

Global Compact for Migration
Iraq National Stakeholder Outreach Event Report
18 February 2021

In preparation for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) Regional Review Conference on 23-25 February 2021, IOM Iraq organised a one-day GCM National Outreach Event. Altogether 21 representatives of non-government GCM stakeholders¹ from 18 different organisations participated in the event, during which stakeholders were divided into four groups according to the division of GCM objectives for the International Migration Review Forum.² Participants exchanged views, shared experiences and provided findings to input into the Regional Review Process. The outcomes of the event are briefly summarised in this report.

Group 1: Review of GCM objectives 2, 5, 6, 12 and 18

Drivers for migration in Iraq include political and security issues, and economic conditions. These drivers are best mitigated by ensuring human rights are upheld, citizens are protected, and job opportunities are strengthened.

Stakeholders called for Iraq to further develop the rule of law and join binding international agreements, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol and the ILO 1958 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention in order to better protect migrants in Iraq. The work, residency and naturalisation of migrants should be regulated with comprehensive legislation, including Labour Law and Social Security Law. As a wealthy country in the region, Iraq could generate greater benefits for migrants if their rights and protections were strengthened. The GCM could be made legally binding to ensure compliance by all signatory states.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of efficient, community oriented and protection based border management processes and adequate facilities. Safety in areas of return and support for local communities is important to be ensured. This can be done by guaranteeing oversight, to monitor risks and threats and make use of migration data for planning. Links between organisations providing health, education, social support and legal services could be built for coordination and referral. Job opportunities with adequate working conditions can be provided to returnees, with possible recognition of valid certificates for those who are educated and vocational training for those who are not.

Group 2: Review of GCM objectives 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 21

Stakeholders called for Iraq to join the ILO Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. Many migrants lose their identification documents and property along the migration path. Identities of migrants need to be verified and temporary identity documents could be issued to ensure access to services and support to retrieve lost property. Search teams should locate missing migrants. Families of migrants are in need of protection as well as migrants themselves.

To better combat Trafficking in Persons, the capacity of relevant authorities must be strengthened, and national law must be sufficiently strong to punish perpetrators. Action in this area can be supported by international organisations and through migration agreements with countries of origin. Shelters could be established with funding from countries of origin. Efficient border control and collaboration between authorities, such as the National Counter-Trafficking Committee, international organisations, national ministries and cooperation between the Government of Iraq and KRI is essential to combat irregular migration. Monitoring is needed to ensure compliance with human rights principles and legal frameworks.

1 Stakeholders are listed in GCM Paragraph 44: “We will implement the Global Compact in cooperation and partnership with migrants, civil society, migrant and diaspora organizations, faith-based organizations, local authorities and communities, the private sector, trade unions, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, academia, the media and other relevant stakeholders.”

2 The International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), held every four years beginning in 2022, will serve as the primary intergovernmental platform to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all the objectives of the GCM. More information of the division of objectives can be found from the background papers of Roundtables 1-4: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/country-regional-network/arab-states>

Safe pathways for migration will benefit all parties and lessen the pressure on national authorities and international organisations alike to support migrants. A national mechanism and follow-up can help ensure and determine the sustainability of reintegration of returning migrants. NGOs and the international community can support the Government to provide reintegration services for returnees.

Group 3: Review of GCM objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22

Iraq has a number of important legislation and strategies on migration. These include the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act of 2012, Labour Law of 2015, National Migration Management Strategy (2020), National Development Strategy (2018–2022), Second National Action Plan for Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, National Policy on Displacement (2008), Beijing +25 Report, and the first voluntary report on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in 2019. Commitments, such as the GCM, could be made more binding. NGOs can play an important role in raising issues in shadow reports and through advocacy. Stakeholders noted the importance of the GCM guiding principles and expressed willingness to engage with the national-level UN Network on Migration in Iraq.

Iraq has gained important experience in combating gender-based violence (GBV) by establishing national and local plans to implement SCR Resolution 1325 and reporting on progress, including through a shadow report by civil society. Greater access to services and more centres for victims of GBV are still needed to provide legal, psychological and social services.

Participants highlighted that access to basic services for vulnerable migrants should also include protection, identity documents, job opportunities and COVID-19 health services. A response and recovery plan could be developed for the protection of migrants in times of crises.

Participants noted that transfer of remittances may expose migrants to legal accountability, as migrants from Syria may need to prove that money sent home does not finance terrorist activities. Transfer commissions are high as well. Certified contracts could be used to secure migrant workers' rights and social security, which would facilitate sending of remittances. Consular protection could be enhanced through more collaboration between relevant ministries and local organisations.

Returnees could be empowered to play a role in their communities of origin by receiving job opportunities and occupational education linked to their identified competencies.

Outcome indicators are crucial to ensure results are achieved in the implementation of the GCM. Greater public awareness and acceptance of international law and obligations was needed. Technology could help play a role in eliminating discrimination against migrants by providing platforms for awareness raising campaigns directed at youth, children and elders.

Group 4: Review of GCM objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23

Stakeholders noted that accurate data is needed to ensure that policies are evidence-based. This data could be collected using specific standards and by trained teams in the areas of return to verify and review collected data. Data could be gained from security actors and local and international organisations. Cooperation could be extended to local organisations, and local organisations who already work on data collection could be organised into networks to better support the collection of more comprehensive and reliable data. Local organisations could also play a key role in providing accurate and timely information at all stages of migration.

Stakeholders noted that rural-urban migration has impacted host communities, as many migrants are farmers with limited job opportunities in the new environment. Displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable. Trafficking in Persons and cases of gender-based violence inside and outside camps are perceived as increased due to the increased psychological pressure and overall vulnerable conditions. Poverty and the economic situation can be factors towards increased harassment and sexual exploitation. Capacity building activities and psychosocial support for women and girls can enhance their role in their communities and create better perspectives. To enhance rule of law, the successful community policing model could be made more widely available in communities and inside camps. Despite differing social norms and legislation related to gender-based violence (GBV) between communities of origin and host, for example in relation to polygamy and child marriage, laws need to be uniformly implemented. Awareness of

men should be raised in support of the participation of women in economic, educational and political fields and in coordination between civil society and the Government.

To eliminate discrimination and promote evidence-based public discourse to shape perceptions of migration, influential laws and contributions of international organisations to support the expansion of outreach of national organisations to raise awareness are needed. An important hurdle to pass is ethnic and sectarian discrimination. International cooperation and partnerships can help ensure safety of migrants.

Conclusion

Human rights compliant, security sensitive, and socially, economically and environmentally sustainable migration governance in Iraq and all other GCM signatory countries is needed to achieve safe, orderly and regular migration. Stakeholders play an important role in supporting governments to achieve this. In Iraq, the UN Network on Migration will continue to facilitate collaboration between the Government, civil society and the international community to support the implementation of the GCM.