the overall response to the pandemic, including during the recovery phase. Governments must also guarantee that all recovery measures and financial packages are gender sensitive and support women's economic engagement.
  8. Guarantee children's rights and prioritize the needs of all children in migration, ensuring their safe and adequate access to:
    - a) Education. Remote learning and school reopening plans must be inclusive of all children, irrespective of status, gender, or disability, and include the specific needs of migrant children.
    - b) Protection. Child protection, gender-based violence and psychosocial services should be prioritized and resourced and social workers, social protection and child benefit programmes accessible to migrant children.
    - c) Sustainable solutions in children's best interests. Children's right to asylum, family reunification and protection must be guaranteed.

## The Perspective of Local Authorities

### Prepared by the GFMD Mayors Mechanism<sup>19</sup>

#### Setting the scene

Mayors, governors, and local governments are on the frontlines in managing the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and leaders across the world have acknowledged that the fight against COVID-19 cannot be won without including the most vulnerable in prevention, response, and recovery regardless of their status. Indeed, migrants, refugees and displaced persons share the same vulnerabilities as other residents, but they may also face a range of other challenges that put them at risk – such as limited access to health services, inadequate housing conditions, lack of information in their language, discrimination, and rising levels of xenophobia.<sup>20</sup>

#### Urban migration and COVID-19 impact in numbers:

- **95% of total COVID-19 cases are in urban areas**, and over 2,550 cities are affected by COVID-19 worldwide.<sup>21</sup>
- **A third of the global population of people who have moved out of their country of birth live in cities**,<sup>22</sup> and 60% of the world's refugees and 80% of internally displaced people (IDPs) live in cities.<sup>23</sup>
- The pandemic will push from 71 to 100 million people below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day in 2020, particularly in urban areas in developing countries according to the World Bank.<sup>24</sup>

In the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres "urban areas are ground zero of the COVID-19 pandemic,"<sup>25</sup> while also being home to most migrant and displaced people.

While migrants and refugees may find themselves in situations of vulnerability, they are also critical in efforts to tackle to effects of the disease and in designing and implementing recovery plans, for example:

- **In American cities, immigrants and refugees represent an outsized share of healthcare workers** — more than half of all healthcare workers in Miami, 42 percent in New York, 40 percent in Los Angeles, and more than a third in San Francisco.<sup>26</sup> Migrants, regardless of their status, also play a critical role other essential service jobs in the US including an estimated 389,000 undocumented migrants working as farmworkers and food processors.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The Mayors Mechanism formally links local authorities to the GFMD, alongside civil society and the private sector. The Mechanism creates opportunities for cities to influence the GFMD discussions and provides them with opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and exchange. It establishes a platform to interact with States, civil society and the private sector and provides avenues to bolster innovative solutions.

<sup>20</sup> GFMD Mayors Mechanism (April 2020). Update on COVID-19.

<sup>21</sup> UN-Habitat (2020). [Key Facts and Data](#).

<sup>22</sup> UN-DESA (February 2018). [Briefing to Member States](#).

<sup>23</sup> UNHCR (2016). [The Power of Cities](#).

<sup>24</sup> UNCDF (October 2020). [Guiding principles and practices for urban economic recovery and resilience](#).

<sup>25</sup> UN Secretary-General (July 2020). [Press Release](#)

<sup>26</sup> New American Economy (April 2020). [Immigrants on the Healthcare Frontlines: A Look at Local Data](#).

<sup>27</sup> Center for American Progress (September 2020). [Immigrants as Essential Workers During COVID-19](#).

- **In the European Union, migrants make up 17.5 percent of all essential workers and 23 percent of doctors in cities are migrants.**<sup>28</sup>
- **In Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo,** and other cities, local authorities have created programs to support and enable migrant essential workers to be part of the solution and recovery to COVID-19 (see examples below).

At the launch of his *Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World*, the Secretary-General went on to say: “Cities are bearing the brunt of the crisis. This is especially the case in poorer areas, where the pandemic has exposed deeply rooted inequalities. But, cities are also home to extraordinary solidarity and resilience.”<sup>29</sup>

### Challenges faced by local governments in effectively responding to the pandemic

Mayors and city governments from all over the world have shown tremendous leadership in responding to the needs of their migrant, refugee, and internally displaced communities during the crisis, especially where national governments have faltered. But while local leaders are shaping powerful, innovative, and inclusive responses to meet the needs of their communities—such as equal access to COVID-19 testing, direct cash assistance regardless of status, or water and sanitation services in underserved neighborhoods—their needs far exceed their current capacities.

Local and regional governments (LRGs) face a dire funding gap, putting in jeopardy their ability to continue their effective and pragmatic inclusive service delivery regardless of status. For example, the World Bank estimates that local governments may lose up to 15 – 25% of their revenue in 2021 because of the effect of COVID-19 on the economy<sup>30</sup>. UN Habitat projects this number to go up to 65% in Africa.<sup>31</sup>

### Recommendations:

In 2018, 150 cities endorsed the Marrakesh Mayors Declaration and committed to implement the Global Compact on Refugees and Global Compact for Migration in unison. These internationally agreed upon frameworks have become even more relevant in light of the global pandemic, as they include actions to ensure non-discriminatory access to health and other services regardless of migratory status.

In light of that commitment, local governments across the globe are taking swift and bold action to make sure migrants and refugees are not left behind in local response and recovery efforts, but they cannot do this alone. As the MMC leadership board mayors expressed in their Joint Statement *Joint Statement on Inclusive COVID-19 Response & Recovery*: ‘Public health and the recovery of the global economy require States and multilateral bodies to follow suit and create the conditions for us to do our job better, faster, and at scale. We ask that decision makers at the national and international level join cities and take the following actions:

- Ensure safe, equitable access to services regardless of migration status, including healthcare and economic relief.

<sup>28</sup> Lukas Kleine-Rueschkamp, Cem Özgüzel (December 2020). [COVID-19 and key workers: The role of migrants across regions and cities](#).

<sup>29</sup> UN Secretary-General (July 2020). [Press Release](#).

<sup>30</sup> UN Secretary-General (July 2020). [Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World](#).

<sup>31</sup> UN-Habitat (2020). [COVID-19 in African cities: Impacts, Responses and Policies Recommendations](#).

- Empower migrants and refugees to be part of the solution to COVID-19, including through the regularization of immigrant essential workers.
- Combat misinformation, racism, and xenophobia to strengthen community solidarity in all COVID-19 response and recovery efforts’.

With an eye to the roll out of vaccination campaigns starting, cities recommend national governments to closely coordinate and consult with local and regional governments to ensure equal access of migrants to vaccines and for migrants to be considered and included in each of the vaccine priority groups identified by national governments in their distribution plans.

Lastly, LRGs are key partners in implementing more effective and more inclusive COVID-19 responses for the benefit of migrant, refugees and the communities that host them. If we wish to have an effective global, national, and local response to COVID-19 “we must strengthen the capacities of local governments. This requires decisive action and deeper cooperation between local and national authorities. Stimulus packages and other relief should support tailored responses and boost local government capacity” as recommended by the Secretary-General.<sup>32</sup>

### Examples of local action for Inclusive COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Despite the challenges and scale of the impact, local and regional governments (LRG) have taken direct action locally to support their migrant, refugee, and displaced populations as well as joined together collectively to advance joint policy objectives globally. They however need to be empowered to continue providing direct support. Below some examples of what that action has entailed concretely:

LRG advocacy related to COVID-19 and migration includes:

- UCLG’s Decalogue for the COVID-19 aftermath calling for, among other things, guaranteeing public services, financial support packages, and a new multilateralism.<sup>33</sup>
- The Mayors Migration Council’s Global Mayors Solidarity Campaign for Inclusive Pandemic Response and Recovery,<sup>34</sup> calling to ensure equitable access to services regardless of migration status; to empower migrants and refugees to be part of the solution to COVID-19, including through the regularization of immigrant essential workers; and to combat misinformation, racism, and xenophobia. The MC2CM’s open letter “A call to recognize local governments in migration governance”.<sup>35</sup>

Collections and assessments of LRG actions related to COVID-19 and migration include:

- The Mayors Migrations Council’s Resource Hub on Inclusive Pandemic Response and Recovery.<sup>36</sup>
- UCLG’s “Live Learning Experience Knowledge Hub #BeyondTheOutbreak”<sup>37</sup> done in partnership with Metropolis and UN-Habitat and its related Migration page.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> UN Secretary-General (July 2020).

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.uclg.org/en/node/31076>

<sup>34</sup> <http://mmc-response.org/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/sponsored-content/a-call-to-recognize-local-authorities-in-migration-governance/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/mmc-covid19>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.beyondtheoutbreak.uclg.org/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.beyondtheoutbreak.uclg.org/migration>

- The Mediterranean City-2-City Migration Project (MC2CM), implemented by UCLG, ICMDP and UN-Habitat, International Migrants Day 2020: Cities Together page<sup>39</sup> and report “Going the (social) distance: How migrant and refugee-sensitive urban COVID-19 responses contribute to the realization of the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees” (forthcoming).

**Examples** of local governments’ actions related to COVID-19 (including those submitted to the Co-Chairs of the RTs in October 2020)

Local-national partnerships:

- While implementing their multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance strategy to mitigate the current outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as per the framework of the National Vision of the Kingdom of Morocco, the city of Rabat cooperated with international organizations such as the IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and UN Women to provide assistance and basic services to the nationals and migrant population alike.<sup>40</sup>
- Local solutions to address the gap in migrant protection where national law does not provide for equal access to healthcare regardless of migration status:
  - **New York City, US** launched a municipal program in 2019 to expand universal health care so that regardless of insurance, ability to pay, or immigration status all residents can seek services without fear of discrimination. Having established this program prior to COVID-19 was critical to the city’s ability to respond rapidly and inclusively when the pandemic hit.
  - Addressing gaps in immigrant communities’ access to testing sites themselves, **Montreal, Canada** and its municipal transportation company, Société de transport de Montréal, converted six public buses into mobile COVID-19 testing clinics. These busses were deployed across the city and, particularly, neighborhoods home to a large number of refugees and asylum seekers that are far from access to healthcare. Each bus is able to test approximately 100 people per day.
- Local equal and equitable access to prevention measures — such as personal protective equipment, adequate sanitation, and health information in multiple languages — are just as critical as access to treatment:
  - **Freetown, Sierra Leone** is partnering with the European Union, Catholic Relief Services, and local communities’ leaders to implement the Freetown City Council’s (FCC) “COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan: Working in support of and in collaboration with National Government.”<sup>41</sup> The plan aims to provide targeted support to the 350,000 people who live in informal settlements in Freetown, many of whom are vulnerable rural migrants living in overcrowded housing. A critical action the city has taken is to provide access to water to ensure adequate sanitation and handwashing to mitigate COVID-19 transmission.
  - **Zürich, Switzerland** organized several multilingual services to support migrants and refugees during the COVID crisis. This includes a centralized, multilingual, and

<sup>39</sup> <https://imap-migration.org/cities-for-migration>

<sup>40</sup>UCLG (2020), Live Learning Experience (LLE) Thematic session 9 – Addressing COVID-19 in informal contexts, City of Rabat - [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/rabat\\_lle\\_migration.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/rabat_lle_migration.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> [https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://fcc.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FCC\\_COVID-19-Preparedness-and-Response-Plan\\_270420.pdf&hl=en](https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://fcc.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FCC_COVID-19-Preparedness-and-Response-Plan_270420.pdf&hl=en)

accessible internet platform run by the city to ensure immigrant and refugee communities in Zürich have access to information about the pandemic including access to support, city contacts, and general information in their own language.

- The **provincial government of the Banteay Meanchey Province** in Cambodia, together with IOM and the Red Cross, organized a set of series to educate migrants and aspirant migrants on how to make an informed choice on migration during COVID-19. Key messages included how to travel through regular means, the risks and benefits of migration, financial management, and how to seek support throughout the migration cycle.<sup>42</sup>
- Emergencies housing and shelter:
  - In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the Government of the UK temporarily allowed asylum seekers and migrants with “No Access to Public Funds” (NAPF) status to access local public housing. As a result of this enabling policy change, the Mayor of **Bristol, UK** took more than 300 homeless people into emergency accommodation, more than 60 of whom are migrants and asylum seekers with NAPF status. Bristol has since set up a special “One City Task Force” made of up local government representatives, civil society and others to identify and support people on pathways from this emergency accommodation into more sustainable long-term housing.
  - **Milan, Italy** partnered with the nonprofit EMERGENCY<sup>43</sup> to provide COVID-19 monitoring in shelters for homeless people and unaccompanied migrant youth as part of their “Service Centre for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors” (part of the national SIPROIMI, formerly SPRAR system).<sup>44</sup> Through this joint “Welcome Project”, emergency teams of healthcare and logistics experts conduct daily monitoring in over 50 shelters in Milan. They work to ensure proper social distancing practices and sanitation services, train shelter staff, and monitor the health status of both guests and shelter staff.
- Regularization:
  - Recognizing the vital role of migrants and asylum seekers working during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of **Montreal** advocated for the regularization of essential workers. As a result of large public advocacy, the Governments of Canada and Provincial Government of Quebec agreed to offer permanent residency to asylum-seekers working in essential healthcare fields across the country.
- Migrants as essential workers:
  - Municipalities across the province of **Buenos Aires, Argentina** hired migrants from Venezuela with professional medical degrees that had not yet been revalidated by the national government.<sup>45</sup> Some 4,500 doctors, nurses, and other health professionals were hired. This practice is expected to be expanded to other areas of Argentina following national decree “to authorize, on an exceptional and

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<sup>42</sup> [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation\\_reports/file/roap\\_covid\\_response\\_sitrep\\_21.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/roap_covid_response_sitrep_21.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.emergency.it/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.mayormigrationcouncil.org/mmc-city-spotlight/milan-italy>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/coronavirus-municipios-provincia-buenos-aires-sumaran-medicos-nid2346577&sa=D&ust=1603639116637000&usg=AOvVaw2TTTTnL3UzUAHNh7oHbxsfb>



temporary basis, the hiring and practice of health professionals and technicians with degrees abroad, whose title is not revalidated or authorized in the Argentine Republic."

- **São Paulo, Brazil** established a Connect the Dots Project (*Projeto Ligue os Pontos*, in Portuguese) to bridge the gap between farmers, cooks, and families in need of food.<sup>46</sup> This project identified rural farmers in São Paulo struggling to sell their produce, connected them with refugee and migrant kitchen workers to produce meals, and then distributed those meals to families in need across São Paulo.
- Direct relief:
  - Recognizing that some migrants did not have access to other financial relief, **Los Angeles, US** established a new, innovative direct cash assistance program — the Angeleno Card<sup>47</sup> — for residents who fall below the poverty line including undocumented immigrants and informal sector workers. Eligible families received no fee prepaid debit cards of \$700-\$1,500 based on their income and household size from Mastercard's City Possible network. Mayor Eric Garcetti's Office, and the nonprofit Mayor's Fund for Los Angeles, raised \$25M from the private sector, philanthropies, and individuals for the program to distribute directly to residents to meet their basic needs.
  - In **Colombia**, municipalities partnered directly with the national government to ensure Venezuelan migrants receive needed aid during the pandemic. The National Disaster Risk Management Unit (UNGRD) secured food aid that will be given to mayors in 47 municipalities, primarily near the border with Venezuela, to distribute with partners to 200,000 families and reach over 1 million people in need.<sup>48</sup>

## The Perspective of Youth

### Prepared by the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth<sup>49</sup>

#### Gendered impact

Women, and women migrants even more, are already disproportionately impacted by issues such as health and gender based violence. The pandemic threatens to make this gap even worse. We have seen a global rise in gender based violence (GBV) and domestic violence globally due to the forced isolation.<sup>50</sup> The impact on young girls is particularly alarming. Moreover, many young girls are unable to continue their education in this situation. Moreover, girls are much more likely not to return to school after missing a year of education, so the predicted education rates for disadvantaged girls, including migrant ones, will be much lower

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<sup>46</sup> <https://www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/mmc-city-spotlight/sao-paulo>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.mayorsmigrationcouncil.org/mmc-city-spotlight/los-angeles-united-states>

<sup>48</sup> <https://migravenezuela.com/web/articulo/gobierno-inicia-la-entrega-de-mercados-a-venezolanos-vulnerables/1839>

<sup>49</sup> The UN Major Group for Children and Youth has consulted with young people around the world to identify the effects of the pandemic on migrants. This included a webinar consultation that fed directly into the 2020 HLPF and our pre-GFMD regional meetings, receiving inputs from 145 youth-led and/or youth focused organizations based in 79 countries and representing 80,000 young people (migrants and host communities). Some of the key points emerging from these consultations, as well as some additional inputs, are presented in this brief.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2020/covid19-impact-on-domestic-violence/>

after this pandemic, with long term impact threatening to bring us quite a few steps back in the development that had been achieved previously.

Trafficking for sexual exploitation has seen a terrifying jump, for instance in Latin America, more women exploited and prices for services fall.<sup>51</sup> States must integrate the prevention of violence against sexual and gender minorities in COVID-19 response plans facilitated by governments including through functional helplines, and connection to services and information.

### Apparent gaps in (de jure or de facto) access to social protection for migrants

Access to health, services, and human conditions has been harder for migrants during these times. Refugee and migrant camps have suffered incredibly during these times: cramped, overcrowded, and do not have a high hygienic standard which in turn make the people of concern much more vulnerable to contract COVID-19. Living situations of migrant domestic workers have also worsened significantly,<sup>52</sup> creating unsanitary conditions that result in infection spikes. In Bahrain, the government has taken the positive steps to urge employers to ensure that no more than five workers are housed in a room and that each worker should be three meters away from the other. In Kuwait, some workers were reportedly evacuated from their labor camps to alternative accommodation.

Also, the working conditions have worsened, as the uncertain situation and general panic has led employers to be much more likely to exploit workers - whether it is by wage theft, lack of sick pay, or firing without any of the protections or compensations stipulated by law. An example is what we can see happened in Lebanon where there has been a mass exodus of Ethiopian migrant workers dumped outside of their embassy due to employers not being able to continue paying them.<sup>53</sup> Thus, this has put a massive strain on already struggling governments to return or help its citizens abroad who are now economically desolate.

An important issue has been that even when social protection measures are in place, migrants often do not make use of these services because their status does not allow, or they risk deportation, or because of lack of adequate information on their rights, the measure championed by Portugal to allow all migrants to access health services regardless of status is a great example of how to effectively address this gap. In Spain the government has worked closely with NGOs to provide adequate housing and pastoral care in smaller facilities which allows for integration. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are both offering free health care services to all migrant workers irrespective of their legal status in the country.

### Unsafe migratory routes and conditions

A rise in irregular migration is to be expected when travel rules do not permit movement, leading to flows that are less likely to be controlled and properly integrated. More dangers present themselves as well during the journey, as exemplified for instance by the situation in Yemen for Ethiopian migrants stranded due to the pandemic.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/08/19/covid-19-pandemic-sex-trafficking-women-latin-america>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2020/04/covid19-makes-gulf-countries-abuse-of-migrant-workers-impossible-to-ignore/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-53031803>

<sup>54</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068301>

Detention and deportations during COVID 19 also raise many issues in terms of safety and protection of the individuals, as well as separations of families. Alternatives should be more urgent than ever during such a time of crisis.<sup>55</sup>

## Remittances

Pakistan, Bangladesh and Ethiopia are examples of countries with high reliance on remittances of their migrant workers.<sup>56</sup> Since lockdown and mass deportations, some wages are being halted and remittances have dwindled. This in turn impacts the country's development vastly, as money which would be going to families in remote villages will have stopped meaning the government and aid organizations have to fill the gap. The reliance on aid organizations have increased and organizations have seen their resources dry and stretched out. Under the GCM migrants have a right to adequate reintegration and support which need to be implemented during the enduring climate. Under the remittances in crises joint collaborative intergovernmental coalition on Remittances in Crises<sup>57</sup> we see emerging best practices in a number of countries. In Jordan, the central bank relaxed regulations to allow Western Union to make remittances available online – allowing unbanked populations to access digital remittances.<sup>58</sup>

## Return and reintegration

A key concern of return is that both for daily wage workers who need to travel back to their villages or international migrants, the loss of their jobs impedes return altogether, as occurred in India.<sup>59</sup>

## Xenophobia and stigma towards migrants

Xenophobia worsened during this pandemic, as foreigners came to be feared as bearers of the virus, even when they had been living in the same place for a long time. For instance, in Latin America some Venezuelan migrants experienced such a strong wave of xenophobia and economic crisis that they started walking back to Venezuelan from as far as Peru. Boats and migrants in Europe have been rejected because of COVID concerns, leaving many migrants stranded, while other forms of travel were accepted. These narratives are dangerous as they lead to strained communities and leave everyone worse off.

## Obstacles in the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Ensuring migrants are socially and economically integrated and that their human rights are respected is a prerequisite for people on the move to - first - not be left behind in the gains towards the 2030 Agenda, and - second - to significantly contribute themselves to the achievement of the SDG through their own skills and work. COVID-19 has taken the focus of governments and civil society away. But the situation of migrants has become more urgent, not less so. With every month of missed action, we are seeing heavy consequences on

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<sup>55</sup> For alternatives to detention see the following report:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b2586e41aef1d89f00c60a9/t/5ec2ce399cc90f48ede28b7c/1589825093397/UNMGCY+Submission+to+the+Special+Rapporteur+on+the+Human+Rights+of+Migrants.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> <https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/lifeline-risk-covid-19-remittances-and-children>

<sup>57</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068301>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.knomad.org/covid-19-remittances-call-to-action/#actions>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/coronavirus-covid-19-daily-wage-workers-vulnerable-landless-labourers-agricultural-workforce/story/399186.html>

migrant populations, and also the huge loss of opportunity that the long-term impact will have on their ability to effectively contribute to their communities and the achievement of the SDGs. We are experiencing an enormous set back in the progress achieved so far towards the 2030 Agenda.

### Education

It is well known that children in migratory circumstances are held back in their education and miss a number of years due to this. During COVID-19 this has further worsened due to schools closing which makes the children in a migratory setting in the COVID-19 generation far more vulnerable, far less likely to own the necessary equipment, space, and time for distance learning, let alone parental help, and end up even more so left behind than their peers. This will have a long lasting, tremendously negative impact on the lives of these young people and their opportunities in the future, as well as their contribution to their host societies. This is also the same for older generations, for instance in Europe migrants have been unable to participate in language classes, health assessments, and counselling.

Migrants can help through this crisis. Migrants have been key workers during the response to the pandemic covering many essential workers positions, and some countries have also relaxed their rules to allow migrants to get their qualifications as doctors to be recognized so to help out with the critical situation of the health system. A leaner transnational recognition of skills that accounts for documentation difficulties in countries of origin is crucial to move closer to the achievement of the SDGs. Imagine what could be achieved if all migrants were allowed to practice their professions even without the threat of a global pandemic: the world could achieve much more, together.

## Part III: Lessons learned - Better prevention, preparedness and recovery. What worked? What can be improved?<sup>60</sup>

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The GFMD ad-hoc Working Group on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Migrants, Migration and Development launched the “*Questionnaire to inform working paper: lessons learned from COVID-19 prevention, response and recovery*”<sup>61</sup> in order to collect lessons learned challenges, practices, policies, partnerships, etc. on how the GFMD constituents have responded and adapted to the pandemic and what type of measures they envisage for prevention and recovery. Twenty responses have been received, as follows:

- States/central government:<sup>62</sup> Belgium, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Haiti, Indonesia (2), Morocco, Nepal, Spain, Venezuela, and United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- Local governments: Municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa (Italy) and Quezon City (the Philippines).
- Civil Society Organizations: ICMC, Migrant Forum in Asia (*Campaign Justice for Wage Theft*) and Alianza Americas.
- GFMD Business Mechanism/IOE.
- International organisations: IFAD, OSCE and UN Habitat.

### 1. Main findings of the Survey

#### a. Responses and adaptation to the pandemic

Overall, all the respondents adapted quickly to the outbreak of the pandemic, by putting in place and implementing mitigating, creative, pragmatic and flexible actions, initiatives, policies, practices and partnerships geared towards institutional capacities, enabling environments, support to migrants and refugees, protection, access to services or employment issues. Depending on their national contexts, migratory patterns and needs, **central governments** have opted for a wide range of social, fiscal, economic, capacity building or communication measures to respond to the pandemic.

#### Policies, practices and partnerships established to respond to the pandemic

##### **Central governments:**

**Belgium** opted for public-private partnerships supporting migrants' skilling, thus adapting to the new environment, market needs and migrants' capacities by matching them with specific focus on entrepreneurial capacities.

**Indonesia** established a dedicated COVID-19 feature on the mobile application 'Safe Travel', elaborated new SOP for the repatriation of Indonesian seafarers, created a dedicated budget for Indonesian Missions overseas to assist citizens and distributed stimulus package to migrants.

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<sup>60</sup> The analysis of the survey responses was conducted by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development.

<sup>61</sup> The questionnaire was composed of 17 questions.

<sup>62</sup> It is important to notice that two replies have been received from the Ministries of Health of Chile and Venezuela.

**Morocco** created a Special Fund for the Management of the Pandemic, provided financial support to the beneficiaries of the National Security Fund who stopped their jobs, to businesses and SMEs. Similarly, **Spain** established a Minimal Vital Income Scheme accessible to nationals and migrants and their families having at least one year of legal and interrupted residence, whereas **Haiti** integrated policies of social inclusion addressing the pandemic in its National Budget 2020-21.

The **UAE** Government created measures to protect employment and support the economy (a US\$70 billion stimulus package), supported and facilitated programmes designed to assist with employees' basic living needs, regardless of their nationality. The Government has automatically renewed visas for workers through December 31, 2020 and made arrangements to ensure that the various services relating to workers' legal status are available by phone and online. The UAE do not deport employees whose employment is disrupted by the pandemic.

**Canada** brought up to date pre-departure medical services for resettled refugees including testing and isolation and provided coverage for telemedical and virtual health services for beneficiaries of the Interim Federal Health Program that provides temporary health coverage for refugee claimants and other specific categories of migrants. The Government put in place actions to reduce gender-based violence and the Feminist International Assistance Policy.

**Cyprus** continued to provide services to asylum seekers through working in shifts or the implementation of interviews via tele-conference, while the operations of the Reception Centers continued as usual. Asylum seekers affected by the pandemic (lost their jobs) received allowances.

As far as health services are concerned, the Ministry of Health of **Venezuela** strengthen the technical capacities of the Health Services, designed measures inclusive of migrants, trained its health officials, as well as disseminated Community Guidelines. On the same token, the Ministry of Health of **Chile** created a campaign for immigrants, providing information on health duties and rights and access to health care.

**Local authorities:**

The **City of Quezon in the Philippines** established Partnerships through the Migration and Development Council in order to facilitate smooth referral systems for services catering migrants and overseas Filipino workers. In this respect, a Migrant Resource and Help Center was established in the Migration Division of the Quezon City Public Employment Service Office that provides a wide range of services to migrants and their families. The **Municipality of Lampedusa and Linosa in Italy** provided Quarantine Ships for the migrants landed in Lampedusa during the pandemic and activated a COVID-19 area in the reception center.

**GFMD constituents:**

**The Business Mechanism** (IOE) provided capacity- and partnership-building to its members, conducted research on business impacts and perspectives in contexts of migration and, *inter alia* the pandemic, and reviewed the 2018 IOE Position Paper on Labour Migration.

**Civil Society:**

**Alianza Americas** strengthen the capacities of its member organizations to respond to COVID-19 and to maintain their advocacy efforts regarding immigration policies and economic relief and access to health care. **The Migrant Forum in Asia** launched the “*Justice for Wage Theft Campaign*” in order to put in place a transnational mechanism addressing grievances, claims and labor disputes of repatriated workers who have lost their jobs, whereas **ICMC** increased its humanitarian assistance for those immediately impacted by the pandemic.

**International organizations:**

**UN Habitat** elaborated the Spatial Planning Guidelines during COVID-19 that put housing and access to basic services in the center. **IFAD** launched the Remittances Community Task Force (40 organizations) with the aim to identifying policy and regulatory challenges and actions to be taken by governments, regulators and Remittance Services Providers and other stakeholders. The main outcome of the Task Force was the *Blueprint for Action “Remittances in Crisis: Response, Resilience, Recovery”* aiming at supporting resilience and recovery of the remittance market.

b. Prevention and preparedness – possible solutions for the future

The major problem with this pandemic is its unprecedented scale and devastation, affecting every single country. Previous emergency crises had been local/regional and financially limited in comparison with the ongoing pandemic. Based on their experiences and contexts, the respondents propose various **solutions to better prepare for future pandemics** or other forms of emergencies affecting human mobility:

Proposed solution	What’s next?
<b>Coordination and dialogue - consolidated and integrated institutional responses</b>	Institutionalized mechanisms of dialogue will be needed to bring together countries, governments, the private sectors, CSOs, local authorities, international organizations, etc. in order to be prepared and respond to future crisis. In the years to come, it will be essential to leverage the existing national mechanisms for dialogue and maintain them as platforms for engagement during future emergencies as they offer effective ways to understand and respond to on the ground realities and offer a comprehensive and collaborative institutional response.

<b>Addressing the shortcomings of the health systems</b>	The actions in the years ahead, at local and central levels, will need to focus on improving the healthcare structures and investing more in their capacities and infrastructure. Moreover, the pandemic has proven that health and access to health services are imperatives for migrants' protection. This reality should be incorporated in the on-going and future efforts in establishing legal pathway for migrants.
<b>Regular pathways, admission and regularized status</b>	This solution shall target, in particular, the essential workers and deal with simplified procedures to renew or extend work and residence visas. All of these help to ensure that employers and workers are legally secure in the work they do before, during and after a crisis, without interruption. Diversification and multiplication of regular pathways and greater flexibility to residence permits will be essential.
<b>Recruitment processes</b>	Responsible recruitment processes for safe, efficient and rights-based matching of migrant workers to employers. This is especially needed with respect to recruitment of mid- and lower-skilled migrants.
<b>Skills frameworks</b>	Practical frameworks for skills identification, recognition and matching of skills, including skills of 'essential workers' at the front lines in contexts of the pandemic. Greater flexibility in terms of labor market access will be of paramount importance.
<b>Social protection</b>	Governments are expected to revise their social protection policies and provide greater access to social protection to all migrants.
<b>Digitalization</b>	Much wider use of digital technologies and on-line interaction, including language- and culturally sensitive information and communications with the full range of migrants, safe and inexpensive transfer of remittances, and portability of skills, wages, social security and other earned benefits.
<b>Capacity development</b>	Training of governmental officials at central and local level (including the Quick Response Teams) on migration crisis management to equip frontline service providers with skills needed to respond efficiently to crisis affecting migrants and their families.
<b>Awareness raising</b>	Public information campaigns targeting migrants and refugees, including the publication of new regulations and policies, will be important.
<b>Data is critical</b>	The efforts will need to be channeled towards creation and collection statistical information on migrants profile and their geographical presence within a country in order to provide more accurate interventions.
<b>Evaluation</b>	It will be important to evaluate the interventions made so far with a view to gauging the achievements and failures and learning from them. This will allow States to better prepare for the future and to draw strategies that better address migration and migrants in times of crisis, relying on the spirit of international cooperation.



<b>Gender-based analysis plus (GBA+)</b>	Integrate GBA+ into future emergency planning in order to anticipate differential impacts of emergencies on various population groups.
<b>Asylum reception capacities</b>	The asylum reception services will need to be better equipped to provide quarantine areas, to communicate with asylum seekers in their languages and to conduct asylum interviews via tele-conference.
<b>Local resilience</b>	Increase the resilience locally by including vulnerable groups into preparedness and identifying service gaps and inequalities.
<b>Remittances</b>	The crisis highlights long-standing policy/regulatory issues that must be addressed to improve the resilience of remittance markets in the future.

### Policies, practices and partnerships on prevention of and preparedness for future crisis:

#### **Central governments:**

- **Canada (IRCC)** adopted a multi-faceted approach to conveying urgent information about COVID-19 to newcomers (pre-and post-arrival), using existing and new channels. IRCC ensured that multi-lingual information on COVID-19 resources, benefits and programmes was available to both temporary and permanent residents.
- **Cyprus** identified practical modalities to adapt its measures targeting asylum seekers and migrants, allowing them to continue benefiting from services (e.g. online language courses, dissemination of translated national COVID-19 measures). The Government approved budget revision for several projects in order to cover expenses arising from the needs of the pandemic.
- **Indonesia** conducted public campaigns, issued regulations on social distancing and legislation restricting the movement of people, adopted regulations on the State Financial Policy and Financial System to ensure economic stability, including stimulus package for SMEs.
- **Morocco** set up the National Coronavirus Infection Monitoring and Response Plan to prevent the introduction of the virus into the national territory. His Majesty King Mohammed VI suggested a joint African framework of action to combat the pandemic.
- **Spain** established a practice concerning the massive sanitary checks of seasonal foreign workers in order to avoid the spreading of the disease and to assure the protection of foreign workers and the communities they live in, as well as to avoid the risks of xenophobia and criminalization of foreign workers.
- **The Government of UAE** put a number of prevention practices in place, notably: (1) Ensuring the Safety and Health of the Workforce and Work Environment (e.g. UAE has made COVID-19 treatment services free and available and accessible across the country for all and has established dedicated information Centers for COVID-19 providing services in various languages); (2) Protecting Migrants in Work (UAE protects the health rights of migrant workers, irrespective of their nationality and migration status); and (3) Bilateral and Multilateral cooperation (UAE support the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan).

#### **Local governments:**

- The **City of Quezon** strengthened the capacities of its Quick Response team.
- **Lampedusa** conducted COVID-19 screening (free of charge) and information campaign.

#### **International organizations:**

- **UN HABITAT** set up a mechanism of coordination between local authorities, civil society and the private sector for reducing the social and economic impacts.
- **The Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) Initiative** and Guidelines. The aim of this Initiative was to improve the capacity of States and other stakeholders to assist and protect migrants and foreigners of all kinds in countries experiencing conflict or natural disaster. Co-chaired by the USA and the Philippines, MICIC represented a framework of practices, policies and partnerships. Its different strands were implemented by IOM and ICMPD.

### c. Recovery (“building back better”)

In order to build back better, it is important to remove the current mobility restriction and to ensure that the recovery strategies and interventions, including their implementation, are inclusive of all individuals. There will only be relatively rapid recovery if there is massive financial investment in recovery packages, ensuring that migrants are part of them. Indiscriminate access to services and the creation of regular pathways are key priorities for the years ahead. It will be impossible to build back better at the expense of vulnerable individuals across communities.

Given the large and increasing imbalances in demographics, labor markets and skills, many countries, companies/employers need migrant workers across all skills levels. The pandemic has shown that many are essential workers and also at the front lines in jobs that are key to healthy economies. It is therefore necessary to prioritize and invest in regular pathways, frameworks and technologies that enable regular admission of new migrant workers, regularization programmes, as well as skills frameworks.

#### **Recovery strategies, measures or plans that include migration and migrants**

**Canada’s** 2021–2023 Immigration Levels Plan sets out a path for responsible increases to immigration targets to help the Canadian economy recover from COVID-19, drive future growth and create jobs for middle class Canadians. The Plan aims to continue welcoming immigrants at a rate of about 1% of the population of Canada. In case of **Morocco**, the recovery plans put in place take regular migrants into consideration, following the philosophy of the National Strategy on Migration and Asylum. The **Belgium Development Agency** has included migration and migrants in its recovery interventions and plans in cooperation with public authorities in its partner countries (e.g. Morocco, Senegal, Niger, Guinea). In **Spain**, the tendency is to include migrants and refugees in the mainstream of national recovery strategies instead of approaching different or specific measures unless these are necessary. **Indonesia** views migration policies as a part of recovery strategy (focusing on facilitating return and the wellbeing of Indonesian migrants overseas).

Locally, the **Government of Quezon City** has taken steps to include migration crisis managements and migrants in crisis in its Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan. **UN HABITAT** promotes local recovery plans (e.g. planning of public space, provision of short term measures such as water through participatory processes).

The **private sector** (GFMD Business Mechanism/IOE) considers concrete recovery strategies revolving around regular pathways and regulatory environments that recognize and incentivize migrant businesses that are built, supported and/or run by migrants and diaspora.

The 'building back better' strategies will also need to focus on the allocation of sufficient resources to the health sector (with due consideration to the economic impacts), infrastructure for health and human mobility (including to ensure access to health for all migrants) and access to social protection for all migrants. Likewise, the recovery strategies are expected to sustain structured partnerships and coordination between relevant actors, to leverage digitalization, to increase resilience, and to take steps in maximizing the development impact of remittances.

Locally, the empowerment of communities shall become a constant feature of policies and interventions, whereas the capacities of local governments would need to be continuously strengthened to be better prepared to respond to future crisis affecting its constituents at home and those who are living and working abroad. This can be done through regular capacity-building activities in partnership with national government agencies, civil society organizations, migrant associations, international development partners, and the private sector.

All in all, the 'building back better' measures should be anchored within the 2030 Agenda and be accompanied by efforts to forge balanced public narratives, linked to integration and inclusion interventions. Clear political messages and actions in support of migrants and acknowledgment of their contributions in all sectors of the economy and society is a key element of these undertakings.

## 2. Conclusions and next steps

### a. Lessons learned:

More than ten months into this unprecedented global pandemic, the international community has witnessed that the **institutional and human capacities, as well as the financial resources**, have been severely stretched globally. The huge increase of needs of populations, including migrants and refugees, compared to the financial means available is still extremely challenging in many contexts.

The GFMD community has learnt that the responses to the crisis require **stronger and closer multi-sectoral coordination and collaboration across the board and multi-level governance**, based on strong commitment, flexibility and rapid-reaction. The establishment of coordination processes allowed achieving full ownership and alignment with the emerging priorities. Crucially, **international cooperation, partnerships and dialogue** are more important than before as it transpires that for the countries of origin it was challenging to generate actions intended to provide a safety net for migrants affected by the pandemic as

the policies in the destination countries were changing very rapidly and not communicated to the former.

The respondents to the Survey have also come to the conclusion that the implementation of the newly and rapidly established practices, policies and partnerships could be more effective if **the data were better recorded and available** (e.g. accurate data on migrants profiles and their presence within the country in order to better understand their needs).

There is a clear consensus that more **extensive public opinion** work is to be conducted with a view to building a **balanced narrative** on migrants and migration, by also engaging as much as possible with political parties and with local authorities and communities. Social cohesion and trust are at stake in the absence of a fair and evidenced-based discourse on migration.

**COVID-19 is the great scatterer.** In a world of remote work and meetings, actors in migration and development will have to invest differently and more deeply to build and bring results that matter from working and collaborative relationships with others in and beyond their communities.

#### b. Immediate policy actions and global partnerships – what could the GFMD community do?

The respondents consider that GFMD is the right platform to further advance the reflection and thinking on the solutions to the pandemic, in a spirit of inclusiveness and participation. Based on the responses received, several global policy actions and partnerships shall be prioritized in the months and years to come by the international community and the GFMD constituents. Sustainability and inclusiveness should become the driving principle of all actions, from local to global level.

1. **Stronger coordination** between countries of origin and destination concerning the policies and interventions they opt for is needed so that to anticipate their effects and ensure synergies.
2. More **global and regional cooperation and partnerships** on assisting the safe voluntary return/repatriation, new regular pathways and skills frameworks are essential.
3. Actions that engage in a supportive approach the countries that were the most affected in view of building a solidarity cooperation system that enables the **exchange of experiences and good practices** in dealing with the impacts of the pandemic.
4. **Ensuring protection and access to health and basic services to all migrants** regardless of status by undertaking real and systemic efforts geared toward the protection of vulnerable people and places.
5. Continuous **advocacy campaigns and lobbying** on international labor rights.
6. Give a stronger **voice to local actors and communities** and build their capacities and resilience.
7. **Balanced narratives on migrants and migration** should be advanced globally and with increased coordination between all actors.
8. Governments, regulators, Remittance Services Providers and CSOs shall prioritize the measures proposed by the Remittance Community Task Force **to build resilience in remittance families** and ensure access to remittances for those who rely on them the most.