

From Marrakesh to Bangkok: Reviewing the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration in a post-pandemic world.

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Who would have thought, two years ago, that the global discourse on human *mobility* would be shaped by unprecedented human *immobility* owing to the COVID-19 pandemic? The 'new normal' was unimaginable when the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) was agreed in Marrakesh and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018.

And yet, as we approach the first regional review of GCM implementation for the Asia-Pacific region (held in Bangkok on 10-12 March 2021), the objectives set in Marrakesh have never seemed more relevant.

The pandemic has highlighted some key issues:

Nobody is safe until everyone is safe. Increased focus on the GCM objectives related to vulnerabilities, inclusion, elimination of discrimination and social protection is needed.

Human mobility is inevitable and unstoppable. Greater attention to the objectives on regular pathways, smuggling and trafficking, border management and migration procedures is necessary.

Digital transformation is necessary. With lockdowns decreed by governments and social distancing, COVID-19 has ushered in a new urgency for the objectives on data and information.

The forthcoming regional review offers an excellent opportunity to see how States have adapted to this new normal and lay out an action plan for building back better.



Participants at a CSO side-event on implementing the GCM, organized by the Civil Society for Global Commitments on Migration (CGCM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bangladesh. © IID

To ensure a 'whole-of-society' approach and the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, a series of consultations called for by the GCM are happening at all levels.

At the national level, one such consultation is being led in Bangladesh. Youth for Policy is leading a consultation in partnership with the UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY). Since the larger share of Bangladeshi migrants are young, economic migrants, the youth perspective on GCM reviews have been of major interest to us. As the host-institute of this youth network, we are excited to see the outcomes they will present to the regional review. In parallel, CGCM, in partnership with the UN Network on Migration in Bangladesh, is hosting a national level consultation to support the governmental delegation to the regional review.

At the regional level, the UN Network for Asia and the Pacific has initiated a series of stakeholder consultations to inform the regional review process with an open invitation to all relevant stakeholders. As a coordinator of CGCM, I have joined the 'cohort of co-hosts' which includes a number of UN and non-UN organizations and networks who have been playing a very active role throughout the consultation process.

An overwhelming number of participants during the first three consultations highlighted the lack of regional and international coordination in protecting the rights of migrants during the pandemic.

In this context, the fourth stakeholder consultation, to be held on 3 February 2021, will focus on improving value-driven and evidence-based policymaking and public debate, and on enhancing cooperation on migration. The debates will feed the intergovernmental meeting in March.

This is not to say that the regional review will not face challenges. Among competing priorities, it often becomes difficult to prioritize actions.

Competing reports can also overshadow crucial human rights issues. For instance, an extraordinary growth in remittances during the pandemic often overshadowed the issue of wage theft in Bangladesh. On top of that, a number of existing issues lose out to today's pandemic discourse.

I am however hopeful that this regional review will come up with specific proposals for the post-pandemic implementation of the GCM and will pave the way for the International Migration Review Forum to be held in 2022.

To conclude, I have three wishes for the upcoming regional review:

First, I hope the regional review **prioritizes the actions with measurable indicators** for the review of progress.

Second, I hope the regional review **plays a pioneering role in showcasing the 'whole of society' approach** by continuing the open-door approach for all stakeholders.

Third, I hope the regional review will **accelerate the implementation of some key objectives** of the GCM.

The pandemic has worsened many systemic issues that the GCM vowed to address.

Its implementation, therefore, need to be accelerated.

Please note that the views and opinions shared do not necessarily reflect those of the UN Network on Migration, its Secretariat, or its constituent parts.