

# GFMD Civil Society Consultations on the 2024-2025 Draft Priorities

## Outcome Report

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## Collective Takeaways

### HUMAN RIGHTS

- **Framing:** Upholding and centering the human rights of migrants should underpin all discussions, development of policies, solutions and partnerships. Across all regions, civil society remains deeply concerned over the negative progress in respecting human rights, and increased securitisation and criminalisation of migration, and strongly called for space to have open dialogue about these issues, collectively find solutions across borders and regions, and work together on shifting the narrative. Importantly, a key aspect of this pillar should emphasise that progress on migration and development cannot be made without upholding and respecting human rights at the core.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Intersection of labour migration and human rights.
  - Externalisation of borders and their significant negative impact on migrant rights and protection.
  - Missing migrants, deaths and saving lives.
  - Migration detention and the effects of increasing securitisation.
  - Rights and safety on route, in transit, at borders and in destination countries.
  - Criminalisation of migrants, human rights defenders, and humanitarian workers.
  - Making migrants' access to rights explicit and in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights laws.

### LABOUR MIGRATION

- **Framing:** Any discourse, policies or solutions around labour migration must be centred in labour and human rights. There must be a recognition of and prioritisation of rights protection for both high-wage and low-wage migrant workers (moving away from skilled vs non or low-skilled), and labour narratives should be shifted away from a solely temporary approach.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Upholding and protecting labour rights: access to justice, freedom of association, freedom of speech.
  - Forced work, wage theft, exorbitant costs of migration, and exploitation of workers.
  - Social protection: healthcare, social security, legal protection, labour rights, access to information, protecting families.
  - Sustainable, rights-based labour pathways, including for seasonal labour, and pathways back to regularisation.
  - The care economy and domestic workers.

## **REGULAR PATHWAYS**

- **Framing:** All discussions on legal or regular pathways must emphasise that some regular pathways are also exploitative, and must include:
  - The consequences of a lack of regular pathways.
  - Narratives around regularity/irregularity, and how this distinction (particularly the continued usage of words such as 'legal') contributes towards harmful narratives and the criminalisation of migrants and humanitarian workers.
  - Challenge the continued use of legal/illegal and move towards regular/irregular.
  - Moving beyond the focus on short-term pathways for migrant workers within current discourse around regular pathways.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Regularisation: upholding Colombia as a standard setter in terms of regularising migrants, and how we can draw upon the knowledge and best practices from other countries' implementations.
  - Expanding regular pathways to address current and future problems (e.g. climate migration).
  - Upholding and ensuring human rights in all regular pathways.
  - The interconnection between the design, establishment and communication of regular pathways, and narratives around migration- including xenophobia.

## **WOMEN, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

- **Framing:** Discussions on migration and development must adopt a feminist and gender-inclusive approach, encompassing women, children, and men in vulnerable situations, as well as for LGBTQIA+ vulnerabilities. There is a critical need to focus on the disproportionate impact of harmful labour practices on women migrant workers.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Wider focus on gender including addressing challenges facing men and women in situations of vulnerability, and LGBTQIA+ issues.
  - The protection of undocumented women.
  - Diaspora, women and development.
  - The care economy and challenges facing migrant workers, particularly domestic migrant workers and their access to social protection.

## **CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

- **Framing:** The diverse contributions of young people to migration and development extend beyond the digital skills of young people, technology and narratives change and it is key to acknowledge their contributions in all sectors and thematic priorities. In addition to recognising the contributions of youth, it is essential to address the specific needs of undocumented and unaccompanied minors and to promote the representation and participation of youth from all regions, especially those that are often underrepresented in global migration processes.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Ensuring sustainable contributions of children and youth to migration and development, including through mechanisms such as regular pathways, regularisation, and rights to work.
  - Education and strategies to promote youth employment.
  - Alternatives to detention and rights of children and young people.
  - Funding mechanisms for youth and youth-led organisations.

## **MEDIA AND CULTURE**

- **Framing:** Across all regions, civil society expressed concerns about the negative impact of regressive narratives on migration policies, increased discrimination against migrants, and xenophobia. The media plays a crucial role in shaping migration narratives but can also perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and their role must be considered in both disseminating negative narratives on migration and in transforming narratives through evidence-based information sharing and storytelling in partnership with civil society organisations, migrant communities, and governments.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - The role of media, public policies, and governments in shaping migration narratives and perceptions.
  - The intersection of media, misinformation, narratives and xenophobia.
  - The impact of negative migration narratives and political discourse on migration policies in all regions (e.g. externalisation of borders, criminalisation).
  - The role of public education in addressing xenophobia with a specific focus on youth and children.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

- **Framing:** Climate-induced migration is a growing reality in many regions, which needs to be addressed through effective policy responses to climate-induced migration through the establishment of regular mechanisms and pathways. With regular pathways being a key pillar of the Colombian Chairship, there is a unique opportunity to advance discussions on climate and human mobility, with a focus on establishing regular pathways for affected communities. Within this framework, it is essential to address both the right to migrate and the right to stay for affected communities as well as looking at potential solutions for sustainable financing.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Looking at regular pathways for climate-affected communities in practice
  - Addressing the climate finance gaps, the loss and damage funds and addressing non-economic losses
  - Recognition of diaspora contributions to climate adaptation
  - Climate research and literacy

## **REGIONAL AND CROSS-BORDER INTEGRATION**

- **Framing:** Effective, meaningful, and inclusive regional and cross-border cooperation requires the participation of all levels of government, from the national to the local and community levels. Regional migration agreements should address migration issues from a cooperative, cross-border perspective, rather than a criminalisation perspective. Civil society has emphasised the transformative potential of

regional integration that puts at the centre the protection of migrants, the harmonisation and implementation of labour standards and the rights to freedom of movement and work.

- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Regional cooperation to address the root causes of migration: conflict, poverty, violence and economic insecurity
  - Enhancing cooperation and collaboration with local governments, migrant communities, grassroots and civil society
  - Addressing the unequal visa regimes and its impact on labour mobility agreements
  - Sustainable interstate partnerships on freedom of movement and the right to work for all migrants

## **DIGITALISATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

- **Framing:** A human rights approach to new technologies should be central to any discussion on digitalisation. Migrants are at risk of being further marginalised and exploited if the use of new technologies does not adhere to ethics-based principles and consider the harmful impact of collecting and sharing migrants' biometric data, surveillance, and digitalisation of services without adequate support in place. Issues around the accessibility of digital services, and laws to protect migrants against digital abuses of their data should be at the core of the digitalisation discussion and the use of new technologies in the design, development, and adoption of regular pathways.
- **Key Subtopics:**
  - Ethical and rights-based data collection, analysis and dissemination
  - The negative impacts of new technologies on the rights of migrants: Surveillance, racial profiling and detention
  - How to ensure equitable access to digital services for all migrants

## **OVERARCHING ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS:**

- **Additional Priorities:**
  - Diaspora
  - Health (including Mental Health)
  - Indigenous Rights
  - Disability Inclusion
  - Drivers of Migration
- **GFMD Format / Modalities:**
  - Emphasis on meaningful civil society participation, particularly of grassroots and migrant communities, into conversations that matter.
  - Follow up and progress continuity on thematics from previous GFMDs.
  - With other international spaces, including in migration, increasingly moving away from facilitating discussions around addressing the wider links between narrative, public policy, government rhetoric, and the backsliding of human rights and normalising deaths- to set up the GFMD to be a space that can contribute towards addressing these overarching forces.
  - Monitoring and follow up of discussions and partnerships from the GFMD itself- potentially with national or regional discussions.

# Key Takeaways Disaggregated by Region

## Europe

- **HUMAN RIGHTS:** The rights of migrants need to be stressed in the framework of the international framework of protection of migrants, centred across the discussions
- **REGULAR PATHWAYS:** all discussions on legal or regular pathways must emphasise that some regular pathways are also exploitative, and must include:
  - The consequences of a lack of regular pathways
  - Narratives around regularity/irregularity, and how this distinction (particularly the continued usage of words such as 'legal') contributes towards harmful narratives and the criminalisation of migrants and humanitarian workers.
  - Challenge the use of legal and more towards regular
  - Uphold Colombia as a standard setter in terms of regularising migrants, and how we can draw upon the knowledge and best practices from other countries' implementations.
- **WOMEN, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT:** Discussions must centre a women-inclusive approach opening it up to women, children and men in situations of vulnerability as well as looking at the undocumented women.
- **CHILDREN AND YOUTH:**
  - Meaningful contribution of youth beyond the usual topics of technology and change in narratives must be included and upheld.
  - Genuine and meaningful participation must be prioritised.
  - Issues and specific needs of undocumented and unaccompanied minors must be discussed.
- **MEDIA AND CULTURE:** Narratives, misinformation, discrimination contributing to hostile climate on migration
  - Narratives in Europe are still centred on securitisation. We see this in the EU Pact talks about detention, where there is no focus on regular pathways and bad narratives shape integration.
  - Far-right, criminalisation of migrants and externalisation of migration policies must be discussed, as well as the role of media in legitimising such narratives.
  - Need for discussion and focus on the role of media and narratives pushed at the national level, lack of awareness around migration drivers, and the role of laws implemented in driving negative migration narratives.
- **DIGITALISATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES:**
  - Digital rights and needs and limitations around digital communications must be considered.
  - Must include discussions around the use of AI in the border and screening process in border countries or countries of first arrival for migrants and asylum seekers.
  - Need to look at and acknowledge the role of technology and tech innovators in violating or putting at risk migrants' rights, particularly in usage at the border.
  - Need to incorporate data, data methodologies, ethics etc.
- **CLIMATE CHANGE:** Narratives must be changed and highlight climate-induced displacement, climate refugees, and the need for regular mechanisms and pathways to address these growing issues.

**PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES / FOCI:** Participants noted that **Diaspora**, a key priority in past GFMDs, was not included on the list. They emphasised that this should be included to ensure continuity in progress on the topic, and must be approached in a cross-cutting, holistic way (e.g. contributions to development, diaspora women).

**GFMD FORMAT AND MODALITIES RECOMMENDATIONS:** Participants re-emphasised the centrality of civil society access, participation and cooperation. CS are at the forefront of supporting migrants so we need to envision modalities that ensure their inclusive participation – particularly for grassroots organisations.

## Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and North America

- **HUMAN RIGHTS:** Make explicit migrants' access to rights, in accordance with international humanitarian law.
  - Pressing human rights issues must be addressed, including the externalisation of borders and their significant negative impact on migrant rights and protection, missing migrants, and migration detention.
  - Further care and a rights-based approach must be paid to the migration routes and critical border regions (e.g. the Darien Gap), including ensuring protection in transit.
  - Multidimensional safety approach towards migrant protection.
- **LABOUR MIGRATION:** Human rights must be explicitly linked and embedded in any discourse or policies around labour migration. Labour rights must be included. Forced work must be addressed.
- **MEDIA AND CULTURE:**
  - Need to combat narratives contributing to xenophobic discourse, discrimination and hostile climates towards diversity that create huge obstacles to protection work.
  - Focus on children and specific vulnerabilities related to child and youth migrants, migrant families and families of migrants, and xenophobia-related problems in accessing and continuing education.
- **REGIONAL AND CROSS- BORDER INTEGRATION:**
  - Expand regional migration agreements and address regional migration issues from a cross-border, cooperative perspective, not from a criminalisation perspective.
  - Expand dialogue mechanisms across governments, with the inclusion of stakeholders-particularly migrant communities, grassroots and civil society.
  - Further integration efforts are needed, including prioritising guarantees for family reunification and integration.
  - Prioritise international protection considerations in the Cartagena +40 process.
  - Regional cooperation to address the causes of migration: conflict, poverty, violence, difficult economic and social situations and problems.
- **CLIMATE CHANGE:**
  - Widespread support for the continuation of this priority.
  - Recognise and uphold both the right to migrate, as well as the right to stay.
- **DIGITALISATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES:**
  - Revise the focus of the New Technologies theme to ensuring non-usage of technologies for the erosion of migrant rights- for example during the taking of biometric data.

**PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES / FOCI:** **Health, including mental health**, was mentioned many times as a needed priority.

### **GFMD FORMAT AND MODALITIES RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Need for more follow-up from the thematics and progress from previous GFMDs.
- Desire for further engagement with other mechanisms, and more multilateral spaces.
- Meaningful participation, particularly of migrant and grassroots communities, must be centred on the methodology and criteria for participation.

- Desire for follow-up on clear indicators.
- Consider the linguistic barriers that continue to limit participation, and diversity within the regions (e.g. diversity within the Caribbean).
- Need to address these challenges with an intersectional and diverse perspective.

## Asia and Pacific (APAC)

### HUMAN RIGHTS:

- The human rights of migrants should be upheld, especially during crises such as conflict and disasters.
- Efforts should be made to develop alternatives to immigration detention and eliminate its use. Alternatives to detention should also be addressed as a cross-cutting theme, especially when it comes to digitalisation and gender.
- The centralisation of migrant rights and protection, including social protection, should be emphasised and integrated into discussions on regular pathways.

### LABOUR MIGRATION:

- The care economy and domestic workers must be centralised.
- Need to centralise recognition and protection of rights for both high-wage and low-wage migrant workers.
- Need to move away from short-term labour mobility pathways and ensure pathways back to regularisation.

### REGULAR PATHWAYS:

- There is an increasing focus on short-term pathways for migrant workers which do not protect the rights of migrants and guarantee their access to services and protection.
- It's important to regularise the status of many migrants who are currently in irregular situations globally.
- We need to ensure that vulnerable workers are not subjected to abuse within the system.

### WOMEN, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

- Need to focus on migrant workers in the care economy, where women are overrepresented.
- Focus on positive development. Many care workers are migrating to Global North countries, amplifying issues of brain drain in the Global South.

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

- Essential to promote the representation of youth from the Pacific, who are often underrepresented in global migration processes.
- Representation goes hand in hand with dedicating specific funding mechanisms for the participation of young people in decision-making processes and addressing barriers such as the provision of visas.
- Youth employment needs more attention in order to ensure youth see staying or returning as an option.

### MEDIA AND CULTURE:

- Need to acknowledge and consider the role of media, public policies, and governments in shaping migration narratives and perceptions.

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE:**

- Need to allocate resources and financing for climate adaptation and disaster response.
- Essential to address the inclusion of affected communities in climate adaptation and disaster response plans.
- Emphasis on addressing loss and damages, including non-economic losses.
- Need to recognise and maximise diaspora contributions to climate adaptation.

#### **PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES / FOCI:**

- Need to recognise **mental health** as a fundamental dimension of health when it comes to migration. There are increasing concerns about mental health, making sure that migrants have access to safe and affordable health services in countries of origin, transit and destination.
- **Indigenous rights and disabilities in migration** frameworks.

#### **GFMD FORMAT AND MODALITIES RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- There is a need to establish an accountability system.
- Continuity and strong engagement with member states are essential.
- The progress of issues discussed in various GFMDs needs to be monitored.
- The GFMD should provide space for civil society and address geopolitical impact and migration-related issues.
- Inclusion should be a cornerstone of each GMFD process: expanding the representation and support of grassroots, promoting and upholding gender inclusivity as well as ensuring that disability-responsive migration practices and policies are central to any discussion.

## **Africa**

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS:**

- Human rights should be the focal point of migration practices, including the protection of people's rights to move and the guarantee of labour rights for all migrants, irrespective of their migration status.

#### **LABOUR MIGRATION:**

- Labour mobility agreements should prioritise comprehensive social protection. Learning from Asia's experience is crucial to ensure the protection of African migrants moving to the Gulf region.
- Robust social protection measures must be incorporated, covering healthcare, labour rights, and social security. This holistic approach not only ensures the well-being of migrants but also fosters sustainable and mutually beneficial migration pathways. Establishing regular pathways with these protections in place will contribute to a fairer and more inclusive migration system.

#### **WOMEN, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT:**

- Unfavourable migration policies and practices significantly affect women, including inadequate education, vulnerability, and human rights abuses.
- Gender disparities from the countries of origin are carried over into the host countries. One example is the issue of illiteracy. Therefore, when addressing issues related to gender and development, it is important to consider intersecting factors and use intersectionality as a guiding approach.

#### **MEDIA AND CULTURE:**



- Negative narratives regarding African migrants fuel hate and repressive policies and practices in destination countries. Racism and xenophobia are on the rise in North Africa, significantly affecting the protection of migrants' rights.
- Mainstream media and populist right-wing narratives further jeopardise migrants' access to services and integration into their society of destination.
- The externalisation of borders is an increasingly widespread practice, particularly enforced through EU bilateral agreements with African countries, and contributes towards xenophobia.

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE:**

- Need to increase financing for civil society to participate in climate mobility solutions and research is essential.
- Need to continue consolidating climate research and promoting climate literacy within and between communities

#### **REGIONAL AND CROSS-BORDER INTEGRATION:**

- Enhancing cooperation and collaboration with local governments and city mayors is vital in providing safe, orderly, and human rights-based approaches to solutions and actions in the context of climate mobility/migration.
  - Addressing the unequal visa regime should be at the centre of the conversation around cross-border integration.
  - Cross-regional and cross-continental learning and exchange can inform the development and implementation of good practices in labour agreements. Countries need to address structural instability and developmental challenges driving out-migration in African countries.

#### **DIGITALISATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES:**

- New technologies should be used to benefit migrants and support the design and development of regular and safe migration. However, instances where technology is used as a surveillance tool and to collect data against migrant rights should be addressed.

#### **PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES / FOCI:**

- **Health and education** should be integrated significantly into the migration discourse.
- Integrating **issues of migrants with disabilities** into migration issues is important in national, regional, and global policy frameworks.
- Highlighting the **role of the diaspora** in the GFMD process is essential to acknowledge the cross-cutting contributions of the diaspora in all proposed thematic priorities.
- Focus on addressing the **root causes of migration**, such as conflict and climate change.

## **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**

### **LABOUR MIGRATION:**

In the MENA region, labour mobility goes hand in hand with ensuring the human rights of all migrants, its imperative to:

- The Kafala system, prevalent in Gulf countries, needs significant reforms or complete abolition due to its inherent flaws, such as long working hours, confiscation of passports and ID cards, and difficulty holding employers accountable. Cancelling the Kafala system requires substantial changes to labour agreements.

- Visa trading for migrants' recruitment process should be banned to reduce the cost of migration.
- Due to the Kafala system, migrants often fall into irregular and undocumented status, in order to open up regular pathways the Kafala system should be abolished.
- Robust legal protections must be provided for migrant domestic workers and seasonal workers, including their right to freedom of association and other essential labour rights.

#### **WOMEN, MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT:**

- The role of women, particularly as domestic workers, needs more recognition in labour laws, better recruitment practices, and access to social protection and labour rights.
- There is a gap in the gender-based disaggregation of the data for migration, reintegration, and remittance. The ethical challenges in collecting sensitive data, particularly regarding gender-based violence also need to be addressed.

#### **CHILDREN AND YOUTH:**

- Essential to discuss the rights of children and youth as pertains to alternatives to detention.
- Countries in the MENA region should not only be seen as migrant senders but also as hosts and transit points, especially for young women from MENA and Africa.

#### **MEDIA AND CULTURE:**

- Combat xenophobia: There is a need for public education to address xenophobia and harmful migration narratives about African migrants.

#### **CLIMATE CHANGE:**

- Climate change significantly affects migrant workers in the Gulf region. Protective mechanisms must be established to ensure their safety under extreme temperatures.

#### **REGIONAL AND CROSS-BORDER INTEGRATION:**

- Need to integrate and harmonise labour laws at the regional level to ensure that migrants rights are upheld and recognised in all regions
- Need to establish regional mechanisms to address the and reduce the high costs associated with migration for many migrant workers.
- Sustainable interstate partnerships between countries in the MENA and Africa regions should address the right to free movement and work, the lifting of visas and mechanisms to combat human trafficking as well as mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of labour standards
- Address the externalisation of borders that the EU is promoting through its bilateral agreements with countries in North Africa.

#### **DIGITALISATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES:**

- Digitalisation may exclude lower-income and migrant workers who cannot access digital services. Migrants must be considered as the end users when implementing digitalisation, particularly with the use of AI.

#### **PROPOSED ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES / FOCI:**

- It's crucial to consider **mixed migration flows** and the **underlying causes** such as conflict and economic/social instability.

#### **GFMD FORMAT AND MODALITIES RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Ensuring the representation of civil society voices within the GFMD is essential.

- Equal and effective participation from the MENA region is vital. Participants must be protected, and their views respected, especially given the civil and political rights situation in the region. This means for example ensuring the safety of civil society participants in the GFMD when they return to their countries of residence.
- The GFMD must focus on producing tangible results on the ground, addressing regressive migration policies and their impact on migrants' lives.