

FINAL REPORT

2019 GFMD CIVIL SOCIETY DAY
22 JANUARY 2020, QUITO, ECUADOR

“CIVIL SOCIETY’S CONTRIBUTION TO TRANSFORMING GLOBAL
MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: STRENGTHENING
IMPLEMENTATION AND ENRICHING PARTNERSHIPS FOR
MIGRANTS AND COMMUNITIES.”



Global Forum on
MIGRATION & DEVELOPMENT
Civil Society  2019 Quito - Ecuador



Contents

Moving from policy to action: from Marrakesh “Migration week” to Quito 2019	2
Quito Civil Society Day: a snapshot	3
Overarching reflections.....	4
Shared experience and objectives:	5
1. Access to services:	7
2. Mixed migration:.....	8
3. Labour migration:	9
4. Climate-related migration and displacement:.....	11
5. Criminalization of migrants and those assisting them:	12
Cross-cutting reports:	14
1. Championing child rights	14
2. Youth engagement and perspectives	14
3. Guaranteeing a gender-sensitive approach	15
4. Navigating negative narratives	16
5. The inclusion and leadership of migrant and diaspora communities	17
Civil Society participation in Common Space	18
Looking towards Dubai January 2021.....	20

Moving from policy to action: from Marrakesh “Migration week” to Quito 2019

The GFMD, according to the Head of the GFMD Civil Society Coordinating Office, is a laboratory – a long-term investment. It was, after all, the GFMD, created 13 years ago, that “paved the way for the adoption of the Global Compact for Migration.” Following the hype of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) that directly followed last year’s GFMD in Marrakesh, the task was clear. 2019 would be the year to move from negotiations to implementation – **from policy to action**: the first steps forward following the roadmap set by the GCM and the GFMD’s 10-Year Review. This Quito Summit was to take place in a largely changed international migration landscape. With the UN Network on Migration finding its feet, the GFMD would provide an exciting opportunity to see how governments and other stakeholders were moving forward with this new framework.

As part of this changing GFMD landscape, the “Common Space” of the Quito Summit was, for the first time, **open to all stakeholders**. As one of the four mechanisms occupying space in Quito (including Government, Business and Mayors), civil society was invited – through the Civil Society Coordinating Office – to provide input to the Chair on the development of the Common Space agenda, and as such was able to propose amendments to the framing of the proposed topics and certain elements of the methodology, in addition to hosting one of the sessions.

When it came to shaping the civil society agenda, heeding the feedback from last year’s Civil Society Day (CSD), the objective for our mechanism was relatively clear: to create a space that would allow us to maintain the rich, constructive and critical dialogue that participants of the CSD have grown accustomed to – allowing for the identification of common goals and strategy – while reducing the level of protocol and providing opportunities for informal exchange. The theme of this year: “Civil society’s contribution to transforming global migration governance: Strengthening implementation and enriching partnerships for migrants and communities” was therefore proposed to allow participants to take stock of initiatives being implemented around the Global Compact for Migration as well as across the spectrum of migration and development. With break-out sessions conceived as a space to identify and learn from challenges; acknowledge successes; and channel collective knowledge into new or stronger partnerships and advocacy.

While there were a range of challenges in the lead-up to this GFMD, including notably the change of date from November 2019 to January 2020, considerable efforts were made to ensure that the level of protocol was minimized in favour of a more personal, content-rich exchanges. In collaboration with the Civil Society International Steering Committee, a list of themes and cross-cutting elements were derived from the “[10 commitments](#)” presented at the closing ceremony of the 2018 CSD, to allow participants to engage across areas of their expertise as well as focus on important themes that many felt were inadequately addressed in the GCM, and thematic experts were consulted to frame the direction of each theme.

Quito Civil Society Day: a snapshot

- A total of **229** civil society delegates participated in the Civil Society Day 2019 (CSD), and were made up of:
 - **54%** female, **46%** male
 - **46%** migrants, refugees or diaspora and **45%** representing organizations led by migrants, refugees or diaspora members
 - **29%** representing human rights organizations, **32.5%** migrant/diaspora NGOs, **17.5%** development groups, **5.5%** from academia or think tanks, **12.5%** from trade unions/workers’ organizations and **1%** from private sector
 - **24 (10%)** youth representatives (less than 30 years old), including 6 participants under 25 years old.
 - **28%** delegates from Europe; **25%** from Latin America (including some **13%** representatives from Ecuadorian-based organizations); **17%** from North America; **14%** from Asia; **13%** from Africa; **2%** from the Middle East, and **1%** from the Pacific regions.
- **58 observers**, including **12** government representatives.

The Quito Summit also provided an opportunity for civil society to organise a number of preparatory and other strategic meetings in the days before the opening. Many delegates also met with representatives from their local, national and regional authorities. Others hosted official GFMD side-events on Tuesday 21 January, together with other GFMD stakeholders. Some of those processes fed directly into the Civil Society Programme of the GFMD, as their main outcomes were presented during the opening ceremony of the Civil Society Day: the Peoples’ Global Action (PGA) on Monday 20 January, and the two-days [Youth Forum](#) on 19 and 20 January.

The following schedule illustrates how the Civil Society Day and other civil society meetings fit in with the broader GFMD Summit. More details, including on the civil society GFMD side-events, can be found [on the GFMD CSD website](#).

Saturday 18 January	Sunday 19 January	Monday 20 January	Tuesday 21 January	Wednesday 22 January	Thursday 23 January	Friday 24 January
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Meeting of Bloque Latinoamericano 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regional preparatory meeting (Bloque, Alianza Americas, Asociación Rumiñahui) ➤ Youth Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Youth Forum ➤ Peoples Global Action (PGA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Action Committee meeting ➤ Registration and official side events ➤ Opening of the GFMD Summit  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Civil Society Day  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Common Space ➤ Closing of the GFMD Summit  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GFMD voluntary dialogue on the GCM
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marketplace and tech garden  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marketplace and tech garden  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Marketplace and tech garden  	

Open to all stakeholders
Open to Civil Society only
Other Civil Society Preparatory Meetings
 GFMD Official events

Overarching reflections

The 2019 GFMD Civil Society Programme kicked off with the opening plenary of the GFMD Summit, with co-Chairs Stella Opoku-Owusu and José Dolores Suazo Mejía (Don Lolo) delivering rousing interventions, **imploping participants to be visionary leaders, to hold each other accountable, all the while putting migrants at the heart of the discussions**. While Stella called upon civil society colleagues to **strengthen partnerships with other stakeholders** in-line with the **Global Compact for Migration (GCM)**, Don Lolo appealed for a **more humanized interaction** – for us to cast a more attentive, caring eye towards each other, and especially the most vulnerable among us. To this end, he affirmed **civil society's commitment to engaging with governments, local authorities and businesses**, to examine how we can work together to improve the reality of migrants' lives.

A shorter opening plenary provided participants with an overview of processes ongoing throughout the year, before providing a general introduction to the five thematic focuses. Moving into the breakout sessions, participants were invited to engage in small round-table discussions on their theme based on language. Each theme followed a different methodology, as defined by the thematic leads and table moderators. Participants **generally appreciated the opportunity to exchange** with peers in an intimate, informal setting. The requirement to canvas a wide range of issues within the space of one day as well as the challenges in reporting back immediately afterwards (as obliged by the one-day structure) was identified as a challenge. However, as another participant recognized, the idea of the GFMD isn't to have immediate results, but to agree on a strategy that can be implemented at the national level.

A particular effort was made to ensure the **meaningful participation of local civil society**. While the Summit was acknowledged as an important learning space and a place to create connections among Latin American organizations, other participants felt that there should have been greater participation from organizations in Africa. More generally, the participants **felt that the interaction during Civil Society Day was the primary vehicle for many of them to go back to their countries** and open up the space for dialogue with other stakeholders, mainly government entities.

On the whole, participants felt that the Civil Society Day allowed them to **identify avenues for partnership**, as well as areas for **improvement in their advocacy and in connection** to the implementation of the GCM.

The **inclusive Common Space was appreciated by many participants** as an opportunity to engage with local authorities, government counterparts and the private sector in an informal setting. There is, however, still room for improvement in **encouraging meaningful exchange between the stakeholders** – something we hope will be addressed in the coming year. It was nevertheless acknowledged that the GFMD was uniquely placed to provide a space to expand opportunities, to increase partnership and to get to know key interlocutors better.

Shared experience and objectives:

The following highlights are some of the **key observations and messages** that came out of the thematic break-out sessions from the CSD. Due to the richness of each of the sessions, not all issues raised during the day could be reflected here, and the below does not purport to be comprehensive. This overview is proposed as a **collection of points that civil society can focus on throughout 2020**, in its daily work at all levels, whether with governments, stakeholders and of course migrants themselves. It can also be a **starting point for collective strategy** as we prepare for the next GFMD Summit in Dubai (see below).

During the day, participants engaged in small roundtable discussions focusing **on one of the following five themes**:

- **Access to services for all migrants regardless of status**
- **Mixed migration**
- **Labour migration**
- **Climate-related migration & displacement**
- **Criminalization of migrants and those assisting them**

Each thematic discussion followed a unique methodology, developed by a small team of thematic leads – considering their topic from **two perspectives**:

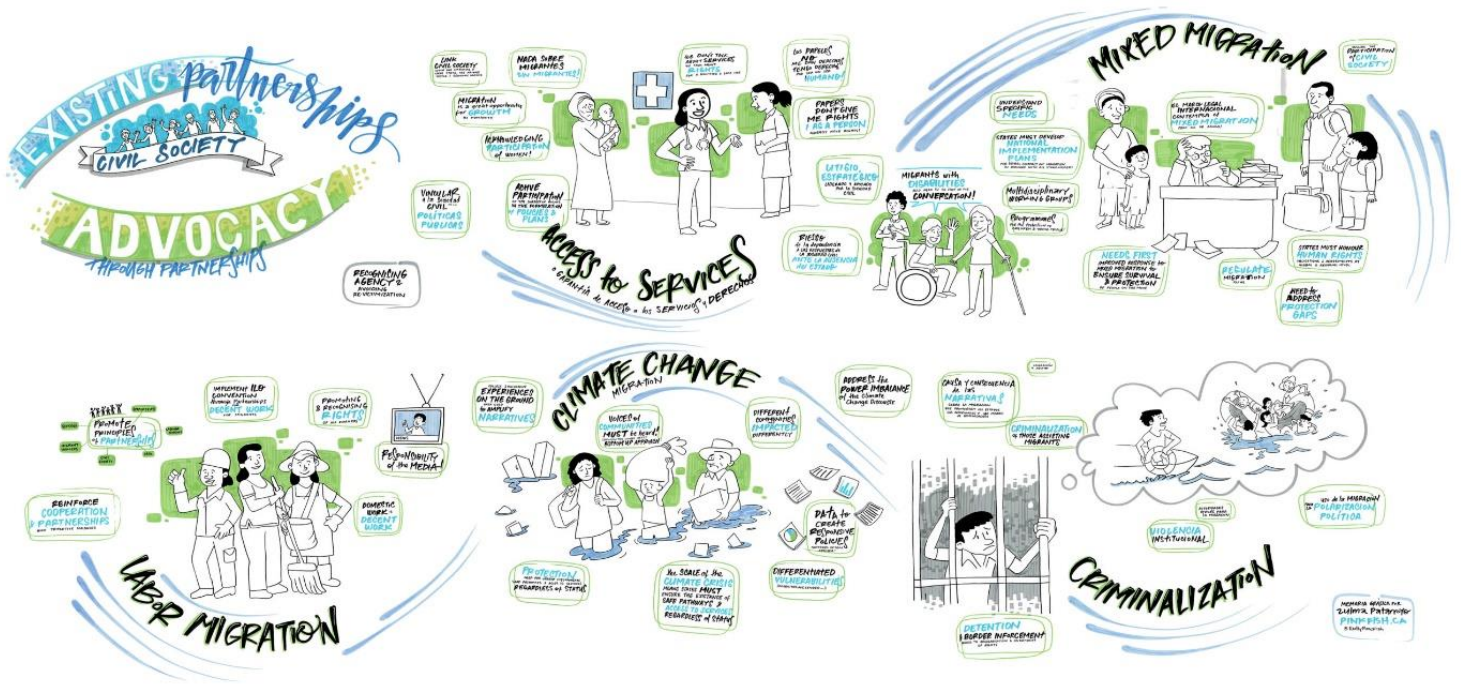
a) **Learning from and enriching partnerships**

With a focus on evidence-building, participants were encouraged to exchange examples of partnerships, highlighting both good practices and challenges, with a view to collecting a set of lessons learned in relation to the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration, the Sustainable Development Goals and the humanitarian-development nexus more broadly.

b) **Advocating through partnership**

Following on from the morning session, participants were asked to identify key advocacy messages related to their theme and more specifically related to developing partnerships for implementation. Three main messages were reported back into the plenary at the end of the day.

Participants were also encouraged to consider a range of cross-cutting elements in their discussions including child rights, youth engagement and perspectives, gender-sensitive approaches, the issue of narratives and the inclusion and leadership of migrant and diaspora communities. Rapporteurs were tasked with reporting back on the inclusion of these issues and any specific recommendations that arose, and their perspectives are included in a dedicated report below. They are also well captured in this graphic recording, done during CSD:



Graphic recording summarizing some of the main points raised during the Civil Society Day

© Zulma Patarroyo.

For all CSD graphic recordings, please consult the [GFMD CSD website](https://www.gfmd.org/csd/).

1. Access to services:

Click [here](#) for the background note of the session.

LEARNING FROM AND ENRICHING PARTNERSHIPS

Challenges:

- Inability to access services due to **lack of documentation**.
- **Misinformation** – particularly in relation to organized migration (such as labour migration) as well as in relation to mixed migration flows.
- **Awareness** of the existence and availability of services.
- **Mistrust of authorities and services** – especially relevant for irregular migrants who often fear being denounced – can prevent migrants from seeking at times life-saving interventions.
- **Harassment of human rights and migrant advocates** and providers of assistance.
- **Practical and physical barriers** to accessing services for those in vulnerable situations, including those in **hard-to-reach areas** and those who are **linguistically isolated**.
- **Disproportionate reliance** on civil society as service providers entails a risk of dependence and can prevent organizations from being objectively critical advocates.
- **Disconnect** in the enactment of policies and their implementation
- **Lack of communication between actors** resulting in poor coordination between services/providers.
- **Negative narratives** portraying migrants as drains on social resources exacerbating perceived competition for resources between host and migrant populations – leading governments to adopt exclusionary policies which reinforce xenophobia, rather than empowering migrants to be active and contributing members of society.
- Need for **more accessible accountability and complaint mechanisms** within civil society, with organizations empowered to decline activities that fall outside of their mandate.

Good Practices:

- **Strategic litigation** led and / or supported by civil society.
- Well defined **roles of consulates and embassies** of countries of origin (while taking into account protection risks for the migrants).
- **Effective firewalls:** Migrants living in New York and Barcelona are issued local identity documents which allow them to access services regardless of their migration status.
- **Development of “service hubs”:** In Qatar visa centres included other services such as medical check-ups.
- **Diversifying the dissemination of information** through community media, community promoters, migrant rights networks, faith leaders and spaces where migrants gather, enhancing youth engagement to run social media campaigns. In Greece, when child migrants were being refused access to schools, migrant communities aired video campaign in schools informing of their rights to attend.

KEY MESSAGES :

- Affected populations should be **actively included at every stage of advocacy, implementation & outreach as driving actors**, with assured consideration of the rights of children, and youth and gender perspectives, as appropriate. Linguistic challenges must be taken into account and provided for.
- The focus should be on **migrants' access to rights as opposed to 'access to services'**, with an emphasis on respecting the **dignity and humanity of all migrants** regardless of their migration status.
- A **rights-based approach to access to services** (i.e.. regardless of migration status) benefits the **whole community**, allowing for the better management of resources in contexts with weaker protection frameworks.
- Services for migrants should be **mainstreamed into public services** to avoid being confined in a parallel system which prohibits inclusion in the host community.

2. Mixed migration:

Click [here](#) for the background note of the session.

LEARNING FROM AND ENRICHING PARTNERSHIPS

Challenges:

- **Lack of clarity in existing frameworks** means that there is no clear response to people in need of protection if they do not fit preexisting categorizations. This is often the case also at the national level.
- **Contradictions between certain legal frameworks**, combined with a **lack of complementarity** between the Global Compacts for Migration and on Refugees means that there is **limited guidance** on how to resolve this lacuna.
- Data is available, but needs to be **transparent and accessible** to the general public.
- **Funding shortages** mean that most resources are allocated to the most vulnerable, with few resources for protection activities for people moving in mixed flows. Moreover, there is rarely a State-allocated budget for such interventions.
- **Insufficient political will to address mixed migration**, with tensions between UN agencies regarding leadership, which affects the response to needs.

Good Practices:

- **Multidisciplinary working groups at the national level** that include the participation of people in an **irregular situation** and involve the authorities such as the Quito Process.
- Partnerships work **when all stakeholders are actively involved with clear responsibilities**, such as the UN-established regional response to coordinate assistance being provided to refugees and migrants from Venezuela (R4V). **The R4V** established a regional strategy and country-specific support, information management, communication (messaging and reporting), and resource mobilization including UN agencies, civil society, donors and international financial institutions.

- Partnerships focusing on **alternatives to detention** for migrant children and adolescents and other profiles in situations of vulnerability, as applicants for refugee status or protection that are **jointly coordinated** by government, civil society and international organizations.
- **Community engagement:** In Canada, a policy has been enacted that allows community interest groups to sponsor refugees or migrants.
- **Capacity building partnerships** between civil society and UN Agencies and government actors include providing trauma interviewing training to child protection services to prevent interrogation-type techniques.

ADVOCATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

- The immediate response of states to mixed migration must be **the protection of people**. States must be **more flexible** in the application of recognition of refugee status including measures such as prima facie.
- Governments and funders should **create comprehensive programs to address all aspects of mixed migration**, in line with humanitarian principles. Mechanisms should be established to detect **specific needs of people in vulnerable situations – regardless of status** – and adequate responses, guaranteeing the use of multidisciplinary teams.
- **All stakeholders have a shared interest in resolving mixed migration issues**, they must **acknowledge each other's strengths and limitations** in order to work together to ensure comprehensive programmes to address all aspects of mixed migration. Including to implement objectives 2, 5, 7, 8 and 12 of the GCM.

3. Labour migration:

Click [here](#) for the background note of the session.

LEARNING FROM AND ENRICHING PARTNERSHIPS

Challenges:

- **Negative narratives** resulting in xenophobic attitudes, discrimination and violence against migrant workers.
- **Women workers and families** disproportionately impacted by technical arrangements that do not consider migration from a broader lens including the impact on communities.
- **Lack of information** about systems in destination countries, need for partnerships between civil society and private sector to bridge the gaps between origin and destination governments.
- Changing economic, social, demographic contexts resulting in **bilateral agreements becoming outdated**.
- **Governments not being held accountable** to implement bilateral agreements.
- **Technology and automation** – need for a set of **protections** and **firewalls** that secure information and to ensure the separation between government systems and private recruitment agencies.

Good Practices:

- **The Global Compact for Migration** provided an opportunity for trade unions and civil society in Nepal, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka to engage more effectively together and with other governments on labor migration.
- **Bilateral agreements** to ensure access to social protection for migrant workers: Agreements between Philippines and Germany, Tunisia, Bosnia Herzegovina, for example, allow nurses and health workers the same rights, benefits and social protections as nationals. In the Mekong region, governments are working together to ensure the **portability of social protection**.
- Across Asia, **a number of State and regional governments are working together with civil society, and representatives of migrant worker and diaspora communities** to establish welfare funds which provide **a range of services** such as support for the education of migrant children, compensation for family members of workers who are injured and for burial in case of death, as well as **partnerships** to provide information, services and counselling.
- Establishment of **visa regimes** that allow workers to move **with families through regular migration channels**, supporting the principle of family unity, as well as a repository of good practices for visa regimes.

ADVOCATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

- Need to **develop and implement practices and tools** to protect migrant workers, their families and communities, regardless of status.
- **The perspectives of migrants, civil society organizations, labour unions and organizations of migrant workers** are crucial to ensuring dignified labour migration policies and practices (that are not driven solely by private sector interests), as well as **access to decent work and safe working conditions**. This means ensuring inclusive, transparent and participatory processes to promote global skill partnerships.
- The ratification and adoption of **international conventions**, as well as their adoption and implementation at the **national level** is vital to the protection of migrant workers in relation to decent work, ensuring employees have contracts and access to social welfare, for example. Civil society would also encourage the establishment of a more efficient monitoring mechanism to monitor state implementation.
- **Use technology innovation to increase protection measures for migrants** – for example, migrants stuck in countries in conflict can receive warnings and information and protection measures. A second example would be youth skills matching

4. Climate-related migration and displacement:

Click [here](#) for the background note of the session.

LEARNING FROM AND ENRICHING PARTNERSHIPS

Challenges:

- **Visibility.** The complex, multi-causal nature of movements associated with climate change result in difficulties in substantiating the **connection between climate change and human mobility**. For example, at the community level, when people move from rural to urban areas, they interpret this as economic migration, even if droughts, landslides, etc. are a factor.
- **Lack of political will** to accept the reality of climate change despite both extreme natural disasters (fires and flooding) and more subtle changes that lead to migration (such as drought and food insecurity).
- Governments that were initially supportive of the GCM **not implementing policies** that would protect migrants or ensure their safety or dignity.
- **Lack of international cooperation frameworks** for cross-border movements associated with climate change.
- Civil society is better prepared for humanitarian response rather than **long-term reconstruction efforts**.

Good Practices:

- Encourage states to follow the example of countries such as Honduras and Peru, who have incorporated **human mobility into their national climate change plans**.
- **Street activism.**
- Create and expand **adaptation programs** to respond to drought and other climate change impacts.
- **Provide information** for persons in irregular migration status so they have access to emergency services, particularly in situations of disasters that are linked to climate change (e.g., floods, storms).
- **Inform and educate partners and local communities**, on how use the GCM as an advocacy tool.

ADVOCATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

- It is important to be cautious of the way that **data is used and misused**. Relying on raw or quantitative data alone **takes the focus away from the root causes** (i.e. climate change). While the relation between climate change and human mobility is complex, **the focus should remain on climate change** - focusing too much on migration and displacement numbers risks feeding into a narrative of “invasion”, where the focus shifts from climate change to migration itself.
- Policy makers should be guided by **documented experiences on the ground**, the experiences of affected communities, as well as those at-risk. **A bottom-up approach is crucial**.

- In order to develop and implement effective mitigation, coping and adaptation strategies, policy makers must not be blind-sighted by the outcome, **but able to focus on the structural challenges.**
- Governments should be **investing in adaptation strategies, including in migration as an adaptive measure.** There must be **channels** for people to **move safely and in dignified ways.**
- Need to create a **culture of accountability for climate change** in the same vein as we strive for accountability for war crimes etc.

5. Criminalization of migrants and those assisting them:

Click [here](#) for the background note of the session.

LEARNING FROM AND ENRICHING PARTNERSHIPS

Challenges:

The criminalization of migrants and those assisting **them exacerbates the often already vulnerable situation of irregular migrants**, further exposing them to the risk of family separation, sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, human trafficking, forced disappearance, violence and/or death. **Trends that have been identified in this regard include:**

- **Negative narratives and harmful policies** affecting migrants
- **Arrests and detention of migrants and those assisting them** (including saving lives at sea, offering food and shelter)
- **The criminalization of human rights defenders, and providers of humanitarian assistance** to irregular migrants

Good Practices:

- **Alternatives to detention:** abolish mandatory detention policies and decriminalize migration through irregular channels; prevent the separation of children from their families; ensure detention centers are monitored and that basic rights are upheld – including the right to due process
- Building a **firewall between immigration authorities and those providing services** (especially health and education) to irregular migrants
- **Strategic litigation and advocacy:** advocate for coherence between international obligations and national policies
- Advocate with governments to **regularize pathways**, and create **alliances with local and municipal authorities** to guarantee the protection of migrants.
- Where possible, encourage the **responsibility of consular services.**
- **Making intimidation of human rights defenders known:** activate the protection and security measures that exist, including by lobbying the media and the international community.

ADVOCATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

- It is simply **unfathomable that people are being penalized for saving human lives**. Shared human values must prevail, and the interference with humanitarian search and rescue missions at sea must stop immediately.
- **The importance of narratives**: the language of “illegal migrants”, for example, and policies that reinforce that narrative (such as mandatory immigration detention), not only exacerbate negative public opinion, but also serve as a **foundation for discriminatory policies**. The focus should rather be around access to regularization and enjoyment of rights.
- This issue shows the potential of **local authorities to make a difference and encourage change from the bottom up**. Despite trends of States avoiding their responsibilities by returning migrants to “safe third countries”, certain “sanctuary cities” have resisted federal laws, refusing to hand over immigrants targeted for deportation.

Cross-cutting reports:

1. Championing child rights

Many of the concerns and recommendations from the break-out sessions relating to children were in line with recommendations stemming from consultations conducted by the Destination Unknown campaign in India and West Africa. The ultimate recommendation being to ensure that regional and global discussions are informed by the views of children and young people who are affected by migration.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDED:

- All migrant children must **have access to services, regardless of their migratory status.**
- Children must be assured **clean and safe accommodation** with electricity, **safe drinking water and proper sanitation facilities**; access to **health services** and **education and opportunities to play.**
- **Officials** at all points of the journey should be **sensitized about basic child protection principles** and available mechanisms.
- **Diplomatic representations** must ensure that their citizens have **access to social services.**
- In relation to **climate change**, it is essential to consider the **needs of children** left by their parents at the point of origin during disaster.
- Establish **concrete accountability measures** (such as fines) for employers engaging children in hazardous work.

2. Youth engagement and perspectives

With young people constituting an important proportion of the global migrant population – as well as actively working at the forefront of migration issues and driving solutions, at the local, regional, and global level, the nomination of a youth rapporteur and youth civil society representatives brought an important perspective to this year's Civil Society Day.

In general, the youth wanted to stress that:

- Youth, from both migrant and host communities, **are active, engaged citizens capable of creating innovative solutions, providing services and supporting the integration of migrants.**
- **Data collection** needs to be improved to understand **the specific needs of migrant children and youth**, so that it can be used to create responsive policies to support integration into host communities.
- There are **particular challenges** when dealing with youth before they turn 18, and then once they turn 18. It is important to consider this **transition period**, especially in light of the **lack of protection** that is accorded to youth once they reach this age, to ensure that they don't fall through the **cracks in the system.**

In particular, rapporteurs identified and raised many of the **specific priorities** that affect migrant youth in the thematic breakout sessions, including:

- The importance of **family reunification for children and youth**, and the need to avoid deportation that results in family separation;
- Encouraging the development and implementation of **norms and practices** to ensure that young migrants, including those driven by climate change, feel **included in their new communities** (including through enrollment in education, vocational trainings, and facilitated entry into the labour market);
- The importance of ensuring the **recognition of education and skills**, including through the creation of **flexible pathways** to address the challenges of obtaining documentation from certain states; and
- **Intransigence towards child labour regardless of migration status.**

A range of **effective solutions and good practices** were presented by the youth in the various groups. For example, the fact that **integrating youth networks into community structures** can be effective in combating problems and finding society-wide solutions, as well as the importance of **co-designing policies with the affected populations, including youth**. Initiatives shared included the youth-led “New Canadian” programme, that creates a network for youth to support migrants arriving in Canada, including helping them to navigate the legal and education system, as well as a program focused on information-sharing among young migrants in Australia via radio, based on extensive consultations with target youth.

This Civil Society Day provided a **meaningful space for young people to engage**, resulting in a richer understanding of the priorities and solutions proposed by the youth, many of whom had attended a consultative two-day Youth Forum held in Quito just prior to the CSD. This is in line with the message of the youth representatives that **young people should not be treated as separate from civil society, but rather as allies** and very much part of the collective solutions we are all trying to build to face the current global, regional, and local challenges.

3. Guaranteeing a gender-sensitive approach

With women and girls constituting roughly half the global population of migrants, a nuanced consideration of how approaches should be tailored to meet their specific needs. Gender rapporteurs participating in the break-out sessions did, however, find that the issue of gender-sensitivity was well reflected on in these discussions, even if the recommendations did not always make it into the overarching summaries.

As a starting point, participants stressed that **safeguards should be put in place** to ensure that **the rights of all women and girl migrants should be protected, and their needs met in accordance with human rights law**, regardless of the way they move or their migration status.

Participants also recommended that more work needs to be done **to recognizing the agency and leadership of women and girls**. This means a commitment **to capacity-building activities**, and ensuring **access to resources and decision-making positions** for women, girl and LGBTI migrants without being tokenistic. For example, it was stressed that women (and especially

young women) often act as the main source of information in linguistically-isolated communities. The importance of **considering the root causes** was stressed by a number of participants, including the multiple and complex reasons behind women's migration and displacement.

Service providers (including sexual and reproductive health services) should not be requested to share information with immigration officials, who in turn should be trained to effectively apply and respect these **firewalls**. This is particularly important, for example, in ensuring that migrant women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence are not at risk of deportation (real or perceived) for reporting such abuse (either in the household or in the workplace) to government officials.

In relation to labour migration, there was a call for **greater gender-responsiveness in bilateral labour agreements and other partnerships**, for example ensuring a right to **family unification**, and more generally encouraging **fair and ethical recruitment** based on principles of non-discrimination. Participants also called for the ratification of ILO conventions pertaining to maternity protection and access to basic labour rights for domestic workers.

4. Navigating negative narratives

The issue of narratives permeated discussions throughout the GFMD, from the opening plenary (with Stella Opoku-Owusu reminding leaders and the media of their increasing influence over the language on immigration, and the risks of perpetuating a narrative of 'deserving refugees' vs 'economic migrants' in the pursuit of self-interest); to side events; to a targeted Common Space session. The issue was nonetheless present during the CSD deliberations, where it came up in almost all group discussions.

The harmful impact of negative narratives was stressed in relation to **climate displacement**, for example, where an overreliance on statistics is often used to feed a "narrative of invasion", where the problem is framed around migration itself, which is a coping mechanism, rather than focusing on the real problem at stake, which is climate change. Similarly, a reliance on negative narratives is one of the main three strategies used when **justifying the criminalization of migrants**, which results in serious human rights violations. Specific attention was given to **the narratives affecting the lives of migrant women** who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. In this respect, participants raised the need to **work closely with media and other influencing actors and hold each other accountable** if reproducing damaging or stereotyping images of migrants, while at the same time, supporting and encouraging the use of a **more nuanced understanding of the complexities behind migration**: the causes, the reactions and the impact on individuals and communities alike. **Training, tools and multi-actor alliances** are required to counter disinformation on migrants and refugees, and to develop a new fact-based narrative that reflects the true experiences of migrant women, men, girls and boys

On the other hand, **positive narratives were said to be invaluable to enabling political change** – something that was specifically identified in relation to accessing services regardless of migration status. In general, being strategic about narratives was identified as a **powerful**

advocacy tool and that an intersectional approach to gender, race, class etc. was necessary to break down silos and change narratives – something that is particularly relevant to the criminalization of migrants. Freedom Cities – a project committed to making entire cities, towns, and communities safe and a place where people can thrive, for all discriminated communities (including migrants) – was highlighted as a positive initiative that embodies this intersectional approach.

5. The inclusion and leadership of migrant and diaspora communities

The significant contribution of diaspora and migrant organizations to development was recognized and stressed that the link that diasporas maintain with origin and residence countries make them natural partners. Diaspora communities also have an important role to play in **countering misinformation and challenging negative stereotypes**.

Positive examples identified included: Indian diasporas from Kerala in the Middle East forming unions to advocate for the labour rights of migrant workers in the Gulf; The African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) – a UK-based diaspora organization – promotes partnerships with states and diaspora groups in countries of origin and destination; and the Danish Refugee Council’s targeted diaspora programme which disseminates information on evolving policies related to migrants on the move.

Despite some discussion related to the contribution of diaspora and migrant communities, a **more integrated consideration of the roles and experiences** of the communities is recommended for the future. Concretely, this could be achieved by **explicitly including specific questions** about how diaspora and migrant communities can be incorporated in migration and development decision-making. It could also be achieved by carefully considering not only how diasporas/migrant communities experience vulnerabilities but also **how they can help address protection issues** because of their lived experiences of policies and practices in communities of origin and host communities alike.

Lastly, it is recommended that **the issue of “race” be considered as a stand-alone cross-cutting** element in the same sense as the other pre-identified social qualifiers.

Civil Society participation in Common Space

The GFMD Common Space has, to date, been a **unique space where civil society can have an open dialogue with governments**. It is a place where often delicate migration issues can be discussed in an open and transparent manner. This year's GFMD took that exchange to a **new level**. In moving towards a reformed GFMD framework, as recommended by the GFMD 10 Year Review, the Ecuadorian Chair, for the first time, opened the Common Space up **to all participants from all four mechanisms** (Governments, Civil Society, Business and Mayors). This presented a rare opportunity for civil society participants to exchange and build alliances with representatives from national and local authorities as well as the private sector, in a relatively informal and friendly setting.

In order to encourage the ownership of this event, each mechanism was invited to host one of the four World Café sessions, with Civil Society tasked with hosting the session on *promoting the inclusion of migrants in host communities: shaping narratives and combatting xenophobia* (with the technical support of IOM). The session ran twice over the course of the day, with one session in the morning (introduced by Mayors Mechanism's participant Irena Guidikova, (Council of Europe) and a second in the afternoon (introduced by civil society participant Eva Garzon Hernandez, Oxfam Spain).

In introducing the topic, it was acknowledged **that migration has been a constant feature of human history** – and one that is integral to the development of both individuals and communities. Despite this, the notion of migration is often connected (either intrinsically or strategically) to a range of **fears**. Whether it be the fear of losing our cultural identity, fear of losing integrity, or fear for security, these elements have incredible power at the societal level – with the **potential to drive xenophobia or to create an environment of inclusion**. Reaching out and engaging the conflicted **“mixed middle”** of society (those who share some of those fears without necessarily being clearly pro or against migration). is key to promoting the inclusion of migrants.

Some of the **main challenges** participants identified in relation to narratives on migration included:

- Policies and programmes **not being informed by the needs of migrants and host communities**, and therefore not sufficiently addressing the needs/concerns of those affected;
- The need for **programmes** for migrants to be **made available and accessible** in the face of push-backs;
- **Push-backs from host communities** – with an emphasis on remote communities;
- A **need for better and clearer communication** from governments to host and migrants' communities;
- A **lack of (continuous) funding** for migrant and host communities, with a focus on inclusion;
- The **economic impact of xenophobia and discrimination** on migrants and their families;

- **The power of the media** (including social media), with a focus on the prevalence of **sensationalized and fake news** (and its disproportionate focus on the issue of migration);
- **The impact of unconscious bias** from the individual all the way up to society at-large;
- The importance of the role that **language** plays - from the terms that are used in the media to frame the “migration debate” to the ability for migrants and their families to engage in their host community and programmes that are meant to include them.

Participants identified the following **good practices** in encouraging the inclusion of migrants in host communities:

- **Engaging with the media**, with specific attention to language that portrays migrants as “illegal” or in a dehumanizing manner – encouraging them to **portray positive migration stories with humanizing language** (many opportunities for partnerships to provide content);
- **Partnering with social media influencers** who have impressive outreach and are capable of engaging with people on a “personal” level;
- Ensuring the **perspective of all concerned parties** are taken into account (including local/host communities) in campaigns, programmes and policies;
- **Sharing best practices at the regional and international levels**, as well as partnering with local organizations to **train them on narrative-sensitive language**;
- **Empowering migrants as powerful actors of change**, encouraging their **visibility**: highlighting the **positive** contributions that migrants make to the community (i. e. contributing to the economy, bringing skills and expertise), breaking down feelings of shame – for example, experienced by second-generation migrants;
- Initiatives that **make migration “accessible”**: sharing of culture, through culture and food, celebrations of diversity, sharing of stories etc. This includes encourage self-organizing/outreach style initiatives. Examples of shared meals, mosque visits and spontaneous cultural exchanges were shared – simple activities that foster positive encounters, bringing people together;
- **Education system and community spaces** as places for change, including collaboration with schools: teaching children how to identify xenophobia in the media (equally important for inclusion of second-generation migrants);
- **Maximizing common spaces for the public good**: libraries, parks and other physical spaces can play an important role in bringing people together;
- **Partnering with youth, the private sector and faith communities** was identified as important as well as ensuring that **gender perspectives** are streamlined into the narratives;
- **Diversifying regular migration pathways**, including through **positive recruitment** schemes, which encourage the appreciation of migrants for their skills and contributions to the community.

Looking towards Dubai January 2021

With the overarching title of “The Future of Human Mobility: Innovative Partnerships for Sustainable Development”, **the UAE Chair is taking the multi-stakeholder approach one-step further**, proposing the GFMD as a framework to foster effective partnerships to work with states in anticipating and adapting to changes in technology, culture, wealth distribution and demographic shifts that are likely to impact migration governance in the coming decades.

Under this umbrella, the **six following themes will form the basis of regional consultations** that will inform the annual Summit in Dubai in January 2021:

- The **governance of labour migration** in the context of changing employment landscapes
- **Skilling migrants for employment**
- Leveraging **new technologies** to empower migrants
- Addressing **gaps in migrant protection**
- Discussing approaches to **address irregular migration** – What works? What doesn't?
- Fostering **partnerships to realise migration-related goals** in the Sustainable Development Agenda and managing the future of human mobility

The Chair has committed to a **Summit that is open in its entirety to all stakeholders** (with a pre-Summit **full day dedicated to stakeholder-only consultations**, i.e. the Civil Society Day for our mechanism), comprising of networking meetings, thematic roundtables, and an “open space”. **As a result, the civil society active participation in the Summit will become the culmination of a “year-long global process”, rather than the current “annual event”**. This means that the deliberations at the Summit in Dubai will be informed by the prepared outcomes of **six GFMD regional consultations**, organized between March and June 2020. All six regional consultations will be **open to civil society participation**, and civil society networks at the regional level will be encouraged to organize their own processes and consultations ahead of those meetings to make sure the voices of their broad constituencies feed into the GFMD activities. We also hope that this dynamic programme will result in a more accessible, interactive and creative process which will result in more concrete partnerships moving forward.

In acknowledging **the clear focus on labour issues**, including regularizing through work permits, but also on addressing gaps in migration protection, issues which are especially relevant – civil society will remain committed to representing the diversity of issues concerning migrants the world over and building bridges from one Summit (Quito) to the other (Dubai). As our 2019 Civil Society co-Chairs reminded us, we have now a comprehensive framework of reference for the issues we are working on, but also **a joint responsibility for collective action**, that requires the GFMD stakeholders to hold each other accountable. **Only by working together can they be successful, and the lives of migrants and societies be improved**. We already look forward to meeting in Dubai.

GFMD Civil Society Days 2019: Key Documents

All reference documents, including the ones listed below, can be found on the GFMD civil society website: www.gfmdcivilsociety.org.

- [GFMD Civil Society Day programme 2019](#)
- [GFMD Civil Society Day concept note 2019](#)
- [GFMD programme 2019](#)
- [Thematic background documents](#)
- [List of participants](#)
- [Statement of the co-Chairs into the opening Plenary of the GFMD and Common Space](#)

Published by:



Acknowledgements:

The Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Civil Society Coordinating Office would like to thank all those who contributed to making the GFMD Civil Society Day (CSD) and Common Space (CS) 2019 a success.

In particular, our sincere thanks and gratitude to the following persons and institutions:

- Ambassador Santiago Chávez, Ecuadorian Chair of the 2019 GFMD, and the Ecuadorian-German-IOM task team
- H.E. Nasser bin Thani Al Hamli, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratization, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Chair of the 2020 GFMD, and the UAE advisers and staff
- The donors of the GFMD Civil Society Programme 2019: The Governments of Germany (GIZ), Switzerland (SDC), the United Arab Emirates, Sweden and Canada, and ICMC
- Deputy-Director Gundula Weitz, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Director Michele Klein Solomon, International Organization for Migration
- The GFMD Support Unit in Geneva
- The Business Mechanism and the Mayors Mechanism
- The International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- The members of the International Steering Committee
- Ms Stella Opoku-Owosu and Mr José Dolores Suazo Mejia (alias Don Lolo), Co-Chairs of the 2019 Civil Society Day
- All thematic and cross-cutting leads, table moderators and rapporteurs
- All participants of the GFMD Civil Society Day 2019
- Ms Samantha Andrade, local liaison for the GFMD Civil Society Day 2019
- Ms Zulma Patarroyo, graphic recorder of the GFMD Civil Society Day 2019
- All volunteers
- All the staff at the Bicentennial Convention Center, and at Hotel Ibis, Quito



International Catholic Migration Commission

Rue Varembe 1
Case Postale 96
CH-1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland

Tel: + 41 22 919 10 37

Fax: + 41 22 919 10 48

E-mail: contact@gfmdcivilsociety.org

Online: www.gfmdcivilsociety.org

*Reproduction of this report is authorized.
Credit for the source must be given.*