

IMRF Round table four Background Note



These background notes have drawn inputs from Member State and stakeholder consultations, regional GCM reviews, dedicated Hub Discussion Spaces, IMRF Dialogues series, information available in the Migration Network Hub Repository of Practices, and the Secretary-General's 2022 report. Further references are on the Network's [website](#).



1. INTRODUCTION

The fourth of the round tables of the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF) will offer space for discussion of progress made in the implementation of objectives 1, 3, 7, 17, and 23 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). This background note integrates the ten cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles of the GCM.

Strengthening evidence-based policymaking for informed public discourse and enhancing international cooperation to reduce vulnerabilities and promote safe, orderly and regular migration are among the central aims of the GCM. Accurate, reliable, and timely data that is disaggregated by sex, age, migration status, disability and other characteristics is vital for informed public debate and the formulation of evidence-based policies and programmes that are child-sensitive, gender-responsive, and human rights-centred.

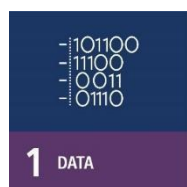
The lack or insufficient use of evidence, combined with misleading migration narratives, discrimination and xenophobia, contribute to policies and practices that make migration unsafe, disorderly and irregular. Discrimination, stigma and xenophobia can also have a corrosive effect on wider society, breaking down trust and hindering the inclusion of migrants. Ensuring that policies and practices are evidence-based and aligned with relevant legal frameworks - for example to uphold the best interests of the child or to provide protection for victims of trafficking --are key to addressing and reducing vulnerabilities, including in responses to mixed movements. Safe, orderly and regular migration requires informed and empowered migrants who are able to access information pertaining to their rights and obligations during all stages of migration. This can include

information on fair recruitment, skills, qualifications, entry and exit requirements, living and working conditions, and access to services, among others.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed light on structural inequalities and exacerbated many of the challenges already faced by migrants in vulnerable situations. At the same time, the pandemic has shown how much societies depend on migrants, especially in sectors such as health, food, carework, and other essential services. The pandemic has also demonstrated that no Member State can address migration on its own, and has reinforced the importance of collective action and international cooperation.

2. OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS

Objective 1: Collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies



Improving the availability and quality of disaggregated data, while safeguarding the right to privacy and personal data protection, is essential for fostering an informed debate on migration and for evidence-based policymaking and programming. Reliable, timely and accessible data and evidence are needed to ensure targeted interventions that meet the varied needs of migrants and their families. COVID-19 has had a major impact on traditional forms of data collection on migration, in particular on population censuses and household surveys. Disaggregation of migration data and indicators by sex, age, migratory status and other key characteristics remains a challenge. Further, limited progress has been made in documenting the contribution of migration to sustainable development beyond the role of diasporas and remittances, and there is a need to better integrate migration as a cross-cutting consideration in sustainable development frameworks such as Voluntary National Reviews for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

During the IMRF preparatory process, Member States and stakeholders recommended further efforts to take whole-of-government approaches to the collection of data and to use new or non-traditional data sources and methods for the collection of migration data. Promising practices identified included the African Migration Observatory¹ and Prague Process Migration Observatory², which seek to facilitate better coordination and collection of data. There is a need to support countries in developing standard procedures for data collection, analysis and dissemination, including on pathways for regular migration and labour migration.

The United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics³ started work to revise the 1998 Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, while the International Conference of Labour Statisticians adopted new guidelines on labour migration statistics⁴. The United Nations system is also implementing capacity development programmes on migration statistics and on harnessing the contribution of migration to development.⁵ The International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) has advocated

¹ See, African Union, [Official Inauguration in Morocco of the African Migration Observatory](#).

² See, <https://www.pragueprocess.eu/en/migration-observatory>.

³ See: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/migration-expert-group/>

⁴ See: ILO, [Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration](#), ICLS/20/2018/Guidelines

⁵ See for instance <https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/project-view-public/>

for a world migration survey to generate internationally comparative migration information.⁶ An International Forum for Migration Statistics was convened in 2018⁷ and 2020⁸. The International Data

Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC)⁹ is pooling technical resources to highlight the particular needs of migrant children.

Objective 3: Provide accurate and timely information at all stages of migration



Accurate, accessible and transparent information at all stages of migration is key to providing predictability for all actors involved. However, most migrants continue to rely on family, friends, other migrants, and even smugglers as the most trusted and reliable sources of information, rather than governments.¹⁰ At the same time, there are gaps between the information needed and what is made available, including on pathways for regular migration, the conditions in transit and destination countries, access to legal or other assistance, and migrant rights.¹¹

Member States indicated that migrants struggled to access information during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding healthcare, social protection, legal documentation and other basic services. Often, the lack of access to information was linked to discriminatory laws or policies and other barriers to accessing services. At the same time, many Member States and local authorities launched awareness-raising initiatives during the pandemic, translated COVID-19 related information into multiple languages and put in place virtual counselling services via their consular authorities abroad to help improve migrants' access to information and health services.

During the IMRF preparatory process, Member States and stakeholders stressed the importance of

providing information in multiple languages and of ensuring that information was accessible to all migrants in a non-discriminatory manner and independent of immigration enforcement, particularly for migrants in irregular situations. Several Member States and stakeholders pointed to the important role played by civil society and national human rights institutions in providing information to migrants, particularly to address information deficits such as on access to services, legal assistance, pathways for regular migration and regularization. Practices identified include: the International Federation of the Red Cross's 'route-based' approach, where migrants are provided with information at different stages of their journeys with protection as a priority;¹² Mexico's development of consular assistance centers, which provide interpreters and translators for their nationals abroad; Migrant Worker Resource Centres in South-East Asia and Tunisia, which act as safe spaces in countries of origin, transit and destination to access reliable information; and Portugal's "Welcome Guide for Migrants", a guidebook to support migrants in Portugal by providing relevant information on services available to them. The development of online platforms that can centralize and make information accessible to migrants in countries of origin, transit and destination was also noted.

⁶ <https://iussp.org/en/case-world-migration-survey>

⁷ <https://www.oecd.org/migration/forum-migration-statistics/>

⁸ <https://ifms.iom.int/>

⁹ See: International Data Alliance for Children on the Move (IDAC)

¹⁰ Mixed Migration Centre, [4Mi Interactive – Access to information](#), 2019-2020.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² See, IFRC, [Assisting and protecting vulnerable migrants along migratory trails: Unpacking the "route-based approach"](#).

Objective 7. Address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration



Migrants may face situations of vulnerability arising from the circumstances in which they travel or the conditions they face in countries of origin, transit and destination. Situations of vulnerability in the context of migration are often the result of policies and practices that fail to protect migrants' human rights, including the failure to apply child-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches.

Member State reporting during GCM regional reviews indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of the human rights challenges already faced by migrants in vulnerable situations, including lack of access to safe pathways for regular migration, health care, decent work, social protection, adequate living conditions and other essential services. At the same time, the GCM has proven to be a powerful framework to address and reduce situations of vulnerability faced by migrants. For instance, during COVID-19, Member States have taken action to provide migrants, regardless of status, with access to COVID-related healthcare and vaccinations; extend visa and residence permits to avoid migrants falling into an irregular status; expand safe pathways for regular migration¹³; provide

migrants proof of legal identity and documentation; establish alternatives to immigration detention; and halt forced returns.

During the IMRF preparatory process, Member States and stakeholders indicated the importance of supporting migrant and civil society organizations, as well as government ministries across health, education, social inclusion, child protection, justice and home affairs sectors, to address and reduce situations of vulnerability for migrants by creating conditions for migrants to be integrated and reach their full potential. The role of consulates in protecting migrants and reducing their vulnerabilities was highlighted. Other practices identified include expanding access to legal identity; expanding opportunities for accessible and durable legal status, such as regularization programmes; ending policies or practices that can create or exacerbate harm, such as the criminalization of irregular migration or the militarization of borders; and drawing on the United Nations *Principles and Guidelines on the Human Rights Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations* to inform the human rights-based implementation of the Global Compact.¹⁴

Objective 17: Eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration



Promoting evidence-based public discourse and confronting anti-migrant sentiments is a crucial part of a comprehensive approach to migration. Accordingly, Member States have committed to promote a more realistic, humane and constructive public discourse on migration, to eliminate all forms of discrimination,

condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants, in conformity with international human rights law. During the GCM regional reviews, few Member States reported on the implementation of Objective 17. The Secretary-General has noted with concern that discrimination, xenophobia,

¹³ See United Nations Network on Migration Guidance Note on Regular Pathways for Admission and Stay for Migrants in Situations of Vulnerability. Available at:

https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/default/files/docs/guidance_note_-_regular_pathways_for_admission_and_stay_for_migrants_in_situations_of_vulnerability_final.pdf

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Migration/Pages/VulnerableSituations.aspx>.

misinformation and stigma against migrants or minorities associated with migration remain virulent, including narratives that falsely associate migrants with criminal activities or heighten anti-immigrant anxieties. During the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants have faced hate speech, racial slurs, stigma and violence related to harmful perceptions that migrants represented a threat to public health. These harmful narratives have fuelled security-focused approaches to migration and impacted migrants' human rights and wellbeing, causing further discrimination and violence. At the same time, a number of Member States and stakeholders have taken positive steps to revise policies and practices in order to combat discrimination and to include migrants in public health and pandemic preparedness and response efforts.

During the IMRF preparatory process, Member States and stakeholders indicated that migrants continue to face virulent discrimination, racism and xenophobia, particularly during the pandemic, and pointed to the need to advocate for a more positive

narrative on migration. They noted that toxic narratives on migration contribute to the criminalization, harassment and obstruction of humanitarian and human rights organizations seeking to provide support and assistance to migrants. They also noted that media and the private sector have an important role in this respect, as media can be a powerful force for good but can also fuel xenophobia and anti-migrant hate speech. Practices identified include: the efforts of Canada and Ecuador, alongside the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Mayor's Mechanism, to develop "It Takes a Community", a multi-stakeholder campaign that promotes the sharing of positive stories on social media highlighting how migrants and communities are working together to make the places where they live and work more inclusive¹⁵; and the Conscious Advertising Network, a group of over 100 businesses which have signed an ethical code to avoid funding media outlets that systematically fuel hatred against migrants¹⁶.

Objective 23: Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration



International migration inherently involves cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination: no country can address migration alone.

Facilitating safe, orderly and regular migration, through implementation of the GCM's objectives and commitments requires enhanced bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation, grounded in international law and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

During the IMRF preparatory process, Member States and stakeholders underscored the central importance of international cooperation to the GCM and stressed that cooperation must be grounded in human rights, solidarity with migrants, and efforts to expand opportunities for migrants to move and live in

safety and dignity. They also noted the importance of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to partnership, and of cross-regional partnerships across countries of origin, transit and destination, including to address and remedy violations of human rights. It was observed that sharing of experiences and seeking joint solutions could strengthen the implementation of the GCM and promote the mutually reinforcing nature between the GCM and existing international legal and policy frameworks, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Practices identified include: the European Union-United Nations Partnership for Migration Capacity Building, which seeks to bolster the capacity of the United Nations system to support GCM implementation¹⁷; Azerbaijan's development of a regional migration training and knowledge management hub to serve

¹⁵ See, <https://gfmddcivilsociety.org/launch-of-the-it-takes-a-community-campaign/>.

¹⁶ <https://www.consciousadnetwork.com/>

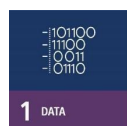
¹⁷ See, <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/eu-un-partnership-migration-capacity-building>.

partner countries across Asia; and cooperation between the Philippines and countries of destination, including Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, to enhance protection for victims of trafficking and labour exploitation, improve labour mobility agreements and expand migrants'

access to health and social protection programmes. Since migration is intra-regional and inter-regional in nature, there was a call for developing and strengthening bilateral, subregional, regional and cross regional cooperation and initiatives.

3. GUIDING QUESTIONS

Objective 1



- What steps can be taken to advance the creation of programmes for strengthening migration data collection, disaggregation, analysis and dissemination at local, national, regional and global levels?
- What is the role of regional observatories in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating disaggregated migration-related data and indicators? What steps can be taken to advance the creation of programmes for strengthening migration data collection, disaggregation, analysis and dissemination at local, national, regional and global levels?
- How can migration data and evidence contribute to informed policy making and public debate?

Objective 3



- What challenges do migrants face in accessing information at all stages of migration?
- What actions can Member States and stakeholders take to ensure migrants have access to accurate, timely, accessible and transparent information at all stages of migration?
- What tools, resources or capacity building efforts have Member States and stakeholders found effective in providing accurate and timely information at all stages of migration?

Objective 7



- How can Member States and stakeholders effectively address and reduce the vulnerabilities that arise from the circumstances in which migrants travel or the conditions they face in countries of origin, transit and destination? What are some promising practices in this regard?
- What practices have Member States found effective in upholding the best interest of the child in situations where children are concerned and applying a gender-responsive approach in addressing and reducing vulnerabilities?

Objective 17



- How do harmful narratives impact the human rights of migrants?
- How have Member States and other stakeholders countered acts and expressions of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against migrants?
- How can we generate a more realistic, humane and constructive perception of migrants and migration?



Objective 23

- What progress has been made with respect to strengthening international, bilateral and regional partnerships to promote safe, orderly and regular migration?
- What are some key recommendations to promote mutually beneficial and transparent partnerships that protect migrants' human rights and that are child-sensitive and gender-responsive?
- What are some of the key gaps in international cooperation on migration and how can they be addressed?

